

Carnival of Shadows

R.J. ELLORY



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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Psychological Fitness Evaluation 19-409

Subject: MT-051027-096N

Date: Monday, August 4, 1958—15:38 p.m.

Transcription by SA Paul Erickson

Q. You understand why you are here, Special Agent Travis?

A. I do, sir, yes.

Q. Take a seat, or would you prefer the couch, perhaps?

A. The chair is fine.

Q. Very good. So let's begin with some personal details. How old are you?

A. Thirty-one.

Q. Married?

A. No.

Q. Engaged?

A. No.

Q. Sexually or emotionally involved with a member of the opposite sex?

A. No.

Q. Very good. Tell me about your personal background, your childhood.

A. The fact that my mother killed my father. Is that what you want me to talk about?

Q. We need to address that area, of course, but we don't need to start with that.

A. Well, if we need to talk about it, then we should talk about it. I don't think there's anything else of great significance.

Q. Very well. We shall begin there, then. You were fifteen at the time, correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Tell me what happened, as best you can recall...

SUMMARY

From initial observation, subject is emotionally restricted. Where there should be significant emotional response and activity, there appears to be little. Such an affected disassociation is not uncommon in cases where severe mental and emotional trauma has been experienced in formative years. Subject's answers appear somewhat practiced and formal, as if he has constructed a means by which he can deal with his emotions. Divergence from that construct is unsafe and would open the subject to alternate interpretations and unpredictable responses. That is unproven and untested territory, and therefore—to the subject—needs to be avoided. Conversely, he may simply have adopted a manner he believes best suited to such interviews, in this way presenting as professional a persona as possible. Travis evidences an inability to engage and empathize with others, though he does not see this as a failing, certainly not in his professional capacity. This is not uncommon in orphans, into which category the subject could be loosely placed.

In light of his proposed promotion to lead field operative, I am erring toward the view that this sense of disassociation and emotional distance might not actually hinder his work, but rather simplify it. Emotional engagement with suspects under investigation has proven to be an obstacle in many instances, and I understand that Section Chief Gale is keen to avoid utilization of field operatives who demonstrate an inability to remain wholly objective.

Clearance is granted for active duty per the cover memorandum of Monday, August 4, 1958 (Reference: Psychological Fitness Evaluation 19-409)

STATUS REPORT

Reference: MT-051027-096N

Originator: SA Raymond Carvahlo

Recipient: SSA Tom Bishop

Re: Mandate (Psych Eval 19-409)

—SA Michael Travis has been granted clearance for active duty

STATUS REPORT

Reference: MT-051027-096N

Originator: SSA Tom Bishop

Recipient: SA Raymond Carvahlo

—Acknowledged. Please submit copies of all interview transcriptions to the office of Assistant Special Agent in Charge Monroe, copies also to Section Chief Gale and Executive Assistant Director Bradley Warren.

COMM EXCHANGE TERMINATED 08.04.58 AT 17:42 p.m. BY
SSA TOM BISHOP

“This is an unusual case, Agent Travis, and we don’t quite know what we’re dealing with, to be honest.”

FBI Supervisory Special Agent Tom Bishop stood just inside the doorway of his office. He leaned against the frame, an unlit cigarette in one hand, a plain manila folder in the other.

“You’ve been in the club a little more than eight years now, Travis, and it’s time we threw you to the lions.”

Bishop took a seat at his desk. He set the manila file down and then lit his cigarette.

“Twenty-eight U.S.C. 540A0, Violent Crimes Against Interstate Travelers sort of covers it, we think . . . but we’re not so sure. We’re dealing with a murder; that much we know. However, all we have right now is a small-town sheriff with a dead body, and he’s in need of our help.”

Michael Travis shifted in his chair. His neck was a little sore. Occasioned, perhaps, by the invasive nature of the previous day’s meeting with the Bureau psychologist, he had not slept well. He tried not to think of his own past, and he certainly did not care much to discuss it, especially with strangers. The conversation with the psychologist had required that he focus his attention toward things that he would have much preferred to remain dormant. However, his humorless, perhaps even *human*-less performance, had evidently satisfied the psychologist, for he knew he’d been given clearance for this assignment. Nevertheless, recollections of his mother’s execution, the death of Esther Faulkner, other such events from his past, had left him unsettled, and—in among all of the long-forgotten feelings and thoughts and conclusions—there had been one thing that had stayed with him. The fear that he *was* perhaps his father’s son, that the tendency to violence *was* in the blood, a hereditary relay, if you like, and that the baton had been passed.

