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– THE IOLA REGISTER

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Chapter 1

Brambles and low tree branches catching at his clothes and tearing at his legs and arms, Ronnie Alan Halford ran wild-eyed through the timbered hillside of Pod Tucker's land, his terrified, rasping breath too quick to scream, like a ten year-old boy running two steps ahead of the devil himself.

His eyes burning with tears and his vision clouded, every smashing bass drum beat of his pounding heart wobbled the already distorted image of the world in front of him. Tiny droplets of sweat spun from his now matted red hair as his head swung back every few steps, wide eyes searching frantically behind him at the rapidly passing oak and hedge trees, praying he'd see no one – nothing – behind him.

Cresting a small rise, Ronnie's speeding, youthful body broke gravity for a moment as he flew into the clearing and slid down the backside of the hill. Losing his footing, he tumbled to the ground in a spiraling heap, sliding on his chest and hands against the awakening spring grass where Pod Tucker's cattle grazed in the summertime. The impact of the fall knocked the wind out of him, and he lay there a second as the dust and debris settled on his freckles and his red hair, adhering to his perspiration soaked arms and legs and forehead and swirling about his tightly shut eyes.

He rolled over slowly to his back, disturbed grass and dirt stuck to the front his sweaty red T-shirt, and as his face slow-

ly contorted he managed finally to find the wind to cry. Just a spackling of emotion at first, spitting from his mouth as his chest began again to rise and fall with the pumping of his laboring lungs. It sounded restrained, as if conducted in church, or on the back of the school bus or some other place where he was afraid someone might hear. But there was some resolution in his collapse, and the gentle coughing of his cry elongated to a moaning, cathartic wail.

Not far from him was Grader's Rock, a nearly 12-foot tall and wide boulder which rolled to this spot 10,000 years ago from the hillside above, a wayward specimen of Manitoba, Canada, picked up and carried on the inching face of a continental glacier 150,000 winters past, and washed from the muddy bank above after hundreds of years of rains filled and routed the nearby Pottawatomie Creek. Just beyond the rock was a minimum maintenance county road, and over the years during its bi-annual grading by the county road equipment, the old stone was scraped repeatedly, because it crowded the road against the hillside a little closer than the skill of most grader operators would condone. No one knew who coined the name Grader's Rock, and grader operators had for years denied being at its root. Now the old monolith sported makeshift campfires nearby where partiers warmed themselves against the chill of windy Kansas nights and beer spilled on their clothes, and graffiti snaked its way over the face of the boulder with bright spray painted arrows that led from words like "oops" and "aw shit" and pointed to the steel-gouged stone.

Struggling to his feet, Ronnie rested his hands against the ageless stone to steady himself, his face still convulsed with emotion and clean streams of skin showing under his eyes where tears had washed away the dirt and dust of the young Kansas spring. He limped past the stone and down the old road, and across the two inches or so of water that covered the gravel and mud bottom creek bed. The shadow from the silver maples along the stream bank cooled his skin briefly from the hot sun. Slogging through the mud where the water stopped and the road began on the other side, his pace quickened until he topped the slope of the stream bank, and his legs picked up stride until the scraggly chopped stalks of last year's field corn now scattered in moist spring fields blurred past him on either side. It wasn't far to the blacktop, and the brief reminder of what he had seen moments before rekindled the fear that numbed his legs and made him feel cold inside. He thrust his dirty, scratched and bruised hands forward to grab hands full of air, tossing his head from side to side, as he pulled hard into his running stride and left fainter and fainter footprints of creek water on the dry road behind him.

Molly Halford was rolling up a green garden hose near a big iron hook on the barn where it was supposed to hang when the old red pickup turned hard into her driveway in a cloud of dust and squeaking brakes. Her mothers' instinct riveted her immediately with thoughts of her two boys, who'd meandered away for one reason or another earlier on that Saturday afternoon, leaving the garden unweeded and their four year-old brother as her sole ward. The flash of anxiety, eased as she saw Ronnie's dirty face through the dusty windshield, was replaced by confusion as to what so much fuss could possibly be about. A glance to the face of the driver, an older man who lived a few miles away and whom she did not know well, gave her no clues. His bewildered gaze met her own as if asking her telepathically for some answer.

The passenger side door of the pickup flew open before the truck came to a complete stop. Ronnie bolted, arms outstretched and voice an indiscernible blubber, toward his mother, who had dropped the rolled hose to the side and now ran toward him.

