

**Murder**  
in  
**Martha's Vineyard**  
**Lodge**

“A Masonic Allegory”

*By:*  
*Christopher Allan Knowles*



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Christopher Allan Knowles  
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## Dedication

To Thomas, James, Sean, and Mary, who granted me the time, and space, to tell a story millennia in the making. May the uninitiated be informed by it, and the initiates learn from it. So mote it be.

## *Chapter One*

*“... a favorable opinion  
conceived of the institution...”*

There are some confrontations which, in retrospect, seem inevitable; Cassius Clay and Sonny Liston, Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King, the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the Oklahoma Sooners, and Good and Evil. Such was it to be with John Jameson and Phil Johnson. Although they both lived on this small island called Martha's Vineyard, only 100 square miles of glacial loess left behind five miles off the coast of Cape Cod by the last ice age, they lived in two different worlds. Indeed, their paths might never have crossed had it not been for the confluence of several unanticipated events.

The first, due to the collision of a late season moisture-saturated warm air mass riding the Gulf Stream up the East coast with an early season Alberta Clipper streaming down out of Canada, was the light freezing rain that early October morning in 1990 that caused journeyman boatwright Alex Mayhew to slip and have his left leg crushed under a wheel of the railway at the Martha's Vineyard Shipbuilding & Drydock Company as they hauled one of the numerous sloops out of Vineyard Haven harbor and across Beach Road for Winter storage ashore. The second was the application of the astute and quick-minded judgment of Dr. Mary Goodale, Chief of Staff at Martha's Vineyard Hospital, who was finishing up an overnight shift in the Emergency Room where she was filling in for Ron Kaplan who was honeymooning on another island, St. Bart's, with his bride of only five days. Mary saw, at once, that the injuries sustained by Mayhew were well beyond the expertise of the local orthopedic surgeon and determined that he needed to be transferred to Boston. Finally, the weather that morning, in addition to precipitating Mayhew's injury, was

accompanied by high winds and a low ceiling prohibiting the landing of either the usual Life Flight helicopter or the Coast Guard helicopter from Air Station Cape Cod at the hospital's helipad. As a last resort the Coast Guard would dispatch a Falcon jet to Martha's Vineyard Airport.

For the trip to the airport Goodale summoned the Oak Bluffs' EMT's from the fire station just down the road. Because of the vast quantity of blood Alex had lost from a nick in his femoral artery, he was being transfused, and the ER doc asked the EMT's if John Jameson, an ER Nurse on duty that night, could accompany them on the 8-mile 10-minute ride to the airport where they would await the arrival of the Coast Guard jet which was to transport Mayhew to Logan Airport in Boston from which he would be taken, by ambulance, to Mass General. It was in the old, ramshackle terminal building at the airport that John Jameson was to meet the man who would change, and ultimately take, his life.

Phil Johnson was a fifth-generation "Islander". The four previous generations had produced sea captains, sailors, and pirates. But, as luck would have it, although Phil had enlisted in the Navy at the height of the Vietnam War, the Navy had made him an "airedale", a mechanic who worked both above and below decks to ensure that the aircraft which took off from his carrier remained airborne until they returned from their sorties unless shot down by North Vietnamese SAM fire. Now Phil, pushing 50 and feeling every year of it, was the ramp manager for Vineyard Air at their Martha's Vineyard facility.

As the Coast Guard pilot was revving up the twin engines of his Falcon at Air Station Cape Cod, Mayhew, Jameson, Johnson and the Oak Bluffs EMT's huddled against the wind, overcast, and freezing rain just inside the Vineyard Air "gate" at the terminal, if a cracked glass door held open by the

relentless high winds really qualifies as a gate. By the time the Falcon arrived, Mayhew had been safely loaded aboard for his flight to Boston, and the ambulance had departed for the return trip to the Oak Bluffs Fire Station, it was nearly lunch time and Jameson's shift had been over for nearly four hours. At first he roamed the hall of the terminal waiting for the "four table and a counter" diner to reopen for lunch. Then, out of sheer boredom, he looked around to see where Johnson had gone. He found him sitting on the conveyor belt behind the Vineyard Air counter, a small book in his hands, its blue soft cover emblazoned in gold with what looked to be a school seal or family crest. As Johnson looked up at the sound of Jameson's approach, he tucked the book into one of the zippered chest pockets of his dirty gray jumpsuit and stood up.

"Can I help you?" he said, not realizing at first that it was Jameson. "No . . ., well maybe," said Jameson. "I was wondering if you knew what time the diner opened for lunch." "I'd better," said Johnson. "I've been eating in there five days a week for the past two years. Hang around for another ten minutes and I'll join you. That way I can warn you off the Special of the Day if it's not as special as they say it is."

The diner eventually opened, and they had lunch together. Neither had the Special of the Day; meatloaf and green beans with a side order of macaroni and cheese. As they ate, they spoke about Vineyard life, and where each of them perceived that they fit into the scheme of things on the Island. They were both fiftyish, but Johnson had always supported himself with his hands and his wits while Jameson had earned both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Nursing and earned his promotions and recognition with his brain. Nonetheless, Jameson bemoaned that within the healthcare environment, where most practitioners are prima donnas, praise is rare and even acknowledgment of good work is hard to come by. What

each of them admitted to themselves and to the other was that they had both made choices which had brought them to a point in their lives where they were faced with the question, "Is that all there is?"

By that time lunch had come to an end, and they had each had one too many cups of coffee. As they were each getting restless, and making signs of getting up to go, Jameson's curiosity got the better of him. Sheepishly he looked up at Johnson and asked, "When I found you back there, behind the counter, you were looking at some kind of book with a seal on the cover. You going to night school or something?" With that, Johnson got a grin on his face, almost as if to say, "Gotcha."

"No," he said. "I'm a Mason; the full name is Freemason, actually. That book is what we call a cipher, or code book. It contains all the text of the rituals that we use when someone is initiated into the fraternity or promoted to a higher degree. Officers of a lodge, like the one we have here on the Island, are obliged to memorize the speeches for their office for each of the degrees. I was just studying up to keep them fresh in my mind."

With that they both stood up and started to walk out of the diner, but Jameson turned to follow Johnson as he headed back toward the Vineyard Air counter. "You know, I've always been curious about Masons," said Jameson. "My grandfather on my father's side was a Mason; he even became what they call a 32nd Degree Mason. But then my father never joined, so I just figured there wasn't much to it."

"Freemasonry's like a lot of things in this life," said Johnson. "You only get out of it what you put into it. Most people spend their entire life, or at least the first fifty years or so, working, buying a car, buying a house, and, if they're lucky, finding a

wife and having kids. But those are external things. In the case of Freemasonry we are taught to work on the internal things; morals and character . . . things like that."

"Yeah, but what do I need a bunch of old men for to do stuff like that?" asked Jameson. "Well," replied Johnson, "remember just a while ago when you were telling me how hard it was to get any praise or recognition where you work? Masons are, for the most part, just a bunch of working stiffs like you and me. We don't care about the car you drive, or the house you live in, or even how much you earn a year. You're judged on your conduct as a man, and on how you get along with others in the fraternity. It sounds to me as though you could get a lot from Masonry that you're not getting where you work."

"Yeah, but . . .," said Jameson again, but this time Johnson stopped him. "OK, that's enough for now. Look, this isn't a sales pitch and I'm not a Navy recruiter looking to get you to enlist. You asked me a straightforward question and I gave you a straightforward answer. You've been up for at least twelve hours now, and I'm guessing more like eighteen. Go home and get some sleep; you earned your daily bread today. If, after thinking about it after a good night's sleep, you want to talk some more, give me a call." Just then a passenger for the next flight to Nantucket approached the counter and asked Johnson a question about carry-on luggage. "Thanks for your time," Jameson called back over his shoulder to Johnson as he headed for the door. Once outside, Jameson realized that the freezing rain had stopped, and that the strong winds, while making the wind chill worse, had blown away the overcast and the sun was making a half-hearted attempt at shining through the cloudy October sky. Since his car was back in the hospital parking lot, Jameson wandered over to the taxi stand. Although there were no taxis to be found when he got there, another passenger arrived by taxi for the next flight to Nantucket and Jameson

took that one back to the hospital. He jumped into his Jeep Cherokee for the fifteen-minute ride home to West Tisbury. By the time he got home it was past three in the afternoon. He put CNN Headline News on the TV and lay down on the couch, but was sound asleep before the recap of breaking stories at the bottom of the hour.

## *Chapter Two*

*“...a desire for knowledge...”*

Having pulled a double shift in the ER and dispatching a patient by Coast Guard jet to Boston, John slept through the night. He awoke in the morning to the sounds of his 8-year old daughter Lisa and 11-year old son Liam, sitting on the floor next to the couch, watching television. He knew instinctively that it was Saturday morning because Lisa and Liam were watching yet another in the interminable parade of computer-animated Japanese cartoon shows dubbed in English. This one, as do they all, had an assortment of creatures of questionable derivation who were either being trained for combat or out to save the world.

Pulling himself up from the couch and walking ever so slowly toward the kitchen, he glanced out the living room window to find that the sun was shining brightly and the outside thermometer nailed to the oak tree in the yard read sixty-nine degrees. By early afternoon it would be in the mid-seventies; beach weather. And with the storm stalled just off Provincetown at the tip of the Cape still churning up the ocean, the waves at South Beach would be great for the kids' favorite water activity, body surfing. Although his wife, Phyllis, had gone out early to get the shopping done before the “shoulder season” tourists clogged the streets, and grocery store aisles, she had left behind a nearly-full pot of black coffee. After one or two cups he would start replaying the events of the previous day in his mind.

His discussion with Phil Johnson had piqued his interest. What was it about the Masons that intrigued him? It wasn't until the day before that he had even known there was a Masonic Lodge

on the Island. Did anyone he knew, save Phil Johnson who he had only just met, belong to the Masons? Surely no one at St. Elizabeth's Roman Catholic Church in Edgartown, where he and his family attended Mass every Sunday morning, was a member. He was sure of that. After all, wasn't it Pope Leo XIII who, in 1884, had said that any man who became a Mason severed himself from the Church? And though the logic of that encyclical was somewhat tortuous, when the Holy See spoke "ex cathedra", that was that. Nonetheless, he promised himself that he'd give this institution of Freemasonry just a little more thought.

After all, Johnson had been right when he'd pointed out that, at their age, with most of life's goals achieved and milestones passed, a man could take the time to work on, what had Johnson called it, his "moral edifice, a house not built with hands." But what did John have left to learn that he would ever need to know? He had two college degrees, his Faith, and fifty years worth of what was euphemistically called "life experience". And yet, as he had asked himself while sitting at the airport diner the previous day, "Was that all there was?" His desire for the answer to that question, for that elusive bit of knowledge, kept on nagging at him and he kept mulling the question over in his mind.

That afternoon John, Phyllis, and the kids gathered together all their beach paraphernalia and piled it into the back of Phyllis's minivan. The trip to South Beach at this time of the year took little more than fifteen minutes. It was a kind of mindless task, really, and John allowed his mind, and eyes, to wander. Exactly what was a "moral edifice", and what did Masons mean when they referred to a "house not built with hands"? Before he knew it they were at the Eastern end of Atlantic Avenue, a one-and-one-half car-width wide strip of black asphalt which ran East and West parallel to, and about 100 yards inland from,

South Beach. On the northern side of Atlantic Avenue at its Western end was Katama Airfield, which was little more than a vast expanse of tall sea grass with several runways and taxiways mowed into it. A lunch counter, flying school, and windsock marked its Northern terminus.

Even at this time of the year it often took two or three passes the length of Atlantic Avenue to find a parking spot as parking was only allowed on the side furthest from the beach, and in the summer John always amused, or sometimes bemused, himself by noting from which states each vehicle came by glancing at their license plates. In early October, thankfully, most of the plates read "Massachusetts", which meant there was a realistic possibility that he might even know someone at the beach. But this time something else caught his eye as well.