Also Travis had dreamed again, the same dream that had plagued him for years—the shadow of an unknown man, a cracked and arid field, the sound of a laughing crow. Nothing more nor less.

Notwithstanding his current frame of mind, he also knew how far he had come. He was thirty-one years of age, he had an apartment in Olathe,

just outside of Kansas City, eight years of dedicated and exemplary service in the Federal Bureau of Investigation behind him, and was about to be given his first lead assignment. Though he had known such a thing was inevitable, it was still both challenging and significant.

"There is, literally, a carnival in town," Tom Bishop said. "The town is called Seneca Falls, not to be confused with Seneca up on 63 near the state line. This is a small town at the edge of the Flint Hills, sits between El Dorado and Eureka, just to the east of I-35. You've heard of it?"

"No, sir, I haven't."

"Oh, by the way, you can skip the 'sir' business now, seeing as how they've seen fit to give you a senior special agent rank for this one."

Travis's chest swelled. "Really?"

"Oh, come on... You knew it was gonna happen any day now." Bishop smiled, reached out his hand.

Travis reached back and they shook.

"Welcome to the executive washrooms, Senior Special Agent Travis."

Travis smiled. "Heard rumor you have real hand towels in there, sir."

Bishop laughed dryly. "Just a scurrilous rumor, Travis, I assure you. SSA is probationary, of course. You still have to earn your stripes on the frontline, but I don't think anyone has any doubt in your ability to run an investigation of this nature, strange though it is."

"Strange?"

"As I said, we are dealing with a carnival, Michael, and not figuratively speaking. We have a real-life honest-to-God traveling carnival with gypsies, sideshow freaks and the like, and right now it appears that someone within it may be responsible for the death of a man. From what little we have, the victim appears to be a non-national. We don't know for sure. We have very sketchy information from the local police, but due to the simple fact that the travelers came in from Oklahoma, and as soon as they arrived, a dead guy happens to show up, we are treating it as a potential federal case. It might not be. It might be something else entirely. All we know is that the locals are out of their depth and that they've asked us for help."

"You said something about U.S.C. 540A0, Violent Crimes Against Interstate Travelers, but what you're telling me suggests it might be a violent crime *by* an interstate traveler."

"Well, maybe, if this guy had nothing to do with the carnival itself, but the Seneca Falls sheriff says that there are a whole bunch of foreigners down there, and this guy might have been one of them. If he was killed by one of his own people, then it becomes a federal matter."

"I see. So it's a fact-finding operation, first and foremost. If I conclude

that neither the victim nor perpetrator had crossed state lines, then surely it would cease to be a federal concern?"

Bishop shrugged his shoulders. "We shall make that adjudication as and when we have sufficient information. I know that Chief Gale works very much with a view that once the Bureau has begun something, it should not leave the matter unresolved. Sort of like the fire department going out to a fire and then deciding not to extinguish it, if you know what I mean. Even if it does turn out to be nonfederal, Chief Gale may just wish it closed up for public relations reasons."

"Yes, makes perfect sense."

"So, you better get your bags packed."

"When was the body found?"

"That's all in the file here," Bishop said, sliding the manila folder across the desk.

"And do I take a second?"

"No. As you said, right now it's nothing more than fact-finding. If it turns out to be a full-blown federal investigation, then we'll send a second, but for the moment, you're on your own."

"And when am I leaving?"

"Oh, around about last Saturday, I should reckon."

"Which, presumably, was when the body was found," Travis replied matter-of-factly.

"That's correct," Bishop said, and made to rise from his desk. He paused then, as if struck by a secondary thought, and resumed his seat. "One other thing."

"Sir?"

"When you get back, we need to talk about something else."

Travis frowned.