Surveillance has its trade-offs. Draw a target with easy access to place and maintain bugs, and it's usually a place so public that interference gets in the way of data gathering. Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation Donald Trent thought about that as he walked past Cheesy Tony's, whose booming lunch business nestled in the heart of downtown Kansas City, was nearing full swing at about twenty minutes after noon.

Next door to Cheesy Tony's was Broadway Cleaners, another of Kansas City's vintage buildings, whose pretty blue canvas awning on the front shook a little in a slight April breeze, and stood in historic contrast to the monoliths of steel and glass that set the city's skyline.

Trent glanced inside the plate glass windows as he passed, catching a glimpse of a few customers milling about ready to pick up or drop off. His Kansas City Chief windbreaker buffeting in the wind against his yellow button-front cotton shirt and jeans and his flat shoes padding against the cement sidewalk, Trent looked just like any other non-professional Kansas Citian on the street, a few fashion steps below the professional office clothes of the lawyers, accountants and advertising executives who staffed the towering buildings overhead. Turning the corner onto 6th Street and heading down to a dank alley behind the block, Trent watched the reflections in the windshields of the parked cars and delivery trucks for any sight of anyone behind him who looked like someone he might have seen before.

The key in his jacket pocket fit easily into the back door of Broadway Cleaners, up a short flight of steps and half hidden from view by a giant and abandoned swamp cooler. Set in place fifty years ago as part of an old air conditioning system, its rotten baffles now collapsed on top of each other, and the whole thing smelled of stagnant water. It hadn't been used in years – beside it sat two modern high-efficiency heating and cooling units – and as Trent turned the key in the lock a startled blackbird rocketed from a hole in the sheet metal of the unit with a whoosh of wings. Trent pushed the door open,

which felt firm but gave way easily considering the otherwise dilapidated look of the rest of the alley side of the building.

He stepped forward onto a worn wooden floor, the closing door behind him choking out a wisp of light. While his eyes adjusted to the darkness of the back storeroom of Broadway Cleaners, Trent fastened the deadbolt lock on the door and walked down a long corridor of shelving, half filled with boxes and what looked like old spare machinery parts. Up one aisle he could see a few of the employees facing customers as they hastily tried to meet impatient demands of workers on their lunch hour. Trent pushed open an old wooden door at the end of the shelving, stepped inside onto a small stairway landing, and pressed a four-digit code into the keypad of a plastic security station mounted on the old plaster wall. He waited until the green light flickered on the monitor, then headed up the steep, narrow staircase, and inside an old apartment door to the room that shared a thick but not impermeable firewall with Cheesy Tony's.

The agent in charge from the DEA was Vincent Palerri, a fifty-something Italian from New Jersey who fit the ethnic stereotype in name only. He was tall and thin with a great swath of salt-and-pepper gray hair. His sharp but sagging features gave him a despondent look; Trent thought he looked like an undertaker, but he was one helluva good surveillance cop. Like Trent, the professional G-Man clothes had been set aside in favor of a pair of khakis and a red golf shirt.

"Where'dja go, Donny? Mistro's?"

"Nah," Trent said, unzipping his jacket to display a shoulder holster and 9mm Beretta. "Burger King."

Trent hung his jacket on one of several nails sticking out of a two-by-four on the south wall. The room was large for a bedroom by today's standards, built long ago as part of the second story four-room apartment. It had been empty for years, and it took nearly a full day to clean it up enough to be usable. Down a short hallway to the east was the old main living room, with ancient graying wallpaper and dirty, curtainless windows that used to provide a metropolitan view of the street below. The grime-covered glass now served mainly to let in the only natural light in the apartment, which filtered through the years of dirt on the glass gave the room a soft, dawn-like glow in the midday sun. The windows also served as a vantage point to look directly across Broadway into the Nation's Federal Bank building, a modern, glass-encased financial workplace where the tinted windows concealed another team like Palerri's, this one concerned with photographing anything coming or going to Cheesy Tony's.

