

**Chapter Twenty-Seven, in which chaos breaks loose, a cold fish gets his way, and the police lock the barn door after said fish has bolted.**

There was stunned silence around the offices at Blankenfields that day, not because they had heard of James' demise, for that information had been carefully guarded for the moment, but because of the fall in the Yen brought on by another spectacular round of money printing by the Japanese government. Blankenfields had had a nearly perfect track record in over-night currency trading thanks to their boss' cozy relationship with the Treasury, but this last week things had been haywire. Good thing he was away, was the general thought, as hope took over rationality and they began to simply wish the numbers on the screens would turn around.

Mary and Ken Mitchell, for that was the name of the strange man that had accompanied Mary to James' home, walked into this silence and put on a great show of normality. Trying to appear calm and everyday, they went into Mary's office which served as an antechamber to James' office, and leaving the door open, sat down on opposite sides of her desk and talked randomly of this and that, hoping their casual attitude would infect the office and give them some breathing room.

After about fifteen minutes, Ken got up and shut the door and joined Mary on her side of the desk. They brought out James' laptop and for the second time in twenty-four hours the contents were copied onto a drive that had been brought for that purpose. Mary didn't think there could be anything new on there that she didn't know about, but when you are a sneaky person for a living you begin to suspect everyone around you. She certainly didn't trust Ken and had wanted to destroy the laptop on the way over, but he had insisted on bringing it here and copying it, saying that he would "take care of it". He was a very cold fish and she couldn't help but wonder if he had had something to do with James' death. It would never occur to her that it had just been a preventable accident, one of those twists that defeats casting a narrative over life.

And then chaos pretty much broke loose. The news of James' death had leaked out and into the office through Twitter. The main news stations still could be

manipulated, but the internet was frustratingly hard to control from an authoritarian point of view, and the lead time to control the situation had evaporated. Ken stood up first, still an image of calm despite the staff outside beginning to react loudly to the news of their boss' demise. He took the computer, and promising to destroy the hard-drive as they had intended to do together, he put it in his briefcase and walked into James' inner office. Shutting the door behind him, he opened the liquor cabinet, and reached for a bottle of **Liqueur Galliano** that was way at the back. As he gently twisted it one of the **book cases across the room began to turn.**

Ken walked through the opening and entered a hidden room that was set up for entertaining, both business and personal, but which also contained a further hidden vestibule that hid what was essentially a bug-out bag and more importantly, a door that led out into the corridors of the steel and glass tower that housed Blankenfields. Ken locked the door through which he had entered, so it could not be accessed from the office, and quickly swapped his business clothes for those of a bicycle courier. Putting the laptop in a bike sack, Ken peeked out into the corridor through a tiny opening. The door was on a dead end, near the stairs, and it was all clear. He snuck out and quietly shut the door behind him, now invisible from the outside, just a panel housing the fire hose.

The police came into Blankenfields' offices just as Ken was exiting, and sealed off James' office so they could investigate the circumstances surrounding his untimely death, one the coroner was hesitating to label suicide, but he wasn't going to hesitate for long. It looked like the loses the investment house was about to absorb could have been motive enough, at least to those who did not know the man and his **extreme narcissim.**

