

PRAISE FOR F. NELSON SMITH

JACK TUESDAY

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“With its vivid atmosphere and unforgettable characters, No Straight Thing is a treat for fans of suspenseful historical fiction.”

— *BlueInk Reviews, Starred*

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TUESDAY



Jack Tuesday is a work of fiction. Apart from events and locales that figure into the narrative, all names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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JACK TUESDAY

Dear Readers . . .

JACK TUESDAY is a retro mystery novel set in Canada, published in Canada by a Canadian company and written by a Canadian author.

We appreciate the few readers who take it upon themselves to assist us in the proofreading process and point out any errors they find. We only ask that perhaps first you do a Google search to discover if the word you feel is spelt wrong (notice 'spelt' not 'spelled') is not just a Canadian variant of that word.

Thank you.



*To my daughter, Brenda, who in my time of sadness
prodded a reluctant me to finish the manuscript.*

“I hold it to be the inalienable right of anybody to go
to hell in his own way.”

Robert Frost

Winnipeg, Manitoba 1951

“Run!”

If anyone wondered what flows through the veins of crime bosses, Danny would say it was ice water. But the fluid oozing around his father’s head where he lay sprawled on the floor wasn’t water. Danny squinted with one eye closed. Curiously, the newly installed asbestos tile shining through the blood turned from green to black. *Good thing it never happened at home, on the priceless Persian carpet.* Danny imagined blood spattered on the Cézanne and let out a manic high-pitched snicker.

“Now!” Luke’s rough shoulder punch knocked him off balance, jolting him into reality. “Go, Danny.”

The room swam into focus, and this time, Danny gagged at the sight of Conor Jackson’s limp form and the meat cleaver beside him. Realizing he still held the baseball bat, Danny shook it free from his hand as if it were an evil thing, wincing when it clattered on the tile floor. With a will of their own, his legs backed him up against the wall. He slid to the floor and wrapped both arms around his head. “Oh God, oh God. I hit him. I had to. What he’ll do . . .”

“—is kill you this time.” Lips twisting in pain, Luke swore loud and long, finishing with, “Dammit, Danny, stop fooling around and get your head together. You have to run.”

“Run where?” The idea of leaving stirred him into a new panic. Shuddering, his eyes slid past Luke’s set face and his father’s prone body as if the answer were blazed across a wall somewhere.

“God, you’re dense.” Luke’s face warped in a mixture of anger,

impatience, and pain. “What you’ve done, he won’t tolerate.” Cradling the blood-soaked handkerchief wrapped around his hand, a pressure on his finger, he took two steps forwards and aimed a vicious kick at Danny’s shin. He sucked his breath between his teeth at the pain, fighting a flash of resentment.

The meat cleaver. Danny relived the memory of it raised against him again. How could he have forgotten so soon? “But you need a hospital . . .”

“The sooner you’re gone, the sooner I get one.” Luke used his good hand to grip Danny’s shoulder as if he could raise his little brother up with one hand. God, his iron grip was as solid as Gentleman Conon’s. Was his strength the reason Luke was favoured? Remembering who the favourite was made Danny’s innards quiver again. Having hit the wrong Jackson with the cleaver would propel the old bastard’s rage to new manic proportions.

“I’ll stall him.” Luke left, disappearing into the hallway. “But eventually he’ll send the boys out looking,” he called out behind him.

Danny forced himself to his feet, barely hearing his older brother over the blood rushing through his ears so fast he thought his head might burst at any moment.

“Here.” Luke stood in front of him again. “Take this. I took it from Dad’s safe.” He shoved a crumpled wad of cash into his chest. “Remember, don’t ask anyone for help. He’ll find out.”

Their father stirred and gave a weak moan. The brothers looked at each other, misery conveying all the unspoken words their upbringing would never allow them to say. Clutching the loose bills to his chest, Danny stepped over his father and towards the door.

“Danny.”

He turned only halfway. Something about the way Luke said his name made him queasy.

“Don’t come back. Forget you even have a family.”

So Danny pedalled his bike into the late afternoon. Away from the rooms behind the pool hall.

Better for him to go to Union Station on Main Street. The CPR Station was closer but would be the first place his father's muscle monkeys, Louis and Dewey, would search.

