

ROBERT ROBERGE JR.

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Media Kit

LATE JUSTICE

A Novel

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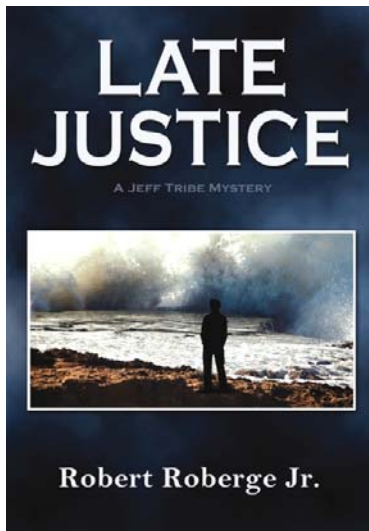
Author Biography

Robert Roberge Jr., author of *Late Justice* and *Intentional Take*, was born and has lived in Massachusetts his entire life. Robert has worked as a marketing communications writer since 1989 in various industries, and in 1997 started his own freelance writing business targeting large- to mid-sized companies. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Professional Writing and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Film/Media Production.

Robert's literary influences include Robert B. Parker, Elmore Leonard, James Lee Burke, and Ernest Hemingway. He also enjoys the work of Ross MacDonal and John Irving, among others. Robert is currently at work on a new mystery-thriller.

Visit his website at www.robertrobergejr.com.

Book Facts



Author:	Robert Roberge Jr.
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Publisher's Synopsis

"Late Justice" by Robert Roberge Jr. is a prequel to his well-reviewed debut novel "Intentional Take."

In state prison for the murder of his fiancée, a crime he didn't commit, Jeff Tribe is released on a technicality and sets out to find her true killer. From the dying mill town of Spicket Falls, Massachusetts to the blue-collar towns of the New Hampshire seacoast he must stand against the cops, newshounds, and street thugs set in his way. As he searches for the truth and to ease the burdens of despair and guilt weighing on his heart, he will betray his best friend, fight for his life and his future again and again, and struggle to overcome his feelings for the beautiful reporter hot on his trail.

Author Robert Roberge Jr. lives in Massachusetts. Fans of Robert B. Parker and Elmore Leonard will enjoy this story.

- RJR Press (www.rjrpress.com)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Author's Second Mystery Novel Published

Robert Roberge Jr.'s *Late Justice* Is Follow-Up to His Well-Reviewed First Novel

Wilmington, Massachusetts, July 1, 2009 – Massachusetts native Robert Roberge Jr.'s second mystery novel has been published and is now available online and from bookstores. *Late Justice* is a follow-up and prequel to his debut novel, *Intentional Take*. It is the second mystery-thriller published by RJR Press of Burlington, Mass., featuring the character of Jeff Tribe.

Late Justice begins a year before the events in *Intentional Take*. In state prison for the murder of his fiancée, a crime he didn't commit, Jeff Tribe is released on a technicality and sets out to find her true killer. From the dying mill town of Spicket Falls, Massachusetts to the blue-collar towns of the New Hampshire seacoast he must stand against the cops, newshounds, and street thugs set in his way. As he searches for the truth and to ease the burdens of despair and guilt weighing on his heart, he will betray his best friend, fight for his life and his future again and again, and struggle to overcome his feelings for the beautiful reporter hot on his trail.

"I really enjoyed using the places I grew up as the settings for these books," said Roberge. "Both novels are set in the fictional town of Spicket Falls, a blending of my hometown of Methuen, Mass., and the surrounding mill towns of Lawrence, Haverhill, and Lowell. *Late Justice* also takes place in Hampton Beach, New Hampshire. People who know these areas and read the books will recognize a lot of familiar locations."

Roberge's first novel, *Intentional Take*, received good reviews. *Midwest Book Review* said: "Roberge's plot is intricate and detailed, pulling the reader into this excellent mystery from page one and not letting go until its somber conclusion. Roberge has written a refreshing and original tale that pulls at the reader's heartstrings even as its almost constant action thrills and enrages." *ReviewYourBook.com* said: "*Intentional Take* has twists and turns that will keep the reader eagerly turning the pages. Robert Roberge Jr. is a gifted author. He has created a complex plot that will quickly capture the interest of the reader and hold them to the last page. This thriller will tug at the readers' heartstrings. Don't miss *Intentional Take*."

