

...**Sorry, Wrong Number**

Suzi B. Mystery #1

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Peter Sharp Legal Mysteries

Magic Lamp



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Chapter I

No matter how great a vacation is, I still find myself eagerly looking forward to getting back to sleeping in my own bed in the master stateroom of the luxurious 50-foot Grand Banks trawler/yacht that I'm fortunate enough to be living on with my 13-year-old legal ward Suzi, who thinks she's the real brains behind our modest law practice.

On second thought, in several instances she actually did come up with some stuff that helped me win a decent sized case here and there, but I'm the adult, so I get all the credit. Besides, after the unfortunate deaths of her stepfather (my ex law partner) in a plane crash, and her mother, in an automobile accident, she definitely doesn't need the money. In fact, she's the richest person I know... but, it's getting tough to handle

her, because she's already planning to attend Harvard law, get her license, and then hire me to work for her.

I don't know why she wants to spend all the effort to accomplish that, because that's almost like things already are now.

I just heard the flaps being lowered, so I guess we're getting pretty close to landing at LAX, where my car service will have a driver waiting for me with a sign that says "Sharp." That's the standard way that livery drivers let arriving passengers know which Lincoln Town car they're supposed to ride in.

I've been away for the past couple of weeks, so I think I'll use one of the first-class amenities this airline offers to watch the local news and see if anything interesting is going on in Los Angeles.

The TV screen shows a familiar aerial shot of Marina del Rey, where my boat is parked. That's a pretty common sight on local news, and they often show an aerial shot like this at the beginning of a news broadcast... but as I put my airline-provided cheap earphones on, I see that the picture is zooming in on one particular dock... and to my surprise, I see that it's my dock – and my bitter ex-

wife, now Los Angeles' top prosecutor, is preparing to make a statement.

The studio announcer brings her on: "and now, live, direct from Marina del Rey California, our District Attorney, Mizz Myra Scot Sharp, will address the press."

There are a couple of things I've learned about some people I know during the past fifteen years or so and the first one is to never get between my friend Stuart and a buffet counter. The second one is to never get between my ex-wife and a TV camera, because making either mistake will cause you to suffer some serious *stampede* injuries. Ah, there she is now... looking as good as ever. Boy, did I ever screw up that marriage.

"We are now at the Bar Harbor Anchorage in Marina del Rey, where the local Coast Guard is cooperating with the Department of Homeland Security in seizing a large yacht, the occupants of which are persons of interest for participating in violation of several matters concerning national security... some of which might even be linked to what is believed to be a terrorist group that has been committing hate crimes of

vandalism against local churches and synagogues.

“As a full disclosure, I’d like the public to know that this vessel belongs to my ex-husband, attorney Peter Sharp, and his female 13-year-old legal ward, who is now being taken into custody and will be brought to my office. Notwithstanding the fact that I am very well acquainted with both attorney Sharp and the minor being taken into custody, this will not deter me in any way from prosecuting any alleged crimes to the fullest extent of my ability, in the interest of serving my duty to the public.

“Attorney Sharp has reportedly been out of state on vacation for the past several weeks and is not necessarily a suspect, but we will be bringing him in for questioning as soon as he is located.”

Maybe it would have been a better idea if I answered that ad and applied for the job of manager at the Pioneer Inn, the place in Lahaina where I usually stay when visiting the island. It’s across the street from the famous Banyan tree, one of the largest-rooted trees in the world, and under which is a great place to just sit and read... away from the kid, and especially away from my bitter ex-wife,

who is always trying to lock me up for one thing or other

* * * *

When a young lady gets married for the first time, in her mind, it is the beginning of something great for her life... little does she know that it's going to be downhill from that day on, especially when she finally figures out that the guy she 'settled' for cannot be molded into what she envisioned as the perfect man she always wanted.

And, if and when everything hits the fan and they separate, it's quite common for her to always detest her ex-husband, because he's the guy who stole her 'happily ever after,' which is bad enough if she's just a normal bitter ex-wife –but when she's the county's tough, top prosecutor, with all of the assets of the entire Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation at her disposal, her poor ex-husband must spend the rest of his life looking over his shoulder and sleeping with one eye open.

I don't have to watch any more news today. I've seen enough to know that I'd better make myself scarce for a while until the dust settles and I have a chance to talk to that precocious genius brat of mine, who has now caused me to have no yacht to sleep on.

As instructed, I followed instructions and turned my cell phone off about five hours ago, when this plane took off from the airport on Maui. We're now about to touch down, so in a few minutes I'll be able to turn it on again to see if there are any messages from the kid letting me know what the heck is going on.

Okay, we just touched down and are now taxiing to the terminal, so I'm going to be sneaky and see if I have any text messages. The phone's screen shows two messages: a text from the kid, and a voicemail from my dangerous ex-wife.

