

**THE PINK PONY
MURDER ON MACKINAC ISLAND**

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A BURR LAFAYETTE MYSTERY

Charles Cutter

MISSION POINT PRESS

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*To
Bob and Yvonne*

*All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is
unhappy in its own way.*

Leo Tolstoy
“Anna Karenina”

CHAPTER ONE

The pink pony hung from chains and rocked back and forth in the wind. It was bubblegum pink and the size of a rocking horse. It hung above the door to the bar of the same name. This particular pink pony, like the ones before it, would soon disappear, but not before the night ended badly.

Just before 2 a.m., the bouncer threw one of the sailors out the front door by the collar of his pink shirt, the pink of his shirt and the pink pony an exact match. The rest stumbled out under their own power.

After the bar closed, the bartender surveyed the damage. The Christmas tree had tipped over and clung to the edge of the bar by duct tape, but the Christmas lights still twinkled. Lingerie dangled from its branches. She finished cleaning up, stepped out onto the sidewalk and stood underneath the pink pony. She reached up and pushed it once for luck.

An hour later, the chains swung in the night breeze. Just the chains. The pink rocking horse had loosed its moorings.

An hour after that, a man sat at the bar by himself. He had a quiet smile, his eyes were wide open, and his chin rested on his chest. The Christmas lights still twinkled, wrapped five times around his neck. Pulled tight and tied in a square knot, seaman-like.

* * *

The Pink Pony was on the ground floor of the Chippewa Hotel, across the lobby from the front desk. The Chippewa, circa 1902, a four-story, white frame, slightly ramshackle building of about sixty rooms, faced Main Street and backed up to the harbor. Not on a par with the Grand, but still one of Mackinac Island's finer hotels. The lobby had a thick, slightly worn, faded green carpet with red and yellow flowers the size of dinner plates. Purple, floor-length draperies with climbing vines finished off the Victorian décor.

But the jewel of the Chippewa was The Pink Pony, which couldn't have

been less Victorian. The bar itself ran along the west wall opposite the lobby, a nutty, polished white oak with long clean lines. The band played on a raised stage behind the bar, a pink pony painted on the wall behind the stage. Plate glass windows fronted Main Street with oak booths below them. There were booths along the east and south walls, vintage Mackinac race pictures above them, dueling twelve meters, a one-tonner flying a spinnaker, a J-35 pointing, its rail buried.

The bar was classy enough and stylish enough, but what made The Pink Pony was its location. Not because it was inside the Chippewa Hotel but because it was the closest bar to the docks. The sailors had made it famous.

* * *

The Port Huron-Mackinac had started on Saturday, just north of the Blue Water Bridge. Three hundred sailboats. Three hundred miles. From Port Huron to Mackinac Island, around the Cove Island buoy near the entrance to Georgian Bay, then west to the finish line between the red can and the committee boat at the eastern tip of the island. The fleet had been blessed with clear skies and a southeast wind that had backed to the west.

By Monday night, the lion's share of the boats were in, and the sailors made for the The Pink Pony. The bar smelled of cigarettes, spilled beer, suntan lotion and sweat. The Jelly Roll Blues Band, the finest cover band in Northern Michigan, had just finished "Son of a Son of a Sailor" for the third time. They promised to be back in fifteen minutes and walked offstage with their instruments, which showed good judgment, the patrons freelancing whenever they got the chance.

Jimmy Lyons, late thirties with deadly good looks, stood. He took advantage of the slightly less than deafening background noise and shouted, "A round for all the racers" The sailors cheered. Jimmy shouted again, louder this time, "And for the racer chasers." Another cheer, this one louder than the last. Jimmy waved a fistful of cash at the closest bartender, a fresh-faced, college-age girl with a ponytail the color of wet sand. Jimmy started toward the bar but knocked his chair backwards. It would have tipped over, but the bar was so crowded that the chair bumped into a sunburned fellow at the table behind him. Jimmy flashed a brilliant smile, made more so by his tan. "I am so sorry."

He dodged his way through the crowd and handed the money to the bartender. She looked over at the head bartender, a seen-it-all, auburn-haired beauty who, unremarkably, also had a ponytail, the style of the season. She nodded and the bartender reached down for a bottle of house whiskey, then poured shot after shot into plastic glasses. They'd learned their lesson long ago and had replaced glass with plastic before the fleet sailed in.

Jimmy downed one of the shots. He boosted himself over the bar, grabbed a fifth of whiskey, four of the plastic shot glasses and headed back to his table.