"I've been working on the Jeff Tribe mysteries for the last ten or so years in my spare time," said Roberge, a self-employed marketing writer. "I truly hope people enjoy reading the books as much as I enjoyed writing them."

Roberge, 45, was born and has lived in Massachusetts his entire life, including the last 14 years in Wilmington. He has worked as a marketing communications writer since 1989, and in 1997 started his own freelance writing business. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Professional Writing and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Film/Media Production, both from Fitchburg State College. His literary influences include Robert B. Parker, Elmore Leonard, Ross MacDonald, and Ernest Hemingway.

Late Justice is available now from RobertRobergeJr.com, Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, or your local bookstore.

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Q&A

Where can I buy a copy of *Intentional Take*?

Intentional Take is available now from RobertRobergeJr.com, Amazon.com, Barnes&Noble.com, or by special order from local bookstores.

Will there be another Jeff Tribe mystery?

Late Justice—the prequel to *Intentional Take*—was released in June 2009. Robert is currently at work on a new mystery-thriller set in Spicket Falls. While Tribe will not be in that story, other characters from the two Jeff Tribe mysteries will appear.

Are *Intentional Take* and *Late Justice* being made into movies?

At this time there are no plans for any movies.

Where is Spicket Falls, Massachusetts located? I couldn't find it on a map.

Spicket Falls, MA where Jeff Tribe lives is an imagined location. It's an amalgamation of my hometown of Methuen, Massachusetts, and the surrounding mill towns of Lawrence, Haverhill, and Lowell. The Spicket River is real and runs through Methuen. There is a small falls in the center of town behind the fire station.

The town of Earnest, NC, in *Intentional Take* is also an imagined location. Earnest is a combination of an area on the northern bank of the Cape Fear where there is a small dock out over the river with a sign next to it warning about crocodiles, a town off Route 421 that mostly consists of a traffic circle, and several locations in and around Wilmington, North Carolina.

Did you do research for *Late Justice* and *Intentional Take*? What were some of the sources you used?

My research includes reading books and newspaper articles about the topics and types of characters that will be in a novel, and visiting the locations I will be writing about. Some of the books I used as research for *Intentional Take* include *Hells Angels: Into the Abyss* by Yves Lavigne, *Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers* by Daniel Wolf, *Gangsta in the House* by Mike Knox, *What Cops Know* by Connie Fletcher, *Bad Guys* by Mark Baker, *The Goodfella Tapes* by George Anastasia, *The Corpse Had a Familiar Face* by Edna Buchanan, and *Huddle Fever: Living in the Immigrant City* by Jeanne Schinto.

Where do you get your ideas?

Basic ideas can be sparked by anything – a newspaper article, conversation, photograph, observation, book, movie, etc. – but turning that idea into a short story or novel is the challenge. For *Late Justice*, the basic story idea came when I was in college. I was researching a paper at the Lawrence Public Library using a microfiche machine when I thought it would be interesting story-wise if someone from outside law enforcement was able to figure out something bad was happening by seeing a pattern in various news stories.

When I decided that I wanted to write a story about the origins of a private detective as he grows from helping family and friends to becoming a true detective, I used that original

idea but made it more personal for the protagonist. Though published second, *Late Justice* is the first Jeff Tribe novel that I wrote.

For the second novel, the kidnapping of a family member and the protagonist's quest to rescue her is the story I eventually decided upon. The title for *Intentional Take* came from a quote in the newspaper several years ago by a park ranger talking about the theft of plover eggs by someone attempting to speed-up the opening of a public beach. The ranger said that they knew the theft was an "intentional take" but that taking the eggs didn't work because the beach would have to stay closed for the process to start over again. As soon as I read the quote I knew *Intentional Take* would be the title and the rest of the plot also fell into place.

Do you have any advice for new writers?