"Mr. Hoover, as you know, is a dedicated Freemason." Bishop smiled. "As am I, as is Chief Gale. In fact, it would be fair to say that there is a direct relationship between one's active participation in the humanitarian and philanthropic activities of the Freemasonry fellowship and the speed and certainty with which one ascends the ranks in the Bureau. Did you know that George Washington was a Master Mason?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Well, Mr. Hoover has been a Master Mason since 1920. He has accumulated a vast collection of medals and awards for his work." Bishop paused for a moment. "Do you know anything of the Freemasons?"

"A little, sir, yes. I knew of Mr. Hoover's devotion to the organization, of course. I understand that he was granted a very senior office just a few years ago."

"Well, this is something we will discuss in greater detail upon your

return. Meanwhile, if you have a chance, do secure some literature on this. You might find it useful.”

Bishop walked to the door and opened it for Travis.

“Do us proud, Senior Special Agent Travis,” Bishop said.

“Absolutely, sir.”

Travis gathered together a few things from his office, took the car, and headed back to his apartment outside of Olathe. Here he studied what little information was available in the file that Bishop had given him, a photograph of the main drag of this Seneca Falls, photos of a somewhat disheveled carnival troupe, canvas tents and the like. There were pictures of vehicles, registration numbers, and then the dead man himself. As Bishop had said, the man was evidently a non-national. There was something Germanic, even Slavic about his features, a heaviness that belied mainland European influence. Beyond that, a few notes had been taken—names of people who were part of this traveling circus, but that was all. It was scant information, but then, the lack of information was the reason for Travis’s dispatch.

He packed some clean clothes into an overnight bag—a second suit, a pair of shoes, three clean shirts, some heavy boots, a flashlight, other such things he considered needful. It was as he was packing that he glanced over at the bookcase. Somewhere, he had a volume on the Freemasons. Perhaps he should take it with him, study it somewhat. He could not find it, but what he did find was something else of significance. A copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Travis had bought it for Esther, Christmas of 1943. She had loved the book, though Travis himself had never read it. It was the only thing he had kept from the Grand Island house they’d shared. There was the book, and—more important—there was the letter within. That letter, given to him by Esther with the entreaty that he not read it until after she was dead, had now remained unopened for more than eight years. He believed he would never open it, had in fact come close to just burning it several times, but had always stayed his hand. He knew what it would say, that she was sorry for everything, that perhaps it had all been a mistake, that she was to blame. But that was not true, and Travis knew it. It had *not* been a mistake, and she was *not* to blame. Between the lines of that letter would be his own unwritten confession, his own guilt, his own heartbreak. He was the one who’d betrayed her, he was the one who’d left her, and had he not done so, he knew she might still be alive. Perhaps she might have died anyway, but the ghost of what could have been still haunted him. No, he was not ready to relive those emotions. Not yet. Perhaps not ever.

Travis returned the book to the shelf, Esther’s letter safely within it,

and hurriedly packed the remainder of his things. He knew he was feeling such a weight of loss because of the interviews with the psychologist. Memories had been stirred up, memories that would have been better left just exactly where they'd been put to rest.

Travis started out just a handful of minutes before midday. It was a dogleg run, southwest along 35 for a hundred miles to Emporia, then south-southwest for another fifty or so into Seneca Falls. He stopped for lunch at a roadside diner outside of Emporia, took a BLT, a cup of coffee, a slice of blueberry pie, and he was back on the road by quarter past two. Traffic was sparse and he made good time, reaching his destination close to half past three.

Travis's first impression of Seneca Falls was of a relatively nondescript and characterless town, much as had been indicated by the one photo in the file. The main drag, at the end of which he found the Sheriff's Department office—itsself a low-slung plain-looking building, just one story high, painted a kind of off-white that had not weathered well at all—was populated by a dozen or more of the regular outlets and establishments one would find in such a place. A barbershop, two saloons (the Tavern and the Travelers' Rest), a drugstore, two hotels (the Seneca Falls Hotel and the McCaffrey Hotel), the Seneca Falls Bank, a general mercantile, a grain and seed store, a car showroom, a tractor and farm machinery franchise, a post office, and a small bus depot that appeared not to have seen a bus for some considerable time.

