

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Outside Man

Richard North Patterson

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About the Book

The Outside Man is Adam Shaw, a successful society lawyer haunted by the murder years ago of his father. A northerner in a closed town in the deep South, a town that guards its secrets jealously, Shaw finds the brutally slain body of his best friend's wealthy wife. And his friend is missing.

In this closed, privileged world where the rich will do everything in their power to maintain their civilized image, Shaw will risk everything he has - his career, his marriage, and even his life - in a passionate quest for the real killer. The secrets he uncovers will reveal to him the shocking truth of his own past and future...

About the Author

Richard North Patterson's ten novels include the international bestsellers *Degree of Guilt*, *Eyes of a Child*, *The Final Judgement*, *Silent Witness*, *No Safe Place*, *Dark Lady* and *Protect and Defend*. His novels have won the Edgar Allan Poe Award and the Grand Prix de Littérature Policière. A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and the Case Western Reserve School of Law, he studied creative writing with Jesse Hill Ford at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He and his wife, Laurie, live with their family in San Francisco and on Martha's Vineyard.

ALSO BY RICHARD NORTH PATTERSON

No Safe Place
Silent Witness
The Final Judgement
Eyes of a Child
Private Screening
Escape the Night
The Lasko Tangent
Dark Lady
Protect and Defend

THE OUTSIDE MAN

Richard North Patterson



arrow books

For Jesse Hill Ford

*Murder doesn't round out anybody's life except the
murdered's and maybe the murderer's.*

Nick Charles, from
Dashiell Hammett's
The Thin Man

We sail with a corpse in the cargo.
Ibsen

Chapter 1

PERHAPS THE MURDERS were fated when I met Kris Ann, then moved with her here, to Alabama. The move was a change of plans. I'd meant us to live in Washington. We never did, and so three deaths began waiting in the ambush of time.

Seven years passed, and then Cade handed me the envelope. It seemed like nothing at all. I'd come from a Saturday partners' meeting called to set new rates - nineteen southern Protestants and me at a long walnut table buffed so high I could see my face in it - trying to feel like eighty dollars an hour. It took some imagination. So when Cade caught me near the elevator and with a quick, chill glance at my blue jeans asked if I'd drop some papers with Lydia Cantwell, my only thought was to do that much for free.

Outside the morning was hazy from the smokestacks of our clients and the streets looked stale and a little hungover, like a room full of cigarette smoke after a long party. Behind my parking space the neon sign of a dingy department store murmured its fatigue in old-fashioned cursive letters. I tossed the envelope on the passenger seat and drove south with the top down through near-empty streets, then up and over a sudden barrier of green wooded hills until the city behind me dropped abruptly from sight.

Now the road curled downward past immense stone houses sheltered by pine and dogwood and magnolia. The air became clear, damp and heavy, and the feel and blueness of it merged with deep lawns and the bursts of pink and white to create that violence of beauty you can find only in the South, in April. Behind me Birmingham

sprawled in a valley of heat and smoke: squat steel mills the corroded color of rust, concrete highways, low-slung warehouses, sinewy towers of glass and steel, sweltering streets. But the road ahead was shady and still. A lone black maid in stretch pants straggled by its side as though on a treadmill to eternity, her slow repeated movements speaking of boredom in the bone and brain, days endlessly the same. I passed her, turning down a road that traced the winding path of a valley in what had once been pine forest, the wind in my face.

There was nothing ahead but shadows. I took the curves fast - shifting and braking, accelerating and shifting - as a smooth radio voice from New York eased into a mass murder, the oil crisis, and a Gallup poll in which three out of four Americans thought things were getting worse. 'Speaking last night in Atlanta,' he went on, 'the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board warned that this country is threatened by permanent inflation which will change the lives of rich and poor alike....' But there was nothing I could do about that, except not smoke my first cigarette. So I didn't, and found myself at the Cantwells'.