In his fifty-odd years, John had been around. He had been exposed to many corporate logos, school mascots, and signs and symbols of many sorts including Masonic ones. As he drove once, then twice, the length of Atlantic Avenue scanning out the corner of his eye for an illuminated white backup light which meant that a car was, hopefully, pulling out of a parking spot, he began to notice first a decal in the left rear window of a car from New York with the "scimitar" of the Shriners on it. Then, just a few cars further, another decal with the well-known Masonic square and compasses on a car which also bore a "VINEYARDERS" decal from Martha's Vineyard Regional High School in the rear window. What really caught his eye, though, was the red Dodge Ramcharger pickup truck with an entire assortment of plastic medallions arrayed in a row on the driver's side of the tailgate. The square and compasses he recognized again, as well as the scimitar, but then came a double-headed eagle, and after that a cross and crown, and finally a set of compasses with a smiley-faced sun superimposed upon it. But the clincher was, as he pulled into

a parking space about three car-lengths further down the road, he recognized the President of Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank in his rear view mirror as he and his wife climbed into the cab of the pickup while their kids hopped into the truck's bed. Hadn't John and his wife banked there for the ten plus years they'd lived on the Island, and didn't even their kids have savings accounts there through the bank's school savings program?

Maybe he just hadn't been paying attention. Maybe these people who chose to call themselves Masons really did live among the population, just not choosing to call any more attention to themselves than by displaying a small window decal on their car lest they come upon another Mason not yet known to them. But then it was time for the migration from the minivan to the beach and John forgot all about those signs and symbols; at least for the moment.

It was a great day at the beach; the waves large enough to be fun without being dangerous, and the sun warm enough to take away the chill from the off-ocean breeze, the other lingering remnant of the previous day's storm. The day after Labor Day the lifeguards disappeared from all the Island beaches, in this case leaving John to play the triple role of father, swimmer, and lifeguard. He made a mental note to himself, as he recalled the events of the past thirty-six hours, to call the Patient Information number at Massachusetts General Hospital and inquire into the current condition of Alex Mayhew.

Sunday was pretty much taken up with church; an 8:00AM service for the entire family, 10:30 Sunday School for Lisa, lunch, homework, and 6:30 Sunday School for Liam. Soccer practices were on Thursday afternoons for both of the children, with games on Saturday mornings. Sundays, then, were a little more civilized in the Fall than in the Winter when church,

Sunday School, basketball games, and homework competed for the entire family's waking hours, and even more so for the few precious daylight hours.

Back at work on Monday morning, John pulled into the parking lot fifteen minutes before the 8:00AM shift change. As he did so he drove past the teal-colored BMW which was parked in the spot reserved for the hospital's Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Montgomery. Out of the corner of his eye, just below the trunk lid on the driver's side, he spied another one of those medallions, this time made of shiny brass, with the compasses and smiley-faced sun on it. At some point he'd have to make an effort to find out just what that symbol was and, more importantly, what it meant.

## *Chapter Three*

*“...a sincere wish to be  
serviceable to your fellow creatures...”*

John's week was a typical one. He was working days this week, and only once, on Thursday, was he asked to pull a double shift in the ER. Evenings in mid-October in the ER at Martha's Vineyard Hospital meant, for the most part, a lot of down time, and for John that meant time to think, reflect, and read. Since the Bunch of Grapes Bookstore (that name would take on added significance to him in the months and years to come) on Main Street in Vineyard Haven was open 'til six in the evenings at this time of year, he had a chance to stop off there on the way home after work Tuesday evening. He'd found a seemingly mundane title, “The Meaning of Masonry” by Wilmshurst, tucked away in a corner of the first floor along with other books on “magick”, arcana, and the occult. What it contained was a series of essays on different aspects of Freemasonry. He'd tossed it into the backpack he carried with him to work each day in the expectation that one night, sooner or later, he'd find himself with time on his hands. The staffing in the Emergency Room, after all, was a function of statutory requirements rather than the level of demand on any given night, and Thursday night's staffing was clearly a function of statute, not necessity.

After dinner he'd found himself a quiet corner within earshot of the electronic doors who's “swoosh” frequently foretold the arrival of a walk-in patient to the ER rather than the tumult which accompanied the arrival of an ambulance and a team of EMT's and/or paramedics. What John had expected, as he started to read, was the revelation of, or the intimation at, “Masonic secrets” by which Masons could do things mere

mortals could not. To the extent that this expectation was not fulfilled, he was disappointed. But what he found was that he was reading essays about something, which, if not as titillating, was certainly more useful in his everyday life. They were about a value system, nonsectarian in nature, shared by a group of men who made up the single largest fraternity in the world. Though not a religion, it required of all of its members a belief in God. Those essays seemed to convey the same sort of message, as did the morality plays of days gone by to the ancient Greeks. It was to today's "Everyman" that they were addressed, and it was for him that they were meant to have meaning. These were not lessons exclusively for the aristocracy or the intelligentsia. Indeed, they may well have been offended by the accessibility of these Masonic "secrets" to the bricklayer, carpenter, or shopkeeper.

John's reading that night was, needless to say, periodically interrupted by the entrance of a patient into the ER but, for the most part, it was a quiet evening. He even skipped his meal break in order to continue reading. As he pondered the usefulness of the lessons of Freemasonry to the working man in his daily life, he reminded himself that it was from the tradition of the working man that Freemasonry had arisen. Whether one held to the belief that the Masonic tradition arose during the years of the construction of King Solomon's temple, or concurrently with the failed attempts at the building of the "second temple"; whether the tradition grew from the guild system during the glory days of stonemasonry when the great Gothic cathedrals of Western Europe were built or was as "new" as the admission of gentlemen Masons to speculative Freemasonry which dated back only to 1717, it was from the workers that it arose and it was by the workers that it was sustained.

By the time John's second shift was over, and the 4:00PM - midnight team had reported off to the overnight staff, it was nearly 12:15AM. Having read Wilmshurst's book through twice, as he drove home he debated whether, and resolved, to call Phil Johnson in the morning and see if he'd be willing to get together to tell him more about Masonry.

When Phil got the call at the Vineyard Air counter the next morning, he suggested that he and John meet at the Masonic Lodge on South Summer Street in Edgartown at 11:30AM Sunday morning. John said that he'd need to check with his wife, Phyllis, to make sure she could get Lisa to Sunday School that morning. After speaking with her by phone at her desk in the school superintendent's office, he called Phil back and confirmed the date and time.

For John, that Sunday morning, the meeting required a brief twenty minute drive from his home. Phil, however, had only a several block walk from his small wooden house located on a narrow parcel of land between North Water Street and Edgartown harbor. The property had been in the family for nearly 200 years and was dominated by a boardwalk which ran from the sidewalk at its Western end to the boat slip on the harbor where Phil docked his 26-foot fishing trawler which had once provided previous generations of Johnson's with a livelihood and now offered Phil and his fellow Lodge brothers with an afternoon's diversion on a warm Summer's day.

Shortly before 11:30, John pulled up in front of the Federal-style two-story building and Phil was waiting for him. As they walked across the colonnaded porch, Phil pulled out his front door key, which was one of the perks of being a Past Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. The foyer led into a large, welcoming meeting room which doubled as a dining room on Lodge nights and a community meeting space for various

groups throughout the week. A doorway and pass-through counter in the left rear corner of the room led to the commercial-quality kitchen at the back of the first floor. At the right rear were two unisex bathrooms. Having taken a quick tour of the first floor, they returned to the bottom of the staircase on the right just inside the front door. The stairs climbed along the front and right-hand walls of the first floor to a locked pair of doors at the head of the stairs. Phil's key opened the doors and they walked into an anteroom with two chests of drawers, a couple of overstuffed red leather chairs, and a row consisting of three sets of wall-hung cabinets with cut glass and latticework pairs of doors. At either end of the wall were doors, the single one at the left leading to another, yet smaller, anteroom. The ones on the right led to the main Lodge Room. When Phil swung these doors wide open, John could take in the full effect of the space.

His initial impressions of the Lodge Room were threefold. First, with the exception of the main anteroom, the second floor was totally devoid of windows. Next, the meeting room was covered, from wall to wall, with a brilliant royal blue carpet. And, finally, that the contents of the Lodge were, in no way, daunting, ostentatious, or even mysterious. In the center of each wall was a high-backed chair. Along the North and South walls of the Lodge Room (i.e., the walls running the length of the second floor), there were two rows of theatre-like chairs. And in the center of the room was a rectangular pedestal with church-like kneeling cushions around it. The sides of the pedestal bore intricate engravings and the top, which was covered in maroon velvet, bore a closed book with a square and pair of compasses lying on the top of it.

Phil and John crossed the room to a couple of chairs on the "sidelines". When they were seated, Phil asked John, "Well, is it what you expected?" John paused for a moment and then

said, "I really didn't know what to expect but, whatever it was, this isn't it." Phil laughed. "You know," John said, "I guess I was expecting human skulls, and suits of armor." "Oh," Phil responded, "I hope we haven't disappointed you. You see, Freemasonry is not about the trappings of the fraternity but, rather, the ornaments which adorn one's soul."

John thought about that last comment for a moment, and then observed, "So the essence of Freemasonry is not aprons, jewels, or even secret handshakes; it's about the inner qualities of a man?" "Essentially, yes. Those other things have both a place and a purpose within Freemasonry. But the mere presence of them does not a Mason make, nor does the lack thereof deprive a Mason of his identity within the fraternity."

With this statement Phil had opened a dialog with John which would last more than two hours and, at its conclusion, John said, "We've been talking about Masonry for hours now and I'm left with more questions than I had when I started." "I'm not surprised," said Phil. "But now the questions are less about Freemasonry and more about yourself. This is where you have to make a decision; it's not whether you want to learn more about Freemasonry, but whether you want to learn more about yourself."

## *Chapter Four*

*“...cheerfully conform to the ancient established usages and customs...”*

In the string of municipalities which make up Megalopolis, the continuous metropolitan area which stretches along the Eastern seaboard from Richmond to Portland, September and October mark that time of year when urban and suburban residents shed the stupor of the dog days of Summer and get back into the hyperactive swing of the remaining nine months of the year. On Martha's Vineyard, however, like its sister resorts of Bethany, Rehoboth, Cape May and Montauk, the residents take their first full deep breaths in four or five months and kick back to revel in the relatively tourist-free months of November through April. The children are back in school, and many of the adults have just earned, in a hectic four-month frenzy of nonstop work, the income which will have to sustain them until, like the swallows to Capistrano, the tourists return in the Spring shoulder season of late April and early May.

During this time of year, occupied with school sports, recreational fishing and hunting, and the passive pastime of watching professional football and college basketball on television, it is easy to lose track of time and priorities. Thus it was that John Jameson, having resolved to pursue membership in the Masons, didn't get around to asking Phil Johnson how to go about obtaining an application until February of 1991. As with all occasions in Freemasonry, there was a strict and well set forth process for every contingency, including this one. It started with a pre-application screening. In the case of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, the screening was always conducted by the current Master of the Lodge. This year that office was held by Sean O'Hanlon, a 43-year old detective on the force of the

Edgartown Police Department, a third generation Irish Catholic Mason, and a recent recipient of his 25-year Masonic pin. This meant that he had been made a Mason at the age of eighteen, the youngest age at which any man may become a Mason, and a privilege available only to the sons of Masons.

John received a phone call from Detective O'Hanlon one evening in late February inviting Jameson to join him at the Lodge in Edgartown one weekday evening when neither of them was on duty. For the first hour the discussion was reminiscent of that which John and Phil Johnson had held in that very same room months earlier. Only near the end did Sean move into such areas as John's motivation for wanting to become a Mason, his ability to afford the annual membership dues, and whether or not his family was supportive of this endeavor as membership and, if fortune shone upon him, the duties of an officer may require certain time commitments. Jameson was able to convince O'Hanlon that membership in Martha's Vineyard Lodge would pose no hardship to himself or his family. With that Sean presented John with an application, a petition, really, with instructions to return it to the Lodge's Secretary with the appropriate fees after he had filled it out.

