

# Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Betrayal

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Extract

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# One

**W**HEN DID THIS particular flashback begin, Mr. Bourne?" Dr. Sunderland asked.

Jason Bourne, unable to sit still, walked about the comfortable, homey space that seemed more like a study in a private home than a doctor's office. Cream walls, mahogany wainscoting, a vintage dark-wood desk with claw feet, two chairs, and a small sofa. The wall behind Dr. Sunderland's desk was covered with his many diplomas and an impressive series of international awards for breakthrough therapy protocols in both psychology and psychopharmacology related to his specialty: memory. Bourne studied them closely, then saw the photo in a silver frame on the doctor's desk.

"What's her name?" Bourne said. "Your wife."

"Katya," Dr. Sunderland said after a slight hesitation.

Psychiatrists always resisted giving out any personal information about themselves and their family. *But in this case*, Bourne thought . . .

Katya was in a ski suit. A striped knit cap was on her head, a pom-pom at its top. She was blond and very beautiful. Something about her suggested that she was comfortable in front of the camera. She was smiling into the camera, the sun in her eyes. The crinkles at their outside corners made her seem peculiarly vulnerable.

Bourne felt tears coming. Once he would have said that they were David Webb's tears. But the two warring personalities—David Webb and Jason Bourne, the day and night of his soul—had finally fused. While it was true that David Webb, sometime professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, was sinking deeper into shadow, it was just as true that Webb had softened Bourne's most paranoid and antisocial edges. Bourne couldn't live in Webb's world of normalcy, just as Webb couldn't survive in Bourne's vicious shadow world.

Dr. Sunderland's voice intruded on his thoughts. "Please sit down, Mr. Bourne."

Bourne did so. There was a kind of relief in letting go of the photo.

Dr. Sunderland's face settled into an expression of heartfelt sympathy. "The flashbacks, Mr. Bourne, they began following your wife's death, I imagine. Such a shock would—"

"Not then, no," Jason Bourne said quickly. But that was a lie. The memory shards had resurfaced the night he had seen Marie. They had woken him out of sleep—nightmares made manifest, even in the brilliance of the lights he had turned on.

*Blood. Blood on his hands, blood covering his chest. Blood on the face of the woman he is carrying. Marie! No, not Marie! Someone else, the tender planes of her neck pale through the streams of blood. Her life leaking all over him, dripping onto the cobbled street as he runs. Panting through the chill night. Where is he? Why is he running? Dear God, who is she?*

He had bolted up, and though it was the dead of the night he'd dressed and slipped out, running full-out through the Canadian countryside until his sides ached. The bone-white moonlight had followed him like the bloody shards of memory. He'd been unable to outrun either.

Now he was lying to this doctor. Well, why not? He didn't trust him, even though Martin Lindros—the DDCI and Bourne's friend—had recommended him, showed Bourne his impressive credentials. Lindros had gotten Sunderland's name from a list provided by the DCI's office. He didn't have to ask his friend about that: Anne Held's name on the bottom of each page of the document verified his hypothesis. Anne Held was the DCI's assistant, stern right hand.

"Mr. Bourne?" Dr. Sunderland prompted him.

Not that it mattered. He saw Marie's face, pale and lifeless, felt Lindros's presence beside him as he took in the coroner's French-Canadian-accented English: *"The viral pneumonia had spread too far, we couldn't save her. You can take comfort in the fact that she didn't suffer. She went to sleep and never woke up."* The coroner had looked from the dead woman to her grief-stricken husband and his friend. *"If only she'd come back from the skiing trip sooner."*

Bourne had bitten his lip. *"She was taking care of our children. Jamie had turned an ankle on his last run. Alison was terribly frightened."*

*"She didn't seek a doctor? Suppose the ankle was sprained—or broken."*

*"You don't understand. My wife—her entire family are outdoors people, ranchers, hardy stock. Marie was trained from an early age to take care of herself in the wilderness. She had no fear of it whatsoever."*

*"Sometimes,"* the coroner had said, *"a little fear is a good thing."*

*"You have no right to judge her!"* Bourne had cried out in anger and grief.

