

# Trinity

## A Haydn & Speaker Mystery

### Chapter 3



Almost every morning, soon after rising and certainly before breakfast, Connie walked to the foot of his driveway, opened up his mail box, and gathered in his daily copy of the Herald and Examiner. He liked catching up on what was happening in the world the old-fashioned way, while munching on toast or Wheaties in the small, austere breakfast room of his split level house. When he spread the paper out on the kitchen table on Friday morning, May 12, he saw right away that his and Shrug's adventure was now news. Not big news, of course. But there it was, toward the bottom of the fifth page, a short piece saying that two local retirees were re-examining the murder of Vincent d'Amato and the conviction of Jason Bigelow. Connie did not regard the matter as newsworthy, but then, Humboldt was a small town. And he did not know at this point that Shrug had called the paper's editor the day before in his pursuit of Rita Grabek.

In light of the article, Connie was not entirely surprised when the phone rang promptly at nine, as if the caller had been counting down the minutes before it was appropriate to place a call. It was Eleanor Trout, Norman Wilkinson's daughter, asking if Connie would visit her at the Wilkinson house—in town they called it “the castle”—that very morning. She sounded agitated, and Connie, who was curious about the invitation, agreed.

The “castle” sat just outside of town, adjacent to the expanse of acreage that constituted the extended Wilkinson farm. It had already been a substantial farmhouse when Norman Wilkinson started “improving” it, and over the years the various additions had eventually overwhelmed the original structure. The result was a sprawling and occasionally towering edifice (for Humboldt, at least), eclectic in architectural style, rambunctious in color combinations, and disconcerting in its juxtapositions of stone, brick, wood, and stucco. It was the most remarkable building for miles around, and almost everyone in Humboldt found occasion to show it off when out-of-towners came visiting.

Eleanor Trout met Connie at the door, dressed in black. Her attire reminded Connie (“how could I have forgotten so quickly?”) that Eleanor's father was to be buried the very next day. She did not, however, appear

to be distraught.

“How do you do, Mrs. Trout. I’m Connie Haydn.”

“Thank you for coming. And I prefer Ms. Trout.” Connie had wondered—he’d guessed wrong. He removed the baseball cap that he invariably wore to protect his bald head from sunlight and followed her through a huge entranceway into a spacious, well-lighted sitting room. Connie could only speculate about where all the various hallways led to.

“Barry Imhoven called me last night to ask what I knew of my father’s request to you and Shrug Speaker. I had to tell him I knew nothing about it at all. Can you tell me what he has asked you to do?” Though couched as an inquiry, the statement had overtones of a command. But Connie didn’t bristle. He had nothing to hide, and he might need some information from Eleanor Trout. So he filled her in on the matter, leaving out many details, but doing nothing to alter the basic lineaments of the story.

Eleanor Trout took it all in, hesitated, and then asked: “Is it likely to cost a lot of money?”

Connie was startled, though he quickly realized that he probably shouldn’t have been.

Eleanor Trout continued. “After I talked with Barry, I called John Jameson to find out what he knew. He confirmed what Barry had told me and added that the fund that daddy had authorized him to establish was

open-ended—that you and Mr. Speaker could tap it as often and as richly as you wished. This is not an arrangement I'm entirely happy with."

She paused, perhaps waiting to see what Connie might say. But Connie's preference for saying nothing when he was uncertain did not fail him, and so after several seconds Eleanor Trout resumed her remarks. "If some sort of miscarriage of justice"—she used the term as if she was somewhat uncertain what it might mean—"has occurred, I'd like to see it corrected, of course. But I thought that's what the police were for. Besides, I'm very uneasy with the fact that you and Mr. Speaker can draw on funds which, had daddy not gotten this bee in his bonnet, would be mine. In fact, according to Mr. Jameson, when you and Mr. Speaker have concluded your work, whatever is left will be mine. I hope a lot will be left."