My advice to new writers is to keep at it no matter what. Keep writing and keep submitting, but heed any comments you might receive if you think they might help your work. I would also suggest you read as much as you can as well, in your chosen genre as well as out of it. You can learn a lot from the works and techniques of writers who are already published. Finally, there are many books out there on writing and getting published – many of them available for free through your local library – so read and take advantage of those as well. Good luck.

Reviews

Praise for Robert Roberge Jr.'s *Intentional Take*:

"Roberge's plot is intricate and detailed, pulling the reader into this excellent mystery from page one and not letting go until its somber conclusion. Roberge has written a refreshing and original tale that pulls at the reader's heartstrings even as its almost constant action thrills and enrages."

- *Midwest Book Review*

"Intentional Take has twists and turns that will keep the reader eagerly turning the pages. This is the first book in a new series. Robert Roberge Jr. is a gifted author. He has created a complex plot that will quickly capture the interest of the reader and hold them to the last page. This thriller will tug at the readers' heartstrings. Don't miss Intentional Take."

- *ReviewYourBook.com*

"This [Midwest Book Review] review is very accurate ... I've passed [Intentional Take] along to others that I think will enjoy it as much as I did. It's refreshing to read a book where you don't know what will happen until the end, and then be surprised at the ending. I enjoyed the Jeff Tribe character and look forward to the next book in this series. I also enjoyed the references to Methuen, Lawrence and the fictitious town of Spicket Falls. It's great to read a book where you are familiar with the area. Great Job!"

- *Vinnie-Jean Byrne, reader*

"[Intentional Take is an intriguing] and compelling thriller that gets you hooked in asap as the story develops with twists and turns, and by no means is predictable. You'll come to know the main characters on a personal level as their troubled pasts unfold throughout the book along with the figuring out of "who dunnit." Tribe, the main character, is edgy. His dark and strong side was appealing to me as probably to most women. The writing is smooth, easy to follow and naturally engaging. I would anticipate when I could pick up the book again after I had to put it down. I look forward to the next Tribe mystery which I hear is coming out soon."

- *Sue Leno, reader*

"INTENTIONAL TAKE was a damn good book. Spare and riveting. Tribe is good. Please put me on the list to notify when the next book is published. Keep at it! You are very talented."

- *Tom Brakefield, reader*

Late Justice

A Jeff Tribe Mystery

Robert Roberge Jr.

Chapter 1

Hampton Beach Detective Herb Samuals swirled the water in the little paper cup and wondered if it was right out of that dirty Spicket River outside the window. He glanced at his partner, Detective Roger McKan, rubbed at the pain in his temple, then drank it down.

Spicket Falls Detective Henry Ford said, "Your man Jeff Tribe put two professional hard cases in the Lawrence General."

McKan said, "Tribe just got out of prison a couple hours ago."

The three of them were sitting around Detective Ford's beat-up steel desk in the Spicket Falls Police Station. Samuals placed the paper cup on the corner of the desk. "We appreciate you letting us come down like this," he said.

"Those were two fairly tough guys," said Ford, shifting in his seat. He was forty-five, thick black hair, crisp blue suit. Samuals guessed he never loosened the tie, worked at the desk with the jacket on.

"Pulled their sheets," Ford said, nodding at the folders and printouts on his desk. "Kid worked them over pretty good. His buddy says Tribe's some sort of karate expert."

"Tribe's a punk," said Samuals, rubbing at his eyes. They were dry and gritty. His mouth wasn't much better, still tasted like chalk.

"He's been on the news a lot," said Ford. "His best friend's the one they got locked up for it now, right?"

"We worked that case," said McKan, straightening against the chair. "Three years ago. Tribe's the one killed that girl."

Ford opened his hands. "Captain said that's why you're here."

"Okay with you, we'd like to talk with Tribe now," said Samuals. The Spicket Falls captain had handed them over to this guy, but he was tired of all the yapping. "Maybe Tribe's buddy too?"

"Fine by me for Tribe. We had nothing to hold the buddy on, just took his statement. The grocery store is only pressing charges against the two hard cases in the hospital."

"Who are they anyway?" asked McKan.

"Couple low-level mob soldiers," said Ford. "They were doing collection work for the guy who runs the book up there at your New Hampshire Rockingham and Seabrook race tracks."

"State border isn't going to stop these types," said McKan.

