

# EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By Homer Kizer

---

## Chapter Twenty Four

Jim Calkins arrived in Alaska with only one purpose: to locate and apprehend alive, if possible, Les Jones. So when he receives the message that Jones will meet him in the street-level grill at eight p.m., he wonders who is playing what kind of a joke on him; who knows who he is and why he has come North. Either the National Security Council has a terrible leak or a sick sense of humor. Either way, he has no intention of walking into a trap.

Calkins, unable to contact the agent in place, a secretary who happens to look like Jones' daughter and who has made a mess of this affair, dislikes amateurs. He dislikes the type of games their futile minds conceive, none of the games based upon the finality that produces death. That is how this affair will end. He only hopes the state won't be littered with bodies; there have already been enough accidents to arouse suspicions.

The agent in place, on her only ever assignment, let Les Jones crawl out of the hospital right under her nose, then proceeded in getting a marshal killed and two others wounded yesterday. Her assignment here, though, is indicative of these frostfaries' low national priority, a situation that changed last night when it was confirmed that Israel had sent a man to dicker for the raw ore being offered for a weapon. Now, the Calvary has been called in to clean up the mess— it seems like he goes from one mess to another, some riskier than others, most with all-professional casts. Truly, it's amateurs like the secretary assigned here that cause the most problems for everyone.

An hour before Jones set the time for their meeting, he locks the door to his room, rides the elevator down, then casually wanders from shop window to shop window, looking the part of a tourist as he notes the price of whales carved from cottonwood bark and of fox stoles manufactured from local furs. Except for the liquor store, no one is in any of the shops.

He doesn't stop at the grill, nor does he appear to look at who's seated and who serves. But he sees everyone there: he memorizes each face, evaluates his or her potential as a terrorist, assigns a risk value to every potential, and determines that Jones isn't yet present, nor is anyone else who doesn't belong.

In the liquor store, he asks to be shown their selection of cigars. With great deliberation, he examines samples of several of the Honduran specialty rolls, produced by makers who fled Cuba after the revolution, taking with them their skills and their starts of tobacco plants. The store's humidor doesn't hold as many sizes as he would like to see or sample, and he has to wait until the clerk is between customers before more sizes can be brought out from under-the-counter storage. Time passes. Slow time. Relaxed time. Like the time spent savoring the perfect blend of soil and sun and seasoning that went into the tobaccos brought together by the strong fingers of the maker. Time that brings only a few new customers into the grill, none with the intensity or harshness necessary to be a terrorist. Time that brings eight o'clock ever closer.

He decides to buy samples of a dozen different rolls. But before he pays, he tells the clerk he will wait while several hotel guests parade into the liquor store for ice and for two cases of *Henry's Private*

*Reserve*, for a small tin of aspirin, the tin like the type in which auto part houses sell fuses, and for a professional woman to buy K-Y jelly. He notices her legs while he waits at the counter, and he wonders if she might be available later. And he waits to ask the clerk about her— and while continuing to wait, he notices the secretary who has made such a mess of this frostfaerie affair enter and ask, "Where do you keep your Alka Seltzer?"

The clerk points her to a display. She pays and leaves. And he wonders what she's doing here. Has she come for the meeting? Is she part of a bad joke? Regardless, he doesn't like seeing her here even though she doesn't, didn't recognize him. She wouldn't know him from a tourist, and with his eyes, he follows her towards the reservation desk.

He steps towards the doorway to better see where she goes, and he doesn't see the knife— the fellow entering the liquor store bumps into him hard, then backs away, mumbles an apology; and rather than continuing on in, the fellow turns and hurries towards the hotel's 5th and "H" Street entrance.

He gulps once as he feels the wetness on his chest, the warmth on his shirt, the weakness of his breath, lost through the slit where, between ribs, the blade entered his...

\* \* \*