Travis pulled up in front of the Sheriff's Department office and got out of the car. He looked back along the street, feeling at once both anachronistic and strangely unwelcome, and yet he shrugged off the feeling. He did not need to like the place or the people; the people did not need to like him; he was here to do a job, and do the job he would. This was his first lead assignment, and it would be textbook, professional, flawless in its execution. This would be the first of a great many exemplary assignments, of that he was sure. He had no doubt that his reports would go through Bishop, Gale, and Warren, all the way to Mr. Tolson and Mr. Hoover. The director was keeping track of all that happened in the unit, and what happened here meant a great deal to Travis, not only for his career, but also personally.

Before Travis had a chance to lock the car and make his way up the steps to the front door of the building, the sheriff appeared.

Travis introduced himself, felt a certain pride in giving his new title of *senior* special agent.

The sheriff's greeting was at once welcoming and unaffected, almost at variance to the impression Travis had received upon arrival. Travis

had suspected that there might be a degree of resistance to federal involvement, but there was certainly no indication of this in the sheriff's manner.

Sheriff Charles Rourke was—at a guess—in his late thirties or early forties. He was slim of build, but broad in the shoulders. He had the kind of open and uncomplicated features found so predominantly in the Midwest, at once trusting without being naive, perhaps believing that other folks should always be afforded the benefit of the doubt until there was reason enough to afford them something else.

"Charles Rourke," the sheriff said, "though everyone here knows me as Chas."

Travis shook hands with Rourke. "Here to assist you with your situation," he said.

"Well, that was fast. You guys are really on the ball, eh? Glad to have you, Agent Travis, and don't let anyone else suggest otherwise," Rourke said. "Folks around here can be a mite suspicious of strangers, and they sure as hell weren't happy when this crowd of gypsies and freaks showed up, but they're a good sort in the main." Rourke nodded back and to the left as if indicating the location of the *gypsies and freaks*.

"The carnival people," Travis said.

"Hell," Rourke replied, "that'll do for want of a better description. Looks like something from the end of last century if you ask me, kind of thing you'd see show up around the edges of the County Fair. Kind of thing we'd encourage to move on, if you know what I mean."

"When did they arrive, exactly?" Travis asked.

"You come on in," Rourke said. "Let's get you a desk and a chair and a cup of coffee and whatever else you need, and then I can give you a full rundown of what's been goin' on."

"Appreciated, Sheriff," Travis said.

"Oh hell, just call me Chas like everyone else does."

"I think it's better if we stay official," Travis replied, smiling. "You're the sheriff, and as such should be afforded the due respect of your position."

"Well, I ain't never heard it put that-a-ways, but whatever you say. And what should I be callin' you?"

"Agent Travis, Mr. Travis, either one will do."

"Well, Mr. Travis, let me welcome you to Seneca Falls, and I can assure you that you *are* welcome, and the facilities and personnel of the Sheriff's Department are at your disposal. We don't make a habit of havin' a murder here, and though some folks around here consider it's exciting and scandalous, still the fact remains that someone got killed,

and though that's mighty bad news for him, it ain't such good news for us either."

"Let's go inside," Travis said, "and you can get me up to speed."

Rourke led the way, introduced Travis to the deputy at the front desk with, "This here's Lester McCaffrey. His brother, Danny, and his sister, Laura, run the hotel down the street, which is as good a place as any for you to stay."

Rourke told Deputy McCaffrey to call ahead, to arrange things for Travis at the hotel, and then Travis was shown through to the offices in the rear of the building.

"This here's the throbbing nerve center of the whole operation," Rourke said, a sardonic grin on his face. He showed Travis his own office, nothing more than a plain-deal desk, a chair on either side, against the right-hand wall a half dozen file cabinets, the drawers labeled alphabetically—AA-CA, CE-FA, FE-KI, and so on. On the wall was a photograph of Rourke with another man.

"That's George Docking," Rourke explained. "Governor of Kansas. Met him while he was doing his rounds before the election. Nice enough feller for a Democrat."

Rourke sat behind his desk, indicated the second chair for Travis.

"You a political man, Mr. Travis?"

"The Bureau operates in the same way regardless of who's in the Oval Office," Travis said. "The director's answerable to the president, of course, but I think some of those conversations might be a little one-sided."

