

# The Money Tree

## Prologue

*A few years from now*

The money tree, *Juniperus lucre*, is a common sight in suburban gardens and hedges. It does not do well on roadsides or near airports, but in large landscaped areas—country gardens, urban parks and the like—it flourishes. Properly fertilized, the lush foliage is a pleasure to contemplate. The branched head makes the tree a natural candidate for decoration and on national holidays, money trees decked out as historical figures are a common sight.

Such practices are dangerous to the extent that they obscure the true nature of the species. But projects in various parts of the world, notably the Middle East and Asia, to grow and harvest a crop, are the object of serious international attention.

Acres of money trees can be found in Russia, China, Zimbabwe, Brazil and, most particularly, the United States. In North Dakota, a hundred-acre site is fenced and signposted: “In God we trust. In government, not so much.” Visitors are encouraged to buy seedlings, and instructions for the care and feeding of this difficult, not to say temperamental, tree are available online.

It is hard to remember nowadays that the money tree might have remained forever a myth except for the skill and devotion of one man and his family. A chance meeting, a moment’s curiosity, and the world was changed forever.

*Chapter 1***Harvest Time***The present day*

A tractor filled the entrance to the grove. Jane Frisby sat on the swiveled tractor seat, with the winch lever on one side and a megaphone on the other. She was motionless except for one finger, which tapped against the underside of the seat. She stared unseeing at the grove of trees, listening intently, a woman in her late thirties, of classic beauty with a brisk self-deprecating manner.

Music—"The Twelve Days of Christmas"—played softly in the September sun and small waves lapped against the pebble shore of the nearby cove. She ignored these sounds, waiting for another: the sound of a car.

The grove contained twenty evergreen trees planted in a circle. They were eight feet high with blue-green branches trained inward, and scale-like leaves, springy and profuse. The branches were bowed low with the weight of the woody berries, shaped like Brazil nuts, clustered along them. At the apex of each tree, two small semicircular branches formed an oval head.

A circular tarpaulin covered the ground inside the grove. George Frisby walked around the perimeter, stooping to check that the tarp was snug against the trunk of each tree. He finished up in the gap. "Nearly ready," he said. In his early forties, the horticulturalist had a bony, pleasant face and a high forehead.

Beyond the grove and the forest a car went by on the island road. Jane straightened as a girl ran up.

“All clear, Mum.”

Highly intelligent, Daffy Frisby had hair the color of green grass, heavy eye makeup and a ring in one nostril. She had no tattoos because her parents refused to allow them until she could vote. Next year she would be nineteen and therefore able to vote, which she was beginning to care about, and wear tattoos, about which she was beginning to have mixed feelings.

Jane picked up the megaphone. They had only begun using it two years ago, and only after a good deal of discussion, but in the end, as is often the way, speed and efficiency won out over civility. “Ready, George?” She had an English accent and a pleasant voice.

“Do your stuff, love.”

Daffy looked apprehensive as Jane addressed the trees. She spoke severely but did not raise the megaphone. “Now pay attention, you lot—”

The branches rustled and the trees’ heads turned toward her.

“—because I don’t want to have to say this twice.” More rustling, and the plop-plop of a few nuts into the tarp. “I’m going to give you the word and when I do, I want you to,” she raised the megaphone, “drop it!”

With a whoosh and a thump, the nuts dropped into the tarp. The branches rustled, rising, freed of their burden—all except for one tree. It remained laden.

“Oh Meshach,” Daffy pleaded, “don’t be like that.”

*“Meshach!”*

The other trees sagged away from the sound as Meshach’s nuts joined the rest. Jane lowered the megaphone.

“There now, you silly nits,” she soothed, “that wasn’t so bad, was it?”

The trees swayed toward her, besotted.

Jane toggled the winch switch, and the rope woven through the edges of the tarp slowly began to tighten. She climbed off the tractor and joined George and Daffy outside the grove, circling round the backs of the trees, looking for any loose nuts and tossing them into the tarp. They worked silently and quickly.

When the tarp had become a huge sack, Jane started the tractor and maneuvered through the orchard. George and Daffy followed, using rake and broomstick to help steer the sack in the right direction.

Emerging from the trees, the tractor picked up speed, the sack bouncing over the ground behind it. Now they were at their most vulnerable. As they approached the house, George and Daffy ran on ahead.

Small shrubs grew in a bed along the side of the house opposite the barn. George levered up a wooden divider set into the bed, which was actually one end of a shallow tray, three feet long. Daffy lifted the other end and they removed the shrubs, putting the tray out of the way of the tractor. They took out two more trays, and opened a trap door, revealing a wide hole into the basement. Jane brought the tractor alongside the house, stopping when the neck of the sack was abreast of the hole. They unhooked the tarp and loosened the neck while Jane backed and turned the tractor. She used the small front-end blade to push the sack over the hole and nuts poured into the opening and clattered onto the concrete basement floor, shedding a summer's accumulation of dust. It whooshed up through the opening and the Frisbys stood well back.

Once the shrubs had been replaced and everything made tidy, George and Daffy hopped on the back of the tractor and set off for the south orchard.

\* \* \*

From the eastern point of the cove, Mike Frisby watched the rest of the family and listened for cars. The minutes ticked by. A small, thin boy of twelve with a watchful manner, he stood with Angus, a white and brown terrier, at the end of the road that ran the length of the island. Behind him to the north, other islands dotted the Strait of Juan de Fuca. To the west loomed Vancouver Island.

The whole farm was laid out before him: the cove with its stony shore and the runabout tied up at the wooden wharf; the grassy field sloping up to the apple orchard, and then more field bounded by woods. The house and barn lay on a ridge with an oak tree beyond, in the south field. There the land sloped down again, field giving way to orchards and finally forest.

At last he saw them hooking the tarp up to the tractor. They'd replaced the shrub bed next to the house, and Dad and Daffy climbed on the back. The tractor set off for the south grove and he let out his pent up breath and walked back to the fruit stand. The road curved away from the south grove, following the island's contours, and visitors were a lesser threat.

The island road ended in a concrete barrier and had been widened to allow vehicles to turn. The fruit stand was nestled in the trees near the point, and opposite, though it was only noticeable if you knew what to look for, the cliff split again, forming a second cove, albeit a very narrow one. Its entrance, silted over at low tide, was largely concealed by a fold of the cliff. There the Frisbys moored their yacht. In a way, Mike thought, it was like having a two-car garage.

He studied the counter with a critical eye: apples were piled in a woven basket lined with a cheerful red-checked cloth; two more apples were loose on the counter next to the basket, with a scale and a sign in an immature hand: \$2.50/lb., and a small plate covered with plastic wrap, with slices of apple which, he noted, were beginning to discolor. Apples were little use to anyone. They cost too much to grow and you couldn't get anything for them. However, they had

their place in the scheme of things. Next to the apple slices was another basket, this one holding large cookies. Each was individually wrapped and had a big purple and pink label shaped like a blackberry with white space for writing in the middle: Oatmeal raisin \$2.50.