"That must have cost a fortune," said Murdo Halverson, later thirties, a thinnish man with jet-black hair that forever fell in his face. He had on a lime-green Lacoste and madras Bermuda shorts. He wore tortoise-shell reading glasses and a nametag from the cocktail party at the Mackinac Island Yacht Club.

Jimmy poured a shot for himself and one for Murdo.

"If you were going to steal something, you might at least have stolen something better than Kessler's," Murdo said.

Like Jimmy and the rest of the sailors, Murdo had been up for the better part of three days and needed to get some sleep. He looked like he'd be ill at any moment. Jimmy looked like he could go on forever.

A well-oiled man in a blue Bayview Yacht Club hat reached across two tables and shook Jimmy's hand. "Congratulations. First is first. No matter how you get there."

Jimmy clenched his teeth, smiled back at the drunk and poured the shot down his throat. Murdo studied his shot but didn't drink it. Jimmy looked at Murdo, then drank Murdo's shot.

"What are you doing?" Murdo said.

"I've never seen you drink Kessler's," Anne Halverson said. She had black hair, darker than her husband's, an upturned nose, and green eyes the color of money.

Jimmy poured Anne her own shot. She drank it and shook her head. Her ponytail swung back and forth. "Smooth as silk," she said.

"You only won because of the protest," said Jane, Jimmy's long-suffering wife, if seven years qualified as long suffering. Tall, almost six feet, a leggy blonde, bustier than Anne. Pouty lips and her very own champagne-blond ponytail.

“You just don’t like the name of my boat.” Jimmy waved at someone across the bar, then jumped to his feet. “It’s time for the tree.”

“The tree?” Anne said.

“The Christmas tree. It’s Christmas in July.” Jimmy ducked out the door to the street.

“Now what?” Murdo said.

“The only thing to do is humor him,” Jane said.

Jelly Roll started back up with “Cheeseburger in Paradise.”

“Damn this place,” Murdo said.

Twenty minutes later, Jimmy burst back into the bar with a four-foot spruce duct-taped to a makeshift Christmas tree stand. He set it on the bar next to the Labatt tap. The tree leaned but didn’t tip over. He unwound a string of Christmas tree lights from his waist. They were C-9s, the old-fashioned kind. Big bulbs – red, green, blue, yellow and orange – the kind that didn’t blink. He strung them around the tree and plugged them in. He took a second strand and wrapped them around his neck, like a necklace. The crowd cheered. Jimmy bowed and lost his balance. He righted himself, staggered back to his table and had another shot.

“That’s the poorest excuse for a Christmas tree I have ever seen,” Jane said.

“It is, isn’t it,” Jimmy said.

“Where’d you get it?” Anne said.

“Next to the fort,” Jimmy said.

“God help us,” Murdo said. He swept his lifeless hair off his forehead.

“Now it’s time for the decorations,” Jimmy said.

“We don’t have any decorations,” Anne said.

“Nonsense,” Jimmy said. “How about your bra?”

“That’s enough,” Murdo said, his pointed nose now out of joint. “I think it’s time to leave, Anne.”

“Don’t worry, darling. I’m not big enough to bounce.” Anne slid her chair back, stood and bumped into a potted sailor, who scowled at her. “I’m so sorry,” she said. She reached up underneath her top and took off her bra. He looked at her poking through her top and was all smiles. Her breasts brushed against the back of Jimmy’s head on her way to the tree.

“That’s quite enough, Anne,” Murdo said.

“Darling, no one cares except you.” She twisted her way through the tables to the Christmas tree and hung her white, lacy bra on the tree.

Jimmy stood and clapped. He waved, maybe at Anne, maybe at one of his crew. Jimmy knew everyone. “How about you, Jane-o?” He poured her a shot.

“What’s it worth to you?” She looked at the shot but didn’t drink it.

Jimmy leaned over to Murdo. “They all have a price.”

“I heard that,” Jane said.

“You were supposed to.” He drank Jane’s shot.

“My guess is half of what you’ve got,” Murdo said.

“I’ve got a good lawyer,” Jimmy said.

“So do I, baby,” Jane said.

The band played “Son of a Son of a Sailor” for the fourth time. Everyone in the bar sprang to their feet.

Jane peeled off her bra, black, bigger than Anne’s and every bit as lacy. She snapped it at Jimmy and kissed him on the lips. She twirled her bra like a lariat on her way to the tree and hung it next to Anne’s.