Three large dry erase marker boards hung on the bedroom walls for special notations. Four folding tables pushed together formed a square work area, holding equipment and laptop computers, with a spaghetti bundle of wires leading this way and that around the various listening and recording devices. Agents monitored each of Cheesy Tony's incoming phone lines with earphones as they sat at the tables, noting each of the calls as they began to record them on the computer hard drives, then deleting file after file of Philly and fries orders, employees personal calls, or telemarketer calls after the listener realized there was nothing pertinent to the investigation. A reel-to-reel tape recorder, the mainstay of the previous generation of audio surveillance, was used as a backup to the computer files.

In addition to the phone taps, agents had placed four additional electronic bugs throughout the restaurant. Two at the "family table," near the main kitchen door, which was preferred by owner Tony Malone. In his seventies now, "Old Tony" used the table as an outpost to lookout over his forty-eight year-old empire. Since his stroke three years ago he didn't work much. But he was here from 10 a.m. to around 3 p.m. every day to watch over his boys and the help; part of the shop's ambiance along with the original marble tabletops, oak woodwork and glistening tile floor. Cheesy Tony's had a reputation for great cooked meat sandwiches. The agents listening next door noticed Old Tony breathed heavily as he sat there, usually alone, at times muttering to himself about a weird hairstyle or body piercing on a customer, and even from time to time about the physical attributes of the parade of young female professionals who frequented the restaurant. Eight feet above his head, two directional microphones the size of a dime and hidden well into the ornate tin ceiling focused solely on the table and its conversations, and broadcast them via FM frequency to the computer receivers only a few feet away through the wall where the agents were posted.

Old Tony wasn't the target of the investigation, and there was more than a hint of sympathy in the agents' conversations about the job and the old guy, who they determined to be a pretty decent fellow. Old Tony's curse was his oldest son, Ricky, who would eventually bring the full force and power of a federal prosecution down not only on himself, but also on his father's nearly fifty year-old small business dream.

The surveillance detail included five agents, four of which cycled on and off shifts of two hours at each of the two posts in order to stay fresh, with Palerri coming and going and making occasional reports. The tenor in the room full of federal law officers ranged from silent intensity at times to an occasional burst of juvenile laughter, like a study hall at a fraternity house. Surveillance was 99 percent boring, monotonous work.

"Yeah, baby!" Agent Randy Rogan got up from his listening post when he saw Trent was back to take his 12:30 shift. "My ass is aching." Rogan grinned big, stretching his 26 year-old lanky frame as Trent loosened his shoulder holster so the Beretta didn't jab into his ribs as he sat.

"Ya know, after listening to all those orders for those Phillies, I'd love to go get one for lunch," Rogan said, rubbing his belly in the international male signal for hunger. "Anybody else know of any other place nearby that's got Phillies?"

Trent allowed the computer screen to take his attention away from Rogan's search for food, while another agent tried to give him directions up town to another eatery. Trent's mind was on Ricky Malone, and who he might be talking to today, and how much business was really going through the books down at Cheesy Tony's during a busy weekday lunch crowd.

Only a few feet away on the restaurant floor Lonnie Casey, the twenty-eight year-old boyish-looking agent passing for twenty-one, was now in his second month busing tables and taking orders downstairs at Cheesy Tony's. He hustled an order out of the kitchen and into the dining room to a table of three nicely dressed women. He smiled a big, all-American boy grin under soft brown eyes as he sat the plates of food down in front of them.

"Okay, that's two lunch specials and a chef's salad," he said methodically, speaking directly to them but keeping Tony's table within his peripheral vision. "Will there be anything else?" The women shot glances around at each other grinning, but declined, waiting for him to turn back toward the kitchen so they could each give their review of his backside as they dined.

Trent watched Casey on a little television screen. By the time they were finished they'd have hours and hours of video and audio surveillance. His team's audio and the photos from the team across the street would support the real evidence Casey gained from his frequent peeks into the office books, and his notes on the amounts of the cash register tapes and order slips an hour before closing each night. He was a good looking kid who made pretty good tips, and his bachelor's in accounting plus a number of previous field assignments since joining the bureau gave him one hell of a nose for money. His temporary boss, Ricky Malone, liked him too. Casey had been there only a few months. A smart, nice-looking kid the customers liked, a hard worker who was always willing to stay late and close the joint when everybody else wanted to head home. A kid like that could really make it in this business, Ricky told himself.

Business was good at Cheesy Tony's – too good. So far a sandwich, fries and a drink that sells for around seven fifty on the menu was generating around sixty-eight dollars. Additional money – all of it cash – was coming from somewhere, and the FBI was convinced Ricky Malone could tell them where. Trent folded his fingers together and pushed his hands over his head, stretching and cracking a few knuckles as he settled in at work.