Their drive began with a stand of oaks, continuing its gradual climb through magnolia and dogwood until it reached the crest of pines where the house loomed, a white brick monolith with gables and twenty rooms and the sense of weight that time brings. Seventy years before, Henry Cantwell's grandfather had brooded on the site, then built: over time ivy had crept up the walls, hedges had grown, a formal garden had come to surround the slate patio in back, and finally, Lydia Cantwell's roses had lined the walk that led from the drive to the double door. I parked, taking the envelope, and followed it.

The grounds were shrouded in morning silence broken only by a few birdcalls and the rustling of pine boughs. The snarl of the buzzer when I pushed it sounded rude, and got

no answer. But when I knocked, the door cracked open by itself.

I looked in, surprised, calling once. No one answered. I hesitated, then stepped inside.

The foyer faced a spiral staircase, with a sitting room to the left and the dining room opposite. Next to me was a low table. I placed the envelope there, turned to leave, stopped in the doorway, and then, turning back, picked it up again.

It was an innocuous manila, sealed only by two splayed metal fasteners that Cade's secretary had put through the hole in its flap, then pressed down to each side. I pried the fasteners upright and opened the flap. Inside was a typed document of sixteen pages. I riffled it, then read again, this time carefully. When I had finished I checked for missing pages, found none, and reread the twelfth page, twice. Then I placed the papers back in the envelope and took it with me to the sitting room.

It was sparsely decorated, mainly from the past. On polished end tables were porcelain figurines - a sparrow, Marie Antoinette - that Lydia had collected. From above the fireplace stared an oil of her father, framed by candelabra and looking vaguely distressed, as if he smelled smoke. The shelf built-in next to that held portraits of more dead ancestors and a larger one of Henry Cantwell, gray hair neatly parted. The papers in the envelope reminded me that Jason's picture had been removed. Then I noticed that Lydia's was gone.

I called out.

No one answered. I walked past the fireplace through the open door to Henry's library, filled with books: *Lancelot* by Walker Percy, some Aeschylus, much Faulkner and Camus, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and leaning next to that with a bookmark sticking from it, *Crime and Punishment*. Often I would find Henry in a cardigan sweater, amidst his volumes: the most reliable friends, he'd once remarked, full of consolation. But his half-glasses were on the shelf and

his chair was empty. I returned to the sitting room, stopped, and listened.

I didn't like finding the house unlocked, or its silence. Though in the seven years since, I'd been to the Cantwells' perhaps a hundred times, I could still hear the sounds of our engagement party, when the house had been filled with people and laughter and the clink of a barman dropping ice in crystal. I'd begun awkwardly, conscious of Cade and worried that if I moved too quickly I'd slop champagne on the Oriental rugs. I had never met the Cantwells and, while Henry and Lydia were gracious, Jason watched me from one corner with a peculiar bright intensity, never coming forward. The chances of meeting a second northerner were nil and everyone else seemed to have money to burn, even Kris Ann's florid uncle who had backed me to the fireplace denouncing the Berrigan brothers. Then Kris Ann appeared behind him in the crush. For an instant her look seemed probing and uncertain and then, knowing I saw her, she flashed me the dazzling, flirty, self-mocking smile that was an in-joke between us - her southern-girl smile, she called it - until it warmed the darkness of her eyes. I'd felt myself relax, and after that I remembered the moment precisely: her smile, the room, and the sounds of the party - so that now it seemed too quiet.

'Lydia?' I called, and then went back through the foyer to the staircase, glancing toward the dining room as I passed.

I stopped there.

Lydia Cantwell lay sprawled behind the dining room table. Her eyes bulged and her tongue protruded from a smear of lipstick. Her throat was circled with bruises.

It was a moment before I knew that I had crossed myself.

I went to her then, kneeling. Her wrist was stiff and cold to the touch. There was no pulse.

My limbs had gone numb and heavy. I stumbled back from her. Her terrycloth robe was pulled to mid-thigh and her legs seemed pitifully thin. Black hair straggled on the Persian rug, and I noticed, foolishly, that she had dyed the gray at her temples.