Jimmy went back to the tree, took Anne and Jane by the hand, and danced with them.

Jimmy and the two braless women danced their way back to the table, hands over their heads, swaying to the music. It sounded like “Boat Drinks,” but it was hard to tell over the roar of the sailors, their wives, their girlfriends, and a few stray islanders.

Anne planted a wet kiss squarely on Jimmy’s lips, then sat.

“Stop it, Anne,” Murdo said.

“It’s a party,” Jimmy said.

“She’s my wife, and this has gone too far.” He flipped his hair out of his face again.

“Nonsense,” Jimmy said.

“You’re drunk. And so are they.”

Jimmy draped an arm over Murdo’s shoulder. “That’s the point.” He looked over at the Christmas tree. Anne and Jane’s bras had been joined by a dozen more. “We need something to go with them.” He looked at Anne, who wound her way back to the tree.

She reached under her skirt, stepped out of her matching white panties and hung them on the tree.

Jane gave her a husband a withering look. Not to be outdone, she made her way back to the tree. She made a show of taking off her black panties and hung them on the tree.

Murdo groaned.

“Why don’t you just go up to your cottage and go to bed,” Jimmy said.

“Someone has to watch the three of you.”

Jimmy looked at the tree. Weighted down with the flotsam and jetsam of lingerie, it had developed a dangerous list to port. He rushed to the bar. “Over here, Murdo. Help me prop it up.”

Murdo followed Jimmy to the bar and righted the tree. “Thata boy!” Jimmy said. He duct-taped the tree to the bar.

Back at the table, Jimmy sat and plopped Anne on his lap. Her skirt climbed up her legs.

“It’s time to go, Anne,” Murdo said.

“The bar doesn’t close for another hour,” Jimmy said.

Anne wiggled on Jimmy’s lap then untangled his Christmas light necklace. “You’re going to strangle yourself,” she said.

CHAPTER TWO

The porch swing hung from chains and rocked back and forth. Burr Lafayette pushed off from the porch with the big toe on his right foot. The toenail on the big toe of his left foot had already started to turn black, and he was sure he'd broken his toe.

Was it just last night that I dropped the damned pink pony on my toe?

At the moment, though, his soon-to-be lost toenail was the least of his worries. The throbbing began just above his eyebrows. Not a throbbing. A pounding. That's what it was. His head pounded like a pile driver pounding in time with his heart. The eight aspirin and two quarts of water hadn't touched it

Hiding behind sunglasses, Burr sat in the shade of the porch and rocked back and forth on the swing. The sun, reflecting off the water a hundred feet below, made his headache worse. "Damn that sun." He shut his eyes behind his sunglasses. "I never thought I'd say that," he said to Zeke, his aging Labrador retriever sprawled beside him.

"We're going to have to get ourselves straightened out before Eve and Jacob get here."

Burr rocked and rocked. Late forties. At one time he had been six feet. Still lean. Hawk nose, peeling. Straight, white teeth. Sky blue eyes. His eyebrows arched when he spoke. His hair was still the color of an acorn in autumn. He had a few gray hairs, but he pulled them out as soon as they came in.

Not quite a week ago, Burr had chartered *Scaramouche*, a Peterson 34. She was a fast boat with new sails and the owner needed some legal work done, which Burr agreed to do for the use of the boat. He and his crew had won their class, and they made for The Pink Pony as soon as they tied up. He had drunk too much, and here he was on the porch of Windward with one of the top ten hangovers of his life.

The wind came up from the west, blew across his face and he fell asleep. Broken toe, pounding head and all.

His nap didn't last for long. The ding-a-ling of a bell sounded. Burr squinted through his sunglasses. The ding-a-ling of a bell on the handlebars of a bicycle, the old-fashioned kind with fat tires and a basket. The cyclist, a beefy man with white hair and a red face, puffed his way up the street, ever closer to Windward, where Burr Lafayette hid from the most beautiful day of the summer.

Burr watched the beefy man come closer to the cottage. To Burr's horror, he dismounted in front of the cottage. He leaned his shiny red Huffy against the hitching post and lumbered up the sidewalk. He had on the short-sleeved white shirt and blue slacks of the Mackinac Island Police Department.

"What fresh hell is this?" Burr said.

The cop stopped at the porch stairs. "Beg pardon?"

"Dorothy Parker."

"Who's she?"

"She's not from around here."

"I didn't think so." The cop huffed and puffed up the steps, then stopped to catch his breath. "That's a hike."

I hope he doesn't die on the porch.