He ditched the bike in front of a butcher shop and ran the remaining two blocks, slowing to a stop near the ticket window, breath ragged. Which way? East to Toronto? West for Calgary? Gang contacts in both cities would find him in no time at all. Danny took a deep breath, fighting rising panic and poor decisions, and inspected the big departures board hoping for inspiration. Not finding anything useful, he backed out of line and weaved amongst a crush of men milling about at the far end of the waiting room, using them as concealment. He headed for the nearest bench for a break, with the nagging thought that Luke could not stall for long.

The familiar smell of old varnish and regular activity calmed him somewhat. He picked up a brochure lying on the bench beside him, gripping it with shaking hands and raising it as a shield against his face. There in bold print: 'Your country needs you.'

Danny peered over the top, more interested in making sure nobody was pushing through the crowd and heading for him. He saw men discussing a wall-sized poster displaying a montage of soldiers guiding rafts across rivers, climbing barricades, and rappelling up cliffs. Two soldiers in crisp uniforms handed out more brochures alongside another poster crying for recruits in the war between the United Nations and Korea. Enthusiastic tones made army life seem like a picnic.

Danny's thoughts zeroed in with the finest inspiration he'd had all day. His eyes rapidly moved between the poster and the brochure. It only took a moment before he rose and pushed to the front of the line.

His open relief didn't fool the sergeant manning the desk, whose sigh of enforced patience confirmed the sharp and knowing eyes beneath his cap. "How old are you, son?" Behind him, a corporal holding a clipboard inspected Danny with interest, then cemented

the sergeant's opinion with a grin.

Danny pointed to the calendar behind his desk. "Eighteen yesterday, sir. May fourteenth."

The sergeant's eyes zeroed in on Danny's shirt and the drops of blood. "You look like someone in a hurry. We aren't a refuge if you're running from the police."

His heartbeat increased to a mad gallop. He forced out a chuckle. "Oh no, sir. I deliver . . . delivered for a butcher shop, and the packages always leak." He rubbed the stain with a finger. "I'm not running from the police, sir. My job is going nowhere, and there's no future here." Danny quit talking. Luke said that when telling lies, not to overdo it and volunteer too much. He mentally crossed his fingers and focused on the sergeant's cap badge. A deer. No, an African animal.

"Do you know what it is?" The sergeant asked, bringing Jack's attention back to him.

"A Springbot."

With a glint of surprise in his eyes, the sergeant half-smiled, then pulled a form towards him. "Name?"

He uncrossed his fingers. "Jackson . . ." Danny froze.

The sergeant raised his head, smiling with forced patience. "You sure you want to join, son?" His cold eyes sent a message that action, not tolerance, was a virtue in the army.

A snicker came from behind, and the corporal grinned again. Danny felt his face grow hot. His eyes fell back on the calendar over the sergeant's shoulder. "Tuesday. My name is Jackson . . . Jack Tuesday." The corporal raised a questioning eyebrow, then gazed at the sergeant as if knowing the verdict.

But the sergeant bent his head and wrote. "Mother and father's name? Address?"

"Both parents are dead, sir." It was half-true, anyway. "And until today, I lived in a room above the butcher shop. But since I quit my job . . . guess I don't have an address, sir."

The sergeant held his pencil, one end in each hand, his eyes

boring into Danny's. Danny gazed straight back with well-practiced neutrality. The sergeant bent his head to fill in the blanks on the form, turned it around, and pointed. "Sign here."

Danny took the pen and signed his new name. It felt clumsy, like when forging his father's signature for school forms.

"Welcome to the Royal Canadian Dragoons. Armoured Regiment, Private. You're in the army now."

"The Dragoons," he repeated. "Yes, sir."

"And don't call me sir. I'm a sergeant." He sorted out some papers on the desk, put them in an envelope, wrote Danny's new name on the front, and handed it to him.

"Thank you, Sergeant." Danny—Jack's lungs took in a releasing breath. A smile spread over his face for the first time that day, and he nodded to the man who had just saved his life. "And I hope you get better soon."

The sergeant's fingers froze on the envelope. His other hand squeezed into a fist, then relaxed. The icy stare told Danny his remark was invasive and beyond army protocol.