Sandy Marcum didn't work most Saturdays, and she resented it when she had to – especially today. Just twenty five minutes ago she'd been snuggled up next to Max in bed back at her tiny upstairs apartment across town, the two of them sleeping into the early afternoon after partying into the wee hours with some of his friends. Max slept over a lot lately, and Sandy was determined to make sure he didn't want to sleep anywhere else. But the end of the month was coming and she still wasn't sure if she could run renewal notices on the new circulation software. The anticipation was gnawing at her. She'd worked at The Sharon County Sentinel almost three years, and this damn new program was completely different than the old one.

At twenty-one years of age, it was the longest she'd ever held a "real job." With no other schooling after high school except for a year in business college, the job was as good as any she'd probably be able to find in town. She had learned early the pace at a weekly newspaper, even in a little town like Henrysville, is faster than its readers could ever imagine. She was learning the business – the buzz of news, the body of customers who were sometimes adoring and sometimes hateful, and the smell of ink that met her nose every morning when she walked in the door. And she was learning to like it.

The downtown traffic in Henrysville on a Saturday afternoon was always light and there was no need to worry about taking up customer parking, she thought to herself, so Sandy pulled her light blue Mustang into a parking slip in front of the Sentinel and turned off the engine. She pushed the tail of her T-shirt a little further in her jeans to be sure it was tucked in. Sandy was tall and lanky and a little flat chested, and she looked up into the rearview mirror for a second and wondered if she ought to put on makeup, in case anybody's at the office. She pushed her fingers through her short brown curls and tried to fluff out the bed-head, and ran a red nail-polished finger under her eye. Makeup would take too much time. Max was waiting at home. She hoped.

Saturdays used to be big days in downtown Henrysville. It was the day most farm folks came to town to do business and maybe recreate a little, since they worked all week on their acreages and had little time to make the trip while working sunup to sundown during the week. Capitalizing on the traffic and the general excitement created when a crowd gathers, store owners used to have their biggest day on Saturday, staying open well into Saturday night until the crowds finally thinned. It wasn't uncommon to see all three barbershops open – and three-deep in customers – at 9 p.m. on those old Saturdays. Cars filled every streetside parking slot up and down Main, doors open with mom sitting on the passenger side, window rolled down and talking to another woman on the sidewalk, and dad standing in the open driver's side door, one foot up on the threshold of the car door and arm resting on the roof of the car, talking to someone else or even a group of men, all of them smoking cigarettes. The kids were either sitting in the back seat, having gotten into trouble for running up and down the town causing mischief, or were busy running up and down the town causing mischief.

But those were the old days. Sandy had heard about them, but they were done long before her time.

Main Street in Henrysville wasn't too wide, and Saturday traffic used to have to move slowly and carefully down the center because of all the cars parked along the streetside with their doors open. Groups of people frequently crossed not just at the corners, but anywhere they wanted. Highway 59 used to run right up the center of town until the bypass was built, which gave the locals a fresh crop of strangers to gawk at as they made their way up and down the highway on their way to somewhere else. The businesses and the crowd fed off each other in those days, and every Saturday was like a little festival. But satellite television, the Internet, the decline of family farming and Wal-Mart put an end those heydays, and now the struggling few businesses left downtown lamented that they could shoot the old Civil War cannon on display in the city park down Main Street on a Saturday at noon and not hit a soul.

So the street was a fairly private scene on this Saturday as Sandy slipped her well-worn key into the glass front door of The Sharon County Sentinel, glanced down the row of building windows behind which set the idled pressroom of the newspaper, turned the lock and stepped inside. Light from the office's plate glass windows seemed to get swallowed up by the dark, century-old woodwork of the vintage office as Sandy crossed around the heavily varnished customer counter to the hallway door to hit the office light switches. The overhead lights lit up a rich-looking carpeted work area with four modern office desks, each with a computer monitor sitting on a side work table, which looked a little out of place and oddly compelling against the backdrop of the ancient stained oak paneling and ornate woodwork of the office. Across the room, more carpeting, this time with plastic runners laid down to protect it against heavier traffic, spread out under brass hand railings in place to guide traffic along the walls where frame after frame of historic photographs, letters to and from presidents, display boxes filled with mementos and other memorabilia were arranged to convey the unique place the Sentinel claimed in Kansas history. Sandy sat at one of the desks closest to the counter, and had barely sat her keys down beside her desk when a message crackled over the office police scanner sitting on a file cabinet across the work floor.

