



*Some secrets are worth revealing...
no matter the cost*

FOUND

Karen NEW YORK TIMES
BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
KINGSBURY
BAXTER FAMILY DRAMA™ – FIRSTBORN SERIES #3

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“I love all of Karen Kingsbury’s books. As with the previous books, I could not put this one down—read it in two days. While they all touch my heart, the beautiful brokenness of Dayne Matthews and his search for significance and love really got to me this time. Read this one! It was wonderful.”
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“As always, Karen Kingsbury is captivating in her writing. Couldn’t wait to get this book and read it in its entirety the first day I received it.”
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“Another EXCELLENT read, definitely one you don’t want to miss in the series. Karen is an incredible author that keeps you turning the pages. ENJOY!” —M.R.

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“I have missed the Baxter saga! [*Found*] was salve for a thirsty soul. I was on the edge of my chair. I read it practically nonstop but hated it, as I always do, when I reached the last page.” —Jan

“I absolutely loved this book! I was able to connect with the characters because I also am adopted. I laughed and cried at the same time! Karen keeps you into the book from cover to cover, page to page.” —Tyesha

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To Donald, my Prince Charming

In this season of life, with you working as full-time teacher here at home for our boys, I am maybe more proud of you than ever. I am amazed at the way you blend love and laughter, tenderness and tough standards to bring out the best in our boys. Don't for a minute think that your role in all this is somehow smaller. You have the greatest responsibility of all.

Not only with our children but in praying for me as I write and speak and go about this crazy, fun job God has given me. I couldn't do it without you. Thanks for loving me, for being my best friend, and for finding "date moments" amid even the most maniacal or mundane times.

My favorite times are with you by my side. I love you always, forever.

To Kelsey, my precious daughter

You are sixteen, pushing seventeen, and sometimes I find myself barely able to exhale. The ride is so fast at this point that I can only try not to blink so I won't miss a minute of it. Like the most beautiful springtime flower, I see you growing and unfolding, becoming interested in current events and formulating godly viewpoints that are yours alone. The same is true in dance, where you are simply breathtaking onstage. I believe in you, honey.

Keep your eyes on Jesus, and the path will be easy to follow.

Don't ever stop dancing. I love you.

To Tyler, my beautiful son

Can it be that you are thirteen and, yes, taller than me? Just yesterday people would call and confuse you with Kelsey. Now they confuse you with your dad—in more ways than one. You are on the bridge, dear son, making the transition between Neverland and Tomorrowland and becoming a strong, godly young man in the process. Keep giving Jesus your very best, and always remember that you're in a battle. In today's world, Ty, you need

His armor every day, every minute. Don't forget . . . when you're up there onstage, no matter how bright the lights, I'll be watching from the front row, cheering you on. I love you.

To Sean, my wonder boy

Your sweet nature continues to be a bright light in our home. It seems a lifetime ago that we first brought you—our precious son—home from Haiti. It's been my great joy to watch you grow and develop this past year, learning more about reading and writing and, of course, animals. You're a walking encyclopedia of animal facts, and that, too, brings a smile to my face. Your hugs are something I look forward to, Sean. Keep close to Jesus. I love you.

To Josh, my tender tough guy

You continue to excel at everything you do, but my favorite time is late at night when I poke my head into your room and see that—once again—your nose is buried in your Bible. You really get it, Josh. That by being strong in Christ, first and foremost, you'll be strong at everything else. Keep winning for Him, dear son. You make me so proud. I love you.

To EJ, my chosen one

You amaze me, Emmanuel Jean! You have become a different little boy while attending your daddy's home school. In every possible area you have improved. I see you standing straighter and taller, articulating more, making eye contact, and feeling confident and proud. I know that Jesus is leading the way and that you are excited to learn the plans He has for you.

But for you, this year will always stand out as a turning point.

Congratulations, honey! I love you.

To Austin, my miracle child

Can my little boy be eight years old? I love that you still wake up every now and then and scurry down the hall to our room so you can sleep in the middle.

But most of all I love your tender heart. Just last week you looked at me and said, "Mommy, you're so pretty." Talk about making my day! Then you were at a basketball game with us, and you sat on Daddy's knee and hooked your arms around his neck and said, "You're my best friend, Daddy. Thanks for loving me." Wow . . . it's so wonderful to see a reflection of my own heart in you, my littlest son. I thank God for your health, precious boy. I love you.