The petition was straightforward; name, address, employer, date of birth, place of birth, etc. Having filled it out, John wrote out a check to Martha's Vineyard Lodge for the cost of a year's membership plus the fees for the three degrees. O'Hanlon had explained to him that if, for some reason, his petition for membership was rejected; these fees would be refunded. Because of the timing of the receipt of the application by the Lodge's Secretary, it was read out before the membership at the March meeting. With that the Master, Sean O'Hanlon, appointed an Investigative Committee, made up of three Master Masons, who would look into the life of one John Jameson to determine if he was a suitable candidate to be

admitted into Freemasonry. Because John's life, with the exception of a four-year tour of duty in the Marines, had not taken him far from his hometown of Waltham, Massachusetts, vetting Jameson was a relatively straightforward process. A discreet verification of his Honorable Discharge from the United States Marine Corps completed the investigation.

At the April meeting of Martha's Vineyard Lodge the Secretary announced that the report of the Investigative Committee was favorable and the petition for membership of John Jameson in Martha's Vineyard Lodge could be balloted upon. The balloting process dates back, at least, to 1717 when the fraternity went “public”. The Senior Deacon prepares the ballot box with an adequate number of white balls and black cubes to accommodate the vote of every member in the Lodge that night who is lawfully entitled to cast a vote; i.e., members of Martha's Vineyard Lodge who have attained the rank of Master Mason and are in good standing. The Master casts his vote first and then all others who are entitled to vote pass by the ballot box where they pick up either a white ball or black cube and drop it into a hole leading from the exposed to the enclosed portion of the box. White balls elect; black cubes reject. It takes but one negative vote to prevent a man from joining the fraternity. While the term “black balled” does, indeed, derive from Freemasonry, the rejecting balloting device has actually evolved from a black ball to a black cube over the past nearly 300 years. One can only speculate as to why this transpired, but it may well be that, due to the advancing age of the average Mason, the “feel” of a cube or ball inside the confines of a shadowy wooden box was more readily recognizable to those whose eyesight may have deteriorated. In addition, it precludes the need for an older Brother to remove the ball from the box and look at it more closely while, in the process, holding in his hand for all to see, the device by which he will exercise his vote.

When all those eligible to vote have done so, the Senior Deacon allows the Junior Warden and, then, the Senior Warden, to examine the contents of the closed portion of the ballot box before proceeding to the East where the Master of the Lodge makes his own examination. The Master then polls the Junior and Senior Wardens as to their finding of the ballot before announcing his own. They should all, of course, agree, and with that an individual is either elected or rejected as a candidate for the first three degrees in Freemasonry. In John Jameson's case the result of the ballot was favorable. Several days later he received a letter from the Secretary of the Lodge indicating that the balloting on his petition had been favorable and that he would be notified when and where to present himself for initiation into the fraternity of Freemasonry and the conferring of the First Degree.

There being only one other candidate awaiting the taking of the degrees as of the end of the April meeting, and having only two more meetings, in May and June, remaining for the current Masonic year, it was decided that John and his fellow candidate would receive their degrees in the Fall. Thus, all three degrees could be conferred in consecutive months and it would allow for any additional candidates whose petitions were favorably voted upon in May, June, September or October, to go through the degrees as part of John's "class".

During the Summer of '91 two more applications were handed out by Sean O'Hanlon, Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, and both were received back, accompanied by the appropriate fees, before the September meeting which marked the beginning of the 1991-1992 Masonic year. There were, then, two orders of business other than the reading and acceptance of the Minutes of the June, 1991 meeting. The first was the reading out of the two petitions, which the Master had received over the Summer; the second was the installation of the officers

for the year. Barring suspension, expulsion, or death, each of the officers, save the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, and Tyler, moved one seat closer to the Master's chair. The Master, having completed his journey through "the line", was honored by being presented with the jewel and apron of a Past Master. Thus, Detective Sean O'Hanlon became a Past Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. The positions of Treasurer, Secretary, and Tyler, were customarily held by the same Master Masons, usually Past Masters of the Lodge, for a number of years.

And so the Senior Warden became Master, the Junior Warden became Senior Warden, the Senior Deacon became Junior Warden, etc. By the end of the evening the Lodge had favorably heard the two new petitions and installed a new "suite" of officers. The new Master had expressed his intention to appoint Investigative Committees for the two pending petitions for membership with the expectation that the reports would be back in time that balloting on the two additional applicants could take place at the October meeting.

When the second Tuesday in October came around, not only did the Master have in hand the reports of the Investigative Committees on the two outstanding petitions, but it was the month designated for the "fraternal" visitation of the District Deputy Grand Master for Massachusetts' Masonic District Nantucket #31. In Freemasonry the District Deputy Grand Master was the eyes and ears of the Grand Master of Masons for Massachusetts in each of the several Masonic districts. The fraternal visit by the District Deputy Grand Master was usually marked with a great deal of cordial rhetoric, some small exemplification of Masonic ritual recited, from memory, by a newly "raised" Master Mason or one of the officers, and a large meal. This was in contrast to the "official" visitation of the District Deputy Grand Master and his suite when the charter or

warrant of the Lodge was examined, the financial records were reviewed, etc.

To John Jameson the only important piece of business that night was the balloting on the two petitions. Both were balloted upon favorably and the first, and possibly only, class of four candidates for the first three degrees in Freemasonry was set. The last week in October he received a phone call from the Secretary of the Lodge telling him to make himself available at 7:00PM on the evening of the second Tuesday in November. It was the order of the Master that the First Degree be conferred on the four candidates in November, the Second in December, and the “sublime degree of Master Mason” should be conferred upon the four at the January meeting when another sit-down dinner would take place between the First and Second Sections of the Third Degree ritual.

## *Chapter Five*

*“from a Lodge of the  
Holy Saints John of Jerusalem...”*

While John Jameson had eagerly awaited his initiation into the “mysteries” of Freemasonry ever since his petition had been favorably balloted upon in April, his anticipation grew to a fever pitch over the next three weeks. He'd gotten a haircut, polished his only pair of dress shoes, and the Monday night before his initiation his wife had ironed one of only two dress shirts which John owned. On the designated night, and at the designated time, John Jameson arrived at Martha's Vineyard Lodge dressed uncharacteristically in a sport coat, dress shirt, and tie, as he had been directed to do. The three other men who were to go through the rituals of the three degrees in Freemasonry with him had all done the same.

So it was that John Jameson, along with three other candidates, came to be initiated into the mysteries of Freemasonry on the evening of the second Tuesday in November, 1991. At the hour of 7:00PM the members of Martha's Vineyard Lodge entered the Lodge Room and the doors were closed behind them. This left John and his three “classmates” waiting nervously in the main anteroom where one Master Mason with a jewel around his neck, an apron around his waist, and a sword in his hand had stayed behind, outside the Lodge Room doors, as if to ward off intruders. At roughly 7:20PM, two Master Masons, each carrying a wooden rod about five feet in height and capped with some Masonic headpiece, emerged from the small anteroom and escorted John and his classmates back into that smaller anteroom from whence they had come.

What happened to John Jameson and his classmates in the smaller anteroom and the main Lodge Room that night has no bearing upon the outcome of the evening. It is sufficient to know that what was said to them, and the manner in which they responded, has remained essentially unchanged for, at a minimum, nearly 300 years, and possibly for as many as over 5500 years before that. But, when the four finally emerged from the Lodge Room that night they were newly minted Masons, having had conferred upon each of them the designation of Entered Apprentice, the First Degree in Freemasonry.

And now John Jameson and his classmates each knew infinitely more about Freemasonry than they had two hours earlier, but were “in the dark” about just how much they had left to learn. They had, as yet, taken but a single bite from the fruit of knowledge.

The ritual of the First Degree had been performed well, and with the proper solemnity, by the officers of Martha's Vineyard Lodge and the four Masons had been treated to a proper initiation into the mysteries of Freemasonry. All four stayed around after the “closing” of the Lodge for what was Masonically referred to as a “collation”, which was another way of saying cake, ice cream, and coffee. In another era it may have more likely consisted of scotch, bourbon and rye, and Edgartown was, indeed, one of the two “wet” towns on the Island where alcoholic beverages could be sold, but it was the 1990's and between the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union), MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), and the United States' Surgeon General weighing in on the ills of “Demon Rum”, having a group of Masons emerging from their Lodge hall under the influence of alcohol would have brought condemnation from some members of the community down upon the fraternity.

The next morning, when John Jameson awoke to get ready for another day in the ER, he felt no different than he had the morning before. What he did have, however, was a fond recollection from the night before of a type of camaraderie which he hadn't experienced since his days in the Corps, and a litany of Masonic ritual calling him to a higher level of awareness as to the quality and constancy of his conduct toward his fellow man. It wasn't as if he'd been told what to do but, rather, he'd had set forth for him a manner and attitude with which to approach those things which he already did. This, at first blush, hardly represented a “life-altering” experience, but short of an accident, an illness, or the death of a loved one, few life-altering experiences reveal themselves as such when they first occur.

During the following four weeks, John and his classmates met with Sean O'Hanlon weekly in the Lodge hall on Tuesday evenings to review what is affectionately referred to by Masons as “the catechism”. That is, they each received a small blue paperbound pamphlet which set forth, in a form of Masonic “code”, the essence of the ritual lectures they had heard the night they were initiated and they had to exhibit to their instructor, in this case the Master of the Lodge, that they were able to readily recite, with the aid of that pamphlet, the facts and lessons which they had been given. This came more easily to some than others, but by the third Tuesday night all were able to exhibit “suitable proficiency” so that the Master could vouch for their progress along the continuum which would eventually lead to their becoming Master Masons.

At 7:00PM on the evening of the second Tuesday in December, Martha's Vineyard Lodge held its monthly meeting, referred to as a “Regular Communication”, and, following the business meeting at which only Master Masons were present, the four newest Masons, who had been “regularly initiated” Entered

Apprentices” the previous month, were “passed' to the degree of Fellowcraft,” the Second Degree in Freemasonry. Again, cake, ice cream, and coffee followed the closing of the Lodge and they were provided with their Fellowcraft pamphlets which they were to study, under the supervision of George Slack, during the next four weeks. This was somewhat more difficult than it had been the preceding month because of the holidays but, when the second Tuesday in January came around, Slack could, once again, vouch for the progress made by the four Fellowcrafts.

## *Chapter Six*

*“To learn to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry...”*

And so it came to pass that at 7:00PM on the evening of January 14, 1992, at the Regular Communication of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, John Jameson took the step which his father's father had taken one-hundred and eighteen years earlier, and, in the most elaborate and dramatic of the three degree rituals, was “raised' to the sublime degree of Master Mason.”

There followed a fine dinner prepared by the Culinary Arts class at the regional high school, a class taught by a Brother Master Mason. It consisted of a tossed salad, chicken cordon bleu, scalloped potatoes, and French-cut green beans with slivered almonds. The meal ended with fudge-topped Devil's food cake, warm regards and hot coffee.

Thus ended, almost, but not quite, all of the process of becoming a Master Mason for John Jameson and his three classmates. As in the preceding two degrees, they would be required to meet weekly with the Lodge's Master, George Slack, to review the catechism of the Third Degree. As George was the retired director of the Island's only funeral home, he had plenty of time on his hands to work with the new Masons between the January and February Regular Communications. His only “busy season” occurred about every nine weeks when, as the Chairman of the Red Cross Blood Drive, all of his time and energy were absorbed in that one task. Fortunately, the last blood drive had taken place in mid-December and he could just complete his work with the new class of Master Masons before gearing up for the next blood drive. At February's Regular

Communication the four were allowed to sign the By-laws of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, thus entitling them to all the rights and privileges of a Master Mason at Martha's Vineyard Lodge or, for that matter, any lodge of Master Masons throughout the world.