"I meant . . . your arm, Sergeant." His voice trailed off. *Shit. I'm a wet rag. He'll reject me now. Stupid, stupid.*

Danny waited for the bad news, but the sergeant only let go of the envelope, and his brown khaki arm bearing three stripes pointed to the station side door. "A bus leaves at six o'clock. Check in at five o'clock. Sharp. You will get your kit at Osborne, then you're headed to Petawawa." He leaned back. "Say goodbye to your . . . friends. You won't be seeing them for a while." He beckoned over Danny's shoulder to the next man in line.

Danny checked the big station clock. He'd stand out if he didn't have a carryall filled with necessities. The Army and Navy store wasn't far, so he could hide there and buy what he needed.

Wearing a cap and carrying his new belongings, Danny joined the line of men at the side door right on the dot of five. On board the bus, he watched as the corporal came down the aisle, checking off a list on

his clipboard. When he got to Danny, he sat in the aisle seat. Danny's heart sank. Had the goons found him? Would he be kicked off the bus? The sigh of pneumatics sounded as the door closed, followed by the squeal of brakes being released. The bus moved.

"Tuesday," the corporal said. It sounded strange. "What you said. . ." He nodded his head towards the sergeant sitting behind the bus driver. "His injury. How did you know?"

Used to keeping his explanation simple, Danny rubbed his face. "I notice things . . . I shouldn't have said anything. I forgot myself."

The bus slowed at the exit road, then merged into the traffic leading from the station. Danny craned his neck towards the window, searching for Louis and Dewey.

"Tuesday." The tone said *don't ignore me*. "What things?"

"The sergeant's left arm is stiff. He squeezes a ball to strengthen it and still squeezes his fingers in a reflex. There's a white strip above a tan line on his forehead, meaning he used to wear his cap lower. Maybe he injured his head. His whole left side, I think."

Danny felt the corporal's eyes inspecting him as he talked. In the end, he asked coolly, "You got any more talents the army should know about?"

Not sure of what he was after, Danny shook his head. The corporal made a note on his clipboard and went to the front of the bus. Danny saw him exchange words with the sergeant before he sat in the seat across the aisle.

Familiar streets whipped past the window. Totally isolated now, a combination of loneliness, fear, and misery cramped his stomach. Where was Petawawa? Someplace his father couldn't find him, he hoped. He thought of Luke's last words.

"Don't come back, Danny. Forget you even have a family."

Edmonton, Alberta 1972

“How many secrets are rattling around in your head, Officer Tuesday?”

Warmth rushed to Jack’s cheeks. The doctor had outed his fake calm in what? Two minutes?

The doctor chuckled. “Police detectives should be skilled at stone-faced exteriors.” He beamed over at Jack, his face splitting into a myriad of cracks. “I ask everyone that question, and you all look guilty.”

Jack bit back a sarcastic comment. Instead, he forced a grin and shrugged in a *what-can-I-say* attitude.

Dr. Pavic settled back into his chair. “Tell me what you recall. Why you are here.”

Not prepared for the sudden switch in conversation, Jack spoke in spurts. “It was a raid. We, my partner Brodie and I, were with the tactical team. Afterwards, or during, I’m not sure which, we had a car accident. I was driving. I survived; Brodie didn’t.”

“And?” The doctor raised his eyebrows. Jack growled softly to ease the lump in his throat. If he weren’t careful, the cold, harsh reality that Brodie was dead would bring the too familiar anguish, which always ended with him weeping in abject misery. Only another cop would understand what it meant to lose a partner.

“No sympathy from that end, pal. Not this time.” Jack ignored the voice in his head.

“I woke up in the hospital with a major concussion and minor injuries and no memory of what happened.” He eyed the doctor, whose expression showed only interest, no accusation. Jack drew in a

shaky breath and held it before releasing a long exhale. “They told me Brodie died from a gunshot wound to the chest. It ruptured major organs. That’s all I know. If you know more, please . . . tell me.” A plea close to begging.

Dr. Pavic obliged and turned to a single typed page. “You left out the part about being suspended while the police investigate.” He peered at Jack over his reading glasses, expression neutral.

Jack met his eyes but said nothing. He would contribute as little as possible until he identified the lay of the land. Was the doctor’s aim to help or get him to confess to killing Brodie? He was around sixty. Burly arms and shoulders showed a man once fit but softened from hours at a desk. He wore his dark hair long, but it still didn’t cover the scar tissue running across the side of his head and over his right ear, which lacked part of the upper ridge.