Connie was stunned. But it was not simply the stark covetousness of this already-well-off woman that left him silent. It was also the embarrassing fact that—"Why didn't Shrug and I see this?"—Eleanor Trout was of course right: some sort of system of accounting for the expenditures they would be making should already have been established. It's true that they had not imagined that they'd need to tap the fund to any great extent, but that assumption did not exempt them from the obligation to keep full records of all the money

they spent.

Connie's apologies followed quickly. Of course she was right that moneys should be accounted for. Of course he and Shrug would be sparing in drawing on the funds. Of course they understood that they had not been given license to "loot"—he actually used that word—Ms Trout's inheritance. Eleanor Trout seemed to accept the apologies in good spirit, especially when Connie added that he would contact Mr. Jameson as soon as possible to set up accountability rules.

Having made her point, Eleanor Trout became the gracious hostess. "May I show you the house, Mr. Haydn? There's a room you might especially want to see. Daddy called it his baseball memorabilia room."

Yes! thought Connie immediately. In the focused activity of the last few days he'd forgotten about that room. But Eleanor's mention of it opened a tap in his memory. He'd never seen it, of course, but it was fabled. Norman Wilkinson had amassed a celebrated collection of photos of nineteenth-century players and a variety of artifacts from the game in those distant days. Connie remembered something about a uniform, several baseballs, an early contract, some publicity from a Temple Cup competition. Immediately forgetting the recent unpleasantness, he accepted the offer.

Eleanor Trout led Connie down several wide and

angled hallways, commenting on various items displayed along the way. They paused before a huge, elaborately-clothed doll. "Daddy bought me this when I started losing my baby teeth." Connie said nothing. They paused before a plaque on the wall. "Governor Gilligan gave this to daddy for his work on some state commission." Again Connie was silent. They paused before a trophy. "Daddy got this for me as consolation when rehearsals for South Pacific were canceled." Connie hadn't any idea at all what she was talking about, and Trout, seeing his perplexity, added, not very helpfully, "I have a lovely voice and might have been a famous singer if I'd been discovered." They paused yet again, before the photograph of a handsome horse. "Daddy gave me 'Bravo' when I returned from Riding Rock." In the face of all this opacity Connie could only remain self-consciously silent. Besides, with each hallway he was becoming less interested in the curiosities that Eleanor Trout was running on about and increasingly excited about the prospect of seeing baseball mementos.

At last they reached the memorabilia room. It contained four display cases, featuring such collectibles as autographed baseballs, signed programs, old newspaper clippings, several letters of acknowledgment from the Hall of Fame, and a sermon by Billy Sunday. In this setting Connie was the child in the candy shop.

After examining the items that were under glass, he turned his attention to the series of photographs of nineteenth-century stars that hung around the walls of the room. Beneath each photo was the name of the player pictured. Connie quickly realized that they constituted an alphabetical hall of nineteenth-century baseball fame. First off was Cap Anson, followed by Dan Brouthers, John Clarkson, Hugh Duffy, Buck Ewing, Sid Farrar (“I don’t recall that his career merited inclusion; I’ll need to check my Total Baseball when I get home to find out what I’ve forgotten”), Jack Glasscock, Billy Hamilton, Arthur Irwin (“Hmm. There’s another I’ll have to look up”), Hughie Jennings, Tim Keefe, and so on, right down to the famous battery of Cy Young and Chief Zimmer. Connie realized that few would ever understand how he felt at that moment; “reverential” would not have been an inappropriate adjective to apply to his mood. It was only when a clock bell began tolling somewhere in the house that Connie realized that Eleanor Trout was standing in the doorway of the memorabilia room, a smile on her face. He apologized for taking up so much of her time. I haven’t apologized to one person this often in years, he thought. Then they returned, by a different route, to the sitting room.