Ford nodded. "All those guys are on a direct line to the Saugus outfit over here on Route 1."

Samuals rubbed his eyes, held his tongue. What'd it matter about those two? They were here for only one reason: Jeff Tribe.

McKan said, "What do you got on the two in traction?"

Ford handed him the folders. "Harry Mazertski. Must be near sixty now but over the years he's been suspected in more than twenty mob-related homicides on the North Shore alone. He's a big

guy, very tough. The other guy is Frank Schell. He's average height and stocky, and new to Massachusetts. This appears to be his first work with the members of organized crime."

McKan said, "You get a lot of this type around here?"

Samuals rubbed his eyes again, hoped his partner would see it and they could get a move on.

Ford said, "Spicket Falls is a working class town, but there's not that much left for work here with the factories boarded up. We got rivers and towns on all sides of us, so we're boxed in. No highway access to build office parks next to. Means we got a lot of poor people with a lot of idle time. The boys from Saugus and Boston come down Route 114 to feed off them," Ford shrugged. "Town's kind of ripe for it."

"Yeah," said Samuals, on his feet now. "Everybody's mobbed up. Can we go in?"

Ford stood after a quick look at McKan. "This way."

They followed him down a dark, musty-smelling corridor to a door with chicken wire pressed between the frosted glass and the words 'Interrogation 1' stenciled in black on the wood just below the window.

"I'll be in the observation room," said Ford, indicating the next door over.

"Fine," said Samuals, hand on the knob.

Ford said, "I'm in the AA over on Prospect Street, you ever want to check out a meeting."

Samuals froze. In the glass he watched the blurry face of Ford turn briefly to McKan. His hand was white on the knob.

People were talking down the other end of the hall.

One of Ford's shiny shoes squeaked.

"Maybe you should mind your own damn business," Samuals said, and walked into the room.



The room had a small table with four chairs and an old steel radiator against the wall with a barred window above it. The window was set too high to see out unless you stood on the table. Jeff Tribe was waiting in the chair facing the mirror. Behind him was a blank wall.

He heard voices outside the door for a few moments, then it opened and McKan and Samuals walked in. McKan had a big smile on his face. He was a large guy, forty-six with a freckled head that was mostly bald and patches of grayish-brown hair over each ear. Samuals was even bigger, with a full head of silver hair and a worn face with a patchwork of burst capillaries across his nose and cheeks. He didn't say anything, but his face was flush red and his mouth a tight line. He took the seat across from Tribe while McKan leaned against the wall behind his partner.

"Jeff Tribe," said McKan. "What's up for the afternoon, B and E's?"

"What do you want?" Tribe said. "This isn't New Hampshire."

"No, it's not," said McKan. "We're down here to help you."

"Yeah, that sounds right."

Samuals said, "How do you know those two guys you put in the hospital?"

"I don't."

McKan said, "Don't give us this shit."

"They were shoving my friend Walter around. That's all I know."

Samuals rubbed his temple, said, "So you don't know Frank Schell and Harry Mazertski?"

"No."

"You're not doing yourself any favors here, these are serious guys."

"I told you I don't know them."

"What about your friend, Walter Russell?"

"What about him?"

"How does he know those two?"

"You'll have to ask him that."

"He's being talked to."

"Well then, you're on your way."

McKan made a noise against the wall.

Samuals said, "Why don't you tell us what happened at the grocery store."

"Ask Detective Ford."

"We're asking you."

Tribe cut a glance at the mirror, wondered if Ford was enjoying this, then he looked back at Samuals. "My buddy Walter picked me up when I got released this morning from the state penitentiary up there in Concord, New Hampshire, something you guys already know. We drove home to Spicket Falls and I dropped him at the Market Basket for his shift. He's a meat cutter. I went inside to say hello to the store manager—I know the guy from when I worked in the store as a kid. I got to talking with the manager and when I went back to say so long to Walter, those two guys were in the meat room giving him a hard time. I told them to stop, they wouldn't."

McKan said, "We got a witness says you smacked Frank Schell around even though he had a knife. Seem like old-home day, a guy coming at you with a shank?"

Tribe locked eyes with him, said nothing.

