

CHAPTER 1

The solid oak door split open with a startling crash. It slammed against the back wall with such violent force that it bounced shut just as the trespasser stepped partially through the entryway. With a vicious boot, he punted it again and splintered the bottom section of what once had been a splendid antique four-paneled door. Sprung from its hinges and shattered from its grandeur, the door swayed limply in defeat.

Startled, Graham Crane jumped to his feet and fumbled with his red-rimmed Pravda bifocals. He tried to make sense of the situation escalating before him. Light flooded through the entrance and made it difficult to clearly discern the features of the individual who hulked in the doorway.

However, Crane could clearly make out the shotgun with its menacing barrel pointed at his midsection. He also saw a look of abject horror on Frannie Weinstein's face, his secretary of the past thirty-two years. She stood in her office, and cowered just to the right of the intruder's shoulder, screaming for him to stop.

"Mr. Crane, I tried to stop him!" Frannie shrieked, as if she could have really done anything. At sixty-eight years old and weighing one-hundred two pounds, it was doubtful she could have stopped an unruly child, much less this mountain of a man who crashed into the normally tranquil legal suite.