I felt a moment of awful tenderness, as if I should cover her legs. Instead I went to the kitchen and called the police. When I returned, my throat was parched and my mouth tasted bitter, like half-swallowed aspirin.

It was then I saw her picture.

It had been taken at a formal sitting and placed next to Henry's in the other room. Now it sat on the dining room table. Someone had stabbed out the eyes. I rushed back to the kitchen and vomited.

I raised my head from the sink, breathed deeply, and went back to the dining room. The envelope lay where I'd dropped it, by Lydia's hand. I picked it up and went outside. I didn't look back at the woman, or her picture.

The porch was cool. Above the roses a hummingbird hovered in delicate suspension, a picture from a Chinese vase.

I walked to my car and slid the envelope under the seat.

Chapter 2

'PANIC IS THE first enemy of the lawyer,' Cade had once told me. So when the first police came - two uniformed patrolmen in a squad car - I tried to blank out everything but the envelope.

The young man rushed past me through the front door, slamming it behind him. The other stopped in front of me. He was short and paunchy, with pale blue eyes and a creased clown's face so sad it must have always seemed close to tears. 'What happened?' he asked.

'I don't know.'

'Sure.' His voice was patient and unsatisfied. 'Just how you found her.'

I swallowed. 'I got here maybe fifteen minutes ago, on business. Mrs Cantwell's our client -' I paused, deleting the envelope. 'No one answered, and the door was unlocked. That wasn't like her; she was a careful woman. So I stepped inside to check.'

The door opened behind me. 'Called in the body,' the young man said. 'Rayfield's coming himself. You'll want to see this.'

His partner nodded and turned back to me. 'You'd better come inside, Mr Shaw.' I didn't move. 'Come on,' he said, almost gently.

I followed him to the sitting room without looking at Lydia. He pointed me to a sofa across from the fireplace where I couldn't see the dining room or her body. 'You'll have to wait here for Homicide,' he said, and left.

'Jesus Christ,' someone muttered. It was the older man's voice, coming from the dining room, low and close to

tender.

'Look at the picture,' his partner said.

There was silence. 'We got a creep maybe - someone who'll do it twice.'

'Might could be rape. It's funny - Rayfield was sending Watkins until I said her name and then he decided to come himself.'

'Look around you,' the older man said. 'She used to be somebody.'

There was no malice in that, just fact and a little kinship, as though Lydia Cantwell had taken a great fall quickly and thus qualified for sympathy. My throat was dry.

The front door opened, there were murmured greetings, and footsteps near the body. A new voice - soft and flat - asked, 'Call the medical examiner?' 'Yessir,' the older man said, and then two plainclothesmen walked into the sitting room.

The thin one had a neat mustache, wire-rimmed glasses, and the meticulous intense look of a demolition expert. But it was the second man who held my attention. He was perhaps fifty, with a large potato face and small cobalt eyes at once pained and bleak and totally absorbed, the eyes of a bitter saint. They lit on me, appraising.

'I'm Rayfield,' he said and inclined his head toward the younger man. 'This is Sergeant Bast.'

I nodded without speaking. Four uniformed police came briskly through the front door with ropes, cameras, and sketch pads, headed for the dining room. The last one carried a black doctor's bag. 'Ready to go, Lieutenant,' he called.

Rayfield glanced over. 'Rope it off,' he ordered, and walked out.

The young patrolman appeared next to a vase of white chrysanthemums, watching me. I didn't look up.

'Feel her armpits?' someone asked. 'She's room temperature.'

Another said, 'She's eight hours old, anyhow. They get this cold no way to tell for sure. Rape test's not much good.'

'Do it anyway,' Rayfield said. Cameras began spitting.