"Sharon County Center/Sharon County 2 and 3," the dispatcher said.

"Sharon County 2, go ahead" another voice responded.

"Be enroute to 22545 Northeast Osage Road. Again, 22545 Northeast Osage Road. Have a report of a 10-54. Be advised the 10-54 is in a dry well on the property.

"Ah, 10-4, Sharon County. Go ahead and notify EMS and Sharon County Rescue, and tell them to respond with high-angle gear. Sharon 3 do you copy?"

The dispatcher identified the location again for the Emergency Medical Service and rescue personnel. But Sharon County Undersheriff Todd Bookman, "Sharon 2" as he was identified on the radio, listened closely for a confirmation of the call from his road deputy on that shift, Sharon 3.

"Sharon 2/ Sharon 3, did you copy that traffic?."

There was still no response. The dispatcher had passed along the word to the other responders, and was awaiting further instructions.

"Sharon 2/ Sharon 3?" Still no answer. There was a pause. Sandy listened intently.

"Sharon 2/Sharon County Center, can you public service Sharon 3 and advise of the situation, tell him I need him at the location with me ASAP. He should have his cell phone on."

"10-4, Sharon 2, will advise you."

By this time, Sandy had hustled back to McKane's desk and was looking for his list of law enforcement "10" signals. Finding a photocopied list pushed under the glass table top on the corner, her finger stopped half way down the page, as she faintly caught her breath. "Omgod," escaped under her breath, more in concern than in exclamation. She picked up the phone, punched the button for line two, and dialed Michael McKane's home number.

Two long, solid legs in a pair of old blue jeans stuck out from under the front of the blue Chevrolet van as Delbert Stimpson walked slowly up the gravel alley, tracing his knuckle along the fading decal lettering on the van that read "First Presbyterian Church." Grunts and groans were apparent as Stimpson came closer to the half of the man that was visible, he watched as the occasional contortion knotted up the man's legs when the unknown discomfort under the van was most audible.

"Preacher, has that thing got a hold of you under there?," Stimpson warbled, his skinny, seventy-nine year-old body leaning now on an oversized hand, grown large from years of manual farm work and now connected to the end of a frail but so far cancer surviving arm. The legs stopped shifting at the realization someone was nearby, and their owner uttered some indiscernible words as his ratty old sneakers started back pedaling at the cardboard box the body was using as a pad on top of the gravel. Stimpson began to laugh a little as the large body became visible.

"Ah, brother Stimpson, good morning!" Reverend Pete Tinney's hands were covered in engine grease, and beads of sweat lined his forehead as he lay on the cardboard, his head just clearing the underside of the vehicle, but his face smiled the smile of a man legitimately happy to see someone. He pushed his way out from under the van along the cardboard,

clutching a rusty hose clamp in his left hand as he did so, and squinting as road grime from underneath the van fell in speckles into his eyes and thick, billowing gray and white hair.

"I said, I wondered if that thing was going to eat you or something," Stimpson said as Tinney became more visible. Tinney had heard what Stimpson said, but Stimpson's hearing wasn't what it once was and they both knew it, so Stimpson had gotten into the habit of repeating himself. It was enough to drive his wife of sixty years crazy.

"Brother Smith found a water pump on one of his salvage vehicles down at the gas station that fit our van, so I was doing my best to install it," Tinney said, turning over the clamp in his left hand and pushing sweat away from his brow with the back of his right. He straightened into the form of a man, six-foot four inches tall, big shoulders and a broad chest inside a tan T-shirt with some printed emblem now mostly washed away. He had just a hint of a paunch belly which had come about in the last few of his fifty-five years. His graying beard was neatly trimmed but right now splattered with a little grease on the side of his chin, and his thick, shoulder-length gray hair was pulled back into a pony tail. His light complexion was worn, like that of a light skinned man who'd spent almost as much time outside in the elements as he had inside writing sermons. Thick gray eyebrows arched over two beautiful and bright sky-blue eyes, which smiled back at Stimpson, who continued to cackle.