*"You've spent too much time with the dead,"* Lindros had berated the coroner. *"You need to work on your people skills."*

*"My apologies."*

Bourne had caught his breath and, turning to Lindros, said, *"She phoned me, she thought it was just a cold."*

*"A natural enough conclusion,"* his friend had said. *"In any event, her mind was clearly on her son and daughter."*

"So, Mr. Bourne, when did the memory flashes begin?" There was the distinct tinge of a Romanian accent to Dr. Sunderland's English. Here was a man, with his high, wide forehead, strong-lined jaw, and prominent nose, that one could easily have confidence in, confide in. He wore steel-rimmed glasses and his hair was slicked back in a curious, old-fashioned style. No PDA for him, no text-messaging on the run. Above all, no multi-tasking. He wore a three-piece suit of heavy Harris tweed, a red-and-white polka-dot bow tie.

"Come, come." Dr. Sunderland cocked his large head, which made him look like an owl. "You'll forgive me, but I feel quite sure you're—how shall I put it—hiding the truth."

At once, Bourne was on the alert. "Hiding . . . ?"

Dr. Sunderland produced a beautiful crocodile-skin wallet, from which he slipped a hundred-dollar bill. Holding it up, he said, "I'll wager that the memory flashes began just after you laid your wife to rest. However, this wager will be invalid if you elect not to tell the truth."

"What are you, a human lie detector?"

Dr. Sunderland wisely kept his own counsel.

"Put your money away," Bourne said at length. He sighed. "You're right, of course. The memory flashes began the day I saw Marie for the last time."

"What form did they take?"

Bourne hesitated. "I was looking down at her—in the funeral home. Her sister and father had already identified her and had her transferred from the coroner's. I looked down at her and—I didn't see her at all . . ."

"What did you see, Mr. Bourne?" Dr. Sunderland's voice was soft, detached.

"Blood. I saw blood."

"And?"

"Well, there was no blood. Not really. It was the memory surfacing—without warning—without . . ."

"That's the way it always happens, isn't it?"

Bourne nodded. "The blood . . . it was fresh, glistening, made bluish by street lamps. The blood covered this face . . ."

"Whose face?"

"I don't know . . . a woman . . . but it wasn't Marie. It was . . . someone else."

"Can you describe this woman?" Dr. Sunderland asked.

"That's the thing. I can't. I don't know . . . And yet, I know her. I know I do."

There was a small silence, into which Dr. Sunderland interjected another seemingly unrelated question. "Tell me, Mr Bourne, what is today's date?"

"That's not the kind of memory problem I have."

Dr. Sunderland ducked his head. "Indulge me, please."

"Tuesday, February third."

“Four months since the funeral, since your memory problem began. Why did you wait so long to seek help?”

For a time, there was another silence. “Something happened last week,” Bourne said at length. “I saw—I saw an old friend of mine.” Alex Conklin, walking down the street in Alexandria’s Old Town where he’d taken Jamie and Alison for the last outing he’d have with them for a long time. They had just come out of a Baskin-Robbins, the two of them loaded with ice-cream cones, and there was Conklin big as life. Alex Conklin: his mentor, the mastermind behind the Jason Bourne identity. Without Conklin, it was impossible to imagine where he’d be today.

Dr. Sunderland cocked his head. “I don’t understand.”

“This friend died three years ago.”

“Yet you saw him.”

Bourne nodded. “I called his name, and when he turned around he was holding something in his arms—someone, actually. A woman. A bloody woman.”

“*Your* bloody woman.”

“Yes. At that moment I thought I was losing my mind.”

That was when he’d decided to ship the kids off. Alison and Jamie were with Marie’s sister and father in Canada, where the family maintained their enormous ranch. It was better for them, though Bourne missed them terribly. It would not be good for them to see him now.

Since then, how many times had he dreamed of the moments he dreaded most: seeing Marie’s pale face; picking up her effects at the hospital; standing in the darkened room of the funeral home with the director beside him, staring down at Marie’s body, her face still, waxen, made up in a way Marie never would have done herself. He had leaned over, his hand reaching out, and the director had offered a handkerchief, which Bourne had used to wipe the lipstick and rouge off her face. He had kissed her then, the coldness of her lips running right through him like an electric shock: *She’s dead, she’s dead. That’s it, my life with her is over.* With a small sound, he’d lowered the casket lid. Turning to the funeral director, he’d said, “*I’ve changed my mind. No open casket. I don’t want anyone to see her like this, especially the children.*”

“Nevertheless you went after him,” Dr. Sunderland persisted. “Most fascinating. Given your history, your amnesia, the trauma of your wife’s untimely death set off a particular memory flashback. Can you think in what way your deceased friend is connected with the bloody woman?”