His brown eyes stared into Jack’s face. “Your stay in the hospital was near on two months. During that time, you had no recall at all? Even a small niggler of the accident or the events leading up to it?”

“Nope. Most of what I know came from Internal Affairs and the newspapers.”

“Idiot.”

Jack’s eye twitched. *“Move along. Nothing to see there, partner.”* Brodie’s voice was insistent now, seeking attention.

About to open his mouth in reply, Jack pressed his lips together, realizing nobody else could hear the voice that taunted him.

“You’ve remembered something?” The doctor leaned forwards.

“No.” What could he say? That unrelieved depression had set him to talking to his dead partner? Back in the hospital, he’d wracked his brain for answers, for any trace of memory as he pleaded, ‘I need you, Brodie. You shouldn’t be dead. Help me here. Tell me what I need to know.’ When the response came, he was so shocked that he spent the next two days in silence, suspecting he was brain damaged. Now the voice intruded at random. It sounded so real.

“Well, you will talk, and I will listen.” Dr. Pavic closed the file and

leaned back; his stubby fingers peaked into a steeple. Jack's attention sharpened seeing a man experienced in interrogation. "Would you like coffee or water? I don't want you to think of me as your enemy. Rather, you only need to remember two things. You are safe, and I may be the best friend you have right now." In the doctor's gentle tone, Jack could detect no undercurrent or warning at the remark. Despite his reluctance, his spirit warmed towards him.

Jack shook his head and shifted his gaze away to inspect the office space, postponing the inevitable. No stark, modern glass and metal here. Two leather matching easy chairs. A bookcase against the wall, the books lined up behind glass doors, sorted by height into orderly ranks like soldiers. Lighter outlines on the floor disclosed someone had recently moved the furniture. Some remodelling? The overall effect projected a warm and comforting atmosphere for patients. Two diplomas on the wall, one in a foreign language and one in English from the University of British Columbia. Also, two cityscapes; the Edmonton skyline viewed from the river, and the other seemed European.

"It's Belgrade," Pavic said, following his eyes. "I attended university there."

Jack nodded again, finishing his sweep around the office furniture. "No couch inviting me to share my innermost feelings?" He didn't hide the sarcasm.

Dr. Pavic only smiled and crossed one knee over the other. "Your physical recovery seems to be complete, except for headaches?" His eyes swept over Jack's frame as if looking for signs of injury. Jack didn't have any. Not outwards, anyway.

When he nodded, Pavic added, "Don't you wish to remember?"

Jack lifted his shoulders to hide his desperation. He had to remember . . . for Brodie's sake.

"We will get acquainted here, I promise." The man smiled. Not forced, Jack noted. It signalled Dr. Pavic cared for his patients. Or was it just the doctor's expertise at work?

“What choice do I have?”

“None,” Pavic admitted. His mouth pulled down, conveying consolation that they were both constrained in choice. “Deputy Chief Durand and Internal Affairs seem committed to a full investigation and requested I flag your file as urgent action.” He peered at Jack as if the urgency might be his fault.

“He’s only *Acting* Deputy Chief,” Jack put in. Durand was the inspector of his detective squad. “Until they find a new one.”

Pavic ignored Jack’s correction. “So I repeat, I am here to help you recall what happened and find the reason Officer Brian Brodie is dead.”

Jack winced at the stark reminder, and his chest constricted. “I want that more than you know. Brodie and I were close. We started in the force together over ten years ago. Internal Affairs as good as accused me of shooting him and causing the accident to cover it up.” He clenched his fists, unable to hide his desperation. “I wouldn’t . . . can’t believe it.”

“Is their accusation based on evidence?”

Jack gritted his teeth. “The bullet taken from Brodie came from my weapon. And they have our prints, mine on the butt and his on the barrel. Their theory is that he grabbed the barrel just before I shot him in a last-ditch attempt to stop me.”

“As if I’d be so stupid.”

“It does not seem sufficient proof for them to charge you outright.”

“A murder charge, you mean.” Jack squeezed the word out through tight throat muscles. “No. I can’t see them going that far.” He blew air between pursed lips, saying what he thought of the premise. “There has to be a good reason the prints are there. I would never harm Brodie, let alone shoot him.”