And to God Almighty, the Author of life,
who has—for now—blessed me with these.

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Thanks to Olga Kalachik, whose hard work allows me to

operate a significant part of my business from my home. The personal touches you bring to my ministry are precious to me, priceless to me. Thank you with all my heart.

And thanks to my friends and family who continue to surround me with love and prayer and support. I could list you by name, but you know who you are. Thank you for believing in me and for seeing who I really am. A true friend stands by through the changing seasons of life and cheers you on not for your successes but for staying true to what matters most. You are the ones who know me that way, and I'm grateful for every one of you.

Of course, the greatest thanks goes to God Almighty, the most wonderful Author of all—the Author of life. The gift is Yours. I pray I might have the incredible opportunity and responsibility to use it for You all the days of my life.



CHAPTER ONE

THE STORY WAS MORE than any reporter could resist.

A knife-wielding stalker with the delusional belief that she was married to the famous actor Dayne Matthews. The accusation that the same crazy woman had jumped from the dark shadows of Paradise Cove in an attempted murder of an associate of Dayne's. The rescue of that associate by Dayne, the photos that showed him and an unknown woman kissing on the beach earlier that night, and the fact that no one had ever been able to identify her.

Never mind that it was just a deposition. A crew of news vans and photographers surrounded the entrance to the Los Angeles Superior Court this January morning, hoping for a glimpse of the star they couldn't get enough of. Desperate for details beyond what they already knew.

Dayne Matthews sat in the backseat of the rented black Suburban. His attorney, Joe Morris, was driving. They were the only people in the vehicle, and from their position at a stoplight in front of the courthouse, they could see everything. Newscasters

and print guys and tabloid photogs scurrying about the scene, searching for the best angle, the fewest shadows, plugging in wires and adjusting lenses as they waited for him to appear.

“They’re out in full force.” Joe turned the SUV into the parking lot.

“They love a good story.” Today’s newspaper lay on the seat beside Dayne, and he picked it up. His publicist had spoken with the media and put quite a spin on the facts. The article read: *Dayne Matthews and his unnamed associate will appear in court this morning to give depositions in the case against stalker Margie Madden.*

Dayne chuckled to himself. Katy was coming into court half an hour after him, and she was hardly a mere associate—though that’s what the media and the police had believed about Katy since the beginning. An “associate” helping him scout out a location for an upcoming film. Since Katy was an unknown and since they didn’t need to release her name until the trial, no one had to know that she was an actress or that she’d turned down the lead role in *Dream On* or that she lived in Bloomington, Indiana. The tabloids had a picture of him kissing an unknown woman earlier that evening on the beach, and he had explained that she was an actress who preferred to stay anonymous. The media had never put the two stories together.

“Let’s go.” His attorney exhaled hard as he put the vehicle in park. “It’ll take a while to get through the throng.”

Dayne unbuckled his seat belt and slid toward the door of the Suburban. The explanation he’d given to the press and the police had holes big enough to drive a train through, but none of it was a lie, not really. Katy was his associate, in the sense that she’d associated with him in a work setting for a time. And the police didn’t care about the tabloid photos of him kissing some woman on the beach. He wasn’t on trial after all.

Margie Madden was.

The explanation bought them time. That way Katy could stay out of the limelight as long as possible. By the time the press

heard actual testimony and realized her name, and that she'd been thinking about the role in *Dream On*, the movie would already be released and Katy would be only a small aspect of the story.

Dayne and Joe walked close together, their pace fast and clipped. Joe had flown out from New York City to be here, even though his presence wasn't really necessary. The prosecuting attorney would handle the deposition, and normally witnesses needed no other representation. But Dayne's situation was different. His public persona was at stake any time he did or said anything involving the law. His attorney even planned to have someone out here from the New York office at Dayne's side every moment during the trial.

They were a hundred feet from the courthouse when the swarm of media caught wind of Dayne's arrival. In a rush they pivoted and aimed their cameras. A few nicely dressed newscasters stepped in front of the others, large booming microphones in their hands. The bigger the network, the more likely they were to use his last name.