Since Eleanor Trout made Connie uncomfortable, he was moving the conversation toward closure even as

they wended their way back to a familiar setting. He thanked her for her hospitality, reiterated his promise to handle the fund in accordance with appropriate fiduciary principles, and – suddenly recalling the great omission of the morning – extended his condolences to his host. Then, putting his cap back on his head, he left the “castle.” Although he didn’t much like Ms. Trout, he was glad she had invited him over, for he had dreamed of seeing the baseball memorabilia room for at least twenty years.



Shrug learned that the public knew of the investigation when he phoned the sheriff’s office at 9:30 a.m. on Friday to ask for George Fielding and found out that Mr. Fielding was expecting his call. That, of course, made explaining himself simple, and Fielding made things even easier by inviting Shrug to his office. Fielding was about thirty-five years old and the only African American in the sheriff’s office. A lifelong resident of Humboldt, he was known to Shrug as a fellow communicant at Trinity Episcopal Church and to the community as a public-spirited golfing enthusiast. By 10:15 Shrug was in the lobby of the Court House building, and while waiting for Fielding to deal with his ten o’clock appointment, Shrug read the piece in the

Herald and Examiner for the first time.

“I thought you’d be coming by,” Fielding said for openers, smiling. “I expected you’d call next week, after the funeral. But today is fine. Sheriff Brice asked me to remind you that this matter is officially closed, but he also said—as a courtesy to the late Mr. Wilkinson and to Mr. Jameson—that we should be sympathetic to reasonable requests for help.”

“That sounds more than fair,” Shrug replied. “In any case, all I’m here for today is information. Connie and I are trying to bring ourselves up to speed on Vince d’Amato’s murder, and you are probably as good a source of information as we are likely to find.”

George Fielding seemed to take that remark simply as an accurate statement, not as an effort at flattery. “There might be several ways in which I can help. I was the first law enforcement official on the scene of the fire, though the fire department was there before me. I investigated the site as a possible crime scene. I attended when Ms. Flanagan conducted the fire marshal’s investigation. And later on, when the prosecutor decided to move against Jason Bigelow, I helped assemble the evidence for his case.”

“Connie and I are interested in the fire. Do you know what started it?”

“No. But that’s the case more often than you’d think. We do know some things that weren’t involved. There

was no incendiary device—no mechanism that could be set to trigger a fire. There was no gasoline or other accelerant. Vince d’Amato’s basement was just like lots of unfinished basements that become cluttered over time. And it was both unfinished and cluttered.” Shrug was taking notes. “He had lots of cardboard boxes piled together, most of them empty. He had clothes drying on the line. He had trunks of older clothes. There was”—and here Fielding began consulting his notes—“a sled, some books, a pair of boxing gloves, two sets of golf clubs, an artificial Christmas tree, an old sewing machine, an exercise treadmill, a butter churn, several rugs, a mounted moose head, lots of auto parts, carpentry tools, an elaborate matchstick structure that Vince had been constructing, paint brushes, folding chairs, beach equipment, photo albums, a collection of videos—some of them pornographic—some old magazines. My list here is longer—and you can see it if you want—but you get the idea.”

“Maybe I’ll want to see it later. But right now I don’t think I’d know what to do with it.”

Fielding could not entirely suppress the smile that the professional law enforcement officer will often sport when the amateur admits to being out of his element.

“Was there anything odd about the basement?” Shrug continued.

“Several things, I suppose. A window was unlocked. Bianca said that Vince was usually pretty good about keeping the house windows locked up. Since it sat right above a book shelf, we decided it was possible for someone to enter and leave through this window without using the ground floor. But we never found evidence that the window had in fact been used that way. Then there was a small puddling of candle wax on the floor. We hadn’t recognized it at first, and when we realized what it was, we immediately tried to figure out if a candle had started the fire. And it’s possible it did. But once we focused attention on Jason Bigelow, we didn’t need to worry about candle wax, because if he was in the basement that evening, he could have used all sorts of things—matches or a cigarette lighter, for example—to set the cardboard on fire. A final oddity was the absence of financial records. Bianca d’Amato told us that Vince had kept the older records in the basement—he did the family finances—but we couldn’t find any evidence of them.”