“No.” But of course that was a lie. He suspected that he was reliving an old mission—one that Alex Conklin had sent him on years ago.

Dr. Sunderland steepled his fingers together. “Your memory flashes can be triggered by anything providing it’s vivid enough: something you saw, smelled, touched, like a dream resurfacing. Except for you these ‘dreams’ are real. They’re your memories; they actually happened.” He took up a gold fountain pen. “There’s no doubt that a trauma such as you’ve suffered would be at the top of that list. And then to believe you’ve seen someone you know to be dead—it’s hardly surprising the flashbacks have become more numerous.”

True enough, but the escalation of the flashbacks made his mental state that much more unbearable. On that afternoon in Georgetown, he’d left his children. It was only for a moment, but . . . He’d been horrified; he still was.

Marie was gone, in a terrible, senseless moment. And now it wasn’t only the memory of Marie that haunted him, but those ancient silent streets, leering at him, streets that possessed knowledge he didn’t, that knew something about him, something he couldn’t even guess at. His nightmare went like this: The memory flashes would come and he’d be bathed in cold sweat. He’d lie in the darkness, absolutely certain he’d never fall asleep. Inevitably he did—a heavy, almost drugged sleep. And when he rose from that abyss, he’d turn, still in the grip of slumber, searching as he always did for Marie’s warm, delicious body. Then it would hit him all over again, a freight train slamming him full in the chest.

*Marie is dead. Dead and gone forever . . .*

The dry, rhythmic sound of Dr. Sunderland writing in his notebook brought Bourne back from his black oblivion.

“These memory flashes are literally driving me crazy.”

“Hardly surprising. Your desire to uncover your past is all-consuming. Some might even term it obsessive—I certainly would. An obsession often deprives those suffering with it of the ability to live what might be termed

a normal life—though I detest that term and use it infrequently. In any event, I think I can help.”

Dr. Sunderland spread his hands, which were large and callused. “Let me begin by explaining to you the nature of your disability. Memories are made when electrical impulses cause synapses in the brain to release neurotransmitters so that the synapses fire, as we say. This creates a temporary memory. To make this permanent a process called consolidation needs to occur. I won’t bore you by detailing it. Suffice it to say that consolidation requires the synthesis of new proteins, hence it takes many hours. Along the way the process can be blocked or altered by any number of things—severe trauma, for instance, or unconsciousness. This is what happened to you. While you were unconscious, your abnormal brain activity turned your permanent memories into temporary ones. The proteins that create temporary memories degrade very quickly. Within hours, or even minutes, those temporary memories disappear.”

“But my memories occasionally do surface.”

“That’s because trauma—physical, emotional, or a combination of the two—can very quickly flood certain synapses with neurotransmitters, thus resurrecting, shall we say, memories previously lost.”

Dr. Sunderland smiled. “All this is to prepare you. The idea of full memory erasure, though closer than ever before, is still the stuff of science fiction. However, the very latest procedures are at my disposal, and I can confidently say that I can get your memory to surface completely. But you must give me two weeks.”

“I’m giving you today, Doctor.”

“I highly recommend—”

“Today,” Bourne said more firmly.

Dr. Sunderland studied him for some time, tapping his gold pen contemplatively against his lower lip. “Under those circumstances . . . I believe I can *suppress* the memory. That’s not the same as erasing it.”

“I understand.”

“All right.” Dr. Sunderland slapped his thighs. “Come into the examination room and I’ll do my best to help you.” He lifted a long, cautionary forefinger. “I suppose I needn’t remind you that memory is a terribly slippery creature.”



“No need at all,” Bourne said as another glimmer of foreboding eeled its way through him.

“So you understand there are no guarantees. The chances are excellent that my procedure will work, but for how long . . .” He shrugged.

Bourne nodded as he rose and followed Dr. Sunderland into the next room. This was somewhat larger than the consultation room. The floor was doctor’s standard-issue speckled linoleum, the walls lined with stainless-steel equipment, counter, and cabinets. A small sink took up one corner, below which was a red plastic receptacle with a BIOHAZARD label prominently affixed to it. The center of the room was taken up by what looked like a particularly plush and futuristic dentist chair. Several articulated arms depended from the ceiling in a tight circle around it. There were two medical devices of unknown origin set on carts with rubber wheels. All in all, the room had the efficient, sterile look of an operating theater.