He heard a car in the distance and came to a decision. The apple slices went out the back of the fruit stand, where Angus made quick work of them. He sliced up another apple, as the tourists pulled up at the concrete barrier. They studied the view for several minutes, comparing the islands they could see with those on their map. Eventually they turned and approached the stand. Mike produced his best waifish smile.

“How you doin’, son?” The male tourist was heavy and old.

“Ooh, what a sweet dog!” The female tourist bent down to pat Angus, who was falling all over himself to be friendly. “What is he, honey?”

“He’s a guard dog.”

The man guffawed, then noticed the price of the apples. “Say, that’s a helluva a price, kid. They’re a buck fifty down the road.”

“Ours are better. Ours are organic.”

“Oh, Stan, never mind.” The female tourist beamed at him. “We’ll take a pound. Two pounds.” She looked along the counter. “And two cookies.”

Michael weighed out two pounds, bagged them and handed them to the female tourist with the two cookies and a big smile. “Thank you, ma’am. Have a nice day.”

The male tourist handed over a ten-dollar bill. “How about the exchange rate?”

“Oh, we’re happy to take US dollars at par,” said Mike naïvely.

Leaving a smile and a scowl, the tourists returned to their car and drove off. He leaned on the counter and watched as it disappeared round the bend. “A couple more soakees bite the dust,” he said with satisfaction.

The small sign his mother had made was lying on the floor. “Galas \$1.50/lb.” He picked it up and put it tidily on the shelf beneath the counter.

The sound of the car was overlaid by the sound of the tractor. A few minutes more, a few minutes to dump the second load of nuts and they’d be safe again.

\* \* \*

It was a painting of hills and sky, with cattle clustered in the foreground and an old oak tree, some tufted grasses on the left, a stone cottage in the distance. Jane found it restful and nostalgic; it reminded her of Northumberland, where she’d been born. She gazed at it a few moments longer, then wandered through the gallery looking at the other offerings. It was a showing of minor nineteenth-century English artists, what Antiques Roadshow would call second division. Jane didn’t care. She wanted a painting for their bedroom, and she returned to the cattle picture after looking at everything else, and debated whether to buy it. As though he had read her mind, the gallery owner materialized at her elbow.

“Appealing, isn’t it?” he murmured.

Jane smiled. “I like it. I honestly don’t know a thing about paintings but I expect you hear that all the time.”

The owner made pleasantly indeterminate sounds. The visitor was casually but expensively dressed. A serious prospect.

Jane made up her mind. “I’ll take it.”

He unhooked the painting and they walked to the desk at the front of the gallery while he complimented her on her choice.

The Frisbys always took a week’s holiday in Vancouver after the harvest. They moored in False Creek and left Angus to guard the boat while they stayed at the Granville Island hotel. This

past week they had toured Science World and the Maritime Museum; Jane had shopped and George visited the botanical gardens at the university. Daffy and Mike had spent a whole day at a vampires, werewolves and zombies film festival, and they had all gone to ball games and eaten their fill of exotic and junk foods. Tomorrow they would head home.

The gallery owner gave her the total, and Jane opened her shoulder bag, took out her wallet, pulled out the bills and counted mentally as she laid them one by one on the desk. She hesitated at the ninth, her mind shouting an alarm. What was wrong with that eighth bill? *What?* Serial number? She hesitated a moment longer, thinking quickly, then lifted her head and smiled at the gallery owner. He smiled back. Hard not to.

“You know, I’ve just remembered we were going to the races later today. I’ll pay by credit card.” She returned the bills to her wallet and took out her credit card. A few minutes later, she emerged from the gallery with a shopping bag in one hand and her wallet safely back in the depths of her shoulder bag.

She felt exposed, as though she were standing in a spotlight. She stared at the sidewalk, composing herself, then summoned a pleasant expression and walked the few blocks to Solly’s on West Seventh, where she had agreed to meet the others. She paid for a cup of coffee from the girl at the counter and took it over to join them at a table near the window. George and Daffy were studying a banknote on the table between them, a thousand-dollar bill, Jane noted as she sat down. Michael was working his way through an enormous cinnamon bun.

“Hello, love,” said George.

Daffy looked at her mother. “What’s wrong, Mum?”

“Nothing, darling.” Jane smiled brightly and then dropped the pretense. “We’re not using any more of our bills until I’ve checked them.”

She took out her wallet, riffled through the bills, pulled out a hundred and placed it on the table.

“What’s wrong with it?” Mike licked his fingers and leaned over.

“The serial number’s different on the right.” Daffy pored over the bill.

“I nearly gave it to him,” Jane shook her head. “He must think I’m mad. I had to tell him we were going to the races.”

George appraised the bill with a scientist’s eye. Spoilage of one sort or another was an ongoing issue.

“That’s the first time ever,” said Mike.

“Mm.” Jane was noncommittal. It was the first they knew of.

“You can see what it is, Dad,” Daffy pointed to the serial number on the left. “It’s not so much that the number is different, it just isn’t fully developed on the right. See? ‘B’ on the left is ‘P’ on the right. The bottom part failed to form.” They scrutinized the bill, looking for other anomalies.

Jane rummaged in her shoulder bag and produced a lighter. George glanced up.

“Do it outside, Jane. Don’t call attention.”

Jane stared at the lighter, wondering what she’d been thinking, then glanced around. No one was paying any attention.

“No harm done,” George spoke soothingly. “We’ll just have to be more careful, that’s all.”

“If the Feds found out they’d burn the house down and us too, probably.” Daffy spoke matter-of-factly.

“Don’t be extravagant, Daffy.” Jane glanced at Mike as she sipped her tea. “They couldn’t possibly do anything of the sort.”

George looked quizzically at his daughter. “What happened to ‘Be nice to the government, they’re doing the best they can’?”

Jane laughed shortly. “That was three years ago, George. You don’t listen.”

An awkward silence fell, in which Jane continued to sip her tea while Daffy looked defiant. George searched his mind. Keeping up with Daffy took some doing. She’d been distressed over the financial meltdown a few years ago, he remembered that, and the unemployment rate. Ah yes, greedy bankers. And government officials. Oh lord, he remembered: terrorism. He glanced at his daughter thinking there’d be hell to pay when she turned nineteen, then met his wife’s gaze. Jane raised an eyebrow.

“I remember,” he replied, then changed the subject: “I don’t care, love, you know that. Do you want to burn the nuts?”

Daffy giggled at Mike’s expression and George ruffled his hair. “Sorry, son.” He looked at Jane. “What do you think?”

Jane sighed. “We’ll chalk it up to carelessness.”

“Right!” George pulled out his wallet and picked up the thousand. “Shall we go to the races?”

Jane glanced at the thousand. “We’re not having that conversation, George.”

“I didn’t say anything.” He put the bill away.