Fielding paused. Then he added: “I don’t mean to tell you how to set about your task, but you have to realize that every crime scene has a few anomalies. So just because some things struck me as, to use your word, ‘odd,’ doesn’t mean that the investigation was badly handled.” He was still smiling, but his voice was suddenly more brittle.

“I’m surprised this inventory is so full. I’d imagined that a fire wiped out evidence.”

“Sometimes it does. But the fire department arrived in time to save much of the house, and in any case lots of tightly packed things don’t get burned except in infernos. This fire certainly wasn’t that. Vince died—as most fire victims do—not from the flames but from smoke inhalation.”

“Your list didn’t include the pen.”

“Ah yes, the famous pen.” Fielding stood up. “That’s somewhat embarrassing. We found it in the debris in the basement, it clearly said Bigelow Hardware on it, and it is on the list—the part I hadn’t gotten to yet. But we thought it was one of their standard-issue pens, the kind they distribute at Christmas to hundreds of customers. And so we didn’t attach any significance to it.”

Shrug noticed that George Fielding kept using the first person plural. He suspected that Fielding was hoping to distribute as widely as possible the blame that was properly his alone for any investigatorial carelessness that might have occurred.

Fielding proceeded with his explanation. “It was only when Ms. Grabek suggested that we look at it more closely that we realized that it was a special pen and that only Jason and a few other employees had them. Suddenly it was important. In fact, it was central to the case I was trying to build.”

The mention of Rita Grabek ignited Shrug's curiosity. "She's in Seattle now, and I'm trying to reach her about all of this. How in the world did she come up with an idea like that? It's almost as if she had inside information."

Shrug could see George Fielding wince at this remark. But what Fielding then said only extended Shrug's astonishment. "If you mean that someone was leaking information to her, I think you're wrong. I know I wasn't. The trouble was of a different sort. You see, she and I were romantically involved at the time"—Shrug knew that George was married to a woman named Felicity, but he kept his silence—"and I now know that she was using me, not to get information, as you thought, but to push me to re-examine the case. I'm resentful of her behavior now, and ashamed of my own, but at the same time I have to admit that if she hadn't prodded me, we wouldn't have gotten Jason Bigelow."

Shrug was silent for a moment, wondering which way to go. "Why are you telling me this?" he asked. "I know it's relevant, and maybe it's even going to prove to be very useful, but I had no idea that you and Rita Grabek were ... (a long pause) ... dating, and it's not the kind of information people usually supply about themselves unless under real pressure. And I don't think I'm putting pressure on you—or if I am, I'm not

aware of my power over you.”

“It’s not your power, it’s the sheriff’s. He told me to come clean,” was Fielding’s quiet reply. He was no longer looking at Shrug. “Felicity knows about the affair and of how I made a fool of myself. She says she’s forgiven me, and I think she has. I’m hoping, of course, that you won’t need to make the information public. But the sheriff was quite direct: if either Shrug or Connie gets interested in your link with Ms Grabek, he said, you’ve got to tell them the truth.”

Shrug could think of nothing to add to that, and so he changed direction. “What about the trial? If the pen pointed to Jason, what nailed him?”

Relieved that the conversation had shifted onto more comfortable ground, Fielding looked up before talking about the trial. “Three things told against him,” Fielding said, looking up. Shrug was immediately interested: he knew of only two. “First, of course, was the pen. It suggested that Jason had been in the basement. Then there was his admission of a grudge against Vince d’Amato.”

“What! I haven’t heard of that.”

“Yeah, believe it or not, Jason said that he suspected that d’Amato was having an affair with Patricia. Bigelow had a funny way of saying things that didn’t help his case.”

“When did he say that?”

“After he was arrested. He said he was trying to tell us the truth, he insisted he hadn’t killed Vince—even though, he added, he suspected Vince and Patricia of having the affair. All we could do was whistle quietly to ourselves.”