The impersonal noise of strangers - doors opening, footsteps, orders, slamming drawers - came to me like the sound of television through an open window. Someone clambered up the stairs. I lit a Camel, forcing myself to watch Rayfield as he backed into the sitting room. He was around six-two, thick-bodied and awkwardly careful of movement, as if trapped in his own skin. His suit and tie were just something to wear, his gray wavy hair was cut military-style, his stare at the Cantwells' furnishings abstemious and disapproving. He turned to me, asking, 'You're her lawyer?'

'That's right.' My mouth was acrid with vomit taste and I needed some water. Instead I took a deep, harsh drag of cigarette smoke and stood.

Bast materialized with a note pad. Rayfield took out a black notebook and asked, 'Mrs Cantwell invite you?'

I noticed that his hair tonic lent him a not unpleasant whiff of the barber shop: the smell of my father. 'Not exactly,' I answered. 'I was on the way home from the office.'

'Then she wasn't expecting you.' His flat drawl might have passed for witlessness if I hadn't lived in the South, or caught the sharpness of his eyes.

'I'm not sure - she'd talked yesterday with my father-in-law.'

'But you didn't call her.'

'No.'

'Then why'd you come?'

'Private business. Law business, that's all.'

'What was it?'

I shook my head. 'I'm sorry, Lieutenant. That's covered by the attorney-client privilege.'

Bast's eyes rose from his notes. 'Give me the semen slide,' someone said in the living room. Rayfield drawled, 'She's dead now, Mr Shaw,' in a voice so flat and uninfected that his words held the barest trace of irony.

'Not just her. The family.'

His eyebrows raised. 'Dead?'

'No. Clients.'

'Just who are we talking about?'

'Her husband, for one. Henry Cantwell.'

Rayfield paused, head angled to look at me as if revising some impression. His thumb began clicking the ballpoint. I noticed then that his hands were at odds with the rest of him: pale and delicate, with long piano-player's fingers, his nails fastidiously trimmed. In a monotone he asked, 'You a friend of Henry Cantwell's?'

From the side Bast glanced hastily at Rayfield. 'His friend, and lawyer,' I answered.

Rayfield's pen stopped clicking. His tone was cool, accusing. 'Where is he?'

'I don't know.' Then it hit me that Henry might be dead or in trouble. It hit me hard, like sudden knowledge in a man not smart.

'What's the problem, Mr Shaw?'

'Nothing.'

'Then where is he?'

I turned to Bast. 'There's an envelope under the front seat of my car - the Alfa Romeo. You'd better get it.'

Bast looked to Rayfield. But Rayfield was staring at me, voice now taut as he asked, 'Did Henry Cantwell do this?'

'Get the envelope,' I repeated to Bast.

Rayfield kept staring. But Bast nodded and went through the front door. In the minute it took him to come back Rayfield said nothing, his eyes never moving until Bast gave him the envelope. He pulled the document, reading its caption. 'Her will?'

'Her new will. She never got to sign it.'

He flipped its pages as Bast read over his shoulder. He finished, said nothing, and started again more slowly. 'Take another smear,' said someone near Lydia. I reached to stub my cigarette in one of her ashtrays, jabbing twice before it went out. Finally, Rayfield asked, 'Isn't there a son?'

I nodded. 'Jason.'

'But not in here.'

'No. Not in there.'

Rayfield looked up. 'How old's he now?'

'Mid-twenties.'

'Know where he lives?'

'Just that he goes to the university. Sort of a perpetual student.'

Rayfield turned to Bast. 'Better find the boy.'

Bast left. Rayfield rolled up the will and began tapping it in his palm. He turned suddenly, walking toward Henry's picture until he stood in front of it. Without turning, he asked, 'Who's your father-in-law?'

'Roland Cade.'

Rayfield turned slowly back to me, eyes widening slightly before they dropped to the will. He stared at it in pensive silence, pen held to his lips. Abruptly, he said, 'We'd better call him,' and went to the kitchen.

The young patrolman still watched me. Police talked near Lydia. An awed voice said, 'Take a man to do like that.'

'Maybe a strong woman,' someone answered.

I went to the window.