“You were going to. Only drug dealers use thousands. We’re not growing them.”

She bought a dozen bagels at the counter, and they strolled back to False Creek in the warm sun, stowed their belongings, had lunch at the Granville Island market and went to the races. If the day was marred slightly for Jane, she made sure the others weren’t aware of it. The following day, however, having slept on it, she issued a recall of all homegrown bills.

They had left False Creek early, sailing under the bridges into English Bay, watchful of the smaller boats and kayakers. The *Calypso Sue* was a cutter-rigged bluewater yacht. They passed the tankers anchored in the bay, where they put the sails up and continued under power due west until the Point Grey bell buoy was behind them. Out in the Strait of Georgia they cut the engine and sailed southwesterly on jib and mainsail. Mike and Angus sat forward of the mast on the cabin roof in their neon yellow life jackets. Jane had the wheel while George checked the tide and current tables for Active Pass, and Daffy read a book.

While they were eating lunch, with Mike at the wheel, Jane asked for all their banknotes.

“Growing money is one thing. Putting flawed bills into circulation amounts to counterfeiting. At least, that’s how I see it.”

George and Daffy were silent, digesting this, as she went on: “I want all the banknotes you have on you. That includes you, Michael,” she called up through the cabin door.

“She’s right, Dad.” Daffy reached for her purse and pulled out her wallet. George did the same.

“I can’t tell if this is ours or not.”

“Give it to me anyway. Daffy? Any bills?”

“We can check them now, Jane.”

Jane shook her head. “I’m going to ’scope them. Michael, stop messing and fiddling.” She held out her hand and received two twenties.

“Is that necessary?”

“I don’t know, George, but I’ll feel better. Now you can both go on deck, if you don’t mind. I’m going to search the boat.”

The afternoon wore on in sun and silence. George and Mike played chess while Daffy took a turn at the wheel. The ferry crossed their path doing a comfortable fifteen knots en route

to the mainland, with more than four hundred cars and two thousand bodies on board, and as they neared Active Pass, a powerboat approached and roared by, speeding toward Vancouver. Racing alongside it was a group of Dall's porpoises, baby orca look-alikes with their black and white markings. The sound receded, leaving only the ripple of water under the bow.

\* \* \*

Jane finished arranging the first vase and turned to the second. She had a selection of dahlias cut from the garden and fern from the side of the road, and she stood in the dusky quiet of St Anselm's, the small stone Anglican church at the foot of the island, arranging the altar flowers for the Sunday service.

St Anselm's was a hundred and twenty-five years old, nothing by English standards but a good age for the west coast. Jane was not especially religious: she believed in God and right and wrong, and in George. But she had been born into privilege and community service was ingrained in her. She belonged to several nonprofits in Sidney, on the Big Island, where she had a small catering business. She was also a member of the Women's Auxiliary at St Kits, which maintained St Anselm's. In that way, she was able to volunteer to do the altar flowers, which helped to ease her conscience.

She finished the second vase and put one each at opposite sides of the altar. Then she used the remaining flowers for a third vase, which she put on the table at the church entrance.

She came out of the church through the small annex that doubled as a community center, and walked round to her car. The church stood on a knoll overlooking the harbor, the eastern arm of which was formed by the Rock, a half-mile-long appendage separated from the main island by a narrow channel. At low tide, islanders would take the path running down to the channel and wade across to the Rock for picnics or to fish off the southeastern shore.

A power boat rounded the southwestern point and with engine rumbling moved slowly into the harbor, and overhead a few seagulls wheeled and cried in the afternoon sun. Jane smiled for no particular reason, enjoying the sparkle of sun on water, reluctant to move.

Houses dotted the forested slope on the western arm of the harbor, where nearly half of the three hundred residents lived. Larger properties of five acres or more ran back from the shoreline up the west and east coasts. The Frisbys had the only dwelling at the north end.

Jane heard the whine of an electric scooter. Mrs. Bagnold was coming to visit her late husband. Doris Bagnold was ninety-one and lived next to the path leading to the Rock. Her house was small, old and picturesque, painted a vivid azure, with a dense garden all round. She was the island's oldest resident and most days, she drove along the road on her scooter to the graveyard at St Anselm's.

Ledyard Island had been named for a seaman on one of the exploration vessels that charted the coastline in the eighteen hundreds. When, a few years ago, a sacred burial ground was discovered to have existed next to the church graveyard, the island was renamed a long and unmemorable Salish name roughly meaning "Place of the Early Ones." Reaction was mostly unfavorable, but since the change was manifested only on the ferry schedule, most islanders ignored it. Following the renaming, a sign appeared on the graveyard gate stating that visits were by appointment only, and must be outside the hours of eleven and three p.m., when the spirits slept. "How do they know that?" asked Mike, but Jane had no idea. Mrs. Bagnold was one of those who liked the change in schedule: it gave shape and structure to her day. But she drew the line at making an appointment. "Tommy never kept an appointment in his life," she said. So she came along whenever she pleased (outside the hours of eleven till three) and now Jane waved to the old lady, sitting upright on her scooter, driving into the graveyard.

About to open the car door, Jane heard her name and turned. Her heart sank. Coming up the steps from the wharf, Ariadne Wu waved and hastened past the marine supply store toward her.

“I thought I would catch you,” she said as she drew near. “Helga Johnston said you arrange flowers or something at the church. Are you religious? I didn’t know.”

Jane resolved to have a word with Helga and said nothing. Ariadne Wu was the most tactless individual she had ever met, a curious trait in a realtor. She had nevertheless been fabulously successful over the past thirty years in Vancouver’s property market boom. Now in her mid-fifties, she had bought a seaplane and a substantial property on the west side of the island, and she commuted to her Vancouver office.

“People say you are very good at organizing and you work on many committees.” Ariadne smiled encouragingly.

Jane knew what was coming. “Far too many,” she said. “I really don’t spend enough time with my family.”

Ariadne waved this away. “One more or less, what difference does it make?” Her eyes were fixed on Jane’s face. “You should join the Channel Dredging committee. Mr. Dhasi and I could use your help.”

If the channel between the island and the Rock had not been dredged once a year it would have filled in completely. This suited Ariadne and Mr. Dhasi, who had a substantial mixed farming operation and sold most of his produce on the Big Island. They wanted approval for a hundred-unit condo development on the southwest side of the Rock. Other islanders were averse to any more development, and the Channel Dredging committee was the field on which the warring factions met. Jane, who had an open mind on the subject, would have given a lot to join.

“I’m awfully sorry,” she summoned a smile, “but I really haven’t the time and I know nothing about dredging.”

Ariadne laughed. “You wouldn’t have to if we succeed.” She held out a card and Jane took it reflexively. “Think it over, and give me a call if you change your mind.” She began to turn, then paused. “Let me know if you ever decide to sell. I could get you a very good price for your place.”

“Would you put a condo development on that, too?”

