

Excerpt

Steam rose from the latte in Harvey's hands, causing the window to steam and obscure his view of the front of Capricorn House. The coffee shop overlooked the tent covering the remains of Donald Grace, an ideal location to watch the police activity in front of the office block. A few non-uniforms had entered. A few had left.

He stirred his coffee slowly, watching as the body bag was discreetly removed from the tent and placed into an unmarked van. The bag held some semblance of human form, but inside the body would be packed and bent together to fit it into the rigid bag. Impact remains from such a height never kept their shape, more resembling a pat of butter hammered by a fist than a human being with skeleton intact.

The coffee was doing nothing for his nerves, and for the third time in as many minutes he reached for the cigarette packet and withdrew one. This time he lit the cigarette and tentatively inhaled. The initial lungful made him nauseous, but he persevered and swam along with the numbing elation.

'Excuse me,' a nearby customer smiled at the cigarette in Harvey's hand. 'But you aren't allowed to smoke here. You have to go outside.' Harvey nodded and stood to leave. He grabbed his coffee and angled a spoon on the table. Small daggers of chi aimed themselves at the helpful customer. He would have one hell of a headache for the rest of day.

Harvey huddled in the doorway outside, sipping the coffee as he let the cigarette burn into a slim grey stack of ash. His path was set now. His future determined as surely as if it was written. The first was dead. The others would follow.

Officers in overalls packed the tent away, bundled into the grey van and drove off. The only evidence of Donald Grace's final landing place was the acid-cleaned markings on the pavement.

The final plain clothed detective exited the building and made her way across the street. She carried a heavy box in her arms, which she placed into the passenger side of a car before slipping into the driver side.

Harvey's throat seized up and he bit into the styrofoam cup. Why would she remove anything from the office? Could she suspect that the suicide wasn't a natural phenomenon?

He noted her scowl as she swerved to miss a man overladen with gifts directly in front of the cafe. She was attractive, in an ice-queen pouty sort-of-way. She glanced towards the cafe and they locked eyes. For a moment she reached out and stole his breath away with her frost blue eyes. Then she was gone, speeding away in her car and lost in the flow of traffic.

Harvey took a moment, then pulled out the paper and flicked to the horoscopes. She was an Aries, that much was clear. He read her star sign for the day and relaxed. She wasn't having a good day. And from the monthly forecast, it looked like she wasn't about to have any good fortune for the foreseeable future.
