



## CHAPTER TWO

Brenner spent most of the next day at the marina working on his boat. By seven o'clock, all the jobs on his worklist were checked off. He sat in the cockpit, enjoying a chicken sandwich and bottle of wine. Across the water in the neighbouring slip a young man was helping his girlfriend climb over the lifelines and into the cockpit of a small sailboat called *Dumb Luck*. The young man held her hand and made jokes about falling into the water. She said something that Brenner couldn't quite hear. Seagulls were calling somewhere in the distance. Brenner looked away and then up at the sky, still a perfect, sheltering blue. The light it cast made the entire marina glow.

Brenner's cellphone rang. He put the sandwich down. He stumbled down the stairs into the cabin and picked up the phone. "Hello," he said.

"Paul, it's George." And then a pause. He knew immediately that something was wrong. George always followed his introduction by asking Brenner how he was. He had very good manners.

"Yes," Brenner said. "Yes, George?" There was a long silence. "George?"

"Paul, please bear with me."

Brenner was impatient now. He heard sounds in the background. "What's wrong, where are you?"

"Paul, I am at the hospital. Vancouver General."

"Louise, is it Louise?"

"Paul, please, I am trying to tell you. The police have found Daniel. They have found his ... his body."

"No," Brenner said. He was speaking loudly now. "Let me speak to Louise. George, let me speak to Louise." His hand was shaking.

"Louise cannot talk to you now," George said.

"Alright then, I'm coming," Brenner said. He stood up too quickly and hit his head on the cabintop. "George, tell Louise I'm coming." He carefully snapped the cellphone shut and put it in his pocket. He began to speak out loud, as though issuing commands to himself.

"Step up into the cockpit. Leave the bottle on the table. Step over the lifeline and onto the slip. Move slowly. Do not trip or fall."

He began to run down the dock towards the marina gate. When two men blocked his way, he shouted at them and pushed them aside. One almost fell into the water and yelled back at him, "Buddy, what the fuck?" Then he was through the heavy gate and into the parking lot, running again, the parking lot full on a Saturday night, and far too many cars and he had to think to remember where he had parked, and then he double clicked the remote so the flashers would flash and he could see his car, there it was, and quickly he was standing beside his car, he opened the door and got in and started the engine and the music of Bach flooded the car, he punched a button to turn that off, and then drove out of the parking lot, quickly turned left, and drove a quarter of a mile twisting along the shore, then he turned right, up the steep winding road to the main highway and merged into the traffic, heavy from a ferry arrival and he shifted through five gears quick, quicker, quickest, quickest to the speed limit and beyond and his only thoughts were for his son. Daniel, oh, Daniel.

He could see George waiting for him in the front lobby of the hospital. Where was Louise? As he walked through the automatic doors, he saw two police officers talking to each other. George was staring at him now. Brenner entered the hospital, and looked around at the bright emptiness of it, the harsh concrete walls and highlights of wood trim, the coffee bar off to the left, the colourful art, and thought *This looks like a hotel, not a hospital, when did this all change?*

George touched him on the shoulder and said his name. He introduced the two police officers. The older officer asked Brenner to confirm that he was Daniel's father and Brenner said, "Yes, of course I am. Would you please tell me what's happened?"

"Sir, please follow me," the officer said.

George and Brenner followed the officers down a hallway and around a corner and down another hallway and around yet another corner and then through a door to a small lounge where Louise was waiting.

When Louise looked up at him, Brenner met her eyes and saw an expression of such grief and despair that he had to look away, at the walls, at the ceiling, at the tidy pile of magazines on the table in front of her, before he could look at her again. "Paul," she said, "please sit beside me."