The sun had climbed, filtering through the pines in yellow shafts. Beyond the grounds, I knew people were living their same lives, and at the club couples were playing mixed doubles, or drinking. But I couldn't envision it. When Rayfield returned I was staring at nothing.

'You must be worried about Henry Cantwell,' he said softly from behind. 'Would that be like him, being gone?'

His tone seemed strangely kind. But when I played it back I heard a faint, tense undertone. I turned and said in a

flat voice, 'I wouldn't know.'

Rayfield watched me for a moment, then looked down at the will again. 'Mrs Cantwell,' he said almost musingly, 'what was *she* like?'

I had no answer.

For me it had never changed from that first engagement party. Mercedes and long Lincolns had eased up the drive as Henry and Lydia greeted each new arrival. Poised and perfectly coiffed, she'd begun as my youthful notion of a great lady, except that I'd watched too long. Guest upon guest, the precise same smile came and went without quite touching her eyes, and her hugs of greeting resembled acts of will. She seemed to play out the party like a role she knew expertly, which stifled her, real only in a quick turn of the head, one sudden worried glance toward Jason. And for seven years after, she kissed my cheek, remembered when we'd last talked and asked how I was, listening closely to my answer with her head slightly tilted - a minuet of courtesy which, when over, left behind nothing but itself. I'd wondered for a while, then just stopped. 'She was our friend,' I said now. 'It's hard for me to talk about.'

The older man from the squad car had appeared next to Rayfield. 'No sign of forced entry, sir,' he put in.

'Upstairs too?'

'Yessir.'

Rayfield seemed almost to smile without changing expression. 'Mrs. Cantwell,' he said to me. 'How'd she get her money?'

'For Christ's sake, Lieutenant, we're not talking about some bird that crashed into a picture window. I *knew* her.'

'That's right,' he said bluntly. 'Past tense. She's been strangled by someone who looks like he could do this again to some other friend of yours. That's why we're talking.'

We stared at each other. 'Her mother was a Maddox,' I finally said. 'Maddox Coal and Steel.'

He jotted that in his notebook. 'What about her father's side?'

I pointed toward the portrait. 'Remember the Grangeville case?'

Rayfield turned to look. 'The one way back, where they executed those two Negroes for rape.'

'He was the judge who sentenced them.'

Rayfield's face was devoid of expression. 'You're not from here, are you?'

I knew where 'here' was. 'No. Cleveland.'

'And Cleveland's where your people are.'

'That's right.'

I'd tracked his thoughts, so I wasn't surprised when he said in a flat voice, 'Grangeville was a long time back,' and shut the notebook. It was then that it struck me that he had asked almost nothing about Henry Cantwell.

'Clean her up,' someone said. I winced, involuntarily, and then Cade walked through the door.

Chapter 3

CADE STOPPED IN the alcove to stare at Lydia Cantwell. No one spoke. Cade's head inclined in the attitude of patience, as if waiting for her to awaken. Slowly, perceptibly, the stiffness went from his back.

'Mr Cade.' It was Rayfield, standing next to me.

Cade turned, ashen, gazing for a moment with vague, frightened blankness as though jarred from sleep by a sudden noise. Then his black hawk eyes settled on Rayfield until they seemed to glare at him from a face all surfaces and angles, like those of some great arrogant bird. Rayfield's pen clicked, once.

'We're in here,' he said.

For several seconds Cade watched Rayfield, refusing to move. Finally, he limped toward us. World War II had left a pin in his hip and he moved with torso canted slightly forward, to ease a pain which seemed etched in the squint of his eyelids and the grooves running like scars from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth and then to the square of his jaw. But his hair was still chestnut and his stomach flat: looking down at Rayfield, he seemed younger than fifty-six.

Rayfield held out the will. 'You know about this.'

Cade gave him a look of repugnance. 'All I know is that an old friend lies horribly murdered in the next room.'

'You did draft this will, though.'

'Yesterday. I said that when you called.'

'Then maybe you could tell me how that happened.'