Ariadne shrugged. “You have to follow the market. People can’t afford to buy here otherwise.”

She gazed past Jane out to the harbor and the Rock. “The aquifer would support it, you know. With the additional contributions, we could increase the number of ferry sailings.” She looked at Jane. “You could cater to some of those people without having to go to the Big Island, just like Mr. Dhasi. He wants a bigger local market for his produce.” She paused, then added, “It all makes good sense.”

Jane was beginning to agree with her. Then Ariadne ruined it.

“Of course, she would have to relocate.” Her gaze had moved to the graveyard.

“Who?” Jane turned. Old Mrs. Bagnold was maneuvering her scooter round the graves, coming toward the entrance. “You’re not serious.”

Ariadne raised a calming hand. “She will be well taken care of. But the road down to the channel would have to be widened and it makes sense to remove her house. We would give her a choice of—”

“Please don’t say any more.” Jane paused to control her anger, and when she continued it was with a smile. “You must surely understand that she cannot be asked to move at her age. It might well kill her. She’s lived in that house for, what—seventy years?”

Ariadne's expression became opaque. She gazed out at the harbor as though debating whether to say more. Then she nodded, sketched a wave and left, retracing her steps past the marine supply store, heading back to her boat.

\* \* \*

George felt the same as Jane about doing his bit for the community. "I've joined the Solid Waste committee," he had announced one day a few months after their arrival.

"Well, you'll just have to unjoin it," said Jane briskly. Ledyard Island had few public facilities: the islanders had to pay for everything out of their own pockets, and no one wanted needless expense. The church annex was the only public place available to hold meetings, and since it was drafty and uncomfortable, most committees met in members' homes instead. Jane was quite sure any meeting George held would be a sociable affair, with beer and wanderings around the house and property, and awkward questions: "Say, George, that's a weird-looking tree. Are those Brazil nuts?"

The discussion had gone back and forth. "It's not just you," she had said at one point, "I'd like to help out, too." Since most residents wanted only to be left alone, volunteers for committee work were always welcome. The price of real estate had prevented more young families from moving to the island, so the population was gradually aging.

About five years ago, George had brought the subject up again. "They're calling for firefighters, Jane. I want to join and I've thought of a way we can get more involved all round." Frequently abstracted, he was vigorous and enthusiastic, and his family viewed him with something close to suspicion. They were sitting in the TV room at the time.

"Oh?" said Jane.

“We’ll give everyone trees.” He leaned forward. “I’ve worked out the nutrient cycle, and we’re getting good harvests now. It should be fairly easy to show people how to care for them.”

“Dad!” Daffy shook her head decisively. “You can’t give away trees. It would lead to hyperinflation.”

“What? What do you mean?”

Daffy had been sprawled in the small armchair and now she straightened up. “Get this,” she made sure they were all listening. “In Germany in 1923 they needed wheelbarrows of money to buy anything. Wheelbarrows!” Daffy had run out of fiction and was reading history, and the story of the German hyperinflation following the First World War had both shocked and enthralled her. She screwed her face up, working through the implications. “Dad, if everyone had a money tree, so much money would flood the market that the dollar would become worthless.”

She looked down at seven-year-old Mike, lying on his back on the floor. “Know how much an egg cost back then, Mikey? Just one single egg?”

He sat up and shook his head.

“Twenty-three billion marks.” She spoke slowly and impressively, then added, “That was their money, marks.”

George and Jane looked uncertainly at each other. Neither knew what to say.

“Money’s interesting isn’t it? I mean, everyone wants some, don’t they? I’m going to read up on it, Dad, and if there’s a way we can let people have trees, I’ll find it.”

The following day, Mike had expressed an interest in raising chickens.

\* \* \*

George entered through the side door, next to the moveable shrubs, switched off the yard light and tapped the barometer as he did every night. Angus watched from his wicker basket, then lay down again as George went along to the den.

The north-facing front door of the house was seldom used, but it opened onto a wide foyer with a staircase up to the bedrooms. The living room and den lay left and right respectively.

Jane was bent over a stereoscopic microscope, her head framed in the light from her desk lamp.

The den held a battered sofa and armchair and two large, old-fashioned oak desks facing each other. They liked to sit there in the evenings, George doing his research, Jane paying the bills or reading committee-meeting minutes, or planning meals or agendas. There was a bookcase against the wall on George's side. On the wall behind Jane's desk was a framed map showing the Gulf Islands and the mainland: British Columbia and Alberta, Washington and Idaho.

George sat down opposite her at his own desk and opened a drawer, taking out a blue three-ringed binder. Like Jane, he had a laptop, but he used it mainly for research. He liked his binder for daily entries but after Jane impressed on him the need for discretion, it became a rather mundane record of daily temperature and weather readings. He kept important information in his head.

"Your halos are beautiful, darling. Yves would approve." She turned the bill and bent to view the reverse side.

"Mm?" George flipped the binder open to the journal section, noted the date and time and jotted his daily entry. Then he closed the book and leaned back, gazing at his wife. Earlier, a hundred-thousand dollars worth of twenties and hundreds had formed a six-inch stack next to her right hand. Now virtually all of them were stacked on her left.

"Find many duds?"

She finished scrutinizing a bill and leaned back in turn, stretching and yawning. “Not really.” She glanced in the wastepaper basket. “Two, I think. And I’m probably being silly.” She reached for another bill and bent over the twin eyepieces again.

Mike came in, wearing pajamas. “Can I have my money?”

Jane did not look up. “Where are your slippers?”

He came up to the desk as George pulled out his wallet and handed him a fifty. “That cover it?”

He took the bill with a grin. “Thanks, Dad.” He peered in the wastepaper basket and stooped down, reaching for one of the rejected bills.

“Leave those alone, Michael.”

“Daffy got you worried, son?”

“Michael!” Jane straightened up and glared at him.

“There’s nothing wrong with them, for crying out loud!”

“Obviously there must be or I wouldn’t throw them out.”

He gave her a disillusioned look. “Give ’em to the food bank, they won’t care. They’re just a bunch of soakees.”

“I’ve told you before not to use that expression. Now, go back to bed. Go on.”

Michael straightened and George reached for him.

“Why are they soakees, Mike? Because they got soaked?”

He nodded.

“Listen, Mikey. Maybe they didn’t. What if they just got sick or something?”

“Then they should stay home and not spread it around.”

Jane snorted. “Save your breath, George.” She leaned back, eyeing her son. “Has Daffy said anything more about becoming a terrorist?”

“No.” His parents seemed to want more, so he added, “She’s okay. She’s just bent.”

“Daffy’s hormones may be out of whack,” said Jane, “but her heart’s in the right place. Which is more than I can say for some people.”

She looked pointedly at Mike and bent again over the microscope. George hugged him. “Don’t think it’s hormones; it’s the Internet.” He gave him a swat on the rump. “Hop it.”