"Walter said they were hassling him over not paying his gambling debt. How are you involved in that?"

"I told you I just walked into it."

"And you jumped in on them, a couple of connected guys."

"Didn't know who they were."

"Put them in the hospital."

"They were after my friend."

Samuals said, "You working for the wise guys now, Tribe?"

Tribe looked at the mirror. "Jesus," he said. These two bullshit cops were *still* making up shit to pin on him.

McKan walked over and put his hands on the table, leaned forward. There was a small coffee stain on one of the thick stripes of his tie. "Aren't you a friend of Joey Anthony's?"

Tribe looked across the table at Samuals, realizing now what the deal was.

"I guess."

McKan snorted. His forehead was flushed red.

"Is Anthony looking to expand out of New York?" said Samuals. "You down here to start Anthony's family in on some new turf?"

"Look, I'm not doing anything."

"Don't play us!" McKan yelled, slamming his hand on the table.

Tribe didn't flinch. "I want a lawyer."

"For what?"

Samuals said, "They're not holding you. You can go."

"What?"

"The grocery store isn't pressing charges against you."

Tribe looked at the door.

"They already booted your buddy, Walter," Samuals said. "You better tell him to pay the wise guys, they don't take well to being jerked around."

Tribe stood up. "Uh-huh."

"There's a brilliant comment, college boy," said McKan, back now against the wall, arms folded.

Tribe said, "Let me know if you need any help with the big words."

McKan leaned forward. "Fuck you."

"You are the bright one."

"Shut up," said Samuals. "This isn't a game, son. Those boys are major leaguers. They'll be looking you up, once they're out of lockup and feeling better."

"Thanks for the notice."

"Don't try to be a wise guy Tribe," said McKan. "You aren't Italian enough and you aren't smart enough."

"I'm not trying to be anything," he said, walking towards the door. "I was just helping my friend."

"You need a whole new group of friends," said Samuals.

"We'll probably find you floating in that river in a few weeks," McKan pointed at the window, smiled, "sporting a couple extra holes in your head."

"Thanks for the thought, detective," he said, glancing at the two-way mirror before opening the door.

"Hey," said Samuals before he could get out. "How's your best bud Ricky Morales feel about doing your murder rap?"

Tribe stopped dead in the doorway. He didn't turn around. After a few moments he just walked.



Ford watched the kid standing near the main door of the station, the kid not knowing what to do. The Hampton Beach detectives were using his phone, so Ford left them to it. Better to let the alcoholic have his breathing room. He'd brought the matter to the guy's attention, at the least. His old partner Vic Mosby had done the same for him, then died the next night of a heart attack. Ford'd been sober since the day of the funeral, seven years now.

Jeff Tribe wasn't much to look at, not too tall, maybe five ten or eleven. Lean though, muscular and hard looking. It was the same face you saw on TV, but in-person the eyes were like ice. Different than the first trial. He'd looked like a fresh-faced kid back then. Not anymore. Three years inside would do that to you for sure. At least the dark brown hair was now freshly cut.

Through the front windows Ford could see at least one TV truck, and guessed there might be a few more. They were like carrion eaters, waiting to swoop on the boy as soon as he was out the door. Ford came up behind Tribe, seeing he was right. Across the street was another van, this one with the little brunette with the big ears doing a stand-up with her back to the station.

"You sure they're here for you?"

The kid didn't turn. "Sergeant at the desk said they were."

"Thinking about waiting them out?"

"Maybe. He also said your chief doesn't let them in the station unless you guys are holding a news conference."

That was true enough, Ford thought. Chief Ramirez was a master at keeping the media on a tight leash. The kid was avoiding them now, but he'd been on TV plenty these last few weeks, pleading his case. You couldn't turn the channel without his mug showing up, him and the Morales kid both. Outside, another TV van pulled up. Across the street, Manny Schuster from the *Lawrence Tribune* was pestering a uniform officer trying to get into his cruiser.

Casting a sidelong glance at Tribe, Ford said, "You want to go out the back way?"

The kid angled his head see he could see him, met his eyes. "Yeah," he said, but with nothing in his voice.