I'll take a look at the kid's text first.

***“Peter: some things have come up that might require me to be off the boat for an evening or so... Myra will surely fill you in on the details. In the meantime, I'd strongly suggest that you not come to the boat upon your return, because for some one reason or another, it might not be there.*”**

“If you will go to Mister B’s girlfriend’s house and pick him up, he will escort you to another boat that we will be staying on for a while. The Asian Boys have already brought your stuff over there... and please buy Mister B. dinner.

P.S. Turn you phone off.”

Hmm. Very interesting. Mister B is her huge beast Bernie, the Saint Bernard that follows my little Chinese legal ward around. His girlfriend is a female mastiff owned by a lady who lives in the apartments not far from our former yacht... and I hope the boat she’s picked out for us to live on has standing headroom – not only for her 4-foot presence, but for my six-feet three. She may be a computer genius, but when it comes to speaking in code, she’s still just a kid. The Asian Boys she refers to are a team of four busboys who work at the Chinese restaurant around the corner where her mother used to be the manager. They clean tables in the evening, but act as her servants during the day.

The voicemail from my ex is a little more interesting, but also quite transparent.

“Hello Petey... you know who it is. Listen, I’d really like to get together with you when you get back from Maui, so please call me when you land. I’ll probably be in a meeting when you call, so be a dear and hold on for a couple of minutes while one of my deputies comes to get me.”

First of all, she knows I don’t like being called ‘Petey,’ and only does it when she really wants to press one of my buttons... but she also knows that I never pass up a chance to get together with her. But this time she telegraphed her punch when telling me that I might have wait on hold for a couple of minutes, because that’s when her staff of spies will be tracking utilize the required 18 seconds of my cellphone signal to find out where I am – and I’m also sure that if I’d be foolish enough to meet her somewhere, I’d be a guest of the county for a while.

My phone is now being turned off.

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I hate schlepping luggage around, so I travel very light, and if there’s anything big that I might need, I ship it via UPS so

it's waiting for me when I get to wherever I'm going – and the stuff gets sent back home the same way.

Not having to worry about picking up checked baggage is a real time-saver, so all I have to do is go down the escalator and look for my driver... the one holding up that sign with my name on it.

Ah... there he is, and as expected, there are a couple of guys trying so hard to look like they're not plain-clothes cops, that it's actually funny to see them do their act. I know that if I actually approach the driver I'll immediately be arrested, so I turn around and look for a guy my height... and I see one. He's a tall African American, so I call him aside, hand him a couple of hundred-dollar-bills, and make him an offer. "Excuse me, but I'd appreciate very much if you'd accept this money and my offer of a free limo ride to wherever you want go from the airport."

He looks at me like I'm crazy... and that's probably not too far from the truth.

"Listen, I don't know if you've ever been married or not, but my wife is a total... B... – well you know that I mean. Anyway, she's after me for her complaint of the week, and I'm sure she's paid off

my limo driver to let her know where I am, so please take this money and use my car service. The driver will be holding up a sign that says "Sharp," and all you have to do is walk over to him, tell him that Peter wants him to take you to wherever you direct, and then to come in and pick up Peter, who took an earlier flight and will be waiting for him inside."

This guy must have been divorced, because he smiles and says, "When we get to my apartment building and you're not there, what do I tell them?"

"Don't worry pal, the car service has my credit card number, the ride's paid for with a nice tip for the driver. All you have to do is look at your phone. There'll be a text from me that lets you know that I've made other plans and can't meet with you tonight. And if anyone asks what we were supposed to meet about, just tell them that I'm your lawyer - and I am one, - and that I'll answer their questions about our meeting when I speak to them tomorrow. When you get into the limo, call me at this number, so I can see your number and send you that text. I won't answer your call, so leave me a voicemail with your number."

It works. He takes the money and goes down the escalator towards the driver. I'm still upstairs, but I can see what's going on down there. He's walking up to the driver and telling him about my request to take him to where I will supposedly be waiting. The two non-cops are about ten feet behind the driver, looking very surprised, because they didn't know that their lead prosecutor had once been married to a tall black guy.

The driver leads my new 'client' out to where the livery vehicles park, with the two non-cops following closely behind.

After they're all out of sight, I go outside and grab a cab. First stop will be the nearest Radio Shack or large drugstore where I can go inside and purchase a couple of 'burners...' throwaway pre-paid cell phones, and then load each one with about 20 minutes of calling time. These are the same type of phones that drug dealers use.

Using one of the untraceable 'burners,' I call my own cellphone's voicemail, retrieve my new 'client's' number, and send him the text to show to Myra's two henchmen.

My next burner call is to the apartment of Bernie's female friend. When the dog's owner answers the phone and hears that it's me, she lets me know that it's no use coming to pick up Bernie. The FBI took him away about an hour ago – and then she hangs up.