"It's a long way up the East Bluff on a bike." The cop's complexion was fading from beet red to cherry tomato.

Maybe he isn't going to die after all.

The recovering policeman walked the length of the porch to Burr, Zeke, and the porch swing. "Chief Art Brandstatter." He stuck his hand out thrust his hand to Burr, who offered his own, reluctantly. The cop pumped Burr's hand, sending a brand-new pain up his arm and into his pounding head. Burr jerked his hand away.

"That's not very friendly," the cop said.

"I'm not feeling very friendly," Burr said. "No offense."

"None taken." The cop put his hands on his hips. "Come with me."

"Why would I do that?"

"Right now," the chief said.

"Officer Friendly, I'm afraid I don't even know why you're here."

"Sure you do. Now come along with me."

"No, I don't think I will."

“Mr. Lafayette, there is the matter of the missing pink pony.”

Burr winced. “You’ll have a heart attack if you get on that bike again,” he said.

“It’s all downhill to the Chippewa,” Chief Brandstatter said.

“Why didn’t you ride a horse?”

“Allergies. Come with me.”

“Do I have to?”

“Only if you want to stay out of our little jail.”

“Why would I go to jail?”

“Grand larceny.” The cop smiled at him and lumbered back to his bicycle.

Burr slipped on his flip-flops and climbed on one of Windward’s fat-tired bikes. He pedaled behind Chief Brandstatter along the row of Victorian cottages that lined the East Bluff. They coasted downhill, Zeke trotting next to Burr’s bike. Burr winced every time his brakes squeaked. They turned west on Main Street, St. Anne’s Church, the Indian Dormitory and the Mackinac Island Yacht Club all to starboard, the state-owned docks to port. Burr saw the flag flying in front of the harbor master’s building and smiled to himself.

Fort Mackinac, left over from the war of 1812 and now restored, looked down at them over Marquette Park. The fort a long, rambling, whitewashed wall in a rectangle, with blockhouses on the corners. Inside the walls, all the buildings any self-respecting fort would have: barracks, commissary, infirmary, cookhouse, guardhouse.

Burr dodged pedestrians and bikes, plus riders on horseback, horse-drawn carriages, drays – and their droppings. The sweet, ripe smell of horse manure turned his stomach, but even today he thought it preferable to the exhaust of Detroit, three hundred miles to the south.

At the Chippewa, the beefy cop stuck his left arm straight out and turned left. The opposing traffic ignored him. Brandstatter ding-a-linged and dodged his way to the sidewalk. He half climbed, half fell off his bike, then kicked the kickstand in place.

Burr coasted up and parked. He touched his temples with his fingertips and winced. He swept his hair back with his fingers. It curled as it broke over his collar, slightly longer than fashionable. He patted the crown of his head, feeling for the beginnings of a bald spot.

It might be a bit thinner.

He looked up at where the pink pony had hung just last night and how many martinis ago, the chains hanging from the ceiling.

“Damn it,” the chief said as Zeke stood on three legs, his fourth above the rear tire of the chief’s bike. “Make him stop that.”

“I think he’s just about done.”

“Jesus, Mary, Joseph. When I’m done with you, I’m gonna arrest him, too.” Brandstatter looked Burr square in the eyes. “Now where is it?”

“Where’s what?”

Chief Brandstatter pointed up at the empty chains.

“I have no idea.”

“Like hell you don’t.”

Burr looked back up at the dangling chains, then at Brandstatter. “Chief, I have no idea where it is.”

Burr had stolen it last night and hoisted it up the flagpole at the marina, but he had no idea where it was now.

“You’d better have an idea, or you and that damned yellow dog can sit in my jail until you come up with one.”

“Chief, I really don’t what you’re talking about.”

“Why don’t we just go inside and straighten this out?”

He pulled on the door to the bar. “How can the Pony be locked at noon? That’s a fire hazard.” Brandstatter pulled on the door again, harder this time. “We’ll just see about this,” he said. “You come with me.”

The chief rumbled up the sidewalk and into the lobby, Burr and Zeke followed him in. Burr slipped out of his flip-flops and wiggled his toes in the flowery carpet. His broken toe throbbed so he stopped wiggling that foot.

“Excuse me, sir, there are no dogs allowed in the hotel.” Burr looked past the guests at a twentyish, strawberry blonde standing at the check counter, behind her, old-fashioned shelves with cubbyholes, some of which had keys in them.

