

Excerpt from Patrick Finneran's *Murder in Two Parts*

Friday, 3:45 p.m.

The Windom Towers

He held the blood soaked towels away from his naked body as he walked quickly from the master bedroom to the bath just down the hall. Brushing the shower curtain aside with his forearm, he reached inside the tub and dropped the pile just in front of the drain. From the bathroom closet, he selected a clean wash cloth and returned to the master bedroom to retrieve the tools of his trade, wrapping them in the cloth and returning to the bathroom, he laid the cloth with its bloody contents in the ornate marble sink and returned to the tub where he turned on the single, water mixer control, carefully adjusting the water temperature—not too hot, not too cold. When he was satisfied, he swiveled the water selector from the bath spigot to the shower head. Taking care not to touch any part of the tub or walls, he stepped in and stood beneath the running water, both feet carefully placed on the pile of bloody bath towels. He let the pounding water wash his body clean of all traces of blood. No soap, no rubbing—eliminating the chances of leaving behind any traces of his skin. He'd pretty much solved the problem of body hair by using a highly effective depilatory cream he purchased in a Hollywood department store. He smiled to himself as he fantasized police evidence technicians' frustration at finding nothing. He'd employed this clean up technique several times in recent years, and it had proven a success—leaving him beyond detection.

When he could see no more traces of blood on his body, he shut off the water and stepped from the tub onto a clean towel. When the soles of his feet were dry, he tossed the towel into the tub with the rest of the bloody towels and went into the living room to retrieve a large dopp kit from his airline, carry-on bag. Returning to the bathroom, he removed a can of Drano crystals from the kit. He unscrewed the cap, and leaning over the edge of the tub, he carefully poured about half the can's content into the drain. As the acrid smell rose and the foaming action began, he smiled with satisfaction. "Let them trace that!" Removing several sheets of toilet paper from the roll next to the stool, he began to carefully blot the water remaining on his skin. As each wad became soaked, he dropped it into the toilet. It took about half the roll to get his body nearly dry. He flushed the toilet, eliminating that link to his DNA.

Still damp, he searched the bath closet for something with which to complete the job—and leave no trace of his DNA. Catching sight of a hair dryer on the shelf, he'd found the answer. To further confuse any diligent police technician, he plugged the dryer in a hallway outlet and stood in the hall to dry himself. After several minutes of playing the warm air over his body—a sensation he found surprisingly pleasant—he was satisfied. In fact, it had proven so successful and sensuous he made a mental note to include a hair dryer as a permanent addition to his "tool kit".

Still naked, he carried the dopp kit and wash cloth that contained the surgical knives, which he'd used, to the kitchen, set them on the drain board next to the deep, stainless steel sink, and removed a velveteen, roll-up case with individual sleeves for each knife and surgical tool. He untied the binding ribbon, unrolled the case, and folded back the flap covering the sleeves. Taking great care not to cut or nick himself on the razor sharp blades, he unrolled the wash cloth and placed the knives and instruments he'd employed over the past several hours, in the bottom of the sink. He then washed each knife clean of

all traces of blood. Using a tooth brush he carried for the task, he diligently brushed every nook and crevice clean. He then dried each instrument using the kitchen paper towels. Finally, he reached into his kit and withdrew a can of number 10 sewing machine oil, squeezed a few drops on a clean paper towel, and anointed each blade with the preserving oil. His clean up chores accomplished, he inserted each instrument into its designated sleeve, folded the flap over the tips of the instruments, and rolled the case into a tight package. As he tied the ribbon, he recalled how much this case with its instruments reminded him of his mother's fine sterling silver. She kept it in just such cases between her Sunday family dinners. It was time to get dressed and take his leave. The remainder of the can of Drano went into the kitchen drain. The empty can went into his dopp kit. He walked to the living room and dressed.