"Mr. Matthews." A heavily made-up blonde stepped into his path. "Is it true you want the judge in this case to make an example of Margie Madden, and is it true—?"

"No comment." Joe took hold of Dayne's elbow and straight-armed a path through the crowd. "Excuse us."

"Dayne." It was a photographer shouting from a few layers back in the crowd. "Tell us about the associate. Where is she? Isn't she supposed to be—?"

"She's already here." Joe's answer was loud enough for most of them to hear. It was part of the plan, that he would discourage the press from sticking around and waiting for Katy.

The photographer raised his hand and shouted again, "Does she still work with Dayne and in what capacity, since we don't have a name on her and—"

"No comment." Joe kept up his pace. He pulled Dayne along,

leaving no room for responses. Dayne sort of liked the help. Maybe if he had Joe around more often, the paparazzi would leave him alone. He stifled a grin at the thought.

The crowd parted easily, and Dayne did his best to look straight ahead, his expression serious. The press would have their requisite photos and footage—Dayne Matthews, Hollywood star, coming to court to give testimony on the crazy stalker who tried to kill his associate. None of them really expected more than that.

Other than passing glances and whispered comments, Dayne and Joe weren't approached again as they entered the building and took the elevator to the eighth floor. Dayne stopped for a minute and looked out the window across the hazy Los Angeles scene. Somewhere out there Katy Hart was back in his city, making her way to the courthouse. Her visit was all he'd been able to think about since Christmas.

"This way." Joe took the lead and headed toward a room at the end of the hall.

They were met by a sharp-looking woman who appeared to be in her midfifties. She introduced herself as the prosecuting attorney. "We have a room set up for you." She gave them a business-like smile. "Follow me."

The attorney explained the proceedings as they walked down another hallway, but Dayne did little more than give an occasional nod in her direction. Joe would handle the details. All he had to do was tell the story while the prosecutor tape-recorded it. For now he could let his mind wander, let himself think about Katy.

He hadn't heard from her since opening night of *Annie*, but she was there when he woke up and when he lay down to sleep. The past few months had been the loneliest of his life. Not that he hadn't had offers. He was in the middle of filming a romantic suspense film opposite Angie Carr, a dark-haired beauty with exotic looks and a penchant for her leading men. They'd met at several functions but never starred in a film together until now.

On the first day of filming she had poked her head out of her

trailer and called to him. “Dayne, come here.” Her eyes danced, and her smile held the pout she was famous for. “I have a question.”

He was in the middle of three things, including a conversation with his agent. But she was his priority as long as they were still establishing chemistry for the film. He jogged to her trailer, stepped inside, and closed the door behind him.

She stood facing him, dressed in nothing but a transparent negligee. “Hi.” She took a step closer. “I need your opinion.” Another step. “Will this work for the bedroom scene, the one at the beginning of the film?”

He swallowed and put his hand on the trailer door. “I thought the script called for a nightgown.”

She pushed out her lips in a pout most men would have found irresistible. She played with a lock of her hair, dropping her chin and looking beyond seductive. “You don’t like it?”

“Yeah, well . . .” He let loose a single chuckle and rubbed the back of his neck. “The film’s PG-13, so I’m thinking something less see-through.”

She grinned. “Oh, well.” One more step and now she ran her finger down the length of his arm. “It works for right now, anyway.” She nodded toward the set crew outside. “They’ll be busy for an hour before they need us.” Her face was so close he could smell the mint on her breath. She dropped her voice to a whisper. “Do you know how long I’ve wanted to practice a love scene with you, Dayne Matthews?”

He gritted his teeth. “Angie, listen . . .” She was stunning, but so what? Did she want him to take her right here on the trailer floor? And if he did, then what? They’d pretend to be hot lovers for a few weeks, and after that he’d be lonelier than ever. Something else too. The peace he’d found in Bloomington wouldn’t last if he went back to his old ways.

With gentle hands, he framed her face and drew her close. Then he kissed her forehead. “The film calls for a few kisses—that’s all.” He searched her eyes. “We’ll have time to practice later, okay?”

She could've gotten angry, but she didn't. Instead she took a few steps back, making sure he had a view of her full frame. "I'll look forward to it." She tossed him a confident smile as if to say she wasn't giving up that easily. "Dinner tonight?"