'Cade shot me a hasty glance. 'I'll need to speak with Mr Shaw.'

Rayfield tugged his ear in a distracted, impatient gesture, looking from Cade to me and back again. Then he nodded toward the door. 'You can do that outside.'

We left through the alcove. A white-coated man stood over the body. Lydia Cantwell's thin legs splayed crazily from behind him like the bottom end of a department store mannequin that had toppled backward. Her toenails were bright red. There was the faint odor of chemicals. I turned away.

We passed the old patrolman at the door and then walked through the roses, a line of police cars, and an ambulance, stopping by the magnolias at the far side of the drive. The blossoms gave a thin, sweet smell. Next to us sun burnt a shimmering patch of asphalt. The white glare of car windows cut into my eyes.

'You found her like that?' Cade was asking.

I nodded.

'Sweet Jesus,' he said softly. A crow cawed. Cade's voice turned harsh. 'What's he want?'

'I don't know.'

'Then why in hell did you give them the will?'

'Because Henry's missing.'

'You don't think Henry -'

'Not me. This man Rayfield. It wasn't a break-in, Roland. She let him in.'

'Who? Jason?'

'Maybe. I don't know. You said once that Jason is a sick man.'

Cade's voice was rough. 'He's scum - for all I care they can electrocute him. But you're stripping the Cantwells in public. You know what the papers will run? That will, and the Cantwells' troubles with it.'

'The will is evidence,' I shot back. 'And there are fewer Cantwells than there used to be.'

Cade flushed. 'What makes you suppose - whatever we might think - that Henry Cantwell wants us pointing at the

boy?’

‘What makes you suppose,’ I said tightly, ‘that Henry Cantwell’s still alive?’

Cade’s mouth opened in an odd, surprised expression. ‘Look,’ I told him, ‘I found Lydia murdered and Henry missing. Jason’s supposed to hate them both. The will may be his motive. I had to turn it over. If Henry’s in danger – if anything’s happened – the police should be hunting for Jason. They’d better do that even if Henry’s just gone fishing: Rayfield thinks whoever killed her may do this again. And if I hadn’t given him the will, then Henry’s his suspect, and by noon every hick sheriff will be looking to bring him back in handcuffs for the six o’clock news –’

‘Quiet.’ Cade’s eyes fixed on some point over my shoulder. I realized my fists were clenched. I relaxed them and turned. Two uniformed police bore a stretcher covered by a white blanket between the roses. Only her outline showed. They carried the stretcher to the back of the ambulance and slid it inside. The door slammed. Someone started the motor. Then the ambulance backed slowly down the long drive and was gone. We listened as the motor sound faded and died, and for a long time after.

Cade slumped with his hands in his pockets. ‘Why quarrel?’ he said softly. ‘It’s done.’

We stared at the ground.

‘I can’t believe this,’ I murmured.

He shook his head. ‘I’ve known her so long. And Kris Ann – it will be hard on her, too. I hardly know how to tell her.’

The last was spoken almost to himself. I looked up at him sharply. ‘I’ll tell Krissy.’

Cade turned to me, arms folded, his face set as if fighting to hold silent. Abruptly, he broke away and called to the man at the door for Rayfield.

A moment later Rayfield appeared amidst the roses, striding toward us deliberately and without hurry. ‘You

ready?' he demanded.

Cade reddened. 'You'll want to know how that will come to be drafted.'

Rayfield took out his notebook. 'Go ahead.'

Cade paused, breathing deeply, composing himself into a lawyer. 'Mrs Cantwell called me yesterday,' he began, 'to insist on seeing me. I said of course, and she came, around three. Our receptionist can confirm the time, if that's important. In any event, she sat in my office and asked me to change her will.' Cade's voice seemed muted by a kind of buried sadness. 'Her prior will favored her husband and son in equal measure. Now she wanted to leave everything to Mr Cantwell.'