Ford almost changed his mind, was going to tell him to take his chances on the front steps, but then remembering the kid'd been in the N.H. joint the last three years for something he maybe didn't do, let it pass.

"This way."

They turned together, crossed the short hall in front of the main desk, went through a door marked 'Stairs' in faded gold paint. He had Tribe walk in front of him until they reached the lower level that let out into the rear parking lot where the squad kept the cruisers and personal vehicles. Stepping around the kid, he pushed the door open and held it with his foot. Outside it was cold, smelled like snow again.

"Walk straight ahead. Gate's electric. I'll open it when you reach it."

The kid paused a few steps away, met his eyes, and nodded.

There it was.

Ford nodded back.

He watched Tribe until he reached the metal fence with the barbed wire, then buzzed him through the gate. When the kid was through, he hit the red button, waited for the gate to close, then headed back up to his desk. He hoped the Hampton Beach cops were gone.



Tribe walked the four miles back across town to the supermarket where he'd left his car. Huge mountains of dirty snow were shoved into piles at either end of the lot, the back half of a crushed shopping cart protruding from the top of one of the steep embankments. As he reached the Cavalier he spied the red bandanna tied to the side mirror. He untied it without looking around and got in the car.

He didn't need to check for the patch on the bandanna to know Esai had found him. Esai was Ricky Morales' brother. He was also leader of the Red Street Kings, the street gang that controlled the Tower Hill side of Lawrence and along the city's borders where Red Street and the old mill town's triple-deckers spilled out of Lawrence and into Methuen and Spicket Falls.

Tribe started the Cavalier and headed towards Red Street.

The snow along the city streets was filthy and soot-stained, same as the tenements and empty store fronts lining the roads. Late-model Toyotas and Datsuns, with the occasional drug dealer's BMW, parked bumper to bumper on both sides of the streets.

As he reached the intersection of Red and Haverhill Streets, he saw a lookout on the street corner. The lookout was a Hispanic kid, maybe fifteen, leaning against a telephone pole smoking a cigarette. He wore a winter jacket, stocking cap, and baggy, hip hop jeans. Tribe could see the tip of the red bandanna on his right hip, sticking out from under the jacket.

Tribe parked the car in front of a fire hydrant and walked over. There were bullet holes in the telephone pole, the holes just visible above the young gangbanger's head. The kid stared at Tribe as he walked up to him, eyes right on him.

"What you want, fucker?"

Tribe kept coming until he was in his face.

"I'm looking for Esai Morales."

The gangbanger stepped back. "The fuck off me."

Tribe stepped up to him again.

"You with the Kings, or what?"

"What you want, cop?"

"I'm no cop."

Off over the gangbanger's head, Tribe could see the tops of the redbrick mill buildings that lined the river. He'd never really noticed before how much they stood out. The kid didn't step back again, stood his ground. He took a drag off the cigarette and blew the smoke at Tribe's face.

Tribe cracked him one in the side of the head. The kid went down, a short cut open over his left eye.

"I'm looking for Esai Morales," Tribe said. "Where is he?"

The kid grabbed for something under his jacket and Tribe kicked him hard in the gut. Then he knelt on the kid's chest and pinned his arms down.

Tribe said, "Where is he?"

"Who the fuck're you? How I know he wants to see *you*?"

"My name's Jeff Tribe."

"I know you." The young gangbanger's eyes were wide now. "You the one jacked Esai's brother inside."

"Is Esai around, or what?"

"No, man. Shit, he in New Hampshire to see your best buddy, Ricky."

Tribe ground his knee into the kid's throat. "You fucking with me?"

The gangbanger struggled with the knee, said a garbled no. Tribe let up.

"You tell him I came by?"

"Why should I, fucker?"

Tribe cuffed the kid in the head. "What'll happen he finds out I came and you didn't tell him?"

"Fuck!" said the kid. "All right, man. All right. I'll tell him."

"Okay."

He didn't know if he should trust the kid, but didn't want to spend any more time looking for Esai. He stood up, watched the gangbanger get to his feet.

The kid was looking at him hard, standing there rubbing his throat. Breathing heavy. Arm dangling like he wanted to go for the gun Tribe had felt under the coat.