Bourne sat on the chair and waited while Dr. Sunderland adjusted its height and inclination to his satisfaction. From one of the rolling carts, the doctor then affixed eight electronic leads to different areas of Bourne’s head.

“I’m going to perform two series of tests of your brain waves, one when you’re conscious, one when you’re unconscious. It’s crucial that I be able to evaluate both states of your brain activity.”

“And then what?”

“It depends on what I find,” Dr. Sunderland said. “But the treatment will involve stimulating certain synapses in the brain with specific complex proteins.” He peered down at Bourne. “Miniaturization is the key, you see. That’s one of my specialties. You cannot work with proteins, on that minuscule level, without being an expert in miniaturization. You’ve heard of nanotechnology?”

Bourne nodded. “Manufactured electronic bits of microscopic size. In effect, tiny computers.”

“Precisely.” Dr. Sunderland’s eyes gleamed. He appeared very pleased by the scope of his patient’s knowledge. “These complex proteins—these neurotransmitters—act just like nanosites, binding and strengthening syn-

apses in areas of your brain to which I will direct them, to block or make memories.”

All at once Bourne ripped off the electronic leads, rose, and, without a word, bolted out of the office. He half ran down the marble-clad hall, his shoes making small clicking sounds as if a many-legged animal were pursuing him. What was he doing, allowing someone to tinker with his brain?

The two bathroom doors stood side by side. Hauling open the door that said MEN, he rushed inside, stood with his arms rigid on either side of the white porcelain sink. There was his face, pallid, ghostly in the mirror. He saw reflected the tiles behind him, so like those in the funeral home. He saw Marie—lying still, hands crossed on her flat, athlete’s belly. She floated as if on a barge, as if on a swift river, taking her away from him.

He pressed his forehead against the mirror. The floodgates opened, tears welled up in his eyes, rolled freely down his cheeks. He remembered Marie as she had been, her hair floating in the wind, the skin at the nape of her neck like satin; when they’d whitewater-raftered down the Snake River, her strong, sun-browned arms digging the paddle into the churning water, the big Western sky reflected in her eyes; when he’d asked her to marry him, on the stolid granite grounds of Georgetown University, she in a black spaghetti-strap dress beneath a Canadian shearling coat, holding hands, laughing on the way to a faculty Christmas party; when they’d said their vows, the sun sliding behind the jagged snowcapped peaks of the Canadian Rockies, their newly ringed hands linked, their lips pressed together, their hearts beating as one. He remembered when she’d given birth to Alison. Two days before Halloween, she was sitting at the sewing machine, making a ghost pirate costume for Jamie, when her water broke. Alison’s birth was hard and long. At the end, Marie had begun to bleed. He’d almost lost her then, holding on tight, willing her not to leave him. Now he had lost her forever . . .

He found himself sobbing, unable to stop.

And then, like a ghoul haunting him, the unknown woman’s bloody face once again rose from the depths of his memory to blot out his be-

loved Marie. Blood dripped. Her eyes stared sightlessly up at him. What did she want? Why was she haunting him? He gripped his temples in despair and moaned. He desperately wanted to leave this floor, this building, but he knew he couldn't. Not like this, not being assaulted by his own brain.

**D**r. Sunderland was waiting with pursed lips, patient as stone, in his office. "Shall I?"

Bourne, the bloody face still clogging his senses, took a breath and nodded. "Go ahead."

He sat in the chair, and Dr. Sunderland reattached the leads. He flipped a switch on the movable cart and began to ramp up dials, some quickly, others slowly, almost gingerly.

"Don't be apprehensive," Dr. Sunderland said gently. "You will feel nothing at all."

Bourne didn't.

When Dr. Sunderland was satisfied, he threw another switch and a long sheet of paper much like the one used in a EEG machine came rolling out of a slot. The doctor peered at the printout of Bourne's waking brain waves.

He made no notations on the printout but nodded to himself, his brow roiled like an oncoming thunderhead. Bourne could not tell whether any of this was a good sign or a bad one.

"All right then," Dr. Sunderland said at length. He switched off the machine, rolled the cart away, and replaced it with the second one.

From a tray on its gleaming metal top he picked up a syringe. Bourne could see that it was already loaded with a clear liquid.

Dr. Sunderland turned to Bourne. "The shot won't put you all the way out, just into a deep sleep—delta waves, the slowest brain waves." In response to the practiced movement of the doctor's thumb, a bit of the liquid squirted out the end of the needle. "I need to see if there are any unusual breaks in your delta wave patterns."