By the time John had signed the By-laws, he had already begun to look at the “next steps” in Freemasonry. It is said, and not without the moral authority of the entire fraternity of Freemasonry, that there is no Mason more senior than he who holds the title of Master Mason; and, indeed, this is an accurate statement. But a Mason who has received the Third Degree has two avenues available to him should he wish to pursue “further light in Masonry”. The first is the Scottish Rite; the second, the York Rite.

The Scottish Rite is not Scottish at all, but, rather, French, “Scottish” being a misnomer as a result of some faulty transliteration from French as recorded by an Englishman. The York Rite, however, did indeed have its roots in English Freemasonry. The Scottish Rite, sometimes referred to as the University of Freemasonry, consists of twenty-nine plays, each teaching an integral lesson of Freemasonry, terminating in the 32nd Degree, the “Prince of the Royal Secret”. The York Rite follows a somewhat different path although its “terminal” degree, that of the Order of Knights Templar, is deemed to be the “equivalent” of the Scottish Rite's 32nd Degree. That they are deemed equivalent is testified to by a third, though not Masonic, organization; the Shriners.

Once upon a time, in France, a group of American show business luminaries had been feted by their hosts to a display of hospitality the likes of which they had ne'er to fore seen. The “theme” was that of ancient Egypt, replete with pyramids, camels and fezzes. They determined that, upon their return to

the States, they would set up such an exclusive club with corresponding pomp and circumstance. They searched for a set of membership criteria which would assure them the “right people”. They settled upon a sole prerequisite; the applicant would have to hold the title of 32nd Degree Mason in the Scottish Rite or Knight Templar in the York Rite. They decided to call themselves “Shriners”, a reference to the formal title of the group, the Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, abbreviated “AAONMS”. This, to the not-so-astute denizen of the Sunday Boston Globe crossword puzzle, is nothing more than an anagram for “A MASON”.

While the Shriners held no attraction for John, he couldn't get past the fact that his paternal grandfather had been a 32nd Degree Mason. Much as he never got over the fact that his father had been a Captain in the United States Army Quartermaster Corps during World War II, a commissioned officer, and that he had only attained the rank of Gunnery Sergeant in the Marine Corps during 'Nam, he wanted to make sure that, if he had anything to say about it, he'd meet his grandfather as a fellow 32nd Degree Mason if ever he got to Heaven.

This having been said, the “Chivalric Orders” of the York Rite, the Order of the Red Cross, the Order of the Knights of Malta, and the Order of the Knights Templar, were the only “exclusively Christian degrees in Freemasonry.” Indeed, when the Pope created the original Templar order in 1118, its full name was the “Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon”. Their charge; to escort pilgrims from Western Europe on their perilous religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem. While their Western European warrior monks set up store as bankers vouchsafing their charges' fortunes for the trip to Jerusalem, the “Templars” in Jerusalem itself set up camp adjacent to what was, according to whom one asked and their

particular theological persuasion, referred to as the “Church of the Holy Sepulcher”, the “Dome of the Rock”, the “Temple Mount”, or simply the ruins of King Solomon's Temple.

However, as regarded John Jameson's continuing quest for Masonic knowledge, he decided to pursue both the Scottish and York Rites, though not membership in the Shrine. In terms of the Scottish Rite, this meant joining the “Consistory” of 32nd Degree Masons in the Valley of Southeastern Massachusetts based in Wareham on the mainland. As far as the York Rite was concerned, he joined the “Chapter” of Royal Arch Masons and “Council” of Royal and Select Masons on the Vineyard as well as the “Commandery” of Knights Templar in Centerville on Cape Cod. By 1994 he had made his way through both hierarchies to 32nd Degree Mason in the Scottish Rite and Knight Templar in the York Rite. Along the way he had learned that the double-headed eagle which he had seen as a plastic car appliqué on the bank president's pickup truck those many years before was the emblem of a 32nd Degree Mason, and the cross and crown which had been displayed beside it was one of the symbols of a Knight Templar.

All the while, however, the primary focus of John's efforts in Freemasonry had been geared toward his entrance into, and advancement through, the line of officers of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. George Slack had been the Master of the Lodge who had raised John in January of 1992. In the Fall of 1992, George had accepted the office of Tyler, a position more commensurate with his age, energy, and interest in the ebbing “politics” of Martha's Vineyard Lodge.

## Chapter Seven

*“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity...”*

At the installation of the officers in September, 1992, David Anthier, a Sergeant in the Edgartown Police Department, had moved from the Senior Warden's chair in the West to the Oriental Chair as Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. On the recommendation of the outgoing Master, George Slack, John Jameson had been asked if he would be interested in serving as the Junior Deacon of Martha's Vineyard Lodge for the 1992-1993 Masonic year based upon his facility in picking up the Masonic ritual and his enthusiasm in learning more about “the Craft”.

That year was more about observing the various officers, and how they functioned in the ritual of the conferring of degrees, than anything else, but it had taught John two important lessons; that the “work” of the officers, both in terms of ritual and “floorwork” (i.e., how they moved around the Lodge during the ceremonies), could make or break a new Mason's impression of Freemasonry, and that it took only a willingness and an aptitude to continue to move up through “the line”.

As the months turned to years, John's dedication to the principles of Freemasonry, as well as the work necessary to become an exemplary officer, had not waned. In fact, as time passed his commitment to Freemasonry had been enhanced by the Brothers he had met and the impact, which they had made upon his life.

Nor had this commitment gone unnoticed. When, in the Fall of 1992, Senior Warden, and Martha's Vineyard Hospital's Chief

Executive Officer, Thomas Montgomery moved from the Senior Warden's station to his second term in the Oriental Chair as Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, he asked John to be his Senior Deacon. That Montgomery had previously held the office of Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge explained the presence of that enigmatic shiny brass emblem, the compasses with a radiant, smiley-faced sun in their center, the insignia of a Past Master on the rear of his "bimmer".

Now, although the Senior Deacon's station is fourth in the line of officers, the amount of ritual and the floorwork to be learned for the conferring of the three degrees is second only to that of the Master, and the Middle Chamber Lecture for the Fellowcraft Degree is deemed by many to be the jewel in the crown of Masonic ritual. Indeed, throughout the conferring of the three degrees it is the Senior Deacon who serves as a virtual "ringmaster", seeing to it that each candidate is in the right place at the right time and that, as Senior Deacon, he is responding, upon cue, to the prompts of the senior officers.

Jameson's work as Senior Deacon had proven to the senior officers of the Lodge that he was at least worthy of consideration for the last three chairs in the line; Junior Warden, Senior Warden, and Master of the Lodge. Even Phil Johnson, who had reentered the line as Junior Deacon to John's Senior Deacon, had to grudgingly admit that Jameson's work over the past two years had been an asset to the Lodge and had "raised the bar" for all the officers from Junior Steward through Master.

When the ritual and floorwork of a Lodge is not up to par, two things happen. First, the candidates do not receive the full impact of the historical, as well as personal, significance of the steps, which they are taking. Second, the Brethren become disillusioned and stop attending the Regular Communications.

One begins to hear comments like, "The Master would have raised Hell with me if I'd done a job like that when I was Senior Warden." Eventually, when the bill for the next year's dues arrives some Brothers simply toss it in the trash. After a while, depending upon the Secretary and that year's Master, they're ultimately suspended from the Lodge for non-payment of dues. And so, John had vowed to himself that, if he was not prepared to do a piece of ritual correctly, he would tell the Master and ask to be replaced rather than embarrass himself and discredit the Lodge.

As the year went by, John became known for the earnest effort he made in trying to get every bit of ritual and floorwork right. Inevitably, though, at least once in the conferring of each degree for that year's class of candidates, he "flubbed" some little piece of floorwork; either losing count of the number of times they'd passed the Junior Warden's station's when escorting the candidates in their "circumambulation" of the Lodge or heading for the North of the altar, instead of first stopping at the Master's station, when preparing the ballot box for a vote on the petition of an applicant. He'd even left off the last and, arguably, most important line of the Middle Chamber Lecture when they conferred the Second Degree on that year's candidates. But no one seemed to notice. No one, that is, except Phil Johnson.

## *Chapter Eight*

*“...The Lamb has in all ages been deemed an emblem of innocence...”*

Phil Johnson was a Past Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. Moreover, not only had he held comparable positions in the Island's York Rite bodies but he was also active at the Commandery and Consistory levels as well. He'd even given Jameson a ride to the Centerville Masonic Hall that snowy winter evening in 1994 when John had been made a Knight Templar.

Hadn't it been Phil who had first turned John on to Freemasonry in the diner at the old airport terminal? And hadn't it been Phil who met John that night, after work, at the Masonic Hall and talked to him for hours about the meaning of Masonry and the significance it had held for him in his life? And now it was John, and not he, who was getting all of the attention. Somehow, though Phil didn't know how, John's work had even come to the attention of the District Deputy Grand Master. On his official visitation in the spring of 1994, the District Deputy had sought John out. “I've been hearing good things about you,” he said. “I hope you intend to stay in the line and stick it out.” This was the same District Deputy that Phil played golf with at Farm Neck on balmy spring weekends. And now he was seeking John out.

Somehow it had all gone wrong, terribly wrong. Sure, Phil had received the Joseph Warren Award for meritorious service to the fraternity several years ago. And when the Grand Master was planning to come to Martha's Vineyard it was Phil that he called first. But Phil had many more years to make his contributions to Freemasonry. And there were still heights he

had not yet achieved. But, suddenly, he had found himself in the shadow of this newcomer; a newcomer who had yet to “pay his dues”.

Although John had once complained to Phil that he never really got the recognition he deserved at Martha's Vineyard Hospital, he did, after all, have his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Nursing, and he was a well respected healthcare professional. Phil, on the other hand, was the Ramp Manager for Vineyard Air. With no recognition there, he “lived” for this Masonic stuff. It was what made him tick, what he took pride in and how, ultimately, he defined himself. And now, in part due to his own complicity, he could feel it slipping away. Jameson, the new kid on the block, was Island Masonry's “flavor of the month”. Phil figured if he just waited long enough it would “blow over” and he'd regain his rightful place in the fraternity once again. He was wrong. The accolades kept accruing to Jameson; Johnson had become yesterday's news.

There was a phrase Freemasons used. When, at the end of a prayer offered by the Chaplain, he would say “Amen”, the response from the Brethren was “So mote it be”. The derivation of this phrase is lost in the mists of antiquity, but the saying persists to this day. John Jameson had stolen Phil Johnson's thunder. The “strokes” Phil Johnson got from Freemasonry meant more to him than they did to John Jameson. But John had taken them away just the same. “If that's the way he wants it,” thought Johnson to himself, “I'll show him he's got a fight on his hands. So mote it be.”

## Chapter Nine

*“...so are the most valued tenets of our Institution, Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love, contained within the Points of the Compasses...”*

In May of 1994, while watching television one evening, John Jameson had gotten a phone call from James Arundel, the Executive Director of Martha's Vineyard Community Services. Arundel was currently the Senior Warden of the Lodge, and he was compiling a list of names which he and the other two members of the Nominating Committee would place before the Brethren at that month's Regular Communication as a slate of officers to be elected for the 1994-1995 Masonic year when he would be Master of the Lodge.

John couldn't honestly say that he hadn't hoped the phone call would come, and, when Arundel asked him if he'd like to be nominated as next year's Junior Warden, he'd said “Yes” without a moment's hesitation. In fact, he was looking forward to Phil Johnson's recitation, as the new Senior Deacon, of the Middle Chamber Lecture. He was confident that, unlike himself, Phil wouldn't drop a whole line. Indeed, much of Phil's reputation in Freemasonry had derived from his proficiency in the minutest details of Masonic ritual.