Head to one side, Dr. Pavic’s middle finger scratched behind one ear as he considered Jack’s statement. “There is no personal history in your file,” he abruptly altered course. “Where you were born, your parents’ names, siblings. Background things that are usually present

in a police file.” He looked apologetic. “You may think it unnecessary, but your background helps me understand your present condition.” His eyes twinkled at Jack. “I am not fond of treating police officers if knowing that makes you feel any better. You all have the idea that you should be asking the questions, not answering them. But get over it, Jack, and things will go much faster. Don’t make me guess what makes you tick, as the saying goes.”

“I’m an onion patch kid.” The doctor’s eyebrows became part of his hairline. “An orphan. Brian was my family.” A sudden ache made his voice ragged. “I never knew how much I treasured our relationship until he was gone.” He clamped his teeth together to stop his chin from quivering.

Dr. Pavic said nothing, and thankfully Jack assumed his technique knew enough to leave him in peace for the moment.

“And you never married? No children?” Pavic’s voice was soft, inviting confidence.

“No. At least none running around who look like me.” He managed a grin, apologetic for the poor joke.

“Irresponsible rowdies looking like you? When you came out of the hospital with that bush of blond hair, you looked like an alien from The Village of the Damned, green eyes and all.”

Jack mentally punched Brodie and continued, “Sometimes, I’m convinced it’s lucky I don’t have any.” It was a lie, but this was not the place to talk of hopes and dreams. “In my job, I see too many who fall on the wrong side.”

Jack saw a momentary shift in the doctor’s gaze as if he had caught sight of a face over his shoulder. It was so quick that Jack wondered if it was a trick of the light. He dismissed the thought and concentrated on the doctor’s questions, noting how he shifted the subject from one thing to another. He seemed good at it, maybe to force his patients to blurt out information. “You were in the army before becoming a policeman.”

Jack nodded, knowing it would be in the file. “First Korea, then a

posting to Germany.”

“Where you learned to be a smart pest.” He pronounced it like *psst*. He chuckled at Jack’s questioning face. “The reports say you go your own way, have a sarcastic mouth, and resist authority.” Eyes twinkling as though sharing an internal fault, he peered at Jack over the paper and tapped his forefinger against his lip. He raised his palm, smiling, painting a secrets-between-us image. “My instructions tell me to concentrate on your years before the army. Is that mere curiosity, do you think?” He shut up, waiting for an answer.

“Probably wondering if I pulled wings off flies when I was a kid,” Jack said, feigning boredom. Danger signals began to tingle the back of his neck.

“*What strange things you have done in the midnight sun . . . ?*” Brodie and his everlasting Robert Service quotes.

“Well, no matter,” the doctor continued. Safe for the moment, Jack relaxed, aware a reference could slip in anytime amongst other subjects. “We have something in common.”

Jack’s eyebrows rose.

“Your military background. I was in the resistance during the war. In Yugoslavia.” His expression sobered. He touched the side of his head over the temple, caressing the edge of his scar. “War is not pleasant.”

Great, thought Jack. *I’m getting treated by a Commie*. “Am I here to get an earful of Commie logic? Does the RCMP know why you didn’t stay in your own country?” Jack shot the questions at him to keep him off the subject of his past, but just the same, he was barely kidding. Hadn’t a Yugoslavian been assassinated in Toronto recently? Infiltration of Communist agents into Canada was front and center now, and the Mounties had undercover police acting as students in university to single out Reds lurking there to recruit young idealists who were avid readers of Marx and Lenin.

Pavic threw back his head in a roar of laughter. “Most Canadians aren’t as vocal about Communism as you are, Jack.”

“Most Canadians haven’t seen them at work. Nor had daily in-your-face insistence of how superior they are.”

Dr. Pavic chuckled. “Yes. I agree. Tito headed the Communist Partisan’s resistance, but it was not the only resistance group. I belonged to the Chetniks. We supported the Royalist Government in exile.”

He watched Jack, waiting for him to say something, perhaps remarking on their shared comradeship in military life. “Didn’t the Chetniks collaborate with the Nazis?” Jack immediately regretted his rudeness. Why did he care who was or wasn’t a Communist over twenty years ago?

Dr. Pavic didn’t hide his surprise, either at Jack’s knowledge or that he had the gumption to say it aloud. “Not altogether true. Yugoslavia’s war is a complicated matter of who, where, and why. Months of discussion would not even probe the top layer.” His voice hardened. “But we are not here to discuss my history.”