Bourne nodded, and awoke as if no time had passed.

"How do you feel?" Dr. Sunderland asked.

“Better, I think,” Bourne said.

“Good.” Dr. Sunderland showed him a printout. “As I suspected, there was an anomaly in your delta wave pattern.” He pointed. “Here, you see? And again here.” He handed Bourne a second printout. “Now here is your delta wave pattern after the treatment. The anomaly is vastly diminished. Judging by the evidence, it is reasonable to assume that your flashbacks will disappear altogether over the course of the next ten or so days. Though I have to warn you there’s a good chance they might get worse over the next forty-eight hours, the time it takes for your synapses to adjust to the treatment.”

The short winter twilight was skidding toward night when Bourne exited the doctor’s building, a large Greek Revival limestone structure on K Street. An icy wind off the Potomac, smelling of phosphorus and rot, whipped the flaps of his overcoat around his shins.

Turning away from a bitter swirl of dust and grit, he saw his reflection in a flower shop window, a bright spray of flowers displayed behind the glass, so like the flowers at Marie’s funeral.

Then, just to his right, the brass-clad door to the shop opened and someone exited, a gaily wrapped bouquet in her arms. He smelled . . . what was it, wafting out from the bouquet? Gardenias, yes. That was a spray of gardenias carefully wrapped against winter’s chill.

Now, in his mind’s eye, he carried the woman from his unknown past in his arms, felt her blood warm and pulsing on his forearms. She was younger than he had assumed, in her early twenties, no more. Her lips moved, sending a shiver down his spine. She was still alive! Her eyes sought his. Blood leaked out of her half-open mouth. And words, clotted, distorted. He strained to hear her. What was she saying? Was she trying to tell him something? Who *was* she?

With another gust of gritty wind, he returned to the chill Washington twilight. The horrific image had vanished. Had the scent of the gardenias summoned her from inside him? Was there a connection?

He turned around, about to go back to Dr. Sunderland, even though he had been warned that in the short run he might still be tormented. His

cell phone buzzed. For a moment, he considered ignoring it. Then he flipped open the phone, put it to his ear.

He was surprised to discover that it was Anne Held, the DCI's assistant. He formed a mental picture of a tall, slim brunette in her middle twenties, with classic features, rosebud lips, and icy gray eyes.

"Hello, Mr. Bourne. The DCI wishes to see you." Her accent was Middle Atlantic, meaning that it lay somewhere between her British birthplace and her adopted American home.

"I have no wish to see him," Bourne responded coldly.

Anne Held sighed, clearly steeling herself. "Mr. Bourne, next to Martin Lindros himself nobody knows your antagonistic relationship with the Old Man—with CI in general—better than I do. God knows you have ample cause: They've used you countless times as a stalking horse, and then they were sure you'd turned rogue on them. But you really must come in now."

"Eloquently said. But all the eloquence in the world won't sway me. If the DCI has something to say to me, he can do it through Martin."

"It's Martin Lindros the Old Man needs to talk to you about."

Bourne realized he was holding the phone with a death grip. His voice was ice cold when he said: "What about Martin?"

"That's just it. I don't know. No one knows but the Old Man. He's been closeted in Signals since before lunchtime. Even I haven't seen him. Three minutes ago, he called me and ordered me to have you brought in."

"That's how he put it?"

"His precise words were, 'I know how close Bourne and Lindros are. That's why I need him.' Mr. Bourne, I implore you, come in. It's Code Mesa here."

*Code Mesa* was CI-speak for a Level One emergency.

**W**hile Bourne waited for the taxi he'd called, he had time to think about Martin Lindros.

How many times in the past three years had he spoken of the intimate, often painful subject of his memory loss with Martin. Lindros, the deputy

director of CI—the least likely confidant. Who would have expected him to become Jason Bourne’s friend? Not Bourne himself, who had found his suspicion and paranoia coming to the fore when Lindros had shown up at Webb’s campus office nearly three years ago. Surely, Bourne had figured, he was there to once more try to recruit Bourne into CI. It wasn’t such an odd notion. After all, Lindros was using his newfound power to reshape CI into a leaner, cleaner organization with the expertise to take on the worldwide threats that radical, fundamentalist Islam presented.