Tribe said, "Don't be stupid."

The kid stared at him a little longer. Then he nodded.

"Esai'll want to do you hisself," he said.

‡‡‡

On the toilet, phone perched on his knees, Walter Russell waited for the busy signal on Sammy the bookie's lines to clear. If he could just talk to him, calm this down, everything would be cool. It was the first time Sammy had ever sent anyone after him. Well, there was that time he sent Gino Borrelli the ex-Spicket Falls High School linebacker. Good thing he knew Gino, talked him out of breaking anything. Gave him some free steaks.

He couldn't believe this though. He always paid. Always. He had some money now too from the college basketball, was planning on making a payment. Now Schell and Mazertski were after him. Christ! It'd only been, what, three weeks? A month maybe, tops.

Walter wiped the sweat from his forehead. Man, Louise's mother kept it frigging hot in here. The cow. He tried the number again, goddamn rotary phone too.

Busy.

Every busy signal was like a step closer for the Saugus goons. And where the hell was Jeff? Man, he shouldn't have got into it. Walter knew he could've talked his way out of it. He had the money now, didn't he? He felt bad about leaving Jeff with the cops but he had to get the hell out of there. Went straight home to Louise, grabbed her and her things, came over to Louise's mom's. It was his safe house. No one knew about it. No one knew Louise and Irene were related. Not even a family resemblance, Louise thin like a Q-tip with a big head of hair and Louise's mother big enough to need a minivan for a casket.

He tried Jeff's old number from his address book, but a message came on telling him the number was disconnected. Followed that with a call to Mrs. McGreevy's, Jeff's landlord, but hung up when the answering machine came on with her leprechaun voice.

He heard stiletto footsteps on the thick pink shag, pausing now outside the door.

Listening.

"What Louise, you need to sit on the toilet?"

"Don't be a pig!" said Louise. "I just came to check on ya! You're putting *me* out, remember? I could be home right now, wasn't for you."

He looked at the door. She was right. "I'm just nervous honey bun. But I can take care of it. Soon as I make some calls. Soon as his phone's not fucking busy. Shit."

"Me and Ma are out here if you need us."

"Okay."

"We're going to have some cheese doodles and Waist Watcher orange, want some?"

"I'm on the toilet!"

"I mean when ya get out!"

"Yeah," he said. "Yeah. Okay. Save me some. That'd be great. I'm calling now again though, okay? Can't talk."

"Yeah, yeah," he heard her say, walking away, voice faint now. "You're calling again."

Ringin'!

"Sammy here."

“Sammy! Jesus Christ Sammy why are you doing this? Why are you sending goons after me?”
“Who the hell is this? That you Walter?”
“Who the hell you think it is?”
“Don’t be making wise at me. You been skirtin’ me for six weeks. I’m a businessman here, this ain’t no charity auction.”
“Auction? What are you talking about? Look, I got half what I owe you right now. Fifty gee’s.”
“You owe me two.”
“I owe you one.”
“Two. Doubles every month,” said Sammy, Walter hearing him strike the match for one of those sweatsock cigars he smoked.
“I’m your best customer, Sammy.”
“My best customer pays-up.”
“How about I give you one today, we call it even?”
Sammy blew smoke at the phone.
“You pay me one today, cash, I’ll give you a month to pay the other.”
“What about I give you 75, we put the other 25 in play?” Walter said.
“No more for you until you’re squared.”
“How am I supposed to raise it, you won’t let me play?”
“I look like dear fucking Abby?” Sammy said, clearing his phlegmy throat. “Who you do the college ball with?”
“Guy out of Connecticut,” Walter lied.
“What’s his name?”
“Joe.”
“That it? Joe?”
“Yeah.”
“Connecticut, huh?”
“Yeah,” said Walter. Mingua, he’d be damned if he’d give up his only other reliable bookie to an over-reacting pud like Sammy. “You gonna call off those goons?”
“They won’t bother you, you pay me before three o’clock today.”
“You keep them away from my buddy, too? He was just helping me out.”
“What those two got on their minds for him after this morning, your boy’s on his own.”
“Come on, Sammy!”
“Welcome to the world, Walt.”