Jack nodded his acknowledgement. Still, an uneasy feeling hung on the sidelines, somewhere in the mist, like a shape not fully formed. Mentally dismissing it, he concentrated on the doctor.

“Tell me what you remember before your accident.” Pavic’s manner shifted again, now like buddies having a conversation over a beer. A familiar tactic—questions stated in different ways to see if answers varied, indicating he was lying.

“Not much. We attended the briefing about the raid on a biker chop shop. I vaguely remember the team’s planned routine, but the raid itself draws a blank.” He waited for the doctor to contribute information, helping him along, but Pavic only bent over his notepad and scribbled. Jack bent over his knees, head in his hands, then sat back and took an unsteady breath. Pavic made another note on the pad. “It’s like being half-dead. I can remember before and after, so why can’t I remember that day?”

“You experienced trauma, and your brain erased it to protect you. We cannot force the memory. Do you have nightmares? Flashbacks

which seem unconnected and then disappear? Are you sleeping well?”

“Nothing,” he said, not wanting to complain about the hours he spent mapping the ceiling. “Everything I do is to jog my memory. I go to the station as if I am going to work, hoping for some ah-ha moment.”

“No girlfriends?” When Jack shook his head, Pavic’s expression changed, plainly wondering about other preferences.

Jack wasted no time protesting. “I’ve had a few.”

“A few dozen,” Brodie snickered in his ear.

Jack’s lips quivered, tempted to voice an open retort to his taunt. “Nothing serious,” he offered instead, “not since a girl in Germany.” Jack cringed. The words had come out of their own accord. Why did he mention Ursula after all this time? “. . . It didn’t work out.”

Jack shut his mouth and stared out the window behind the doctor. In the distance, he could see a PWA 737 turning on a flight path towards Kingsway Avenue, targeting the runway at the Municipal Airport. The silence grew. Finally, Pavic sighed, looked at his watch, and stood. “You cannot force a memory, Jack. Do something entirely different with your days. Relaxing things. Shopping. Take in a museum. Talk to ordinary people, not policemen. An idea or clue may turn up. Just write it down. Shall we say Friday at the same time for our next appointment?”

“Watch it! He’s anxious to roast your butt over the fire.”

“Why so soon?”

The doctor grinned at him and waggled his eyebrows like a conspirator. “I have made you a priority, so why not? Besides, what else have you got to do?”

Jack almost blurted out that *his* priority was proving he wasn’t a corrupt cop, so he had plenty to do. However, long experience cautioned him. Durand would be front and center, needling the doctor for prompt answers. Nodding to the man about Friday, he left the office.

Downstairs, he swung through the door to the street outside at

the same time as a girl coming in. Straight blond hair fell down to her shoulders, and startled blue eyes crinkled in amusement when their voices sang a duet of apologies. As Jack stood back to let her through the door, he thought she was the prettiest girl he'd seen in a long time. Her eyes looked him over, apparently liking what she saw, for she nodded in what he took to be pleasure before she ran to the elevator, high heels tapping on the tile. Flashing a dimple that showed up at the corner of her mouth, she gave him another once over as the elevator doors closed.

Jack watched until the indicator light stopped at the second floor, and he wondered, unreasonably, if she were the doctor's next patient. His training registered her description; early thirties, well dressed, even features, and eyes the colour of bright cornflowers.

Squinting against the direct sunlight, he strode to his 1969 Volvo 164 at the far end of the lot, parked there on purpose to give himself needed exercise. Inside, he grabbed his sunglasses. With no warning, his vision could go wonky on him, and dancing prisms of light would flash before his eyes, leaving him dizzy and with another headache. It had been a cold winter day near the end of March when he regained consciousness, and the aftereffects of the concussion still plagued him . . . among other things: treatments, endless questions, and the cold stares of betrayal and blame.

Jack tuned the radio to CKUA, choosing to think about the girl with blue eyes instead. Louis Armstrong's trumpet blared forth *Love Walked Right in and Drove the Shadows Away*, the notes sweet and clear. Cheered, he smiled. It seemed fitting. From the lot on 109th Street, he turned south towards the river.

Parked at the curbside, a driver let another car pass before he pulled out and followed.