Mike made his way upstairs to bed, the fifty tucked in the breast pocket of his pajamas, warming his heart. He climbed into bed thinking about tomorrow with a sense of pleasurable anticipation. Tomorrow he would pick up Mr. Lee’s bottles. And the next day and the next. It was ninety days tomorrow, which meant (probably) ninety bottles. Twenty cents each, that meant . . . he turned on his side. Five bottles per Safeway bag, two bags per load. Two dollars. All his, not like the apple money, which was family money. So ninety times twenty cents . . . a dollar eighty? That couldn’t be right. . . . He fell asleep on the recalculation.

\* \* \*

Daffy sat at her computer, alternately tweeting, posting and chatting. One wall of her room was covered from floor to ceiling with books, an eclectic mixture ranging from Adam Smith to Danielle Steele, heavy to free-market economists: von Hayek, Friedman, Rothbard.

Daffy read everything she could lay her hands on. She had been eight when the Frisbys moved to Canada and she was kept back a year, over her parents’ strenuous objections, because of her birth month and the fact that they had arrived in April, before the completion of the school year. She was a bright child and would have sailed through school with ease, even if she had been put a grade ahead. As it was, she turned to books to offset boredom. Boxes and boxes of childhood favorites were stored in the barn, including all her Harry Potters, all her L.M. Montgomerys, Tolkiens, Twilights, assorted Collinses, and hundreds of others. George had

warned her she would have to become more selective, but the advent of e-readers had diminished the pressure for wall space.

She made a homework suggestion to a Facebook schoolmate, then turned to read her Twitter feeds on the effects of a new banking regulation. Daffy did not yet feel she had the credentials to contribute to such discussions, but she learned enormously from following them. She had found two or three young economists online, people who had responded to her questions and seemed happy to answer her follow-ups. She was chatting with one this evening, discussing the potential for hyperinflation in the world.

She studied a response, thought for a minute then typed:

OK, but I thought the way the system worked, the multiplier effect would lead to a rapid inflation once people start borrowing again. No?

The answer came:

Yes. But when? Dud banks aren't allowed to die. They just go on existing like zombies, not lending. And people are afraid to borrow. Whole system is stagnant.

So...how do we get rid of this crappy money and get good money?

Bomb Washington? hahahaha.

She mulled this over while monitoring the action on Twitter.

*Chapter 2***The Smell of Money**

Jack Halloran, Deputy Director of the Secret Service, sat on the edge of a table looking at a wall map of the United States. Locations were flagged on it with colored pins. Most of the pins were red. Halloran was a big man with a square face and a sharp mind.

Agent Lyle Hicks, tall, thin, in his late-30s and divorced, pointed at an orange pin in Texas. “This one was a horse in a town called Muleshoe.”

“I know Muleshoe,” nodded Halloran.

Hicks edited out the comment about one-horse towns and went on. “A guy got off his horse outside the bar, took out his wallet and fanned the bills. You know, checking how much cash he had?” Halloran nodded again, and Hicks resumed, “The horse reached out and ate them. Two chews and a swallow.” At the other’s expression, he added, “That’s what the guy said.”

Agent Sam Gumble, shorter, older and of a morose disposition, pointed at a black pin in Wyoming. “Campsite in Yellowstone. This happened back in June. Woman came out of the RV, found a bear at the picnic table. Honey jar on the table and she’s expecting the bear to go for it.” He eyed Halloran gloomily. The Deputy Director nodded: get on with it. “So anyway, the bear swipes at the honey jar. Sends it flying. There’s a twenty underneath it. The bear eats the twenty.”

“What was the twenty there for?”

“Husband left it. For groceries.”

The two agents waited while Halloran studied the map.

“Random incidents,” he summarized.

“All twenties and hundreds, as far as we can determine,” said Hicks.

“Mostly dogs,” finished Gumble. Dogs were the red pins.

“What’s that green one?”

“That’s the parrot, sir. San Diego.”

“And the blue one? Up there?”

“Lab in Boston.”

“What kind of lab?”

“Pharmaceutical. A monkey in an SBP lab. Two technicians had a bet on the Red Sox.

The loser goes to hand over a hundred and this monkey on the table grabbed it out of his hand and ate the whole thing. They tried to get a piece of it. No luck.”

“Theories?”

Hicks opened his mouth, but Gumble beat him to it. “I got one. Suppose you got a McDonalds, a distribution center where they parcel up the hamburger and send it out to the restaurants.”

“Is that how they do it?”

“I’m just saying, this could account for it. So they got the previous day’s take sitting near all this hamburger—”

Hicks suppressed a laugh.

“—and somehow the two get mixed up. So you got all this money with the smell of hamburger all over it.”

Hicks laughed. He couldn’t help it. Even Halloran produced a grin.

“So this money covered in hamburger gets spread out over the entire country? Gumble, you’ve got a rich imagination.”

Gumble shook his head. “No imagination, sir. I’m just trying to think how this could happen.”

“Any other theories?” Halloran raised an eyebrow at Hicks.

“What if the ink at one of the presses was tainted?”

“Tainted? How?”

Hicks shook his head. “I don’t know. But it’s the only thing I can think of. Either one of our presses. Or some crook’s.”

Gumble said, “We only need a piece of a bill. That’s all we need to figure this out.”

“Right.” Halloran stood up. “We could go on like this till the cows come home and we’d still be playing catch-up. Time you two started being proactive.”

“How’s that, sir?”

“We can’t find the printing press without a forensic analysis. For that we need a bill.” He headed for the door. “Take a hundred thousand in twenties and hundreds to the pound. If you don’t get a reaction, take another hundred thou. And another. Don’t come back till you find me a bill that drives mutts nuts.”

*Chapter 3***Dear Abby**

Sipping her tea, Jane stood at the kitchen sink gazing out at the drizzle. She liked to come downstairs each morning in her dressing gown, boil the kettle, warm the little brown teapot, make her tea and drink it while staring out the window over the kitchen sink. This was her routine, while around her Mike made his lunch and at the kitchen table, Daffy ate porridge and read the Wall Street Journal on her tablet, and George looked through the mail.

At some point would come the daily turmoil of gathering books, grabbing coats and lunches, and saying goodbye (Daffy kissed both parents, while Mike hugged George, and waved to Jane), then the children were gone and silence descended.

At no time during these proceedings did Jane speak, unless it was absolutely necessary. She preferred to give the tea time to permeate every cell, preparing her body for the coming day. “It’s like a solar panel,” she said once, out loud.

George looked up, startled. “What is?”

She’d turned away from the sink and gone back upstairs to shower and dress.

“Tea,” he heard as she went up the stairs. “It stays with you all day.”

On the Monday following their holiday, she finished her porridge and opened the local paper, which she liked to read with her coffee. George was absorbed in the latest issue of the *BC Fruit Grower*.

She turned to Dear Abby, one of her staple sources of news, commentary and advice. The second letter she read in growing consternation. “I don’t like the sound of this.” She finished the letter. “This won’t do at all. George?” She looked round the paper at him.