“The third thing, I suppose, was Bigelow’s refusal to supply an alibi.”

“You got it. We weren’t unsympathetic to him. We sure didn’t want to railroad an innocent man. But if he really had an alibi, he sure was tying our hands by not supplying it. And given what was at stake, we had to conclude he was lying. He wasn’t facing a capital sentence, but a long term in prison is something any sensible man ought to want to avoid. His attorney pleaded with him too. But he wouldn’t budge. So we had no choice.”

Shrug was inclined to agree. It was puzzling. No, damn it, it was fair to call it incriminating. Shrug thanked George Fielding for his helpfulness, promised again to respect his confidences, and walked out into the warming May morning, sorting through the various bits of information he had been apprized of. As far as he could tell, the picture was becoming messier, not clearer. And the messiness didn’t seem to be helping Jason Bigelow.



Unless something special came up, Connie Haydn spent part of every Friday afternoon visiting his mother at Tuscan Court, an assisted-living facility that had been built to the north of Humboldt about ten years earlier. Veronica Haydn lived in Ayrshire, the romantically named building that housed Alzheimer's patients. Connie had been raised in the West, chiefly in Oregon, and his mother continued to live there well after Connie left home to begin his academic career. After his father's death in 1983, Connie invited his mother to visit him in Ohio every summer, and in 1990 she moved to Humboldt to live with her son. By 1995 it was becoming clear that she was suffering from short-term memory loss, and she and Connie agreed that when her cognitive difficulties became a major impediment to his life, she should be moved to Tuscan Court. That agreement did not, of course, make the actual carrying out of the decision any easier. His mother's condition steadily deteriorated, and in 1998, over the protests of a thoroughly confused Veronica Haydn but with the full support of friends and her doctor, Connie's mother was transferred to Ayrshire. Connie was haunted by guilt about the decision, though, rationalist that he was, he knew it made sense. And not just for him, since his mother increasingly

needed care he couldn't supply at his home. But his feeling that he had not served her in her decline as she had served him when he was a child could not be assuaged. And so he faithfully attended her almost every Friday afternoon, even though, in her ninety-third year, she now lived so cut off from the world that even on her best days she confused Connie with his older brother who had died in the Korean War.

"How is she doing today, Annabelle?" he inquired of Annabelle Emerson, the nurse who was on duty on Friday afternoons.

"She's been quiet most of the time, Mr. Haydn. Don't eat much these days, but she seems contented just watching television." Annabelle Emerson gave Connie the same basic report every week. "We had her up to walk a bit about an hour ago, so she may be kind of tired." Connie liked Annabelle Emerson. She was a Humboldt native who had returned to town about a year earlier after several years away taking care of her own dying mother. Though not very bright, she struck him as reliable. They entered Veronica Haydn's room. "Here's your son, Mrs. Haydn," she said cheerfully.

If Connie found hospitals unsettling, he found nursing homes profoundly depressing. "What a choice!," he thought to himself. "Exit this life in pain and desperation in a hospital or lose control of your body and drift away from consciousness in an old folks home."

But he forced a smile onto his face and approached his mother's bed with a cheery "Hi Mom, how are you feeling today?"

Mrs. Haydn was generally feeling about the same—"poorly"—but she didn't spend much time talking about her health. "Oh Donald, I'm so happy to see you. Come sit in this chair."

Connie knew he'd spend the next half hour or so talking about childhood in Eugene, and while he found the prospect disheartening—he never gave up his hope for improvement—he also found himself once again astonished at a neural system that had so little contact with the world of 2000 and yet retained so much of the world of 1940. His mother talked of flowers that weren't there, parties she was looking forward to, and all sorts of people who were long since dead. By the time he took his leave—and happily she never sought to prevail upon him to stay longer—he realized that this had actually been a pretty good day for her.