3

AT the first right after the High Level Bridge, Jack drove down the tree-lined Garneau district near the university. One of the oldest areas of Edmonton, it overlooked the river valley with easy access to downtown, neighbourhood coffee houses, small shops, and a heritage theatre specializing in foreign films. He parked in his reserved tenant slot behind the three-story walk up containing his corner apartment. Large east-facing windows in his second-floor space looked out onto a quiet street and let in the early morning sun.

Pharo met him at the door, wagging his curly tail but without his usual chortle. His eyes under his wrinkled brow were expressive enough, and with the way he opened his mouth, or didn't in this case, Jack could tell he still hadn't forgotten the two months' desertion. Someone, Hawk, he supposed, had taken Pharo to a kennel in St. Albert after the accident, for which Jack was silently grateful. When he picked him up, Jack had been subjected to the Basenji smell-over, funnelling in the odours before making a decision. Finally, he stood on his hind legs, his tail swishing with a tentative wave, and Jack bent to have his face licked. Pharo put his full weight against his knee, pressing close as he looked for their way out. Now, two weeks later, Jack made sure he got plenty of attention.

At noon, Jack picked the receiver off the wall and returned it. Did he dare chance another call to Brodie's wife? Maureen had rejected all of his calls so far. His compulsion to deliver his sympathy in person wasn't the only reason he needed her to pick up the phone. She was the only person who could answer certain questions.

He gripped the receiver again and dialled the number. She answered on the first ring. Not expecting it, he forgot to respond. Sweat broke

out on his forehead.

“It’s me.” He stilled his shaking hand and quickly added, “Don’t hang up, Maureen, Please.”

“If you think you can come see Ben and me, forget it. Why keep phoning? You’re not welcome here.”

“Please. I’m not responsible. If you’ll just let me—”

“You’re wasting your breath, Jack. I’m hanging up now.”

“Maureen, wait. Meet me tomorrow. Just you and me. Please.”

She hesitated, which he took for indecision and hung up before she could refuse, then immediately regretted it. Maybe she’d assume he was disgusted at her continued refusal. Jack rolled his shoulders, feeling the pain of cramped muscles, telling himself he was tense and getting too worked up. Hands shaking, he slopped coffee into a cup and took it and Pharo outside to the balcony.

How could he show Maureen that he was sincere?

He picked at the ends of his short regulation-cut blond hair as if a solution might fall out like dandruff.

“You’re trying too hard, Jack. She’ll see through that in a second. Just meet her halfway.”

Telling himself to follow Brodie’s advice, he drank his coffee and tried to think of other things. Like a magnet, his eyes automatically went to the old lady’s window on the top floor of the apartment across the street.

He didn’t see her and felt a sudden concern. Was she unwell? He assumed she was old, for she had white hair, and he thought she might be crippled. She reminded him of those sentinels of Europe, the old ladies who policed the neighbourhood from their doorways, eyes missing nothing. Once while staring at her, he thought their eyes locked, so he’d lifted a tentative wave. Her gaze slid past him, leaving him unsure. After that, Jack watched her somewhat sneakily, with eyes partly averted, loathe to seem rude. Still, he liked to imagine they had a bond of kinship.

She must have noticed his weeks of absence, he told himself and

sniggered out loud, making Pharo cock his head at him. After all, watching people was her day job, wasn't it?

A wet nose pushed into his palm. Chortling softly, Pharo pawed at his knee.

Jack rubbed his ears and grinned. "Time for a run? Okay. Forget the neighbours, and let's go back to normal." Pharo padded along behind while he collected the leash and doggie bags.

"Emily Murphy Park?" Pharo wagged his tail. "Or the Kinsmen Park? It's closer." Pharo yipped agreement.

Situated in central Alberta, Edmonton lay on the North Saskatchewan River. Historically, the river had served the fur trade, a primary conduit for trading posts scattered around where the city was now. Miles of linear parks and ravine systems divided the landscape into winter and summer recreation spots. The multicultural mix of English and Europeans reminded him of Winnipeg, the place he shunned like a dose of poison.

They took the gate under the High Level Bridge and the path down through the trees to the park. Pharo sniffed every blade of grass and dashed off in ever-widening circles, leaping at any bird he spotted. He found a tennis ball and brought it to Jack, pretending to release it before running off with it, daring him to follow. "Nope. Me, owner. You, dog."