“Zeke, sit.” The aging lab sat at Burr’s left. Burr had a pretty good idea that a sitting dog wouldn’t trump the Chippewa’s no-dog policy, but he thought it was worth a try.

“Excuse me, sir. Sitting dogs aren’t allowed either. There are no dogs allowed in the hotel. And shoes are required.”

“I have shoes. I’m just not wearing them.”

“Please, sir, your dog must go, and you must put your shoes on.”

Burr looked over at Brandstatter, who was pulling on the door to the bar. "I'm here on police business," Burr said.

"Really. I didn't know that khaki shorts and a polo shirt was the uniform of the day."

"I'm undercover."

Brandstatter walked up to the desk clerk. "Why are the doors locked?"

"It's closed right now."

"Why is it closed? It's lunch time."

"You'll have to ask Miss Hennessey," the desk clerk said.

"And where might she be?"

"I think she's looking for you."

"And why would that be?"

"Because The Pink Pony is locked."

"Look here. I'm here on police business. Unlock the door to the bar."

"That's why Miss Hennessey is looking for you."

Brandstatter pointed at her, then at the door. She bit her cheek, ducked under the counter and came up with a ring full of keys. Brandstatter followed and motioned for Burr to join them.

She unlocked the door, then turned to Burr. "I had no idea he was a police dog," she said, smiling.

Brandstatter opened the door and waved Burr and Zeke in. "Sit down right here," he said, pointing at a table. Burr sat. Sunlight poured in through the windows, lighting the larger than life pink pony painted on the wall behind the bar.

I can't get away from that stupid hobby horse.

He thought there was nothing more depressing than sitting in an empty bar. It had been cleaned, but it still smelled like flat beer and ashtrays.

I may be ill.

The chief sat down across from Burr. "We're going to sit here until you tell me where that damned horse is."

Burr and Brandstatter sat. Neither one of them said a word. Burr's head throbbed and his toe hurt. Just when the silence was getting to Brandstatter, the lobby door opened. In walked a woman with perhaps the most beautiful auburn ponytail Burr had ever seen, auburn with blond highlights. She had a longish nose, brown eyes and a few freckles. Jeans, a black tank top and

tennis shoes. Maybe five-five. Curvy. All of thirty-five. Burr was pretty sure he'd seen her here last night.

She walked over to their table. "Art, I've been looking all over for you."

"That's what I hear."

"You know what happened?"

"Carole," Brandstatter said, "why else would I be here?" He hitched up his pants. "I'm about to get to the bottom of it."

"Already?"

"No time like the present. How come the Pony's not open?"

She looked out the window, then back at Brandstatter. "Have you called St. Ignace yet?"

"I can handle the annual theft of the pink pony without the county mounties."

Carole walked over to the bar. "Come over here."

Brandstatter trundled over and looked behind the bar. "Jesus, Mary, Joseph. That changes the water on the minnies."

Burr looked over at the bar. There was the poor excuse for a Christmas tree hanging over the edge, lingerie still hanging from its limbs. He'd forgotten all about the tree.

Burr stood.

"Stop right there. Not one more step," Brandstatter said.

This has gotten out of hand.

"I'm sure we can straighten this out," Burr said.

"I wish we could. I surely wish we could." The chief hitched up his equipment belt, loaded with every tool in the arsenal of law enforcement, except a gun.

That thing must weigh thirty pounds.

"Come over here. And don't touch a thing. Not one thing. And leave that poor excuse for a Labrador retriever right where he is."

The chief stood at the bar, next to the tree. "Stand right next to me and don't touch a thing."

Burr walked over to the bar. "We didn't have to come all this way for the pink pony."

"Apparently, we didn't." Brandstatter pointed behind the bar. "Look down there."

Burr bent over the bar and jumped, not quite out of his skin. The dead

man sat on a chair, eyes wide open, smiling like he'd just heard a funny story. He had a necklace of Christmas lights wound five or six times around his neck and plugged in behind the bar. The lights were a nice touch, Burr thought, but they'd been wound a little too tight. The dead man's tongue hung out the side of his mouth and the joke was clearly on him.

Burr turned away from the dead man. The color ran out of his face. He was sure he was going to be ill.

"You don't look so good."

"I'm fine," Burr said, who wasn't.

"You look kinda green to me." He reached over the bar and grabbed a bottle of Fleischmann's gin. "How about a little hair of the dog?"

"I wouldn't drink Fleischmann's on a bet." Burr started for the door. "I think it's time for me to go."

"Not so fast. We have important police business."