Much as James Arundel's phone call had come as no surprise to John that Spring, neither was the phone call from Phil Johnson one Saturday evening early that Fall. John had actually fallen asleep on the couch in the living room while watching his alma mater, the University of Massachusetts, play in-state rival Holy Cross on New England Sports Network (NESN) cable TV late that afternoon.

The officers of Martha's Vineyard Lodge were preparing to initiate a new class of three candidates and, although Phil's biggest role that night was to receive the candidates at the door of the Lodge Room, John had a lengthy speech as part of the Third Section of the ritual and he knew himself well enough to know it still needed a lot of work. Phil said he would be willing to meet with John in the Lodge Room to go over his ritual work around noon the next day, Sunday. Since the Patriots were playing in the late game that day, John decided to take Phil up on his offer.

John arrived at the Masonic Hall by car from his home in West Tisbury shortly before noon. Since Phil lived only a few blocks away, and always walked from home, there was no telltale car to indicate to John whether he was there yet or not. His first indication that Phil had already arrived was the unlocked front door. He called in, but there was no response. John made his way up the stairs to the main anteroom but there was still no sign of Johnson. Then he noticed that the Lodge Room doors were open. Though the lights were not on, he slowly walked in.

The only illumination emanated from three candles, placed East, West and South within the Lodge. And then he noticed a shadowy figure, pacing, agitated, near the center of the room. "Phil?" said John tentatively. "Yeah," responded Phil. "Shouldn't we turn the lights on so I can read my lecture from the cipher?" said John. "No, it's OK," said Phil. "I just want to talk for a minute."

As his eyes began to adjust to the light, and as Phil passed in front of one of the candles, John realized that he was dressed in full Masonic officer's regalia; tuxedo, jewel, apron, and white cotton gloves. John was beginning to feel a bit uneasy, but he'd known Phil for three years now, and he knew there was no cause to fear danger. "John," said Phil, "did you know

that, before you arrived on the scene, I was considered the very model of a good Mason on Martha's Vineyard?" "Sure," answered John, "and you still are." "Well it may still seem that way to you, but it's sure not the case from where I'm standing." Now John was feeling more than a bit uneasy. "I don't understand," John said. "You're still the same guy you always were." "That's just the point," snapped Phil. "I'm still the same guy, all right, but in the eyes of the Lodge you've just kept on getting better and I'm stuck playing second fiddle to the latest 'Whiz Kid'."

"It's not like that," said John, feeling both defensive and not just a little threatened. "This isn't about you and me; it never has been." "Well it sure feels that way to me," said Phil, "and I'm going to put a stop to it." "What do you mean?" asked John. Phil's agitation was really beginning to show, as his pacing became somewhat frantic. "I think you should take a break. You know, call Arundel and tell him your work load has increased; involuntary overtime and all that." By this time John and Phil were standing in the middle of the Lodge Room, one on each side of the altar. "Tell him Montgomery's making you pull double shifts in the ER so he doesn't have to recruit any new ER nurses from off-Island." "First," said Jameson, "it's not true. And, second, I gave James my word and I won't let him, or the Lodge, down. As far as I'm concerned, this conversation is over." With that, John did the crispest "180" he'd executed since he left the Corps and headed for the Lodge Room door. "Then die!" shrieked Johnson. With that, he picked up the partially opened compasses from atop the square and Holy Bible on the altar and, with an agility that gave lie to his fifty-plus years, lunged at John from behind, implanting the two points of the antique compasses in John's back, straddling his vertebrae.

John's eyes went wide open. He spun on his left heel until he was looking Phil dead in the eye. He looked as though he were trying to speak, as if to say, "Now why did you have to go and do that?" He opened his mouth to speak, but all that came out was white, frothy pleural effusion, tinged with scarlet. The compasses' points had passed clear through his lungs and punctured his heart. His blood pressure dropped to zero almost instantaneously, and the momentum of his turn carried him just far enough that he collapsed face down, on the altar. There was a brief, sickening sound, as if air was escaping from a freshly punctured tire, and then silence.

## Chapter Ten

*"...so man lieth down and riseth not up  
'Til the heavens shall be no more."*

Every nine weeks or so, from noon until 5:30PM on a Monday afternoon, Martha's Vineyard Lodge would host a Blood Drive in association with the American Red Cross. For longer than he could remember George Slack had been the Masonic Blood Drive Coordinator. What this had meant for him was that, in addition to having overall responsibility for the logistics on the day of the Blood Drive itself, he had to go into the Masonic Hall on the Sunday before the drive to ensure that the downstairs meeting space was in order.

And so it was this Sunday morning in late October. The drive in August had been a great success, with the number of donors bolstered by the summer's seasonal residents. It was amusing to George that many summer residents of Martha's Vineyard thought that the August Blood Drive was the only one of the year. Indeed, they believed that the number of year-round residents on the Island did not warrant, and would not support, a Blood Drive the remaining nine months of the year. However, it would have surprised them to know that the total number of donors actually increased marginally in the Fall because many of the Islanders, who could not get away from work during the height of the tourist season, now took the time to come and donate blood.

As was his custom, George would go home after Sunday morning church services, have a late breakfast, and then head out to the Masonic Hall at about 1:00PM. He, too, was a Patriots fan, and wanted to be home by 4:15PM for the kickoff. When he first arrived at the Hall, nothing seemed out of the

ordinary. The door was locked, as it should have been, and he opened it with his key. Inside it was a bit on the brisk side but George, ever the frugal one, decided that the exercise he'd get while setting up the meeting room would take the chill off.

For the next hour George rearranged the tables and chairs so that they would be properly situated when the Red Cross workers arrived the next morning. They were supplemented by a number of Lodge members who helped with the general flow of traffic, both human and vehicular, which passed through the Masonic Hall and along South Summer Street outside. Just as he was about to leave he remembered that he'd forgotten to make sure that the double doors to the main anteroom at the top of the stairs were locked. He did this so that no curious youngster, or adult, would wander into the Preparation Room, or the Lodge Room itself, unaccompanied by a Lodge member.

George was little more than a third of the way up the flight of stairs when he realized that the doors at the top were ajar. This was not as it should have been, so he decided to investigate further. Passing through them, he saw that the doors to the main Lodge Room were also open, but these ones all the way. He also detected the faint odor of burning candles, and as he passed into the Lodge Room he was surprised to see three candles burning, one each placed East, West and South within the Lodge.

George had been a Mason for well over 50 years, all of them in Martha's Vineyard Lodge, so no sooner had his eyes adjusted to the light than he detected that something was amiss. Approaching the center of the room, he noticed that the flickering candlelight which customarily glinted off the well-polished, cold tempered steel square and compasses resting on the Holy Bible atop the altar was not doing so. In fact, there

was the familiar flickering of candlelight, but it was seemingly coming from above the altar, not atop it.

And then he saw it. The compasses were not lying flat on top of the square but were, rather, being somehow held in a vertical position. The next thing that he noticed was that they seemed to be suspended in midair above the surface of the altar, but their points were not showing. Finally, in an instant, he realized that there was a large form, somewhat human in shape, draped over the altar.

This was all too much for George, a simple man, but practical to a fault. He walked to the light panel behind the Inside Sentinel's seat in the West and threw every switch thereon. Once again, when his eyes had adjusted to the full array of bright lights recessed in the ceiling, he could see the form of a human body draped over the altar. The compasses, or what was exposed of them, were surrealistically "dancing" upon the body's back. It was only upon closer inspection that George realized that the points of the compasses were not visible because they were deeply imbedded in the body's back. And then, as he moved slowly around the altar, he recognized the face. Though contorted, as if by some final, desperate attempt to cry out, he saw that it was John Jameson, the newly-installed Junior Warden of Martha's Vineyard Lodge.

What George did next was now, for him, little more than a blur. He descended the staircase in what, to his recollection, was little more than a single motion, his feet hardly seeming to touch the steps as he went. In an instant he was in the kitchen, dialing "911" on the old, black rotary phone hanging on the wall inside the swinging doors. And almost immediately, seemingly before he'd even hung up the phone, he could hear the blare of the sirens atop the police cruiser and EMT truck as

they raced the few short blocks from the Emergency Services Building to the Masonic Hall.

Ironically, the first unit to arrive was the Edgartown Police Department cruiser with David Anthier at the wheel. His wife and kids were off-Island visiting her mother and while, due to his seniority, he would not normally have been assigned a weekend shift, he was helping out a fellow officer who had an illness in his family. Hot on Anthier's heels were the Edgartown EMT's.

When they both arrived they'd seen George Slack standing in the front doorway of the hall, framed by the colonnaded porch, gesticulating wildly. As the police officer and EMT's ran up the steps of the porch and toward the front door, George beckoned them in and up the staircase to the right inside the door. From that point on, for both the police officer and the EMT's, training, years of experience, and instincts kicked in.

They were all bounding up the steps with Anthier in the lead. He, after all, was a Brother Mason, Past Master, and this year's Junior Deacon. Once inside the double doors at the top of the stairs, Anthier headed straight for the main Lodge Room where every available light shone brightly.

There was little to see, really, and less to do. There, dressed in a blue cotton work shirt, jeans, and a pair of cross trainers, was the body of John Jameson, Junior Warden of the Lodge, ER nurse, devoted husband and loving father, draped over the Masonic altar in the middle of the room. Only secondarily did one notice the vertex of the compasses protruding from his back. This was, in great part, due to the distinct lack of blood on the back of his shirt. While his heart had not stopped pumping the moment it was pierced by the compasses, the blood had taken the path of least resistance and, rather than

working its way throughout John's circulatory system, had simply poured out into his chest cavity. John's head had come to rest on its right side, his eyes wide open, staring out as if in search of some ultimate redemption. There was the faintest trickle of blood-tinged fluid in a fine stream running from his mouth to his right cheek. And, he was clearly dead.

The EMT's, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, had to call this one in to the County Medical Examiner. That would be, along with County Coroner and hospital Chief of Staff, Dr. Mary Goodale who, not being a Patriot's fan, was once again in the Emergency Room. The EMT's had radioed in at 2:05PM. They had performed all of the standard tests for signs of life, and they'd all come up negative. Dr. Goodale called the time of death at 2:08PM and relieved the EMT's. Martha's Vineyard Lodge was no longer the site of a medical emergency; it had just become a crime scene.

## *Chapter Eleven*

*“When was he last seen?  
...at high twelve...”*

There was just no getting around it, thought David Anthier to himself. There's going to be Hell to pay for this, and there would be plenty to go around. There hadn't been a homicide on Martha's Vineyard in over three years, over ten in Edgartown, and now there was one in Martha's Vineyard Lodge. The “victim”, if that was the right word, was the Junior Warden of the Lodge. The man who'd found the body was the Tyler of the Lodge, as well as a Past Master. The boss of the County Medical Examiner, at least in one of her many roles on the Island, was a Past Master of the Lodge. The first police officer on the scene was the Lodge's Junior Deacon, and also a Past Master. And lastly, in this seemingly endless string of ironies, the senior detective in the Edgartown Police Department, and certainly the one to whom this case would be assigned, was none other than Sean O'Hanlon, the Past Master of the Lodge who had, as Master, conducted the pre-application interview with one John Jameson. Well, welcome to life on a small island, Anthier thought.

Edgartown Police Chief, Christopher Ray, had gotten the phone call about the homicide while at home that afternoon at about 2:15PM. He'd immediately called his opposite number in West Tisbury who, by mutual agreement, had sent two of his officers out to the Jameson house to break the news to John's widow. When they arrived Lisa and Liam were playing in the yard. One of the officers went over to keep them occupied while the other went to the front door. After taking a deep breath, she announced her presence by three distinct knocks. After a moment, Phyllis appeared at the door. “Yes,” she said.

"Can I help you?" "May I come in, Mrs. Jameson?" asked the officer. "Certainly. Is there a problem?"

Officer Sandy Johnson had never had to do this before, and it wasn't going to be easy.