Rourke smiled knowingly. "Oh, I can imagine that would be the case. I think your Mr. Hoover there is a somewhat forceful and determined individual and not unused to getting his own way. People may know us out here for *The Wizard of Oz*, but we've had our fair share of G-men down here looking for the likes of Alvin Karpis and Ma Barker's boys. You know Karpis?"

"I know of him, of course," Travis replied. "He's been in Alcatraz since thirty-five or thirty-six, as far as I remember. I know that he was very much at the forefront of the director's attentions in the early thirties."

"Well, your Mr. Hoover got him all right, and got him good."

Travis smiled. He didn't understand why they were talking about Prohibition-era gangsters. Maybe such things were of interest to small-town sheriffs. Travis was interested only to hear the details of this most recent case.

"So to our current situation," Rourke said, as if prompted by Travis's thoughts. "We had this crowd show up early on Thursday morning, like some sort of bizarre motorcade. Half a dozen trucks, a handful of pickups, three or four cars, even a couple of caravans."

Travis took his notebook from his jacket pocket and started to write down details.

"I got everything you need to know already written down in a file," Rourke said. "But there ain't much."

"Just for my own recollection," Travis said. "I find it easier if I make my own notes as well."

"Anyway, they show up, this troupe of strange-looking characters. At first I think they're just on a layover for food, a night's rest perhaps, but then they set themselves to erecting tents and Lord knows what else just on the outskirts of town."

"Whose land?"

"Well, it isn't land that belongs to anyone as such. It's town land, I suppose. Just a few acres that run down to the edge of the river. It's no use for farming, not big enough to build much of anything, and it kind of just sits there. It's where we sometimes have a livestock market. One time we even tried to get a Christmas sort of festival thing going, but that flew like a dodo. So, like I said, it ain't anyone's."

"And a cease-and-desist warrant, an order to move on?"

"Well, that was all in progress. Takes a few days to sort out that kind of thing, making sure it's all legal and aboveboard, but before we even had a chance to discuss it, this thing happened, and now we got ourselves a crime scene. Until we figure out what the hell happened, the last thing in the world we want 'em to do is move on, right?"

"Okay, so they showed up on Thursday," Travis said, aware that Rourke would elaborate and head off course if he wasn't corralled somewhat. Travis had taken an immediate liking to the man. There was something altogether unassuming in his manner. Travis, both personally and professionally, considered himself a good judge of character, even from initial impressions, and Rourke came across as an honest and decent man.

"Yes, Thursday, sometime late morning, and then they're working all day, all night, on into the middle of Friday, and then the late afternoon of Friday there's about a dozen of them, some of them just the weirdest-looking folk you ever did see—"

"How so?" Travis asked. "Weird-looking in what way?"

"Too tall, too thin, too many fingers—"

"Sorry?"

"There's a guy down there with too many fingers, Mr. Travis. I've seen some odd things in my time, but that wins a prize somewhere, I'll tell you."

"So we are talking actual physical anomalies here . . . people who are—"

"You'll see for yourself soon enough," Rourke said. "So, Friday afternoon, here they come, walking through town, handing out flyers, asking

if they can post bills in store windows and whatever. The carnival is opening on Friday night and everyone is welcome, don't you know? And you know what they call themselves?"

Travis looked up.

"The Carnival Diablo, of all things. That's like Spanish for the devil or some such, and here you got a God-fearing, churchgoing little community, all about getting on with one another and minding each other's business, and this motley crew of oddballs and misfits descends upon them. Of course, the kids are all electrified, running up and down, laughing and hollering and making a racket, and they all want to go down there and see this freak show. I got phone calls coming in every fifteen minutes. What am I going to do about this? Why haven't I moved these people on already? I'm trying to explain that the law is the law, that you can't just throw people out, that even crazies and weirdoes have rights too, but no one wants to hear that. They just want me to get these people out of here, and that's that."

"No one wants to talk to you until there's trouble, and then trouble arrives and you're the best friend they ever had," Travis said.

"Oh, you can say that again, Mr. Travis."

"You didn't understand it the first time?" Travis said, his expression deadpan.

"No, Mr. Travis... that's just an expression..." Rourke started, and then he saw Travis's smile. "You're jokin' with me."