“I’m listening.”

“Listen.” She paused, reading the letter again.

“Yes, dear?”

“Sorry. ‘Dear Abby. I was at mom’s last week when she gave her parrot a hundred dollar bill as a treat. Can you believe that? She never gives us kids hundred dollar bills as treats. The parrot loved it but I say it’s the last straw.’ Signed, Camel in San Diego.”

She lowered the paper and they stared at each other. “Fabric softener won’t do, George,” she said at last.

He sighed. “I’m working on it.” He reached behind him for a hefty book on the sideboard: *The Science of Smell*.

Jane looked annoyed. “You always say that. I know the smell problem isn’t sexy and exciting, like growing thousands, but it’s got to be solved.”

\* \* \*

Daffy stood under the eaves near the school’s main entrance, tweeting on her phone. She saw Terry with a group of girls, one of whom was making a play for him. Good!

“Want to buy another gun, Daphne?”

The speaker was behind her but she knew who it was. She turned and scowled at him because he made her nervous. Connor had been had up on assault charges, and breaking and entering, and he liked to taunt her on a regular basis. Two weeks ago, he had mocked her green hair: “You one of those stupid eco-terrorists, Daphne?” And he always made a meal of her name.

“No, Connor, I do not want another gun, thank you,” she answered distinctly. This time, it seemed, he was actually serious.

“I got a Ruger semiautomatic for sale. Give you a good price.”

“I don’t want another gun. Ever.” She’d said that before but he never listened.

He eyed her hair, now orange, then looked over at Terry with the group of girls. “Break up with your boyfriend?”

“He is *not* my boyfriend! He never was!” She scowled again and stalked off.

Boys! Honestly, they were more trouble than they were worth. She had got this phrase from Mum and it expressed her feelings about the opposite sex very well.

She briefly considered the gun. She’d bought it two years ago because her frustration and anger with the banking industry and the government over the whole housing market economic collapse had made her think the only way to get through to these people was violently. Sixteen had not been a great year for her, she thought now, looking back on it.

She joined a group of female classmates near the school doors. Daffy had no close friends at school. She was automatically linked with Amanda Knowles because they were both brains, though they had little in common. In any case, Daffy was so ready and willing to help others in the class with difficult homework, and to do so cheerfully and without making them feel like dummies, that she was accepted with fairly good grace by the other girls.

Now she listened to complaints about yesterday’s history assignment, ready to comment if asked, or stay silent. Other people interested Daffy, and she liked listening to them.

\* \* \*

Still preoccupied with the Dear Abby letter, Jane stood in the mudroom preparing Angus’s lunch. She opened a cupboard and reached for a cornflakes box filled with dud

banknotes. She took out a hundred with a hairless Ben Franklin, tore it into small bits and sprinkled them on the bowl of food, then took the bowl outside and watched as Angus attacked it.

Homegrown money was like candy to Angus. They had discovered this years ago when he pounced on a bill that fell out of George's pocket and consumed it at once. Nor was it only Angus. They discovered that birds found their money just as exciting, and so did squirrels. On their next big-city outing George spent a day in the library followed by a visit to a bookshop, where he had purchased several promising volumes, including *The Science of Smell*. He had not made any progress on the problem since then. Jane resolved to keep nagging until he did. There were nearly ten years' worth of Frisby dollars in circulation, and if they were showing up in Dear Abby it was high time George came to grips with the problem.

Leaving Angus to his lunch, Jane tidied her hair, put on her coat and some lipstick, then fetching her shoulder bag, she crossed the yard to the greenhouse. George was leaning on the counter engrossed in the *Smell* book.

"I'm off, darling. Back at five."

"Mm." Eyes on the book, he reached out an arm, wagging his fingers. Jane came over and he looked up. "When are you doing the groves?"

"Tomorrow?"

He nodded and indicated a pail of fertilizer on the floor near her feet. "Give them that as well, will you?"

"Right you are. Bye."

He kissed her then looked at her. "We'll sort this out, love. Don't worry."

She smiled and left.

Next week the two of them would take off for a week-long cruise, leaving the children on their own. They'd tried this last year, judging that Michael was old enough and he and Daffy could manage, and it had been a wonderful break all round. Now, Jane concentrated on the day and week ahead as she drove the five miles to the ferry. She had a meeting this afternoon, and three lunches later in the week, and had planned her menus by the time Doris Bagnold's azure house came into view, on the corner where the island road turned nearly a right-angle, heading for the ferry terminal.

Aside from St Anselm's, the only other public places on the island were the recycling gazebo, next to the church, and the rust-red marine supply store, which was privately owned but had a bank of mailboxes on one side where islanders often met.

Just past the store the road forked, the island road continuing on the right. Jane took the left branch, a steep ramp down to the dock, and parked behind another vehicle. *All very well to say don't worry . . .* she stared unseeing at the ferry as it approached the dock.

\* \* \*

A flash of bright red caught Daffy's eye, from the wire mesh wastebasket near the gym door. She walked over to look at it. A one-kilo plastic bottle lay in the bin. It had a garish red and green label, "High Velocity Muscle Building Whey Protein Drink."

"That's perfect," breathed Daffy. She'd been trying to find a suitable container for fertilizer. Hoping no one was looking she reached down and retrieved the bottle, shoving it in her backpack.

\* \* \*

"Say Daff! Wanna catch a buzz?" Terry Parker sprawled along a metal bench in the cabin of the small ferry. A large, lazy youth, he was with Daffy the oldest of the twenty-five or so

island kids. The cabin had metal walls and rattled like a cake tin from the engine vibration.

Traditionally, the older kids sat at one end, younger at the other.

“No,” said Daffy. “You want to be careful, Terry, or your gramps could lose his green card.”

“I don’t use his stuff,” said Terry.

“Oh right. And the police will believe that.”

She rolled her eyes and continued chatting with her neighbor. Daffy had tried pot once, with Terry, with disastrous results. She was interested in trying it again sometime, but definitely not with Terry and not until she was older.

Terry was the youngest of three children of Vern and Marge Parker, who had a fifty-acre farm on the western side of the island. Vern had some sheep and a few cows, a horse or two and some chickens. Marge worked at a department store on the Big Island. Their older son was a lawyer in Victoria and their daughter attended university there. Ron Parker, Vern’s father, had been injured in a logging accident as a youth and lived in a cabin on the farm. He had a long grey beard, colorful suspenders much admired by Mike, and a green card, which entitled him to own and use sixty-two pot plants for the pain in his injured shoulder. He favored Texada Timewarp and was a common sight weaving along the island road morning and afternoon on his bike. The kids called him Permastone.

Terry pulled a face at Daffy and his eye fell on Mike, seated halfway between the little kids and the big ones. “What’re you looking at, maggot face?”

“Nothing,” said Mike and looked away. He had no friends except for Daffy because secrets were tricky things, best handled alone. He was okay with that: he had big plans and they kept him company.