Rayfield's pen skittered across the note pad, face tight with expectation as he watched Cade. Cade continued. 'Jason Cantwell's a deeply troubled boy. He's had psychiatric counseling and fooled with radical politics. There are other things - I'm frank to admit I don't care for him. But Mrs. Cantwell refused to give reasons. I did see that she was quite agitated, to the point that her hands shook when normally she was calm and precise.'

'It wasn't a long interview. I asked her if she'd talked with Henry and, when she said no, advised her to. I thought that was best - it was her money, all right, but Jason isn't just *her* son. She said she might, but that she wanted the will revised that day. It wasn't much trouble - just changing some paragraphs - so when she left, I had Miss Millar, my secretary, type it up. I decided to send it to Lydia at home and give her time to consider. If I'd had her come back for it, we could have witnessed the document and the thing would have been done. This way she'd have the weekend and perhaps talk with Henry. So I called her about five and said I'd send it out this morning.' Cade stopped, exhaled, and said, 'You know the rest.'

It had been some moments since anyone else had spoken. Cade's voice had journeyed through calm and

sadness in a near-hypnotic rhythm. Rayfield watched him.

'You should be looking for Henry Cantwell,' I said to Rayfield.

He looked over at me strangely. 'Any particular reason why you're this worried?'

'Look, dammit -'

Cade cut in hastily. 'We're his lawyers, Lieutenant. That's all it is.'

I spun on Cade, angry. He was watching Rayfield intently, hand half-raised between them. Rayfield stared back as if choosing his next words. He was interrupted by the whir of a motor. We turned, and then a black Mercedes loomed amidst the dogwood and drove into our silence.

The car stopped and a slight, gray-haired man got out, blinking as if he had stumbled from a darkroom. I hesitated, frozen by pity and relief. But Cade was quickly to him. 'It's Lydia,' he said.

Henry Cantwell's face turned tight and queer. Cade braced his shoulders. 'She's been murdered, Henry.'

Henry's features crumbled, slowly and completely, like ruined putty. He sagged in Cade's hands. 'Henry,' Cade urged.

His tone mixed sympathy and command. Henry stiffened upright as Cade backed him against the hood. He stared emptily ahead. Then he curled and his face dropped into his hands. His shoulders trembled, and then hurt-animal sounds came from between his fingers. I wanted to go to him. But he didn't need my face to remember when he thought of breaking down. So I watched him: a banker in a three-piece suit, sobbing against the hood of his black Mercedes. Rayfield watched next to me, unnaturally still.

After a time Henry cried himself out. Haltingly, Cade walked him to the house, one arm draping Henry's shoulders as he limped beside him. Rayfield followed.

Two cops called to each other as they paced the rear grounds, finding nothing. I leaned against a magnolia tree,

smoked one cigarette to the nub, and walked back to the house.

Rayfield was alone in the sitting room, staring at the closed door to Henry's library.

'Where are they?' I asked.

He butted his head toward the library. 'In there.'

'What happened?'

'I asked where he'd been. Cade pulled him into the library.'

'What did you expect?'

Rayfield gave me a long cobalt look. Then he began watching the door again.

It slid open minutes later. Cade came first, and then Henry, following with a glazed expression.

'I'd like to be alone,' he said to no one. Without waiting, he began to shuffle toward the stairway with the steps of an old man. Rayfield reached out toward him, mouth open as if to speak, and then his hand fell to his side and he watched Henry move away.

Henry stopped when he reached me. Without speaking he put his hand on my shoulder and looked toward the dining room. For a moment I felt his weight and Rayfield's silent look. Then Henry dropped his arm and started up the stairs.

I watched him climb as the shape of his future came to me. The quiet he had cherished here would build until it screamed. Gawkers would nose their cars up the drive, and people who didn't would claim to know him - or Lydia or Jason - and to remember some telling incident. And if the killer weren't found, someone, to liven up a party, would mention Henry: 'He was always so quiet, so much to himself....' He reached the top of the stairs, and disappeared.

'You can have him at four,' Cade was saying. 'Assuming it won't be a media event.'