"It's your husband, John," started Officer Johnson. "Is he hurt; is he going to be OK?" Phyllis blurted out. "He was found . . . he was found dead in the Lodge Room at the Masonic Hall in Edgartown." Phyllis dissolved. They were young; they had careers; they had children to raise. And now, in an instant, it was just her. She fell back onto the sofa in the living room. Sandy sat down next to her. Phyllis just cried; Sandy just held her. Meanwhile, the officer outside was making his first feeble attempts at trying to tell a daughter and a son that their father wouldn't be coming home. If there was a right way of doing this, he clearly hadn't found it. Lisa and Liam went running into the house in tears; he just followed behind them. There was a time and a place for all the questions the police had for Mrs. Jameson. This, clearly, was not that time.

Back at the Masonic Hall, Chief Ray had arrived. They'd reached Sean O'Hanlon by cell phone. He'd been surf casting at Squibnocket Point. And the State Police, who had received word of the crime by phone at their post on Martha's Vineyard, were dispatching a crime scene forensics team from the State Police Barracks in Bourne on Cape Cod. Before sundown that night every aspect of the crime scene would be photographed; every dimension measured; every tissue and fabric sample cut, bagged and labeled.

## Chapter Twelve

*"...the ashes scattered to the  
four winds of heaven..."*

At the very same time, about eight miles down the road at the Steamship Authority terminal in Vineyard Haven, Phil Johnson was nervously sitting in his Subaru station wagon while waiting for a stand-by space on one of the day's remaining ferries from Martha's Vineyard to Woods Hole on the Cape. He had made it safely home from the Masonic Hall and changed out of his tuxedo into a nondescript outfit of tan Dockers, a blue cotton pullover sweater and a yellow nylon windbreaker. He'd thrown a few personal items into a small gym bag, and gotten in the car for the ride to Vineyard Haven.

Phil didn't know what he was going to do next, but he did know two things. The first was that whatever he was going to do, he'd be better off doing it anywhere else but on the island of Martha's Vineyard. The second was that he had relatives in Gloucester, maintaining the fisherman branch of the Johnson family, who would put him up until he figured out what he did want to do.

As luck would have it, Phil got on stand-by on the 4:00PM sailing of the Motor Vessel Nantucket. Once he was off the boat on the Woods Hole side, he'd be pretty much home free. Interestingly, during the peak tourist season the State Police stationed troopers at the Vineyard Haven terminal, and the seasonal terminal in Oak Bluffs, as well as the terminal in Woods Hole, just to keep an eye on the "clientele" getting on and off the ferries. But in the "off season" the likelihood of trouble, or of actually sighting a fugitive from justice, dropped

to virtually zero. The State Police simply could not spare the manpower.

And so, at 3:48 PM, Phil Johnson pulled his Subaru onto the "single-ended" M.V. Nantucket. He was listening to the Island's only radio station, WMVY-FM, but, this being Sunday, the news was limited to the "on air" staff culling headlines from the wire services and reading them at noon and 6:00PM. Moreover, this was the murder of a Mason, in the Masonic Hall, with a Past Master who had only just arrived at the crime scene leading the investigation. The speed with which information about what had happened that afternoon would "leak out" could be measured in geologic time. Masons, after all, knew how to keep their mouths shut.

When the M.V. Nantucket had finally slipped its moorings and headed out into Vineyard Haven harbor, Phil made his way to the snack bar area and ordered himself a Heineken's. And a second. And a third. By 4:50, when they docked in Woods Hole, Phil was just a tad less tense than he had been an hour before.

During the trip to the Cape, Phil had contemplated the route by which he would make his way to Gloucester. The shortest way, in terms of mileage and traffic, would have been Route 3 along the coast up to Boston, through the Callahan Tunnel to the North Shore, and on up Route 1 to where it intersected Route 128. From there he'd just stay on 128 to its terminus at the head of East Main Street in Gloucester. But these were some of the most heavily traveled roads in New England and a breakdown, accident, or even an overly-observant state trooper could bring an abrupt halt to Phil's "getaway". Also, the average speed of traffic for this route would be less than sixty miles an hour.

The medium-speed route, where he could average between sixty-five and seventy, would have meant taking Interstate 495, Route 24, and then on in to I-95/Route 128 for the circumferential ride around Boston to Gloucester. But the route Phil chose, both for maximum MPH and minimum visibility, was I-495 all the way around Boston, kind of the "outer ring" of the two circumferential highways to avoid The Hub, and backtracking South to Gloucester once he'd overshot it on this thoroughfare to Portland and points Northeast. His average speed using this last getaway plan would approach eighty.

And so it was that sundown that Sunday evening found Phil Johnson en route to Gloucester on I-495. So far West of Boston and the moderating influence on the temperature offered by the Atlantic, and running through the foothills which presaged the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, that the part of 495 where it intersected the Massachusetts Turnpike tended to get quite cold by mid-evening. Phil turned the station wagon's heater on to take the chill off.

It may have been the three Heineken's combined with the warmth of the car. Or, it may have been that the truck, fully laden with lumber which would complete the frame of a new "trophy home" overlooking the Atlantic and Thatcher Island with its enigmatic twin lighthouses from the hills outside Rockport, was not displaying warning flags on the beams which protruded beyond the rear of its flatbed. One would never know. But, because the sun had gone down, the fog had rolled in, Phil was drowsy and driving at nearly eighty, and the truck was going about sixty-five to avoid the potential of a sudden shift in its palletted cargo, it was more a problem in applied physics than the scene of a traffic fatality when the first emergency units arrived at that stretch of I-495 more than 150 miles from Woods Hole and just East of Haverhill.

The truck had been traveling in the “slow lane” because of its speed and caution. The driver had wanted to drop off his high cost, pre-stressed cargo intact the next morning in Rockport, with the added differential he would receive for hauling it there on Sunday. Phil, on the other hand, had just pulled into that selfsame lane from the “passing lane” to make way for, ironically, a logging truck deadheading it back to Lewiston from a delivery in Auburn just off the Mass Pike in central Massachusetts. It was a textbook application of the law of the conservation of momentum.

Phil's one-ton Subaru, when you included Phil's 195-pound frame, although decelerating, had been going eighty. The truck, weighing nearly ten tons with its backwardly-protruding cargo of timbers, had been going sixty-five. Phil never had a chance. For all the difference it would have made, the truck might just as well have been standing still. As the chassis of the Subaru slid beneath the flatbed of the truck, the timbers had shattered the windshield and sliced through the steel pillars supporting the roof of the station wagon like a hot knife through a stick of butter. In one of the more gruesome details of the accident which revealed itself at first light Monday morning, the bottom of one of the pallets to which the lumber had been strapped had caught Phil's skull just above the eyebrows. With surgical precision the top of his skull had been shorn cleanly off.

There had, of course, been an explosion when the sparks created by the disintegrating chassis of the Subaru, being dragged along 495 by the truck, ignited the car's fuel tank. And then there was the ensuing fire. It took the cumulative years of experience of the entire accident investigation team to account for all the components of Phil's corporeal vessel. The carrion which had once been Phil Johnson, the sundry and sundered parts, were mostly found in the wooded area just South of the highway. Though his several and severed parts had been

charred nearly beyond recognition, the scavengers of the field and the air, the raccoons and crows, had no trouble recognizing them. Nonetheless, they scattered when the investigators shone the bright rays of their halogen-bulbed flashlights on what, or who, had earlier that day been the Senior Deacon of Martha's Vineyard Lodge.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

*“...to contribute more liberally  
to the relief of a distressed Brother  
Master Mason, his widow and orphans.”*

**B**ack on Martha's Vineyard, as at the accident scene East of Haverhill, morning had broken on a sunny Monday with the sky a shade of bright blue which almost hurt your eyes. John's family had started to assemble on the Island from the several suburbs of Boston, and they kept Lisa and Liam occupied as best they could.

Phyllis, on the other hand, had an appointment with Detective Sean O'Hanlon in the offices of the Edgartown Police Department. Did she know who called John Saturday night and asked him to come to the Lodge Sunday at noon? No, she'd brought some paperwork home from the superintendent's office and was working on it on the computer in their bedroom when the phone rang. Did John tell her who had called? No, only that it was someone from the Lodge. She'd thought he was going in to rehearse his long piece of ritual for the conferring of the First Degree which was to take place at next month's meeting. Had anything else happened which could shed light on the events of the previous day? No, not really. But she had agreed to call Detective O'Hanlon if she thought of anything.

After Phyllis left, Sean walked over to the Masonic Hall. He let himself in with his Past Master's key and went upstairs to the Lodge Room. Walking the length of it from the main door to the Master's station in the East, he walked past the altar. He couldn't shake the image of John's body draped across it when he'd first entered the room the previous afternoon. An altar, a Holy Bible, a square, a pair of compasses, and a body. It was

all so incongruous. This wasn't the Middle Ages; there were no more human sacrifices. And the "ancient penalties" of the Masonic obligations were no more than the application of vivid images to instill in a newly admitted Brother the importance of the promises he had just made.

As he reached the East, he climbed the three steps and sat down in the Master's chair from which he had presided over the Lodge. His mind wandered momentarily. As he thought about the institution of Freemasonry, he was reminded of its history in America. The first meetings of American Masons had taken place in the Bunch of Grapes Tavern in Boston. Many of the key figures in the American Revolution had been Masons. Both Paul Revere and George Washington had sat in just such a chair as that in which he sat, presiding over the ceremonies as Master of their Lodges. Harry Truman had said that the greatest honor in his life had not been being President of the United States but, rather, being Grand Master of the Lodge of Missouri. And Buzz Aldrin, one of the few astronauts to land on the moon, was a Mason and had taken with him to the moon a Masonic flag which was now on display in the House of the Temple, the headquarters building of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite which was located in Washington, DC. Then he caught himself; he had a job to do.

On his way into the Lodge Room he'd picked up a copy of the mailing announcing the next Regular Communication. Inside it, along with the agenda, was a list of the Lodge's current officers and another of the living Past Masters of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. Was the murderer any of them? Indeed, was there any connection between the murder and Freemasonry? Every fiber of his being wanted to say "No". Nonetheless, his intellect told him "Yes".

Then, with the aid of the list in his hand, he began to go through, in his mind, the current officers of Martha's Vineyard Lodge and whether any of them would have a motive to murder Jameson. First, the Master of the Lodge, James Arundel. He was the Executive Director of Martha's Vineyard Community Services. There had always been a perception in the minds of some Islanders that Community Services and the hospital were competitors; even that there was an antagonism or animosity between them. Some in the local press even reveled in fanning the flames. But the current CEO of the hospital was Thomas Montgomery, himself a Mason and Past Master of Martha's Vineyard Lodge. He'd seen to it that collaboration, not competition, was the byword of the day between these two institutions. And, anyway, O'Hanlon himself had, for several years, sat on the Board of Directors of Community Services. He'd been there when Arundel was hired. He didn't seem the murdering sort and, besides, why would anyone take out an institutional grudge, if indeed one existed, on an Emergency Room nurse?

Next was the Senior Warden, Robert Rogers. Rogers was the sole proprietor of Rogers Construction, a business employing thirty-odd tradesmen; carpenters, painters and the like. No obvious motive there. The Junior Warden had been John Jameson. No apparent motive for suicide. And, anyway, could you really kill yourself by stabbing yourself in the back with a pair of compasses? Realizing that even thinking such a thing was more than a bit disrespectful, he went on.

The Senior Deacon, Phil Johnson, was the Ramp Manager for Vineyard Air. He was also a Past Master of the Lodge. Phil was the one who John had approached about Freemasonry, and he'd even set up John's pre-application interview with Sean. No motive there. In fact, why would Phil have brought John into the Lodge if only to want him out? The Junior Deacon was

David Anthier. David was a fellow Edgartown cop, a Past Master, and had been the first police officer on the scene when the 911 call came in from George Slack. While it sounded like the stuff of which murder mysteries are made, it didn't happen like that in real life.

