

CHAPTER 1

A Job Well Done

Kellen Fitzgerald hated his mother. It had not always been thus. What had started as resentment had, over the years, matured into profound loathing.

He was born in San Francisco, the second child, and only son, of Dermot and Siobhan Fitzgerald. Dermot fled Ireland after the British government put a substantial price on his head and indicted him as a terrorist. His crime had been to roll a car packed with C-4 down a hilly side street into the middle of a British troop convoy, where it detonated. The explosion had been spectacular; the loss of life, horrific. In San Francisco, he opened a pub in the tenderloin district. It was very popular especially with the expatriates.

Kellen had a close relationship with his father, who taught him to hunt at an early age. Their quarry was usually deer, either mule or blacktail. The method was spot and stalk hunting during which he learned the value of immobility, patience, and silence. His father taught him the correct way to bring down the prey and the proper techniques for field-dressing the carcass. The kill should be swift and sure. It was wrong to make a poor, dumb animal suffer. He had a vivid memory of a trophy that hung on one wall of his father's study. It was a mounted head of what had been a three hundred-pound black-tail buck.

On other occasions, his father would often take him along when he was tending bar. The education Kellen got from the regulars included Euchre, a card game that was not taught in any school. He became enough of an expert that most weeks he was able to supplement his allowance. Many evenings, at home in front of a blazing fire, Dermot taught his son how to play chess. Kellen never did beat his father at the game, but, as he approached his tenth birthday, he was getting steadily closer.

Kellen's mother, Siobhan, was an elementary school teacher. She was a borderline schizophrenic with a serious cocaine problem. Kellen was pained by what he saw and the two were not close. She divorced Dermot when Kellen was ten years old. Inexplicably, she was awarded custody of the three children. Instantly, the only home life that Kellen had ever known ceased to exist. He missed his father and blamed his mother for the void. Thus the resentment

was born. He began to act out. He ran away, searching for his father. When he found him, he discovered that Dermot had remarried and sired another son. There was no place for Kellen in this second family. Dermot sent him back to his mother, not a kind thing to do.

At age thirteen, he slit the throat of his older sister's pet Bichon Frise puppy. Then, to satisfy his scientific curiosity, he dissected the corpse. His sister retaliated by attempting to murder him on two separate occasions. Once she tried to push him in front of a BART train as it was coming into the station. She seriously misjudged the amount of force necessary and Kellen was able to regain his balance before he went over the edge of the platform. When accused, she denied guilt, arguing that the rush-hour crowd had jostled her. On another occasion, she poisoned his trail mix, but underestimated the dose needed to kill him. He recovered quickly. She became convinced that some higher power was protecting him and, reluctantly, she scrapped all further plans to kill him.

Siobhan, in turn, battling her own demons, struggled to control her adolescent son. She was a gifted practitioner of psychological warfare, a subject that she learned from her mother, a woman thought by many who knew her to have invented the genre. Siobhan never missed an opportunity to belittle Kellen, to humiliate him, to disparage his intelligence, and to question his manhood. Kellen was entering puberty and she had observed the way he began to look at his sister. Siobhan worried that he might rape the girl and so she took to locking him in his room at night. Understandably, this led to many stormy confrontations.

When controlling him proved too much for her, she sent him off to live with her sister, Jane, and Jane's significant other, Alice, in Montana. In demeaning Kellen, Jane and Alice picked right up where Siobhan had left off. Kellen could never do anything right; he was lazy; he was stupid; he would never amount to anything; he was as worthless as his father. They never let up. One day, after a particularly vicious argument, Kellen took a carving knife from the rack in the kitchen and slit Jane's throat. The attack was so ferocious that Jane was almost decapitated. When Alice returned from a hairdresser's appointment, Kellen met her in the doorway and stabbed her in the heart. The police caught up with him a few days later. He explained that he just wanted Jane to be quiet. He killed Alice because he knew that she would be upset with him for what he had done to Jane.