Now, fully dressed, with credentials identifying him as a salesman for a major, California, surgical supply house resting nicely in his wallet, he attended to one final detail as he departed. Withdrawing a Nice N' Clean packet from his kit, he carefully wiped his fingerprints from every surface and knob he might have touched. He paused in the living room giving the scene a final review in his mind, and with his experienced eye, he decided everything had been covered. He opened the apartment door and silently checked the hallway for any other occupants. Seeing none, he stepped into the hall and used the wipe to pull apartment 33C's door closed. He dropped the wipe together with its foil container into the kit. He removed the latex gloves he'd worn since entering the apartment several hours earlier and placed them in the kit. He'd dispose of everything later. The disposable elements of his kit would, as was his habit, be dropped in a trash container located far from the scene of his work in a highly trafficked area. He closed the zipper on the dopp kit and then his flight bag and walked at a normal pace toward the elevators at the center of the hall.

Taking her leave of the firm's aging clients, Monica Flynn quietly closed the apartment door and consulted her wrist watch. Yes, there'd be just enough time to get back downtown in time to get Norma's car back before the office closed. She made a mental note to thank Norma again for the use of her car on this cold, windy, November day. Her paralegal work accomplished—the clients happy with their revised will—Monica tucked the thin leather case containing the precious legal paperwork under her arm and pulled her warm winter coat tightly around her throat.

Moving quickly, the deep pile carpet hushing her footsteps, she set off for the elevator at the center of the hall, her shoulder-length, honey-blond hair bouncing with every step. As she walked, her thoughts turned to her fiancée, Mike, and the weekend they'd planned. Arriving at the alcove housing the elevators, she pushed the call button and waited. Erotic thoughts of Mike filled her imagination as she waited. She rather enjoyed the fact her five-foot-eight height was short next to his six-foot-two. In her imaginings, she saw his blue-green eyes smiling down at her as his face came close. She fantasized about stroking his lean, hard body.

Her warm thoughts were abruptly wrenched back to reality as the bell sounded, announcing the arrival of the elevator. The polished brass doors slid open, revealing a single passenger already in the car. Unconsciously, as women do, Monica made a quick mental assessment of the occupant. He was tall, maybe six feet, with moderately long, light brown hair. Intense brown eyes stared ahead from beneath heavy, darker eyebrows. Just beside his left nostril a dark brown freckle stood out against his white skin.

There was a hard look about those eyes. Monica's initial reaction was one of mild alarm, and for a moment, she hesitated to enter the elevator. But as her glance took in the rest of the man, she saw he was dressed in an expensive-looking, two-piece, dark blue, pinstripe suit, white, oxford-cloth shirt with button-down collar, a silver gray tie, gleaming, black shoes, a black, cashmere top coat was across one arm, and at his feet, an expensive-looking, leather, airline carry-on bag with shoulder strap.

This had to be a tenant off to the airport. Relieved, she smiled and stepped into the elevator. He nodded an acknowledgment. Turning her back toward the stranger, she pushed the button-marked garage. Uninterrupted by other stops, they rode to the garage level in silence. The doors slid open, and Monica stepped off the elevator first, quickly making her way to the red, Mustang convertible parked a good sixty feet away in the "visitors' " area.

She was unaware the man had stayed back, concealing himself behind one of the huge, concrete columns supporting the tall building. He watched as she unlocked the car, got in, started it, and carefully backed out of the parking slot. As the rear of the car came into view, he quickly copied the license number on the back of a Continental Airlines boarding pass he'd pulled from his suit coat breast pocket. The flight was to depart Indianapolis for Los Angeles at seven o'clock the following morning.

He waited until the car had pulled up the exit ramp and turned out of his view on the main street in front of the building. Replacing the boarding pass in his breast pocket, he put on his top coat, slung the travel bag's strap over his shoulder, and walked up the ramp and out onto Meridian Street. Turning to his right, he walked about two blocks and hailed a Yellow Cab from the front entrance of another high-rise, apartment building. He directed the driver to take him to the downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel.

As the cab headed south toward the hotel, he began to consider this unexpected development. The woman posed a definite threat. He'd caught that momentary look of alarm on her face when she saw him in the elevator. He pulled the boarding pass from his pocket and considered the license number written there. There had to be a way; however, it would mean delaying leaving town for a few days while he located the girl in the red, Mustang convertible.