Since then, Angie's attempts had been relentless, just short of desperate, but he'd managed to keep his distance and still build chemistry with her. Working with her had its benefits. She was a professional, brilliant on the screen and fun off it. But she made him feel empty and plastic, the way all of Hollywood made him feel lately.

He was glad for a day off now, and never mind that he'd spend most of it here in a Los Angeles courthouse. He would've looked forward to a day in jail if it meant seeing Katy Hart again.

The attorneys were still talking as they reached a door at the end of the hallway. Dayne glanced at his watch, then toward the elevator. Katy would be here in fifteen minutes.

"This is perfect." Joe opened the door and led the way into a small room. He looked at Dayne. "You ready?"

"Perfectly." Dayne felt a sudden rush of passion toward the job ahead. The stalker had cost him much. This was his chance to get back at her.

The prosecutor followed them inside. "The deposition doesn't start for twenty minutes." She checked the clock on the wall. "I'll grab coffee and be back by then."

"I'll come." Joe set his portfolio on the desk and nodded at Dayne. "Want anything?"

"I'm fine."

The attorneys left, and Dayne took one of the seats. In the silence he could almost hear his heart beat. Would Katy still have feelings for him? Would the electricity, the emotions that had existed between them still be there after they'd been apart so long? He tapped his fingers on the table. The minutes couldn't drop off the clock fast enough.

He should've brought his Bible, the one Katy had given him.

That would've passed the time. He had been reading it lately, taking in a little more of the message every night. Not that he was ready to hit the nearest church or claim himself born again, the way some of his athlete friends had done recently. But the God of the Bible was the same God claimed by his parents, the Baxters, and Katy Hart. Because of that, He was the same God on Dayne's mind more often now.

He was about to step outside and check for Katy when he heard a knock. The attorneys would've come in without waiting, so maybe it was . . .

He stood and opened the door, and before he could take another breath he was looking into her eyes. The same clear blue eyes he'd connected with from the balcony of the Bloomington Community Theater back in November.

"Hi." Katy was breathless. She looked over her shoulder, nervous. "I've never seen so many cameras."

"They didn't know it was you, did they?"

"No." She exhaled, finding her composure. "I slipped past."

He let her in, closed the door, and suddenly they were alone, face-to-face as if no time at all had passed between them. "Katy—" he reached out and took her hands—"you look wonderful."

The faintest blush tinged her cheeks, and she shifted her gaze to the floor. When her eyes found his again, he had the answer he was looking for. The connection was still there. It was in her eyes and in her expression and in the way she ran her thumbs along the tops of his hands. "I didn't think we'd have any time alone."

"We won't have much."

Her smile told him everything she was feeling. But at the same time it cried of resignation. Because here they were again, their emotions leading the way, and yet their time would be measured and counted by the events around them, by the parameters of his world.

"How are you, Dayne?" Katy didn't blink, didn't seem to want to lose a moment of whatever minutes they had together.

“I’m good.” He grinned, wanting desperately to keep things light. How was it fair that this visit would end up amounting to little more than another sad good-bye? “What are you working on?”

“*Robin Hood*.” She stifled a laugh. “It’s coming together.”

“The kids?” He wanted to know, wanted to soak himself in everything about her. “Are they okay?”

“They are. The older kids are still in the Bible study, the one they started after Sarah Jo Stryker’s accident.” She made a funny face. “Of course, we should probably spend an extra day a week on practice, the way things are going.”

“Blocking, you mean?”

“No.” She laughed. “Trying to stay onstage. I’d be happy with that.” Katy talked with her hands when she was excited. Now she released his hands and began illustrating her story. “So there’s this scene where Robin’s supposed to fly in from the wings on a rope, right?”

“To rescue Maid Marian?”

“Exactly.” She took a quick breath. “Marian’s standing on a fake tree stump, her hands tied, and he’s supposed to swing in, land beside her, and save the day.”

Dayne chuckled. He could see what was coming.

“Instead—” Katy demonstrated the swinging motion—“he sails in from the wings and knocks her square on the floor.”

“Oh.” Dayne made a face. “Was she hurt?”

