

Chapter Thirteen

The Fourth of July was a beautiful day. Wispy white clouds rode high in the bright blue sky. It was very hot, but there was a gentle breeze as we left our brownstone. I decided to drive myself. I wanted more control of my time; a driver would just be in the way. Waze would get us to Hesterville just fine.

I called Ackerman from the highway.

“Mr. Ackerman, good morning. It’s Adrian Taylor. I’m with my wife. We have you on speaker.”

“Mr. Taylor! And Mrs. Taylor! I’ve never met you, but I have to tell you that your husband is a prince.”

She laughed with pleasure. “You’re so kind, Mr. Ackerman. He’s indeed a prince. I know it better than anyone else!”

“You sound like a great lady,” said Ackerman. “A lady fit for a prince!”

“Okay, enough of this,” I said. “How are you, Mr. Ackerman? How’s the family?”

“I’m fine. The family’s fine. I’m on my way home. Today, I stay indoors, just to be safe. How are you enjoying your holiday?”

“That’s what I’m calling about. We’re on our way to Hesterville. Can we park our car in your gas station?”

“What are you saying, Mr. Taylor? You’re coming here? Today?”

“Yes, we’re on our way. I’m calling you from the car. We should be there in a little over an hour according to Waze.”

“Of course you can park your car in my gas station. If I knew you’d turn around and go back, I’d say no. But why are you coming here? You don’t live here. If you want to talk with us, we’ll come to you tomorrow.”

“It’s a long story. Perhaps I’ll tell it to you at a different time.”

“You really shouldn’t come here. Nothing can be that important. You don’t know what’s going on here, Mr. Taylor. Pickup trucks full of rough characters and motorcycle riders have been pouring into town since the crack of dawn. There must be hundreds already. Maybe thousands. They’re having tailgate parties in the municipal parking lot, and they have a stage and loudspeakers set up near the building.”

“Is there a police presence?”

“Absolutely. Just about every police officer in Hesterville is out there, and I saw many police cars from neighboring towns. I even saw squad cars from Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. The police are heavily armed and wearing riot gear. They must be sweating bullets. Oops, I didn’t mean to mention bullets.”

“What else?”

“They’ve put up barricades in a one-block perimeter around the Municipal Building to contain the crowd.”

“Can I interrupt, Mr. Ackerman?” said June. “Did you see any medical people?”

“Lots of EMTs. There are some ambulances parked a block away.”

“Good,” she said.

“But we probably won’t be needing those. The police will have things well under control.”

“But you’re going home,” I said.

“Yeah. I don’t mind watching on television in the comfort of my own home. I’m sure it’ll be covered live.”

“Are there counter-demonstrators?”

“Yes. Loads of them. They’re gathered behind the barricades.”

“Did you pass by the Chabad House on Columbus and Jamestown?”

“I know where the Chabad House is. Everybody knows. Yeah, I passed by a few minutes ago.”

“And?”

“There’s a big white van parked on the Jamestown side, right near the

corner. There are tables set up near the van. It says Mitzvah Tank on the side. There are a few Lubavitchers, maybe six or seven, young men stacking leaflets Why do you ask?"

"I heard that Chabad would have a presence today in Hesterville. Are they out of harm's way?"

"Oh, sure. They're far away. I guess they want to reach out to the Jewish kids who come to demonstrate against the roughnecks. Give them Shabbat candles and things like that. Those Lubavitchers are good people. I like them."