Such a change would have been all but unthinkable five years ago, when the Old Man ruled CI with an iron hand. But now the DCI truly was an old man—in reality as well as in name. Rumors swirled that he was losing his grip; that it was time for him to retire honorably before he was fired. Bourne would wish this were so, but chances were that these particular rumors had been started by the Old Man himself to flush out the enemies he knew were hiding in the Beltway brush. He was a wily old bastard, better connected to the old-boy network that was the bedrock of Washington than anyone else Bourne had ever come across.

The red-and-white taxi pulled to a halt at the curb; Bourne got in and gave an address to the driver. Settling himself into the backseat, his thoughts returned inward.

To his complete surprise, the subject of recruitment had never come up in the conversation. Over dinner, Bourne began to get to know Lindros in an entirely different way from their time in the field together. The very fact of his changing CI from the inside had turned him into a loner within his own organization. He had the absolute, unshakable trust of the Old Man, who saw in Lindros something of his own younger self, but the head of the seven directorates feared him because he held their futures in the palm of his hand.

Lindros had a girlfriend named Moira, but otherwise had no one close to him. And he had a particular empathy for Bourne’s situation. “*You can’t remember your life,*” he had said over that first of many dinners. “*I have no life to remember . . .*”

Perhaps what drew them unconsciously was the deep, abiding damage each of them had suffered. From their mutual incompleteness came friendship and trust.

Finally, a week ago, he'd taken a medical leave from Georgetown. He'd called Lindros, but his friend was unavailable. No one would tell him where Lindros was. Bourne missed his friend's careful, rational analysis of Bourne's increasingly irrational state of mind. And now his friend was at the center of a mystery that had caused CI to go into emergency lockdown mode.

The moment Costin Veintrop—the man who called himself Dr. Sunderland—received confirmation that Jason Bourne had, indeed, left the building, he neatly and rapidly packed his equipment into the gusseted outside compartment of a black leather briefcase. From one of the two main sections he produced a laptop computer, which he fired up. This was no ordinary laptop; Veintrop, a specialist in miniaturization, an adjunct to his study of human memory, had customized it himself. Plugging a high-definition digital camera into the Firewire port, he brought up four photo enlargements of the laboratory room taken from different angles. Comparing them with the scene in front of him, he went about ensuring that every item was as he had found it when he'd entered the office fifteen minutes before Bourne had arrived. When he was through, he turned off the lights and went into the consult room.

Veintrop took down the photos he'd put up, giving a lingering look at the woman he'd identified as his wife. She was indeed Katya, his Baltic Katya, his wife. His ingenuous sincerity had helped him sell himself to Bourne. Veintrop was a man who believed in verisimilitude. This was why he'd used his a photo of his wife and not a woman unknown to him. When taking on a legend—a new identity—he felt it crucial to mix in bits of things he himself believed. Especially with a man of Jason Bourne's expertise. In any event, Katya's photo had had the desired effect on Bourne. Unfortunately, it had also served to remind Veintrop of where she was and why he could not see her. Briefly, his fingers curled, making fists so tight his knuckles went pale.

Abruptly he shook himself. Enough of this morbid self-pity; he had work to do. Placing the laptop on the corner of the real Dr. Sunderland's desk, he brought up enlargements of the digital photos he'd made of this



room. As before, he was meticulous in his scrutiny, assuring himself that every single detail of the consult room was as he had found it. It was essential that no trace of his presence remain after he'd left.

His quad-band GSM cell phone buzzed, and he put it to his ear.

"It's done," Veintrop said in Romanian. He could have used Arabic, his employer's native language, but it had been mutually decided that Romanian would be less obtrusive.

"To your satisfaction?" It was a different voice, somewhat deeper and coarser than the compelling voice of the man who'd hired him, belonging to someone who was used to exhorting rabid followers.

"Most certainly. I have honed and perfected the procedure on the test subjects you provided for me. Everything contracted for is in place."

"The proof of it will occur shortly." The dominant note of impatience was soured by a faint undertone of anxiety.

"Have faith, my friend," Veintrop said, and broke the connection.

Returning to his work, he packed away his laptop, digital camera, and Firewire connector, then slipped on his tweed overcoat and felt fedora. Grasping his briefcase in one hand, he took one final look around with exacting finality. There was no place for error in the highly specialized work he did.

Satisfied, he flipped the light switch and, in utter darkness, slipped out of the office. In the hallway he glanced at his watch: 4:46 PM. Three minutes over, still well within the time-frame tolerance allotted to him by his employer. It was Tuesday, February 3, as Bourne had said. On Tuesday, Dr. Sunderland had no office hours.