"I suppose it must have looked like Jonah and the Whale," Tinney laughed back with his soft, resonant bass. "What can I do for you today, Brother," his inquiry was like his smile – warm and soft.

"I finished with the baby Jesus, and I've got him out in the car," Stimpson said. "I was going to bring him in, but the front doors were locked."

The words caught Tinney by surprise at first, but his memory jogged a little to recall that Stimpson was talking about the baby Jesus from the town Nativity Scene. Last Christmas the local Minister's Fellowship had noticed the weathering on the figures for the Nativity, and had decided to farm the separate pieces out among some of the member churches for repair and refurbishment. Stimpson, a long-time church member and a woodworker hobbyist, had volunteered to give the baby Jesus the once-over.

"Oh, yes- well that's great, Brother Delbert," Tinney said. "But you say the church doors were locked?"

"Yep- tried 'em, but they wouldn't budge."

The conversation was broken by the snap of the storm door on the back of the church parsonage a few yards away. Lara Tinney stood on the back step near the iron pipe railing with a glass pitcher in her right hand and some cheap plastic glasses coupled one inside the other in her left. The weight of the pitcher pulled hard against her delicate hand, flexing the slender, smallish but defined muscles in her already tanned forearm, and on up her triceps to where her arm disappeared under the short-sleeved, faded blue flower print cotton dress. She turned to look toward the men, and raised the pitcher and the glasses a little with a faint smile to signal that she'd brought some refreshment. She glanced down, daintily making her way down the three concrete steps so as not to spill the pitcher.

She was an ample breasted woman ten years her husband's junior, and the dress, worn thin but not ragged from age, pulled slightly across her shoulders and down across her bosom where the aging bra she wore gave only half-hearted support to the weight of its mission. She was not a skinny woman, but her body gathered well at the waistline as it flared down to her gently rounded hips. The bones in her face were well-pronounced, with her chin, her jaw line and her cheekbones lending themselves toward her big round brown eyes. Thick auburn hair touched here and there by gray pulled back into pony tail and held with two brass barrettes in the front, reached near the middle of her back even gathered as it was. She stepped lightly across the gravel of the alley and over a few early dandelions blossomed wide and yellow into the Saturday afternoon sun.

"I saw we had company, so I thought you might like a glass of tea," her voice was light and level, sounding a little more bubbly than the slightly tired, slightly distant look that always seemed to occupy her face. Stimpson waved and made his greeting. She shook her head a bit to the right to control an errant strand of hair as it wrestled across her mouth from a slight breeze that made its way down the alley. Her motion was deliberate, but strangely fluid, almost like she was underwater. She handed a cup to Stimpson, who at first waved it off in protest that he couldn't stay long, but then accepted at her insistence. Smiling, she handed a cup to her husband, and then feigned a look of contempt at the sight of his greasy hands and the smudges across his beard.

"You're a mess, reverend," she pressed a gentle thumb across his chin and tried to remove the smudge, to no avail. "Mechanic work," he smiled back, "from someone who knows precious little about mechanic work."

Lara poured Tinney's drink after Stimpson's, and the three sipped from the plastic cups and chatted about the van, the nativity piece and the warm April Saturday. Stimpson squatted on a closed tool box near the van, Tinney leaned on his newly finished project, and Lara stood, feet together and straight backed, arms folded across her chest, lifting the glass occasionally to her full and paintless lips. Stimpson finished his drink, and Tinney took that as a cue.

"Lara, why don't you go inside and unlock the church doors – I think that trick lock fell again when we let it shut too hard – I'll go help Brother Delbert with the baby Jesus.

Lara jolted slightly at his command, her eyes widening a little in subservient acknowledgment, and she sat her glass in the open door of the van as she quickened her way toward the few steps of the open basement door to the church. On the second step, the slow crawl of a blaring siren grew to a full wail. It was located a few blocks away but was loud enough to cover this quadrant of town. Tinney winced a little at the shrieking alarm, and instinctively looked up and down the alley to its convergence with the two city streets. He saw nothing.

“Goodness!,” there was a bit of alarm in Lara’s voice as well as she stepped back up to ground level, alternating glances at her husband with others that traced around the neighborhood, to the church, to the parsonage, and around the building to Apple Street, which ran in front of the church.

Her eyes were open with concern as she looked to her husband, who was now walking back toward her from the alley. Her voice was soft and concerned.

“I wonder what’s happened?”

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