After leaving his mother's room, Connie walked across the courtyard to visit an old friend who lived in Bannockburn, the section of Tuscan Court that accommodated residents who could still manage their lives fairly well. Teresa Espinosa was about ten years older than Connie. A widow, Sshe had taught Spanish at Humboldt until a heart attack had forced her to retire. Several years later, arthritis had driven her from her

home for the greater protections of Tuscan Court. She had been helpful to Connie when he had first come to town and a trustworthy colleague through many of the arcane battles that mark the life of a faculty. She was still sharp as a tack.

“I read that you’re looking into the d’Amato case,” she said after inquiring about Connie’s mother, a big grin suddenly on her face. “I’ve always been a believer in finding something interesting to do in retirement, but homicide investigations aren’t really to my taste.”

Connie gave her what was now becoming the standard truncated but accurate explanation of his involvement. He continued, “This isn’t entirely a social call, Teresa. Or maybe I should say, I’d like to mix a little business with the pleasure of your conversation.”

“You always knew how to put things nicely, Connie. I’ll bet it’s my memory you’d like to have access to.”

“Your memory and your judgment, Teresa. Shrug and I have run into the names of some people we don’t really know—Vince d’Amato’s death, after all, was neither a campus crime nor an investment crime nor an ecclesiastical crime. I’m hopeful that you, with your extensive knowledge of the diverse social circles of Humboldt”—this was a private joke: Teresa did know a lot, but it wasn’t as a consequence of moving in many circles—“might have some information about some of them.”

“Try me.”

“There are three. The first is Tyler Delsin, whom at least I’ve heard of. I know he’s a chiropractor. I know he’s an eccentric.” What Connie had in mind was Tyler Delsin’s proclivity for writing letters to the newspaper about the plight of penguins, his public sponsorship of a fan club for Britney Spears, and his vigorous advocacy of the obscure eastern religions. “But I don’t know why he might have visited Vince d’Amato on the day he died.”

“Neither do I. Sorry. I guess you’ll have to ask him.”

“That’s what I plan to do. The other two are women—Maria Tedesco and Sandra Peabody. I’ve read that Sandra Peabody is a realtor, but that’s all I know about her. And I’ve never heard of Maria Tedesco at all.”

“I can’t help you on Tedesco either,” Teresa Espinosa said, “but your mentioning of Sandra Peabody is very interesting and, I’d guess, somewhat puzzling.” Connie was immediately attentive. “First, did you know that Sandra Peabody is Bill Peabody’s wife?”

Connie realized that he should have considered that possibility. Bill Peabody taught French at Humboldt. Connie thought him a nice enough guy, though their paths had rarely crossed. Teresa, of course, as a professor of another romance language, would have had far more frequent interactions with him.

Teresa continued with her account. “Let’s see. Some

years ago—if the date’s important, you could track it down at the Court House—the federal government sold off the old arsenal a few miles south of town.” Connie recalled the student demonstrations that had attended the occasion. “The sale of the arsenal seemed a sure bet to raise the value of adjacent land, because it would rid the area of a source of potential pollution. Bill was a friend of Vince d’Amato’s then, and he somehow had gotten a tip about the sale before the matter went public. He told Vince, and the two of them planned to buy some of the surrounding land cheap.” She took off her glasses and tightened her lips while polishing them with her dress. “Oh yes, now I remember ... I think. The language faculty knew about this because Bill could sometimes be indiscreet after drinking, and he said more than he should have at the retirement party for Herr Schmidt. Bill thought that Vince and he would make a nice profit by re-selling the land, but somehow Vince pulled off the purchase all by himself—and later realized the re-sale profit. Bill felt double-crossed and was enraged, calling Vince a cheat and some choice French names. But there was little he could do, I guess, maybe because the agreement had never been written down or maybe because he couldn’t make a fuss without revealing that he’d been privy to information he wasn’t supposed to have. In any case, he rarely passed up a chance after that to tell the

world what a shit-head Vince d'Amato was. I don't actually know what Sandra Peabody thought of all this, but I can scarcely imagine that it differed much from her husband's view."

