

THE TOWN IS MINE

PROLOGUE

The defendant sat at the table with his defense attorney as the twelve members of the jury entered into the courtroom from the side door. He was looking at the list of names that he had written down; six women and ten men. The names were all the people that had brought him to this location and to the trial that he had sat through. He glared at the judge. He had known the judge all his life. After all, they did live in a small town.

The judge was watching the jury as they filled the jury box where they had sat for the morning trial.

The bailiff and the other court workers in the courtroom were running around and doing whatever they did to prepare for the jury's verdict.

The defendant was instructed to rise and he grudgingly stood up. He rolled his eyes to the ceiling when he heard the foreman of the jury speak.

"Guilty."

Then everyone did their assignments in the courtroom to accommodate the verdict. The defendant bowed his head to the table top and looked at the list of names he had doodled.

Not fair.

Then the judge cleared his throat and pronounced his sentence.

THE FIRST

He sat in the stolen car in the parking spot and waited for the school to release the children. The old man he was watching was sitting in his lawn chair on the sidewalk at his assigned intersection. He had his "STOP" sign resting in his lap as he read a book.

The old man was wearing his orange vest and looked up from his book to the park as he listened to the sound of approaching children. He was waiting for what he considered "his kids" to reach the intersection so that he could escort them safely across the street. He did not need the money, but it got him out of the house twice a day, working here as a crossing guard. He closed the book, stood up from his chair and waved to some of the children coming toward him. He then dropped the book on his chair and stretched.

The driver in the car looked down at the list of names on the sheet of paper on the passenger seat of the car and smiled. The name MARVIN MARTIN was at the top of the list. He shifted around in his seat. He turned the ignition key, gunned the engine and waited for the right time. He knew he had to time it perfectly to get away.

At the end of the street was a traffic light and if his timing was right then from here he could catch a green light and move into the flow of traffic on the four lane road without stopping. The old man on the sidewalk was standing next to a fire hydrant and that prevented him from driving on the sidewalk to get him. He needed Marvin in the street at the proper time to catch the light so he could get away.

He shifted the car into gear and waited.

The first group of children was led across the street by Marvin holding up his sign as he also held out his free hand toward the waiting car as he escorted the children across the two lanes

of the road. After he got back to the park side of the street, he waved the one car that had stopped for him to continue.

The watching driver inched his car forward, impatient to get this done. But then he mentally pulled himself back and chastised himself.

Slow down.

He watched the lights at the far intersection for the proper sequence. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the next group of children approaching Marvin. He inched the car forward a little more and turned onto the street moving out of his parking spot.

Come on.

He urged the kids.

Almost perfect.

Marvin was now standing in the center of the road holding out his sign. There were two cars stopped and waiting in the other lane. The children walked across the street.

The driver was fully out of his spot into the road and inched forward. The traffic lights at the end of the street were now moving into the sequence that he needed.

Now or never.

He watched Marvin. Marvin had gotten his charges across the road and there were no additional children waiting on the park side of the road although more were approaching through the park.

The driver held his breath. Marvin stood in the center of the road and was turning to walk back to the park side of the street.

The driver stomped down on the accelerator and yelled out incoherently.

Marvin froze at the gunning of the engine as he stared at the car charging toward him. The car hit him in the center of the car. Marvin flipped over the front of the car and rolled off the windshield on the passenger side of the car to the ground. When he hit the ground, the impact broke his neck.

The killer raced down the street and as he approached the intersection the light turned green.

The drivers in line waiting for the green light moved through the intersection. He caught up to the last car and turned right. He looked over his shoulder and could see people moving toward Marvin laying on the road and pointing at his car. He saw hands moving toward heads.

Cell phones.

He continued down the road and took the right turn into the shopping mall where he had stolen the car he was driving. He parked outside the Sears store at almost the same parking spot where he had stolen the car. He exited the car putting his list in his shirt pocket.

One down.

He cut through the Sears store, through the length of the mall and left the mall through the JC Penney's where he then walked over to his rental car. He got in and drove out of this town for his next stop.

Marauder was in business.

THE SECOND

It was now past twilight and with the darkness, the chances of him being discovered had reduced considerably. He was hidden behind the Amish built storage shed, out of view of the

house and was holding the stereo unit under his arm. The cover had been removed exposing the internal guts of the stereo. The stereo had an eighteen-foot cord, rolled up, which he had determined as the right length.

Marauder peeked around the corner of the shed and watched Gary Riger and his wife, what's her name, swimming in their pool. He knew that they always took a night swim in their heated pool after dinner and that Gary stayed in the pool longer than his wife after it got dark. He had crawled across the yard as the night became darker to get to his position now behind the shed. He wanted to be in position when the wife got out of the pool and left Gary alone there.

He heard the murmurs from the two of them talking, but he did not listen to them. He fidgeted while waiting.

Slow down.

He heard some splashing and it took him out of his own thoughts. He watched Riger's wife Charlene, he now remembered the name, as she climbed up the ladder to exit the pool. She stopped at the top of the ladder and said something to Gary. He grunted an answer and laid back down on his inner tube. The wife climbed down the ladder and walked away from the pool toward the back of the house. Marauder watched her as she went into the house.

Now.

Marauder moved around the corner of the shed and crouched down as he got around the shed. He duckwalked across the yard toward the edge of the house. The above ground pool kept him from Gary's sight as he reached the outdoor outlet.

He grabbed the plug of the power cord of the stereo and plugged it in an outdoor outlet. He hit the power button and the stereo unit energized. It hummed with power, but without speakers there was no other sound.

He heard Gary splashing around in reaction to the humming noise in the stillness of the night.

Too late now Gary.

Marauder stood up and his dark silhouette approached the pool.