When the ferry arrived, Daffy found Terry next to her as they wheeled their bikes up the incline.

“Connor give you any trouble this morning?”

Daffy said nothing until they had reached the top. Then she wheeled over to the side and stopped near the marine supply store.

“What am I going to do with you, Terry?”

His face lightened and she added, “That was a *totally* rhetorical question, you—,” she wanted to say “dumbass” but Terry had feelings like everyone else, even if he had been a complete jerk since last summer. Now at least he was just trying to be nice, instead of making everyone think she was his property or something.

Trying pot had been on Daffy’s to-do list for a couple of years. Last year she had accepted Terry’s invitation and they’d gone to the Parkers’ barn to try it out. It was a proper barn, not like the Frisbys’, with stalls for the cattle and a hayloft, and Terry and Daffy had gone up to the loft. Lying in the straw she had taken a pull at the joint and passed it back. She wondered when it would begin to take effect. Looking up at the rafters, she said, perhaps unadvisedly, “Remember years ago, when we played doctor?” They’d been nine, and Daffy remembered the feel of his skinny arm locked around her neck. They’d been in gales of laughter, vying with each other to see who could deliver the slobberiest kiss. After two or three drags on the joint, she focused on the roof beams, waiting for the effect to kick in and paying little attention when Terry began to kiss her, and when he suddenly said “Okay, Daff?” she hesitated, *what’s the rush* floating lazily through her mind followed by *why not*, and that was that. “Did you say no, Daff?” Mum had asked that evening, and Daffy had looked down at the carpet, trying to think. “Well, I was busy,” she had blurted, and burst into tears. Mum comforting her, rocked her gently. When

she heard about the joint, she said only, “Oh Daffy. One thing at a time, darling,” and asked if Terry had used a condom. Daffy didn’t lie exactly, because he had, although she didn’t think it had been on properly. But she didn’t want his dead body washing up on the Big Island, which would certainly have happened if he had not used a condom. If Mum hadn’t killed him, Marge Parker would have. Mrs. Parker was totally different from Mum, but she had very clear ideas on what boys could and could not do, having honed her skills on Terry’s older brother.

After that episode last summer, Terry had gone around with an infuriating grin on his face every time they were together, as if he owned her.

Now she looked at him and decided she had to be blunt. “Look Terry, we don’t have anything in common. Nothing. Do we?”

He looked away and after a moment said, “We like farming.”

*Omigod*, thought Daffy. “I’m a reader, Terry. That’s my favorite thing. You’re never interested in talking about books. You don’t ever crack a book if you can help it. And—and I want to do things in the world.”

“You mean, be a terrorist? You’re not really going to do that, are you?”

Daffy regretted ever telling him. “Maybe. I don’t know exactly what I’m going to do, but something.” She went on the offensive. “What do you want to do, Terry?” She only gave him a moment because she knew the answer. “You want to take over the farm. That’s fine, there’s nothing wrong with that. But it’s not for me.”

“But we’ve always been friends.”

“I know. And maybe we can go on being friends. But that’s all.” She turned away, then faced him again. “You were talking to Kayla, I saw you. She thinks you’re the hottest guy in school, you know.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah. She told me.” She considered, then added, “You two would be a good couple.”

\* \* \*

In the dim light, Mike looked at the pile of two-liter plastic bottles thrown any which way in the corner of the garage. He had knocked at the kitchen door and Mr. Lee had confirmed that it was okay to take them. Mike felt it was prudent to check because it was three months since they'd spoken, so he might have forgotten his promise. But no, he had remembered, and Mike was now the authorized plastic-bottle remover for Ledyard's most famous resident. Morgan Fiami Lee was a well-known artist descended from a Samoan who had landed on the island nearly a hundred and fifty years ago. He lived on wooded acreage overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca, next to the Eastens, another old family.

Mike had first met the artist last May, when he was biking up the road. Just before the crest, where you could coast for a bit, he'd heard a voice behind him.

“Hey! You there!”

He'd turned to see that a car had nosed out of a driveway. The driver beckoned. Mike wheeled round and went back down, staying a circumspect distance away. The guy had a swarthy look and big teeth. He could be trafficking in body parts, or an alien ready to suck out Mike's brains through his eye sockets.

“What's your name?”

Mike told him, and the man held out a hand. “Morgan Lee.”

Mike wheeled closer and gingerly shook the hand.

“Want to earn some money?” Correctly reading Mike’s expression, the driver went on, “I’ve got a pile of plastic bottles in the garage. You take them, you can have the recycling fee. Interested?”

“Yeah!”

They’d agreed Mike would come by tomorrow after school, and Lee had driven off to the ferry, while Mike sped homeward, flying down the hill and wondering how many bottles and what size.

“Morgan Fiami Lee?” Jane smiled at dinner, and didn’t for once remind him to mind his manners. But in the summer, one of the artist’s seascapes appeared in the living room over the fireplace and the whole family had taken a look at it. “It’s lovely to be able to buy beautiful things, isn’t it?” said Jane. Mike sat quietly while everyone admired the painting, but later, he went up to his room and lay on the bed and tried not to think about how Mum wasted the family money.

Now, looking at the latest batch of revenue lying in the corner of the garage, he pulled out his plastic bags and got to work. Safeway was the only place that had free plastic bags and his pockets were stuffed with them. He shoved them neatly out of the way in a cardboard box, all except for four. These he filled, five bottles in each bag, and a short time later he pedaled up the sloping drive to the island road. He unhooked the bags from his handlebars and shoved them under a salmonberry bush. They should be okay there until tomorrow morning, at which time he would retrieve them and take them to the Safeway near the school, exchanging them for four dollars.

\* \* \*

Pail of nutrients in hand, Jane walked down the field with Angus to the north grove. They swished through the long wet grass in the orchard, Angus sniffing at one or two rotten apples, and entered the grove through the gap.

“Hello, you lot. I’ve brought you a pick-me-up.”

Her voice was soothing and produced nothing more than a gentle rustle from the trees. Angus trotted across the grove and burrowed through the far side, disappearing into the woods with a whine as he scented squirrel.

Jane did not share George and Daffy’s fascination with the money trees. In fact, she viewed them with something akin to suspicion. No one knew why her voice had such a pronounced effect on them, nor its exact nature. “They aren’t sentient, love,” George had assured her. Jane wasn’t sure what that meant, but the trees could write, effectively—at least, they could create complex serial numbers out of letters and numbers—so she preferred to err on the side of caution. She assigned them a university-level education and behaved accordingly.

Walking around the grove, she threw handfuls of nutrients at the base of each tree, addressing them with the utmost courtesy but strictly. “Now it’s been a good year on the whole, but I’m going to leave you with one very simple thought and I want you to reflect on it over the winter.” She paused for a moment, choosing her words, then went on: “The right-hand serial number is not an afterthought. It is not an afterthought. It should be laid down at the same time as the left, so that they can develop together.” She arrived back at the gap and stopped, facing the trees. “Let me put it another way: whatever you choose for the left serial number must appear in the right as well.”