"God! What a fascinating story." Connie was alive with excitement. "I suppose if we could show that Jason Bigelow didn't kill Vince we'd have good reason for putting Bill Peabody high on our suspect list. But right now that's a big bit of supposing. And it still leaves me wondering what Sandra Peabody was doing visiting Vince on the day of his death. It's possible, I guess, that she was just being nice, bringing him something to read or something to eat. But in light of what you've just said, that really seems unlikely."

"Well, as I said about Tyler Delsin, you'll just have to ask him—or rather, her." Teresa Espinosa looked oddly pleased with herself.

"I knew it would be a good idea to stop by to see you today, Teresa. You're a fountain of information."

"And you haven't even asked me the right question yet," she said with her ear-to-ear grin. "You'll never be a good detective if you can't do better than this."

Teresa clearly knew something, and Connie didn't feel like getting involved in some protracted game of guess-what's-on-my-mind. "Okay. Out with it, Teresa. What do you know that I haven't probed about?"

Teresa waited a few seconds, for effect, before reply-

ing. “Did you know that Jason Bigelow was gay?”

Connie’s startled face answered the question. “He was gay? Why haven’t I heard of this before? Why didn’t the police tell me? Or Patricia? Are you sure?” Connie knew that Teresa couldn’t answer the questions about why. And he realized his last query was only rhetorical. Of course Teresa was sure, or she wouldn’t have spoken as she did. But his mind was scrambling to try to decide if this was merely unexpected but irrelevant information or whether it transformed the constellation of emerging impressions. Feeling all the more ill-equipped to follow in the footsteps of Miss Marple, he had to admit that he didn’t even know the answer to that question.

“Maybe Patricia Bigelow didn’t know. Maybe the police didn’t know. The reason I know is that about twenty years ago he was caught in bed with a male student who was majoring in Spanish. ‘Caught’ isn’t quite the right word. This student’s roommate walked in and found the two of them *in flagrante delicto*—I don’t know if I’ve ever used that wonderful term before—and wasn’t sure what to do. He came to see me for advice—did I mention he was a Spanish major too?”

Connie noticed that Teresa was deliberately avoiding using the names of the students.

“Student B—I’ll call him that—didn’t want to remain the roommate of student A. But neither did he want to bring any kind of charge against him and thereby ‘out’ him. So he got me to support a request to the dean for a room change, and once the dean authorized it, the whole matter passed over. My interest was in the welfare of the two students, not Jason Bigelow. But Jason was the lover. That I know.”

“Well,” said Connie, “all I can say now is that that’s interesting. If it turns out also to be useful, I’ll be in your debt, Teresa.”

The two friends spent another fifteen minutes discussing campus gossip. As retirees, they relished their weekly opportunity to dissect a community they knew so well. Before Connie left he promised to keep Teresa informed and certainly to stop by the next time he visited his mother. But as he drove away from Tuscan Court, he could do little but rehearse the conversation he had just had and contemplate the rich information-sharing session with Shrug that lay ahead.

That session could not, however, occur as promptly as either man would have wished, for both had other plans for Friday evening. Shrug attended a chamber music series in Columbus. He held subscription tickets and had been looking forward for weeks to hearing string quartets by Mozart and Beethoven bracketing a Bartok quartet he was unfamiliar with. Connie, mean-

while, was one of several dinner guests at the home of a Humboldt banker and her husband. A combination of the guests' politeness and Connie's discretion assured that the "investigation"—for that's how the topic now loomed in Connie's mind, as a topic that carried its own quotation marks—did not impede the free flow of conversation during the evening. But even though Connie participated fully and happily in the post-prandial chatter, his mind was on his experiences at Tuscan Court.

And facing both men in the morning was the prospect of the largest funeral Humboldt had seen in years.