He was facing two counts of first-degree homicide. However, there were questions about his mental competence. As a juvenile, he was committed to the State Psychiatric Hospital in Petaluma. He became a model inmate. He took classes and earned the equivalent of a high school diploma. For several years he served as an assistant to the staff physician. Kellen behaved responsibly and demonstrated intelligence and rudimentary managerial skills. Arguably, the most important thing he learned was how to behave in polite society so as to appear normal. After five years of confinement, he was pronounced sane and no threat to himself or to the community. More to the point, the Hospital needed his space for new arrivals. His juvenile record was sealed and he was released into the custody of his mother who had since relocated to San Ignacio. He found a job with the Marin County Gas and Electric Company, and began taking classes in the evening at the newly opened branch of the University of California. He intended a premed major. As soon as he could, he left home again and moved into his own apartment. It was just three small rooms plus bath over a detached garage. He was pleased to find that the living room had a working fireplace. It was home. At age twenty, he stood six foot six and weighed 220 pounds. His IQ was measured at 155.

In one of his classes there was an extensive reading assignment. The reference books were put on reserve in the campus library under the professor's name. When Kellen attempted to check the books out so that he could read them at home, the young woman at the desk told him that this was not possible. He argued that he was a legitimately enrolled student and thus authorized to check out books. She informed him that, while he was entitled to sign out many of the Library's holdings, this did not include books on the reference shelf. He persisted that he had need for these books, he had paid his tuition, and that he had a right to check them out. She told him no. He made the point that these were not her books, and that they were meant to be read rather than simply counted. Her patience was wearing thin; it had been a long day and not a good one. She told him that the books in question were never to leave the Library. Furthermore, he was a lazy, pig-headed oaf who was too stupid to understand the content of the books even if he found someone to read them to him.

The dark clouds began swelling up in Kellen's mind. He no longer saw the Librarian; he saw his mother. He no longer heard the Librarian; he heard his mother. He stalked off, his mind

filled with hot fury. After leaving the Library, he retreated to the parking lot and brooded, fanning the flames of his rage. He sat in his car, trying to calm his mind. It did not work. In the fire, he saw clearly his course of action. He took his hunting knife and concealed himself in the bushes where he could watch the front door of the Library.

Just before the Library closed at ten, there was a considerable exodus of students. A short while later the building darkened and the staff left. His quarry was the last to leave. His patience had been rewarded. She made sure that the door was locked and then headed for her car. By then, the parking lot was deserted. He remained still until she had passed his hiding place. Then, silently, he came up behind her. For a large man, he was light on his feet. He moved with an almost athletic grace. He coiled his left arm around her neck. With his right hand, he covered her mouth. He lifted her off the ground and carried her behind the bushes. Then with his hunting knife, he slit her throat from ear to ear. He lowered her to the ground and, while she bled out, he went back to his car and repositioned it as close as he could to the kill site. From the trunk, he removed a plastic drop cloth and used it to wrap the carcass. Then, he stuffed this package into the trunk and drove away. There had been no witnesses.

He parked the car in his garage and carried the package up to his apartment where he deposited it in the bathtub. Then he spent several hours field-dressing the carcass, just as his father had taught him to do with deer. He used the set of tools his father had given him on his seventh birthday. The severed head was thoroughly washed and then it went into a large, clear glass, fish bowl. Next, he filled the bowl with a mixture of 75% alcohol and 25% distilled water, both obtained by midnight requisition from the Biology Department stockroom at the University. He sealed a cover glass to the top with a clear glass adhesive. He was pleased with the finished product. This trophy went onto a shelf over his desk, where he would lecture it periodically on its lack of manners and its insensitivity to the feelings of others. It never talked back to him.

The rest of the carcass was cut up into pieces of manageable size that were then washed and put into sealable plastic bags. The bags went into a plastic garbage barrel that he took down to his car. In the small hours of the morning, he drove out onto the Pacific Coast Highway

and parked in one of the scenic overlooks. It was deserted so that there was no one to observe him as he threw the plastic bags off the cliff toward the crashing surf below.

He drove back to his apartment and burned the bloody clothes in the fireplace. His mind was now at ease. He had the satisfying feeling of a job well done. The hunt had been successful. His father would have been pleased. He slept untroubled for a few hours until it was time to get up and go to work.