



## **P.I. HARRY LYMAN**

### **Episode 1, Part 3**

The stuffy confines of the El Dorado smelled strongly of Camel filter-less cigarettes and Taco Bell extra-spicy tacos. He should probably crack a window, but Harry found the warm pungency familiar. Soothing even. And the quiet comfort was the only thing keeping the grey matter in Harry's skull from oozing out his ears. That, and the old Peter Green tune playing quietly on Bessy's radio.

The song was one of the musician's lesser-known early numbers that predated his Fleetwood Mac days, and the fingers of Harry's right hand instinctively plucked air in perfect time with the warbling guitar notes that stretched and retracted like warm taffy.

There were only two medications that had the least affect on the constant throbbing in his frontal lobe. And because the whiskey bottle had run dry two hours before, the music was currently the only treatment option at his disposal.

Harry let the blues seep into his pores and managed to relax his neck muscles enough to allow his eyelids to slide shut when a sharp rap sounded on the passenger window. Harry's index finger went from picking out an imaginary 'e' sharp to caressing the smooth, cool metal of the .38s trigger without any conscious decision on his part.

"Bit jumpy Harry?" Jo asked as she slid into the dark car, her leather pants squeaking across the leather seat.

Harry blew out a breath and lowered the gun to rest on his thigh.

"Another headache?" she asked.

Harry grunted affirmation and returned his gaze to the brightly-lit Torillo mansion where it stretched out majestically beyond a thirteen-foot-high metal fence on a perfectly-manicured lot diagonal to where he was parked.

"Are they getting worse?"

The "*what the hell do you care?*" look he shot in her direction was mostly lost in the darkness.

But Jo always could take a hint. "I have files on the main security team. Would you like to see them?"

"Might as well."

He snapped on Bessy's interior light, the cover plate's glow muted by a thick layer of dust and the carcasses of three dead flies. The first file was mundane. The second was typical. The third read like a who's who in private security. Whatever, whoever, Eddy Torrillo was, he hadn't lied about wanting the best. His personal security team was top-notch.

The car's light had drawn the attention of the guard manning the front security booth. Harry read aloud from the fourth file as the subject of the file himself stepped from the booth and began making his way toward them.

"Juan Rodrigo Martinez. Thirty-three. Ex-army."

Juan Rodrigo Martinez rested a hand on the holstered gun at his waist as he continued cautiously in their direction.

"Obviously left-handed."



Juan reached for the black radio he carried in the back pocket of his jeans.

“Stiff on his left side,” Harry concluded the observation.

“Apparently he ran into a landmine over there,” Jo added. “Rumor has it he still carries around most of the shrapnel.”

Harry sympathetically fingered the unyielding, unnatural lump just below the hairline at the base of his skull.

“I try to be extra nice to him,” Jo said and gave the man a wave and a sweet smile through the windshield.

Juan halted, squinted in their direction, nodded recognition to Jo, turned and returned to the booth.

Harry scowled and changed the subject. “I’m taking these with me,” he said, tapping the files.

“Sure, but security isn’t the problem,” Jo said. “Eddy’s looking for dirt on his two opponents. He wants this election in the bag.”

“We’ll get to them. First thing’s first.” Like making sure Jo wasn’t working side by side with a psychopath. “How’s security inside?”

“Pretty slack,” Jo said. “We mainly focus on the perimeter.”

“And when Torrillo goes out?”

“Two guys with him at all times. One drives. One sits in the back seat with Eddy. If Eddy feels like driving, then security tails Eddy in a separate car.”

“Lots of *Eddys* in that sentence,” Harry said flatly.

Jo’s carefree smile lost all its warmth. “I’m not sleeping with him, Harry,” she said quietly.

Harry jerked a shoulder. “You never were one to *sleep* with a guy, Jo.”

The cool smile downshifted again. “You’re right. There was only one guy I ever spent the entire night with. Even went so far as to move in with the asshole. Look how that turned out.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Harry said tightly, his tone the verbal equivalency of a harsh shove from the car.

“Ten o’clock,” Jo confirmed before opening the passenger door and sliding out as smoothly as she’d slid in, leaving a hint of vanilla perfume.

Harry growled in irritation as he yanked the crumpled foil pack from his pocket, jammed a cigarette between his teeth and stabbed at the lighter with his thumb. The plume of smoke did nothing to cover the disturbance Jo had left in Harry’s reliably rank environment.

It never did.

*To Be Continued...*