Angus pushed back into the grove and joined her.

“Now. If I can understand that, you certainly can.”

She turned and walked out. "Come on, Angus. South grove, then lunch."

The trees and layout were identical in the south grove, and she delivered the same message. They walked slowly back to the house in the drizzle. Jane could hear the drip-drop of rain on leaves. She loved the island when the weather was like this, the sky lower, everywhere a near-monochrome of color with shreds of mist that drifted like tattered cotton wool over the trees and the cove. Today, the weather bothered her because the dripping interfered with her hearing. The Dear Abby letter had left her feeling on-edge, as though invaders might be lurking all around the farm.

Back at the house, she prepared Angus's lunch in the usual way, then took the bowl outside and watched as he attacked it. Years ago she'd given some shredded money to the grey squirrel that lived in the Garry oak, but it ate some and hoarded the rest, and they'd found bits drifting around the field. George put them back in the little knothole but evidently they had lost their smell and their allure. They had faded to nondescript paper fragments and Jane had stopped feeding the squirrel after that.

She sat on the doorstep watching Angus finish up. She loved the terrier, but for the first time she wished he were something more substantial, like a Doberman.

Back into the mudroom she came to a decision, emptying the cornflakes box into the sink. She lit the bills and washed the ashes down the drain, then sprayed round the sink walls. She took the box outside and burnt it as well. Then she fetched the step ladder from the barn and carried it up to the oak tree. If the squirrel had stolen from Angus's bowl, unlikely though that seemed, incriminating bits of money might be floating around the property in the wind, ready to be pounced on by some interfering official.

She climbed up and, ignoring the chattering of the squirrel at this outrageous invasion, she investigated the hollow behind the knothole.

\* \* \*

“Afternoon, George.” Cam Shockley was the owner of the marine supply store.

“Keeping busy, Cam?” George put a winch handle and a couple of cleats on the counter and took out his wallet.

“Always something,” said Cam, taking the twenty. The store did steady business from boats cruising the Gulf Islands. He handed back George’s change. “Tell Jane hi. Haven’t seen her for a while.” As well as boat fittings, the store also sold canned and household goods.

George nodded and took his brass fittings back to the runabout, moored at the foot of the wharf steps, stowing them in one of the lockers.

Preoccupied with the smell issue, he glanced back up at the recycling gazebo. No one was sitting in it, so he retraced his steps and strolled over, sitting on the bench at the far end from the recyclables. At this time of year, recycling leaned heavily to end-of-summer gear: runners and beach balls and children’s clothing from the hundreds of tourists and summer visitors. The island held several bed and breakfasts in the season, plus an inn on the southeastern side.

George gazed out at the harbor, watching others at work on their boats, and thought about smell. Vern Parker found him there half an hour later.

“Hey, George!” He leaned on the railing. “How you doing?”

“Hi, Vern, it’s been a while,” said George and asked after Marge and Ron.

“Same as always.” Vern took hold of the wooden railing and tried to shake it. “Pretty good, eh? Must be seven or eight years since we put this up.”

“It’s ten,” said George. “We came here ten years ago last April, and it was in the summer of that year.”

“No kidding.”

No one knew who had originally bought the gazebo but it appeared one day in sections stacked next to the recycling lean-to. After a few days it disappeared but a week later it was back. Once again, after a brief rest, it disappeared, and when it reappeared two weeks later, Vern decided enough was enough. George and Jane saw him wrestling with a section when they caught the ferry, and he was still there when they returned, three hours later. So Jane drove home, leaving George to introduce himself and offer his help.

Vern wanted to move the sections out of the way so that he could pour a concrete floor and bolt the gazebo to it. “Don’t want to see it walk off again,” he explained. So they moved the pieces around to the back of the church, put them together and took the measurements. It was oblong, nearly twenty feet long and they gazed at it and wondered why it had been rejected.

“It’s those wrought-iron spokes in the railing,” said George. “They don’t seem right, do they?”

“Plus the size. You could hold a convention in there.”

The following day they moved the recycling lean-to, constructed the forms for the floor, added some rebar and poured the cement. A few days later they erected the gazebo, using rope ties to hold it down, then moved all the recyclables into it and dismantled the lean-to. In the fall, when the concrete had fully dried, they bolted the frame to the floor. Now, ten years later, its cedar shingles and walls had a weathered, permanent look and the structure had become in good weather as much a community center as the annex. By custom, recyclables occupied the west

side, and the benches on the east side were available for socializing. Vern and George had formed a friendship on the strength of that one project.

They talked about the weather and the harvest, and Vern was about to ask George a question about his apples but he saw Doris Bagnold heading for the graveyard on her scooter and glanced at his watch. He had things to do, he told George, and left in his truck.

George returned to the subject of smell. He'd had an idea while Vern was chatting, and now he considered it carefully. Whether it would work or not remained to be seen, but he walked thoughtfully along the wharf to the runabout and chugged gently up the western shore to the cove, deep in thought.

\* \* \*

Wearing a coat over her pajamas, Daffy knelt on the floor of the greenhouse and ladled 6-8-6 from a sack under the workbench into the muscle bottle. A flashlight on the floor gave enough light that she could see to work.

She shivered and hefted the container, then continued to fill it, using a tin cup kept in the sack. Fertilizer, she mused, could be used to make bombs. She didn't know offhand whether 6-8-6 would do the trick, or whether you'd want something more bloom-oriented, like 19-30-30. She made a mental note to research the subject. *I don't think I could make a bomb*, she thought, *no matter how angry I was*. But it would be interesting to find out how it was done. Everything interested Daffy, and she discussed most of what she learned with one or other parent. To assuage her mother's concerns over online privacy, Daffy used the Tor browser and was careful about what she said. But online or off, she watched and listened, and learned.

She felt inside the rim of the muscle bottle and discovered the fertilizer was nearly up to the top. The lid was on the workbench and she groped for it in the darkness and screwed it on.

Switching off the flashlight and holding it and the muscle bottle, she got to her feet. The house remained dark and silent as she came out of the greenhouse, and she was tempted to take the bottle up to her bedroom. Instead, she made her way over the packed earth of the yard to the barn. It had a door in the wall facing the house and she had made sure it was unlocked earlier that evening.

She opened it and used the flashlight to pick her way over to the boxes of books against the back wall. She put the muscle bottle in a small garbage bag. If Mike noticed her putting it in her backpack tomorrow, he would assume it was just books.

She retraced her steps, closed the barn door quietly and ran lightly over the yard to the side door of the house and inside.

Angus sat up as she locked the door. "Good boy, Angus," she whispered and the terrier lay down again. She tiptoed away, planning as she crossed the hall and climbed the stairs. Stop off tomorrow afternoon after school, she decided, and congratulated herself on a practical job well done.