Across the field, he saw Pharo wag his tail at a woman who patted him before walking on. Jack grinned. Pharo was wary of strangers but deigned to be polite when he didn't perceive a threat. The woman's dark hair reminded him of Ursula and his session with Dr. Pavic. The doctor was not what he'd imagined, and Jack didn't dislike him, but he wasn't about to reveal innermost moments of angst. Still, he had easily drawn Jack into mentioning Ursula. He hadn't realized she was still so close to the front of his mind.

He'd met her while stationed at Fort Beausejour in Germany. At a bar during Oktoberfest. She'd leaned up against the back wall, one

arm under her elbow supporting the other that held a cigarette. When she turned her grey eyes on him, he was committed.

“Too long in the barracks, Sergeant?” Her voice, low and husky, tinged with amusement at his frank ogling and it made his spine tingle. Dark hair with bangs cut straight across her eyebrows fell to her shoulders.

“Go on, Tuesday, show her what day it is.” His three mates behind him laughed and jostled him towards her. They spotted a server carrying three steins of beer in each hand, and with arms on each other’s shoulders, the men followed along behind her, leaving him alone.

“What do they mean: show me what day it is?” Her English was good, except for a slight variation in pronouncing *w* as a *v*. She waved the smoke away from her face, then crushed the cigarette against the wall, letting it drop to the floor. Her hips swayed gently in her form-fitting dress as she shifted weight from one foot to the other.

“A joke. My name is Tuesday, and so every day is Tuesday for me. You can call me Jack . . .” He sounded silly when he wanted to sound interesting. *Scheisse*.

“Hello, Jack Tuesday,” she smiled up at him. “I am Ursula.”

“Ursula. Any other name to go with it?”

“Do names matter?” Her grey eyes clouded over.

“Yes. What if I want to look you up? I can’t wander the streets crying out ‘Ursula’ like I’m calling for my lost cat.”

“Never mind, Jack Tuesday. We shall always set a date for our next meeting. Just before we part.”

And that was the start. She’d entranced him—mysterious and beguiling all in one. She forced away any question of her history, but he didn’t care. They loved each other, and that’s all that mattered. Six months later, he headed for her place with a ring, ready to sign up for the house, yard, and kids. Inside, only that loud silence which shouts emptiness greeted him. Fear rippling his insides, he opened the note she’d left. Just that once, he’d wanted his instinct to be wrong.

Shattered dreams meant he chased glimpses of her which never materialized into a real person for the remainder of his tour. Jack left the army, moved to Edmonton, and after a round of unsatisfying jobs, enrolled in the Police Academy. After five years, he got a sideways promotion to Detective.

The quiet of the area brought him out of his daydreams. The park had emptied of people. Time to go home.

He searched for Pharo and found him staring at the field directly across from him, body rigid in concentration. Jack whistled—Pharo turned his head and then back to the far end. *Don't even think of chasing across there after some squirrel*, Jack thought and whistled again. The beginnings of the familiar jackhammer headache nudged around his temples. A train began its noisy rumble over the top level of the bridge.

Still haunted by the remains of memory, the sun hid behind a cloud and adrenaline coursed through him, shaking his other-worldly antennae. The hair on his neck prickled like it did before battle, paired with a tingle in the small of his back.

Relax, he told himself. *This ain't Korea. Everything is normal.*

Pharo had his nose up, testing the air, still trying to figure out the far side of the field. Needing his medication, Jack left him and increased his pace for the path home, knowing the dog would soon dash after him. A bout of vertigo turned the field into a lopsided view of green grass and blue sky. The train's horn blared in sympathy. Jack bent forwards at the waist to stop the world from spinning.

The wind tugged at his hair, and a pop echoed against the tree trunk behind him. Training drove him to the ground, breath escaping in a whoosh as he landed on his stomach. A wet nose snuffled against his cheek.

“Play dead!” Pharo dropped, jowls flat against the ground, waiting for the next command, but Jack's fright confused him. He pawed at him, sensing anxiety. Heart pounding against his ribs, Jack's indecision whether to get up and run or continue to play dead ended

when a foursome carrying tennis rackets burst out of the trees. They bunched up when they saw him, curiosity and caution making them glance at each other. He rose to his knees and pretended to wrestle with Pharo, their presence more welcome than they could ever know.

Someone took a pot shot at me. He wanted to tell them. If I hadn't bent over, I'd be dead.