“Her pride, yes. Her onstage chemistry with Robin, yes.” Katy gave him a teasing look. “We decided we better just have him run in from now on.”

“Sounds good.” Dayne saw so much more than her physical beauty. Her enthusiasm and spirit, her joy and excitement for the little things of life. All of it was like getting air after being too long underwater.

“So . . . enough on that.” Her tone softened. “How are you . . . really?”

“Well . . .” He found her eyes and held them. “I’m not a Kabbalist.”

Her eyes widened, and she looked deeply at him, to the lonely desert plains of his heart. “Really?”

“Tossed it all.” He felt his eyes begin to dance. “Some girl said it probably wasn’t for me. Told me I needed to find the truth.”

“Must’ve been a smart girl.”

“Mmm.” He took hold of her hands again, but he kept his distance. “Definitely. In fact, she gave me a Bible.”

“A Bible? How interesting.” Her eyes twinkled. “What a great idea. You know . . . since, well, it is the truth. I mean, if you’re looking for it you might as well go to the source.”

“That’s what I figured.” He felt his smile fade. “It’s changing me, Katy. I can feel it.”

Her expression softened, and what had been playful became serious. She closed the gap between them and slipped her arms around his neck. “Dayne, I prayed for this . . . for you.”

He wouldn’t have gone to her, wouldn’t have crossed the line he’d crossed the last time they were together. But now, lost in her embrace, he couldn’t imagine letting her go. Slowly, he worked his fingers along the back of her neck into her hair. She smelled wonderful, like the flowers in Bloomington.

Too soon she pulled back and searched his eyes. “Did you find Jesus? When you read the Bible, I mean?”

His hands were around her waist but only loosely. He looked beyond her. The question was a good one. He understood forgiveness and peace better. “Have I found Jesus?”

“Mmm-hmm.” She angled her head, her soul as transparent as a child’s. “When you look past the hurt and sadness of your yesterdays, is He there?”

A part of his heart sank a little. The answer wasn’t what she wanted to hear. “Not yet.” He released his hold on her waist and took her hands once more. “But I’m looking.”

Disappointment never even flashed in her eyes. She gave him her brightest smile yet. “That’s it.”

“What?” It was all he could do to keep from kissing her.

“That’s what I’ve been praying for.” Her eyes glistened. “That you’ll look.”

The door opened. They dropped hands and stepped back to keep from being hit.

Joe Morris was the first to enter. He stopped and looked from Dayne to Katy. “Hi. You must be Katy Hart.”

“I am.” She held out her hand to him. Her cheeks were red, but she rebounded quickly. “I understand the deposition won’t take long.”

“Not at all.”

The prosecutor stepped into the room. She greeted Katy and then Dayne. “We need your testimony on record so we can prepare for the case.”

Dayne felt the intimacy from a moment ago fade like fog in July. It was no longer a reconnecting, a time to remember why he couldn’t get Katy Hart out of his mind. They were in business mode now, and the atmosphere stayed that way for the next hour.

When the lawyers were finished, the group stood and moved to the door. Dayne was about to ask Katy if she wanted to go somewhere, spend some time together before she left. But before he could say anything his cell phone rang.

He checked the caller ID. Kelly Parker. He stuffed his frustration. She rarely called. At least he could politely put her off until later. The two of them hadn’t talked much since she’d moved out. He held his finger up to Katy and opened his phone. “Hey.”

“Dayne.” There was a cry in her voice, one that mixed sorrow and fear. She waited a moment. “I’ve got bad news. I just found out.”

His heart skipped a beat, and he moved to a corner of the room. In the background he heard his attorney start a conversation with Katy. He pressed the phone to his ear. “What is it?”

“There’s no easy way to say this.” Kelly sighed, and it rattled all the way to his soul. “Dayne, I’m pregnant.”



John Baxter was running out of options.

He'd done everything he could to find his firstborn son, everything a person could possibly think of. He'd searched the Internet for information, and he'd gone to adoption sites. He'd made phone calls and connected with people who aided parents in finding their birth children. Now he was down to his last hope.

The chances of finding his oldest son rested completely in the hands of a private investigator. John had hired him a week ago, and now—sitting on his desk—was a message from the man with one simple instruction: *Call immediately.*

He stared at the piece of paper and reached for the phone. Was this it? Had the man found the boy he and Elizabeth had prayed about for so many years? Would he have every bit of information he'd ever wanted in just a few minutes? The possibilities welled up in him and made it hard to breathe.