Bypassing the Senior and Junior Stewards, both of whom had only been Master Masons for six months, and the Treasurer and Secretary, both of whom had seemed to have held those positions forever, and neither seemingly having any motive to kill John, he came to the Tyler, George Slack. George had called in the crime, and the Communications Center even had his desperate call for help on tape. Ever since 911 numbers had been standardized nationwide, some perpetrators of crimes had tried to throw the authorities "off the scent" by making bogus 911 calls after themselves having committed a crime. But, rather than giving them an alibi, these calls had started to focus investigators' attention on the 911 caller. Anyway, George Slack was one of the most respected men on the Island. "So," Sean said to himself, "I'm back where I started, with no logical suspects."

This first analysis had seemingly failed him in the classic "motive, means, and opportunity" exercise. Next came the question of means. Anybody possessed the means (i.e., the strength and agility) to stab a man in the back, didn't they? With the possible exception of the victim himself. And the choice of weapon; the compasses. Was this somehow subliminally significant, or was it just a case of using whatever was closest at hand? A twenty-four inch gauge or square would never have done the trick. And the figurative setting maul in the storage closet was little more than a rod of wood with a stuffed leather sack at the end of it. No, the compasses were indeed the weapon of choice if murder was the intent.

And, so, Sean moved on to the third criterion; opportunity. In addition to the current senior officers of the Lodge, Master, Senior and Junior Wardens, all the living Past Masters had keys to the Lodge Room as well. When they died, their widows or families were asked to return them. Several civic organizations had keys which would get them into the building (i.e., the meeting space on the first floor), but those keys would not unlock the double doors at the top of the stairs which would gain them admission to the anteroom, Preparation Room or Lodge Room. As evidence that George Slack had taken his station as Tyler seriously, he'd had Buzzy Blankenship, an Island locksmith, key the locks in a downwardly compatible way so that, while all the keys that would open the double doors upstairs would also open the front door, those who were not entitled to admission upstairs had keys that would only open the front door.

This was all well and good, but all it told Sean was that, in all probability, no one from the Red Cross, Alcoholics Anonymous or Habitat for Humanity had killed John. Somehow this was not at all reassuring. No one, it seemed, had motive; everyone except the victim himself had means; and only Masons had opportunity. To put a finer point on it, only the current Master, current Senior Warden, and the Past Masters had opportunity.

There is a principle and a methodology, which was used by university Philosophy Departments in the mid-1900's to teach undergraduates who were taking courses in Logic. It was particularly in vogue in Jesuit universities such as Georgetown and Fordham, and the priests seemed to take great pleasure in tormenting their students with it. It is called "Occam's Razor". Occam was Sir William of Occam; "razor" because it was a way of shaving off, or carving out, extraneous information or answers. Sir William of Occam is said to have said, "It is vain

to do with more that which can be done with less.” To a writer this means use as few words as necessary to convey the desired message. But to the logician, the investigational scientist or, in this case, the criminologist, it means, “the simplest explanation is usually the correct one.”

One other consideration which had plagued O'Hanlon at first was whether the murder had actually occurred in the Lodge Room or if Jameson could have been murdered elsewhere and the body moved to the altar. This theory was reinforced by the seeming lack of the amount of blood at the crime scene that one would have expected to find. The mystery was solved by the state's Forensics Laboratory. It turns out that there was, indeed, far more fluid exuded by the body of John Jameson than that small stream of blood running from his mouth to his right cheek. The “froth” coming from John's mouth had, like the head on a glass of root beer, disappeared as, first, the bubbles broke down, then evaporated. The blood was a little more problematic. Blood, and blood-tinged froth, had continued to be exuded by the body, from John's mouth, as the weight of the torso compressed the heart and lungs. As it did it dripped from his cheek onto the maroon-colored velvet, which constituted the surface of the altar. As it reached the surface it was absorbed by the velvet, and when the blood dried it had turned to a maroon-like stain, totally consistent with the color of the velvet cloth itself. It wasn't until the Forensics Lab removed the velvet covering of the altar, much to the consternation of the Mason who had built it, and analyzed the fibers that the missing quantity of blood was accounted for.

Sean turned back, then, to his application of Occam's Razor. If the simplest explanation was, most likely, the correct one, then the Master, Senior Warden or a Past Master (opportunity), having a reason to dislike Jameson (motive), had encountered him in the Lodge Room and, using the weapon closest at hand,

had stabbed him in the back with a pair of compasses (means).

He now had determined the means, the pair of compasses, and had narrowed down the opportunity to those with keys to the Lodge Room. The motive would have to wait.

## *Chapter Fourteen*

*“...faith in God...”*

When Sean returned to his office after lunch he began to compile a list of those with keys to the Lodge Room which would have given them the opportunity to kill John Jameson. As he did so, he said a little prayer that God might grant him the grace to carry out this thankless task without causing undue hurt to the many, all but one really, who should not have to endure the kind of questioning to which he, Sean O'Hanlon, would have to subject those on his list.

Sean FAXED a copy of the names of the Master, Senior Warden, and living Past Masters, to the Lodge Secretary with a request that he be provided with the addresses and phone numbers of each. O'Hanlon knew, or knew of, virtually every man on the list. Many he'd gone to school with, or competed against on the Island's athletic fields. Most of the others his father, or uncles, had gone to school with. These were good men, all but one of whom did not deserve to be subjected to his questioning. But that was his job and, like it or not, he was good at what he did.

There were twenty-seven living Past Masters of Martha's Vineyard Lodge, not including O'Hanlon himself. In reality that number had been reduced by one the night before, but O'Hanlon had no way of knowing this yet. Then there were the current Master and Senior Warden. That made twenty-nine suspects in all. At least seven of the Past Masters were either institutionalized due to poor health in Windemere, the nursing home owned by, and attached to, the hospital, or other nursing homes off-Island. That reduced the number of suspects to twenty-two. Five more had been in the hospital, either on-

Island or in Boston, at the time of the murder. Now he had seventeen suspects. And five more were in such frail condition that they would not have been able to ascend the staircase to the second floor of the Masonic Hall without a Brother on each arm to assist him. That would have constituted a "conspiracy", and Sean envisioned John's murder as an act of passion carried out by a single perpetrator.

Thus O'Hanlon was left with "twelve men good and true", the old term for the legal requirement of "a jury of one's peers". But, in reality, he was left with eleven men good and true, and one murderer. Just then the phone rang. The switchboard operator knew that Sean was working on the case of the murder in Martha's Vineyard Lodge and thought he'd want to take this call.

It was the State Police. They'd had men and women at the site of an accident on Interstate 495 all night, and into the morning, and had come up with their first lead into the identity of the victim. The one body in the car, or what was left of it, had been charred beyond recognition, but in the remains of the burnt out hulk which had once been a Subaru station wagon they had found one veteran's license plate, blackened and bent but still readable. That plate had been issued to one Phillip Johnson with an address of record at a post office box in Edgartown. Sean dropped the phone, and then scrambled to pick it up again. "Are you still there?" asked the voice on the other end of the line.

"Yeah . . . yeah," responded Sean. "I know Phil; I know him well. He lives just blocks from the station; I saw him at least once a month. He was a 'traveling man', you know?" "Traveling man" was a euphemism or code phrase, based upon Masonic ritual, which Masons often used when referring to one another in public. If the other person knew what you were

talking about, you'd found a fellow Mason; if not, no harm had been done. "I'm sorry to hear that, Brother," said the trooper on the line. Many State Troopers, as many police officers, were Masons. The Troopers had once had their own Lodge. "I heard you lost another Brother yesterday; a homicide," he said. "That's right," answered O'Hanlon. "The man you've got brought yesterday's victim into the Lodge. They're both in the line this year." The phone call continued for nearly fifteen minutes, mostly small talk. At the end Sean promised to notify the next of kin on the Island. That meant that before the week was over there would be two funerals for two Brother Masons. It also meant that his list of suspects had just been shortened by one, to eleven. Slowly he drew a line through Phil Johnson's name.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

*“...hope of immortality...”*

Sean O'Hanlon's week was a blur of two wakes at the Island's only funeral home, one Roman Catholic funeral mass, one Masonic graveside service, and the interrogation of eleven suspects. This was made trebly hard on Sean because he kept seeing the same men as Brothers, fellow mourners, and suspects. John Jameson and his family were members of Saint Elizabeth's Parish in Edgartown. The wake for John was on Tuesday from noon 'til four and from six 'til eight, to give the family a rest. The funeral service took place at 10:00 AM Wednesday morning.

The wake for Phil Johnson on Thursday was held at the funeral home but was “hosted” by Martha's Vineyard Lodge. Although Phil was a member of the Congregational Church in West Tisbury, there was no funeral service. Phil had always felt like the Masons were his family, so it was only fitting that on Friday at 10:00AM there was a Masonic graveside service for Phil Johnson. As the Masonic service neared its end, the Master of the Lodge spoke once more. Referring, figuratively, to the trowel, one of the working tools of a Master Mason, he quoted Masonic ritual citing its purpose.

“ . . . of spreading the cement of Brotherly Love and Affection - that cement which unites us into one sacred band, or society of Friends and Brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, save that noble contention . . . of who can best work and best agree.” Amen.

To which the assembled Brethren of Martha's Vineyard Lodge responded, in unison, "So mote it be." With that, the service ended, the Masons returned to the Masonic Hall, and the Lodge of Master Masons which had been opened in the Lodge Room before the service began, was closed "in due form."

Two Brothers of Martha's Vineyard Lodge had been laid to rest within 48 hours of one another, and the search for the murderer of one of them continued.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

*"...and charity to all mankind..."*

During the week following John Jameson's death Detective Sean O'Hanlon had spoken with every legitimate holder of a key to both the Masonic Hall and its second floor Lodge Room. Each had either an alibi or no motive to cause John any harm.

Forensics had turned up nothing of any use. The front doorknob had partial prints from over 500 people. Every Mason, alcoholic, Red Cross nurse and nail-driving volunteer had, at one time or another, passed through this door. For all this, 500 prints were no better than none. And none was the number of prints they'd found on the compasses. How very strange. Had the murderer wiped them clean while they were embedded in John's back? What kind of self-control would be necessary to pull that off? This would, however, explain the lack of fingerprints on the compasses and the presence of white cotton fibers on them as well.

But this explanation wouldn't account for an even more anomalous finding. The white cotton fibers, which were found in abundance on those portions of the compasses which had not entered John's body, had also been found, in lesser but still significant numbers, on those portions of the compasses which had entered, and remained embedded in, John's body. Finally, there were deposits, almost like "rings", of white cotton fibers at the line of demarcation between those portions of the compasses which had entered John's body and those which had not.

What did all this mean? It meant, in the simplest of terms, that prior to entering John's body there had been an equal distribution of white cotton fibers across the entire surface of the compasses. That as the compasses entered John's body most, but not all, of the cotton fibers on that portion of the compasses were wiped off by the skin surrounding the two puncture wounds themselves. Those fibers that did remain were found embedded in the caked blood on the points of the compasses. And, like the powder burns found on the skin or clothing of a person shot with a gun at point blank range, the dense ring of fibers which marked the skin's surface on the compasses were the residue left behind from that portion of the compasses which had passed through the two puncture wounds.

John's conclusion was twofold. First, the murderer, knowing or believing that they would use the compasses as a weapon, had wiped them clean of fingerprints. And, two, the hands of the person wielding the compasses as a weapon were separated from them by a layer of white cotton. A layer of white cotton? Was the murderer holding the compasses with a white cotton face cloth? Or a white cotton hand towel? Or *white cotton gloves*? He had it; white cotton gloves! Was it even possible that the murder could have been committed by someone in an officer's full Masonic regalia? But then he realized he had nothing. At a Lodge meeting every officer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was required to wear a tuxedo and white cotton gloves. To make sure they didn't come up short, every officer owned a pair of white cotton gloves. So every suspect, the Master, the Senior Warden, and all the Past Masters, owned a pair of white cotton gloves.