Gary saw the dark shape and asked, "Who are you?"

Marauder did not reply.

He lifted up the stereo unit over his head.

Gary watched the arms of the silhouette raise holding a square thing in its hands. There were a few buttons and background lights glowing on the stereo. Gary rolled off the inner tube and his feet hit the bottom of the pool. He started moving as fast as he could through the water.

Marauder watched him for a second.

Not too far, don't pull out the plug from the outlet.

Then Marauder dropped the stereo unit into the water.

He ran from the yard to the cries of Gary Riger's electrocution.

THE TOWN

The city of Torino was an isolated city.

That is why the plans he had made would work.

Marauder was from and lived in this town and now he had work to finish here. The first two deaths were done and no one had connected them as related. No one suspected that tonight was going to be his night of revenge. All the equipment was in place and waiting for his

commands to start the night's activities.

Torino was miles from any nearby city and had a population of just over two thousand. The main road through the town was Route 211. Route 211 meandered through the hills and connected three towns. It began in Balelle, twenty-two miles of westward travel it was called Main Street in Torino and it ended after the eighteen miles it took to reach Weading.

To reach the town coming from the east from Balelle using 211, a traveler had to cross over the Shorte River bridge, eight miles from Torino. To reach the town from the west from Weading using 211, the traveler had to cross over the Instrum Creek bridge, six miles from Torino. To reach Torino from the north a car had to use Route 98 South through the hills, with the nearest town, Fortune, just under fifteen miles away. To get reach Torino from the south a car needed to travel Route 27 North through more hills from the nearest town of Granite, a shade more than twelve miles away.

The streets of Torino were laid out in grids with the north to south streets named after trees and the east to west running streets named after flowers. All in all, the town covered six square miles surrounded by peaceful, hilly countryside.

There were a few businesses in the town: gas station/mechanic, pharmacy, all-purpose general store, newspaper (weekly), two banks, two restaurants, three bars, one coffee shop, jewelry store, professional building with the lawyers, insurance agents and accountants. These businesses were all along Main Street and kept the population supplied with the basic necessities. Bigger purchases were made at the malls located in Weading or Fortune.

Main Street also had the Post Office, the Fire Station, the Sheriff's office and the Courthouse/City Hall.

Some of the citizens were employed in the power station outside of Weading. The caravan of these workers left every morning before seven and returned home before six every evening.

Others were employed in "The Plant". "The Plant" was a small company that now built small motors for model planes, trains and cars. The building had been around for a hundred years under different owners and always referred to in Torino as "The Plant".

Torino had recently won a contract, with help from their new congressman, a cousin of the mayor. The congressman had gotten the town a small government laboratory built to work on "top secret" chemicals, according to the residents who found the lab a small source of amusement. They did not know what was done there but they did find it added an air of mystery to the town. The doctors and chemists who moved there did not find the isolation a lot of fun, but they had grown use to the quiet and isolation of Torino and they were well paid. They had to promise their neighbors that they were not creating killer chemicals or diseases that would create a ghost town.

THE TOWN IS MINE

MAIN STREET

Marauder opened the door of his car.

It was a beautiful, late fall Saturday and now dusk was coming. This far north the days got shorter quicker and by five-thirty darkness would rule the land. Leaves had been raked during the day and there was still the scent of burning leaves in some of the neighborhoods. The first round of college football games were ending on television and the late afternoon games were

starting. Satellite dishes around the town were shifting to find the best position for reception of the new games. No cable was available up here, but just about every house had some type of satellite dish. There were a few stubborn holdouts who used TV rabbit ears for reception.

The citizens of the town who were going to dinner or the movies had left for the evening. They left for the nearby towns and would not be back for many hours. Why leave on a Saturday night for a short time? Everyone else who was staying in town for the night were hunkered down and so traffic would be almost non-existent for the rest of the night in the area of Torino.

He entered his truck and opened his laptop.

His laptop was a combat-hardened unit which he had added specialized software and hardware. He powered it on and clicked to open the software that would allow him to control and look through the webcam that he had placed on the Shorte River bridge. He rotated the camera 360 degrees and saw no cars or traffic on or near the bridge. He focused on the Torino side of the road approaching the bridge.

No traffic. It's time to start.

He moved his mouse's arrow to the icon marked ROADONE. He double-clicked on the icon. He watched for and saw the puff of smoke and caught sight of the prongs as they landed on the road from a tree branch that was hanging over the road. There were hundreds of them and they landed across the road surface.

The prongs, called caltrops, were designed to stop horses and infantry. They were in the shape of jacks, but much larger than what children used to play the game.

These caltrops had a different purpose and that was to shred the tires of any cars that attempted to use that road. On the dark road they would be invisible until the driver drove through them.

The Marauder was satisfied that the caltrop drop was successful and then moved the pointer to the icon labeled SHORTE. He checked the webcam there and saw nothing approaching his next target. He double-clicked on that icon and his webcam shook as the center of the bridge blew to pieces from the explosion. He watched as the bridge supports, destroyed by explosion, collapsed into the river.

He pumped his fist in success.

He then double-clicked rapidly on icons ROADTWO, ROADTHREE, and ROADFOUR. He checked through his webcams at Routes 98 and 27 and at 211 leading to the Instrum Creek bridge. He saw that all his caltrops had dropped on those roads. He had the caltrops made out of town and the small shop that he used thought that they were for a military contract. It was easy to fake an official looking invoice with the office software available on the market today. The office software he had purchased was made for government offices and it was just a matter of the proper information to get the caltrops built.

Marauder double-clicked on the INSTRUM icon and watched as that bridge collapsed into the creek. He took a breath and sat back in his seat.

The bridges are burned.

Now it begins.