"Go on with what you were saying, Sheriff Rourke. So the carnival opened."

"Seven o'clock sharp, Friday evening. I went on down there. I'd seen them putting up the tents, erecting that carousel, and it all looked pretty rundown and shabby, to be honest. The tents were old, the stands and sideshows were pretty banged up and the whole thing needed a scrubbing brush and a lick of paint, but I have to say that when nightfall came, when they had all those lights out around the field, they had that caliope music playing an' all, well it was a very impressive sight."

"And the carnival ran smoothly that first night?"

"No trouble at all. Even the adults seemed to take to it. They had all the usual things. Toss-the-hoop, a little shooting range, some guy doing that card-switch trick, a chicken in a cage that could tic-tac-toe like you never did see. There was the usual popcorn, cotton candy, hot dogs, root beer floats, all that kinda thing. There were a couple fellers doing fire-breathing tricks and an acrobatic troupe made up of five guys that looked exactly the same as one another. It was one busy place, even if I say so myself. I mean, I know about all that sort of thing from the County Fair, where they have the ten-in-one show and you get some

guy with elastic skin and some woman with feet the size of suitcases, but this was kind of different. They had the old Bonnie and Clyde death car, you know? Now, if Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow had owned as many Fords as I have seen in my time, they'd be wealthier than old man Henry Ford himself, but this one they have here... I don't know what it is, but it looks spooky as hell. You look in back there, through the broken window, and you expect to see Clyde himself taking his last dying breath. They had that over to one side, and then they had people coming on, like this human skeleton guy, and I have never seen anyone as much a skeleton as that. That was just disturbing. They had a giant rat, the Fiji mermaid, the skeleton of a two-headed dog, a midget guy, the guy with too many fingers who turned out to be the best darned magician I ever did see. The whole catalog was there, and they were good. This wasn't no two-bit, flea-ridden ragtag collection of drunks and conmen. These people were good, Mr. Travis, real good. They entertained the townsfolk, I'll give them that much, and when Saturday morning came, I never got one phone call of complaint. Not one."

"Not even from the Federal Surplus Fingers Department?"

Rourke hesitated and then smiled again. "You know, Mr. Travis, you should probably go on down there and get yourself a job as resident comedian."

"So what happened on Saturday?"

"Ah well, Saturday was even busier. We had folks comin' in from Eureka, El Dorado, Augusta, Marion, even as far north as Emporia. Presumably, folks here were making calls, telling their friends and relatives that Seneca Falls had one fine show going on, and they came in like I ain't never seen before. I mean, this town has a population somewheres in the region of four or five thousand, but Saturday night must have seen maybe a quarter as many again comin' on by car and busload. Seems like half the state wanted to see what the Carnival Diablo had to say for itself."

"And when was the body found?"

"That was late, maybe eleven o'clock or so. Most folks had gone. They were only the teenagers hangin' around, some of the younger couples who ain't got kids to get home to bed, and that's when they found him."

"Where was he found?"

"Seen, more than found, so to speak. He was sort of under the platform of the carousel. Neck was broken, but the coroner, Jack Farley, thinks that happened postmortem. Cause of death was a single knife wound to the back of the neck, sort of upward into the base of his brain. Jack said that death would have been instantaneous. Couple of people there said they saw the victim on the carousel itself, as if he were up there having

a ride, but when I got to asking further, it looked like they was drunk enough to see Santa Claus and Popeye the Sailor Man up there as well. So I don't know what to make of it, to tell you the truth."

"Who found him?"

"Well, he was just there, see? It wasn't like he was hiding anyplace. It was a young woman called Frances Brady. Came up here the few miles from El Dorado. This Brady girl was walking back toward the carousel, says she was looking for her boyfriend who'd wandered off someplace, and she saw this guy under the carousel."

"And she saw nothing else... no one approaching, no one leaving, nothing at all?"

"Not a thing. She just saw the guy down there, started hollering for them to stop the carousel, and then he was pulled out by a couple of the carnival people."

"And he has not been identified?"

Rourke shook his head. "Not as yet. We've had him on ice, so to speak, since Saturday night, and no one has come forward. I got a picture and sent it to my contemporaries in half a dozen surrounding towns, see if anyone knew who he was, but nothing has come back as yet."