"I don't," Burr said.

"You do unless you want to spend the rest of the summer in the hoosegow."

Burr kept walking.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"I did, and I've decided that I prefer jail. Zeke, come."

"How about you turn around and maybe I'll forget about that missing pony?"

Burr stopped.

"That's more like it."

Burr walked back to the bar.

"What we have here is a dead man," the police chief said.

That demonstrates a remarkable grasp of the obvious.

Brandstatter turned to Carole. "Why didn't you tell me right away?"

"That's why I've been trying to find you."

"What in the name of mercy happened?"

"I came in to open up. Both doors were locked just like they're supposed to be. This is what I found when I got here."

"Who closed last night?"

"Karen Vander Voort."

Brandstatter nodded. "Why don't you just leave us be while we get this sorted out. I'll take them keys."

“Shouldn’t we call the police?”

“I am the police.”

Heaven help us.

Carole handed Brandstatter the keys and left through the lobby door.

The chief reached for a glass, poured two fingers of the Fleischmann’s and handed it to Burr. “This will help.”

“I don’t drink.”

“Since when?”

“Since now.”

The chief looked at Burr, then the two fingers of gin, then back at Burr. “Suit yourself,” He set the glass on the bar. “I hear you do criminal work.”

“I’m not a criminal lawyer,” Burr said. “I’m a civil litigator. My practice is limited to appellate work.” He looked at the two fingers of Fleischmann’s. The thought of gin, even Bombay, sickened him.

Maybe a Red Eye will help.

Burr slid behind the bar. He found a towel and picked up a glass with it. He slunk past the dead man to the Labatt tap. One end of the lights was wrapped around the tap.

“Damn it all.”

Carefully, very carefully he pushed the tap with the towel and poured himself half a glass.

“Cut that out,” Brandstatter said. “You’re corrupting state’s evidence.”

Burr held up the towel. He opened the refrigerator underneath the bar, took out a plastic jug of tomato juice and filled the rest of the glass with it.

“What in God’s name is that?” the chief said.

“A Red Eye.” Burr stirred the drink with one finger, then took a big swallow.

“Waste of good beer and tomato juice if you ask me.” The chief squeezed behind the bar and looked over the dead man. “Any idea who he is?”

“He’s got a yacht club name tag on. It says ‘Murdo’.” Burr studied the dead man. “What kind of name is that?”

“What kind of name is Burr?”

“Touché.” Burr took another big swallow. His head was beginning to clear.

“Walk me through this,” the chief said.

“I have no idea what to do,” Burr said.

“Sure you do.”

Burr finished his Red Eye.

That tastes like another.

“Chief Brandstatter, how long have you been in law enforcement?”

The chief puffed himself up, like a rooster in a barnyard. “Thirty years.”

“You’ve got thirty years on me,” Burr said. “And how many murders have you investigated? Assuming this is a murder.”

“This would be my first.”

Burr grimaced. “I may have you there.” He made himself another Red Eye, then disappeared under the bar.

“What are you doing?”

“Here it is,” Burr said.

“Here’s what?”

“Just what I was looking for.” Burr held up a bottle of Worcestershire sauce. “Lea and Perrins. The only one worth using.” He shook a quarter-of-an-inch into the new and improved Red Eye, stirred it with a finger and took a big swallow. “Much better.”

“That’s evidence,” the chief said.

“What we have here,” Burr said, feeling better yet, “are two absolute beginners. We need to get out of here and call someone who knows what they’re doing.”

“I know exactly what I’m doing.”

Burr took a long pull on the Red Eye.

This has remarkable restorative powers.

His ability to think clearly had returned, and he was sure the two of them had better get out of there before they really ruined something. On top of that, Eve and Jacob were due at the ferry docks any time now, and there would be hell to pay if he managed to get involved in another murder.

“You don’t even know who the dead man is.”

“His name is Murdo.”

“How do you know that’s his name tag?”

Now the chief looked like the chicken on the chopping block. “Lafayette, I can’t have a murder on Mackinac Island. Not on my watch.”

“I’d say it’s a bit late for that. We need to lock up the bar and get out of here.” Burr looked down and saw the dead man staring at him. He jumped back a step and felt something crack under his flip-flop. He reached down

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and picked up a pair of tortoise-shell glasses with a dangling bow. He held them between his thumb and forefinger.

“You’re ruining evidence,” Brandstatter said.

“My point exactly.”

The chief bustled over to Burr and yanked the glasses out of Burr’s hand. The bow broke off.