John closed his eyes and exhaled. *God, meet me in this place. I want to find him so badly, and this is my last chance. Please let there be something to go on—a lead, a phone number, a name. Something.*

He opened his eyes, and they fell on a small frame on his desk. It read: *With God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26.* A smile tugged at the corners of John's lips, and he felt himself relax. *Thanks, God. You always know just what I need.* Whatever the private investigator had to tell him, he wouldn't give up. Not now, not ever.

His palms felt sweaty against the phone's receiver. He took a full breath, picked it up, and tapped out the private investigator's number.

The man's secretary answered and connected him to the PI.

"Tim Brown here." The man was a fast talker, high energy. "How can I help you?"

"Uh . . . this is John Baxter, returning your call." He swallowed hard. "Did you find my son?"

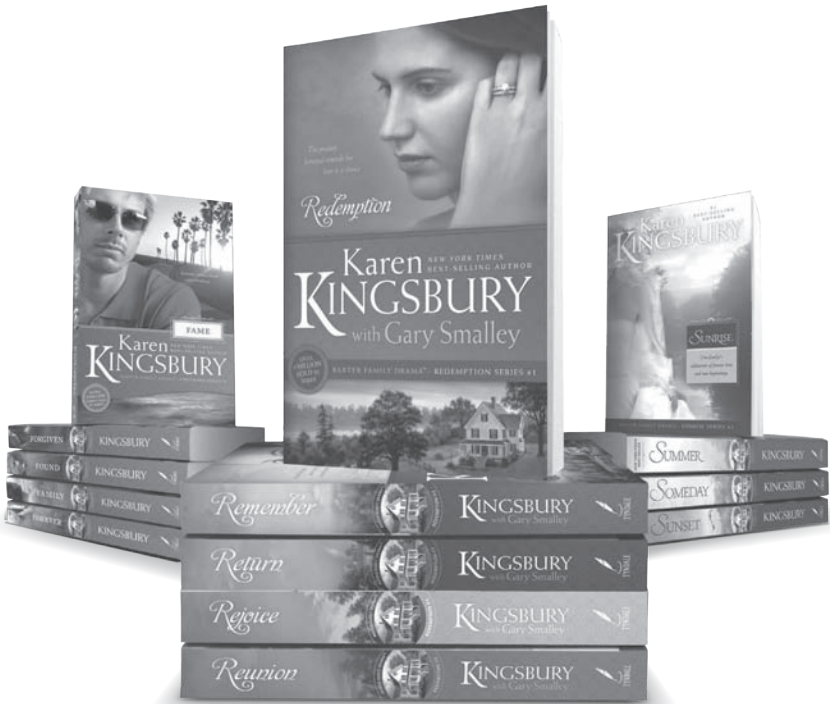
"Yes, John, thanks for calling back." The man's tone became

serious, slower than before. “Listen, something’s come up in my research. Something very, very important. We need to talk about it in person.”

In person? John wouldn’t be able to think straight until he heard the news. “Are you sure? Can’t you tell me now?”

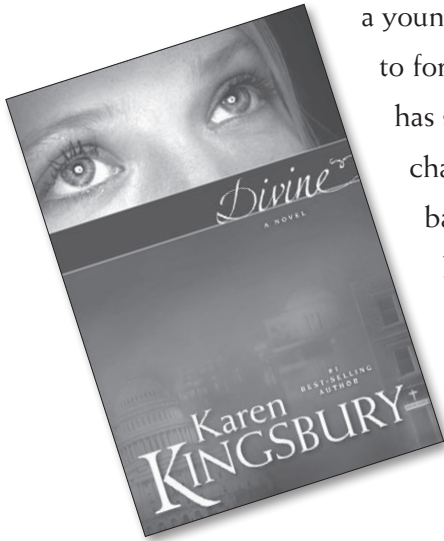
“Not something like this.” Tim rustled some papers. “Can you be here in the morning? Eleven o’clock?” He sighed, and the sound carried his concern across the phone lines. “This is very sensitive. I think you should know right away.”

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