Rourke reached into the drawer of his desk and produced a photograph, no more than five-by-four. It was the same image as that which had been provided by Bishop. He also produced a fingerprint card from the same drawer.

"And there's his prints. Understand you boys have some kind of fingerprint archive or some such. Maybe you got him on record somewhere."

Travis took the card. "Do you have more copies of the picture?"

"Sure do," Rourke replied, and furnished Travis with another photograph of the dead man.

"Anyway," Rourke continued. "I have questioned everyone who works for the carnival to see if any of them recognize him, but there's been nothing. We got ourselves a dead body, no name, no details, nothing in his pockets save a packet of playing cards, a pack of cigarettes, a lighter, and all of nine dollars and forty-two cents. I have all his personal effects and his clothes bagged and labeled down at the morgue."

Travis made a note on his book. "So, best we go take a look at him, then."

"Sure thing, Mr. Travis. You want a cup of coffee or anything before we go? You want us to take your stuff to the hotel?"

"No, that'll be fine, Sheriff. We'll deal with all of that later. I just want to see the body. I want to get going on this thing as soon as possible."

"Good 'nough. Follow me," Rourke said. He led the way out of his office to the front of the building.

They took both cars, Travis following Rourke down the main drag, then left at the end and then a good half mile to a low building on the right-hand side of the highway. *County Morgue* the sign on the front said, and a tan-colored dog with one ear missing raised its head dolefully and watched them exit their respective vehicles and come on up to the front door.

"That's Wolf," Rourke said. "Coroner's dog."

"Hell of a wolf," Travis said, smiling.

"Animal less like a wolf you could never hope to meet, but that's his given name," Rourke replied. "Coroner's name is Jack Farley, like I said. He's a little deaf. Was a medic in the war, but they put his station next to an artillery position, and his ears got a hammering."

Rourke pushed open the screen and went on through the door.

"Jack!" he called out. "Jack! It's Chas Rourke. Got a federal feller here to see our John Doe!"

There was no response from anywhere within the cool and silent building.

"He'll be in back," Rourke said. "This way."

The corridor was painted off-white, the floor was tiled, and the smell of Lysol hung in the air. It reminded Travis of his first day of training at the FBI facility. Everything was sterile, neat, orderly, far more so than it had ever been in the army. There was a comforting element to such surroundings, as if in such a place there was serious work being undertaken.

Rourke opened the door at the far end of the corridor, and there was music. Dramatic, dark even, perhaps Beethoven, but Travis was not sure. He was no classical aficionado.

Jack Farley saw them then. He raised his hand and motioned for them to come on in. He took a moment to step back and lift the needle from a record on a small phonograph turntable in the corner of the room.

Travis placed Farley in his midfifties. He was shorter than both Travis and Rourke by a head, and when he walked, he sort of rocked left to right slightly, as if one leg was rigid at the knee. Farley's hair was ash gray and scalp short, his shoes were inspection clean, and when he stripped off his glove and came forward to greet Travis, Travis noticed that the fingers of his right hand were badly stained with nicotine.

"Apologies for not welcoming you," Farley said. "I'm Jack Farley, Greenwood County Coroner. Pleased to meet you, Mr. . . .?"

"Travis. Special Agent Travis."

"So we got ourselves a federal drama, have we?"

"Perhaps," Travis replied. "For the moment this is just a fact-finder." He glanced at the cadaver upon which Farley had been working.

“That’s not your man,” Farley said, indicating the body. “That’s a-few-drinks-a-day-too-many Stanley Jarrett. Had it coming a long while, and I’m surprised he made it this far. Your man is out back on ice, but I can’t keep him for much longer as he’s gonna start reekin’ something terrible.”

Jack Farley put his right glove back on and indicated a door at the back of the room. “Let’s go to the icebox.”

It was as Michael Travis walked down the corridor to view the dead man that he remembered the death of his own father, the way he had looked as his body cooled and stiffened at the dinner table that evening so many years before.

And the memory came, a memory he had tried ever harder to bury, and yet he knew now, as he’d always known, that they were memories from which he could never be free.

The previous day had dredged these things to the surface, and there was nothing he could now do but face them.