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“Kid’s different,” said McKan, working at the coffee spot on his tie with a thumbnail. It was on his trench coat too.

“Yeah, how so?”

McKan looked up at his partner. Samuals was still seething. What Ford had said hadn’t helped with the guy’s mood. Still, except for their time inside the Spicket Falls station house, Samuals had been wearing sunglasses to cover his bloodshot eyes. Had in fact been wearing them since he’d picked him up that morning at eight. A bad sign along with the fresh mouthful of mints and the cup after cup of coffee.

But getting down here so early couldn’t be helped, the call from the Spicket Falls PD coming in so quick. They’d known Tribe was getting out of the state pen this morning at six, a special release because of the publicity. At first they considered driving up to the Concord prison and giving him some shit there, but then figured screw it. Why drive an hour across New Hampshire for that punk? They’d just wait until something happened. And here it did, sooner than either of them could have guessed.

Samuals said, “How’s he different?”

McKan said, “Seems like he toughened up in the pen.”

“What, you think he’s a hard guy now?”

“You heard him. We did right to be watching him now that he’s sprung.”

They were following the Spicket River out of town, crossing the small concrete bridge at the base of the falls. McKan took a look as they went by—soot-covered snow lined the embankments and fast-food wrappers floated like lily pads in the ice-rimmed water pooled near the base of the falls. On the sidewalk, brown glass from shattered beer bottles covered the ground, sparkling brightly in what was left of the sun.

They still had to get through Lawrence to make it to Route 495 for the trip back home to Hampton Beach.

“I still can’t believe how he got out.”

“No way Morales did it,” McKan said. “No way we could have screwed up that bad.”

“We didn’t fucking screw up,” said Samuals, chunks of mint spraying onto the dashboard.



Tribe’s apartment was on Hughes Street, just about five blocks from Red Street. He pulled the Cavalier to the curb, got out and stood in the street. It was still cold, starting to snow.

He looked up at Mrs. McGreevy’s house, where he’d lived before prison. It was a white, single-family home, one of the only two on Hughes Street. Surrounding the house were double-deckers built when his grandfather was a young man, just starting his own shoe manufacturing company.

On the next street over, Charlene Street, and on the other streets heading towards Methuen were more and more single-family homes. Back the other way, starting with Hammel Street on the other side of Hughes, double- and triple-deckers stood dirty-faced over the side-walks. Continuing on, triple-decker tenements with dirt yards filled that entire side of town, bunching together along the Spicket River and blurring the town line into Lawrence.

He looked to the far end of Hughes Street and could almost see the front porch of his old house, where he’d lived with his mother. For a moment he stood in the street, remembering how she looked back then—the thick brown hair, the easy smile.

None of this would have happened if she’d lived.

He stood there for a while. Then he walked up the concrete stairs and into the raised yard. The apartment was in the basement with the entrance around back, but he looked around for Mrs. McGreevy anyway. She was in Florida for the winter, but he half expected her to be there, tending to the bushes and other yard stuff. If he’d told her he was getting out she would have flown up to meet him.

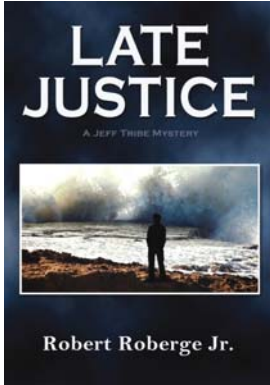
He went up the front stairs, then walked along the concrete walkway on the side of the house. The walkway was clear of snow. Mrs. McGreevy was having it shoveled it seemed, keeping up appearances that someone was home.

He unlocked the apartment door and went inside. The air in the basement rooms was dead, musty. He walked around, looking at his stuff. Not that he had much. Some books, old photographs, his grandfather’s home movie equipment. Furniture from the old house. He picked up the phone, clicked the button, but it was dead. He tried the light switches and the lamps, at least, all worked. He turned them all on, went into the bedroom and dropped onto the bed. He lay there a while without moving.

In prison there was noise all the time, guys yelling, doors clanging shut. He closed his eyes then opened them again, stared at the ceiling.

Somewhere upstairs a radiator clanked.

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