Detective O'Hanlon had solved the mystery of why there were no fingerprints. He'd solved the mystery of the anomalous distribution of white cotton fibers on the murder weapon. And, yet, he was no closer to solving the case. The only other

finding which Forensics had made was of a pair of longitudinal scratches running nearly the entire length of one arm of the compasses, separated by an angle of between 30 and 45 degrees.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

*“...for faith may be lost in sight,  
Hope ends in fruition,  
but charity extends beyond the grave,  
to the boundless realms of eternity.”*

Time and tides wait for no man,” or so it was said by Dickens, and probably others before him. Nowhere was this more true than on Martha's Vineyard. And the same went for Sean O'Hanlon's investigation of the murder of John Jameson. It was now the evening of the second Tuesday in November.

Jameson's wife and family had started to come to grips with John's death. The murder case had not been solved, and Phyllis would probably never totally let go of her anger and anguish until it was, but she had been able to go back to work, and the children had both gone back to school. With the collective help of the community, not the least of which included many of the Brethren from Martha's Vineyard Lodge, they'd get by. In fact, one day, one of the Masonic scholarship funds would put first Liam, then Lisa, through college with Phyllis incurring little, or no, expense in the process.

As for the Johnson's, some relatives from Gloucester came down for the Masonic graveside service. When it was over they had gone to the family house on North Water Street in Edgartown. After boxing up some of Phil's personal effects that they had wanted to take with them, and packing them in the trunk of the car, they sealed up the house which wouldn't be reopened until Spring, winterized the fishing boat against the

rigors of the seasons, and caught the ferry back to the mainland for the return trip to Gloucester.

And as for this year's class of candidates, they received their Entered Apprentice degrees right on time. James Arundel had solicited volunteers from among the Past Masters to serve as acting Senior Deacon and acting Junior Warden for the remainder of the Masonic year. Thomas Montgomery, the hospital CEO, took the chair of Junior Warden and Sean O'Hanlon assumed the Senior Deacon's chair. When the officers had met for their last rehearsal the Sunday before the Lodge meeting, there had been a momentary panic. After retrieving the Senior Deacon's apron from one of the chest of drawers, Sean had gone to the hanging cabinet to get the Senior Deacon's jewel. What this device consists of is a necklace of rectangular, silver-plated base metal links lined with royal blue velvet, from which is suspended the insignia of the particular officer, also made of the same silver-plated base metal. When all the other officers had found their jewels, what was left hanging in the cabinet was one last necklace. However, the ring from which the insignia had hung had been bent partially open and the Senior Deacon's insignia was no longer suspended from it. He searched the shelf at the base of the cabinet, but to no avail. Sean couldn't imagine what had happened to it because he'd seen Phil Johnson wearing it at the Regular Communication in October just three weeks earlier. There would have been no reason for anyone to remove it from the cabinet once it had been returned there after the meeting.

Fortunately, the Lodge maintained a large safe deposit box at Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank in Vineyard Haven in which was kept the Lodge's charter, a supply of Past Master's jewels which was continually recycled as Past Masters died and new Masters completed their terms of office, and a backup set of jewels for an eventuality just such as this one.

When it opened on Monday morning, Sean O'Hanlon went to the bank, opened the safe deposit box, and withdrew the Senior Deacon's jewel, necklace and all. Of course, had they needed it sooner the bank President, himself a Past Master, would have gladly let them into the bank on Sunday. Sean sent a reminder to the Lodge Secretary to order a new Senior Deacon's jewel, necklace and all, from Harry Klitzner's Jewelers in Providence.

When the moment came for the initiation of the candidates into the mysteries of Freemasonry, all of the officers were in place and properly attired with tuxedos, the appropriate jewel, the appropriate apron, and white cotton gloves. Sean had felt a momentary pang of sadness as he dressed for the ceremony, realizing he wasn't just sitting in for one evening for a Brother who was otherwise occupied but sitting in the station which had been occupied, only the month before, by a now-dead Brother.

The ceremony went off without a hitch. The greatest pressure that night had fallen on Thomas Montgomery who, as Junior Warden, was required to present the first third of a three-part dissertation on Freemasonry which, for his part alone, ran over six minutes without a pause. There was cake, ice cream and coffee afterward, and the candidates all indicated that they had been suitably impressed with the evening's proceedings.

In a final, bittersweet moment at the close of the evening, Worshipful Master James Arundel brought out a bottle of Jameson's "1780" Irish whiskey, and poured a jigger full into each Brother's coffee cup. Raising his cup, Arundel said, "May the Supreme Architect of the Universe keep and protect our fallen Brothers, now and forever. Amen." The gathered Brethren responded, in unison, "So mote it be."

## *Chapter Eighteen*

*“...to that undiscovered country,  
from whose borne no traveler returns.”*

By spring, it seemed, life had returned to what passes for normal on Martha's Vineyard. The tourists, as is predictable, were once again returning. The restaurants on Circuit Avenue in Oak Bluffs and Main Street in Edgartown were, with the help of family and whatever other spare pairs of hands could be found, reopening. The Oak Bluffs ferry terminal was accepting cars and passengers. And all the fifth graders on Martha's Vineyard were anxiously anticipating their week-long cruises on the Island's twin tall ships, the Shenandoah and Alabama.

Martha's Vineyard Lodge had survived the most trying year in any current member's memory. One would have to go back to the years of World War II to find a time when the Lodge had experienced such loss. At the Regular Communication in May the Lodge elected its slate of officers for the next Masonic year. In a move that bode well for the future of the Lodge, the Past Masters, who had dutifully stepped into the vacant stations in the line so that the work of the year could go on, were replaced by some of the newer, and younger, Brothers.

In the meeting room on the first floor of the Masonic Hall, George Slack had just finished the last, and most successful, blood drive he'd had the good fortune to oversee. It had been so successful, in fact, that the Red Cross contingent from the mainland was running late, and, with ferry reservations already at a premium, there was a mad rush to get them packed up and on their way to the Steamship Authority terminal in Vineyard Haven. It matters not where the fault lay, for surely no harm

was intended, but in the haste of the moment one coffee urn didn't get unplugged.

By about 7:00PM that evening the coffee in the urn finally boiled dry, and less than an hour later the smoke detector in the kitchen alerted the neighbors, and the Edgartown Fire Department, that there was a fire at the Masonic Hall. Prompt action on the part of the firemen, and the proximity of the Hall to the firehouse, limited the damage to a small electrical fire in the wall of the kitchen. Because the kitchen had been essentially rebuilt to current fire codes when the Masons installed their commercial kitchen equipment in the 1980's, the fire, which would have gutted the building only twenty years earlier, did only enough damage to require some rewiring and the reconstructing of the one wall where the fire had actually taken place. The smoke damage was limited to the pervasive smell of burnt electrical insulation, especially on the second floor. As the Blood Drive was the last event scheduled in the Hall until mid-Summer, they had two months to worry about putting together a cleanup crew and spending a weekend scrubbing the building down.

Then there was Edgartown Police Detective Sean O'Hanlon. The John Jameson case had gone cold within weeks after the crime occurred. All he had was a crime scene, a murder weapon, and a body. He could never let go of the fact that he didn't have a murderer. And, because they were both Brothers, both Lodge officers, and owing to the temporal proximity of their deaths, he could never think about John's death without recalling Phil Johnson's as well. In one of those funny little things that happens in the middle of the Winter on Martha's Vineyard, when there's too much time and too little to do, your mind can start to play tricks on you. You can start to extrapolate from what you know to what you don't. Then you can start to imagine connections between unconnected events.

Finally, you can imagine cause and effect between unrelated events. In a newspaper editorial one editor was bold enough to postulate a cause and effect relationship between presidential vacations on the Island and property values.

But Sean was a detective, not a member of the Chamber of Commerce. When he allowed himself this sort of free association, he did it within the context of unsolved cases and right now, for him, that meant John Jameson.

When John died, Phil died; true. Because John died, Phil died; insufficient data. Why was John in the Lodge Room? To practice his ritual, or so his wife had thought. If this was a rehearsal, where were the other officers? He'd interviewed them all, and not one was aware of a rehearsal. But he hadn't interviewed them all; he couldn't. *When John died, Phil died.*

“Let's take a new tack,” thought Sean to himself. Lodge is proud of Phil; true. Phil brings John into the Lodge; true. Lodge is proud of John; true. Wait. Sean repeated the last three phrases several times. Was it possible that, in Phil's mind, the admiration of the Lodge for its Brethren was a “zero-sum game”? That is, if their admiration for John was increasing, did it have to be at Phil's expense? John had a wife, two kids, a good education, a professional job. Could John become obsessed with Freemasonry at the expense of all the other aspects of his life? No. Phil had . . . Phil had . . . Phil had Freemasonry.

Is it possible that Phil lured John to the Lodge Room in an effort to get John to do something to swing the pendulum of the Lodge's admiration back in his own favor? Sean had to say “Yes” to this one. Is it possible that Phil wanted John to do something to his own detriment but to Phil's benefit? Again, Sean had to say “Yes”. Would John agree to do something

dishonest? Probably not. Would Phil invite John to the Lodge Room to practice Masonic ritual? Yes! Would John go? Yes! Would Phil be waiting for John wearing a pair of white cotton gloves? Let's rephrase that. Would Phil be waiting for John in the full Masonic regalia of the Senior Deacon, including white cotton gloves? If Phil had made the leap of faith that the Lodge's admiration for him was a function of the Lodge's admiration for John, then, again, he'd have to say "Yes".

If Phil lured John to the Lodge Room under the pretext of practicing ritual, and *if* John said "No" when Phil asked him to do something dishonest, *could* Phil take John's life? And, *if* he was wearing the full Masonic regalia of the Senior Deacon, including white cotton gloves, and *if* he picked up the compasses from the altar and stabbed John in the back, *would* it have left the evidence the Forensics Lab found? Yes! Sean said to himself, "This is way out of control." And *if*, as he lunged out at John to thrust the compasses into his back, they caught on the Senior Deacon's jewel suspended from the necklace, *could* the jewel have been pried from the connecting loop so that it would not be there the next time the jewel was needed? "God, I wish summer would come," Sean said out loud. And just like every other year, at about this time, it did.

When George Slack had called to ask if he'd help them clean up the smoke damage in the Masonic Hall that weekend, so it would be ready for the mid-Summer Blood Drive the following Monday, Sean was happy to oblige. But when he got there that Sunday afternoon there were already a number of men and women working to get the meeting room cleaned up. Upstairs, however, the carpet in the Lodge Room, saturated with the smell of smoke, was in desperate need of shampooing. If he cleared the floor of all the furniture, he asked George, could he go to the hardware store at The Triangle and rent a machine to shampoo the carpet? "Sure," said George.

He'd start with the altar, thought Sean. But first he had to move the four kneeling cushions that surrounded it. He picked up the first, then the second, and then the third. And that's when the light glinted off the Senior Deacon's jewel lodged between the third and fourth cushions. *Right where it was supposed to be; right where it had landed over nine months ago; right where it had fallen when pried off the necklace around Phil Johnson's neck.* The jewel was a pair of compasses, opened to between 30 and 45 degrees, with a sun mounted between them. So that explained the scratch marks on the compasses embedded in John Jameson's back. Sean picked up the Senior Deacon's jewel and slipped it into his pocket. With that, he went back to work. As he did so, a phrase from James Arundel's eulogy at Phil Johnson's Masonic graveside service echoed in his head: ". . . among whom no contention should ever exist, save that noble contention . . . of who can best work and best agree.

"And as for those ancient penalties for betraying one's Masonic obligations," thought Sean to himself, "Maybe they're not so 'ancient' after all." "Alas," said O'Hanlon out loud, though there was no one there to hear him, "Now it is in the hands of the Supreme Architect of the Universe."

**So mote it be.**

