

**Psychic Movements**  
**Christmas Story 2013**  
**by Robert Ford**

The Toronto Eaton's Centre at Christmas time is a great place for chance encounters but, because of the way my brain is wired up, it's rare that I'm ever surprised.

In a significant exception, on December 13, 2013 Kendra (I didn't yet know her name) seemed to appear out of nowhere on the third level of the Eaton's Centre near the Trinity Square entrance. Our shoulders connected hard and I grabbed for her, saying "Wow, I'm sorry."

I caught her thoughts, clear as day. She thought, "Jeez, I've got to be more careful when teleporting in."

Typically, when I'm catching people's thoughts, I keep a straight face and my mouth shut. I normally avoid mental eavesdropping so as to avoid excess noise in my head. However, in this case, I blurted out, "Teleporting? Seriously?"

She looked as if she'd been stung by a bee. I thought it best to carry on like I'd not said anything. "So, you're OK?"

She nodded.

"OK, then," I said, "I've gotta go." And I kept walking.

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Despite its great retail promise, after two hours, the Eaton's Centre had exhausted me and I had made little progress with my meagre shopping list. I fled to the lower level, to the "Urban Eatery" which was, I assumed, the new dressed up term for "Food Court."

Once people are known to me, I can feel them gradually coming toward me, even if they're out of sight. As I headed down to the food court area, Kendra's presence popped into my mind in a distinctly non gradual way. By the time I was downstairs, she was walking from a food vendor to a table carrying a rather large burger combo.

I purchased a pita pocket sandwich and, as I was turning around, she waved and beckoned me over. I felt that coming and also had the feeling that to ignore her would be a bad idea.

Once I reached her table, she outstretched her hand and said, "Hi. I'm Kendra. I never got a chance to apologize for almost knocking you over. Entirely my fault."

"Stephen," I said. "Hardly your fault in a busy mall at Christmas."

"Please sit down," she said.

When meeting with strangers, I tend to be on the lookout for strangeness. Some subsets of the mentally ill glom onto me because their damaged structures seem to grasp that I can peek inside people's heads. In Kendra's case she was focused, but rather scared, and doing a great job at hiding it. Her fear came from a worry that I was going to reveal her secret.

The problem was that her secret was unbelievable. It was a conundrum. To reassure her that I wasn't going to reveal her secret – one that I shouldn't know anyway – would require me to reveal **my** secret -- being an actual mind-reader, not just some sideshow trickster.

Kendra believed she could teleport large distances. That's what was in her mind.

I am a really good lie detector. Basically there are three types of lies. One is a quick whopper that you make up on the spot to try to deflect or avoid embarrassment. It's the same as when kids deny dropping the orange juice and then quickly back pedal by saying it was an accident. The second is a more considered lie. You've taken the time to think it up and equip the lie with plausibility or plausible deniability. The third type of lie is harder to detect because it's

part of a web of lies that you've created so well that parts of your own mind believe what you are saying.

In Kendra's case, the problem was that she registered as truthful. There was no sign of mental illness.

"When we collided up there," she said, "you blurted something about teleportation. What was that all about?"

Kendra really wanted to talk about this. She desperately wanted someone to trust.

"Look," I said, "I *might* have figured out something about you. But I get the feeling you really want to share your story, but it's risky for you. I don't mind discussing something with you, but you need to be sure. Really sure. Here's my offer. Take time to think; if you still want to talk, I bet that you'll find me tomorrow. If we '*bump into each other*' again, I'd be happy to talk."

I picked up my pita sandwich and walked out of the food court. I felt a little sad because I realized I too shared her wish to talk.

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The next day found me not a stone's throw from the Eaton's Centre at the new (to me) location of the Silver Snail Comic shop. I am the lamest shopper in the universe and I figured for the people who had a sense of humour, stuff from this store would work. I mean, who *doesn't* need more superhero action figures? In the case of my two sons, if the action figures came with money, that was always appreciated from the odd duck father.

Kendra's presence had been ping-pong-ing in and out of my mind and it was becoming difficult to tell if it was because I wanted to meet her again, or if she were actually physically popping in and out of my sensory range.

In the comic shop I was holding my purchases when I found her looking at some large bound collections of Avengers past issues.

"Kendra," I said, "what a surprise."

"Steve," she said.

"Stephen, with a PH," I corrected.

"Oooh. OK, Stephen-with-a-PH, what do we have here?" Kendra started taking my as-yet-unpaid-for-purchases from my hands. "Who's the Wonder Woman action figure for?"

"My sister-in-law. She puts up with my kid brother," I replied.

"Hey, can we go talk? I'm starving."

"Let me buy my stuff. Where do you want to go?"

"I need a steak."

Food was very important to Kendra.

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Barberian's on Elm Street found us a quiet corner for a late lunch. I was having a steak sandwich and Kendra ordered a 20 ounce rib steak. (I don't know if I ever could have eaten that much.) On the way over, we had some basic get-to-know-you talk which was more about shopping and the difficulty of buying presents for relatives.

Once in the restaurant, she asked "So, how do you know?"

"You mean about your high level of maneuverability?"

"Yes," she said

"I'm psychic," I said.

"Get out. That explains a lot. You have to block stuff out of your head to stay sane, right? I figure I'm able to feel people's minds before I arrive so I can avoid bumping into them. So, I bet you were blocking yesterday and that led me to bump into you."

"Part of me," I said, "has trouble believing you. How does it work?"

She paused; jaw and lips were tense. "You do realize I've never talked about this to anyone. Ever."

"I'm getting that," I said.

"All right then," she said, "I think I'm good with people. I've travelled ... a lot. Let me guess stuff about you and then you can try to outdo me."

"Go ahead."

"OK," she said, "You are single."

"Divorced."

"You have two small children."

"My two boys are at University."

"Wow you started early. 43 years old?"

"45."

"You're a teacher."

"I'm a criminologist."

"A *psychic* criminologist?"

"I don't discuss the first part when I'm working."

"OK, Stephen-with-a-ph, my last impression is that you live alone."

"Correct. Now it's my turn."

I actively avoid doing this kind of parlour trick because it's usually freak-out inducing and it puts stuff in my head I don't want. However, in Kendra's case, I made an exception. I relaxed a little and looked into her eyes.

"Kendra Baumann. Kendra's your middle name. Your Korean mother named you Min-seo and your ½ German, ½ Welsh immigrant father provided your middle name and surname."

Kendra gasped.

"Despite you looking as young as my kids, you are 33 years old. Born I think in the Toronto area."

"Thornhill," she said.

"Your father passed away from an illness when you were 10. Your mother emotionally retreated. She was never outgoing like you. You figured out how to teleport at age 5 – something about a dark room. That's a tough one as you're hiding that part."

"Stop," she said.

"OK," she continued, "I'll give you the basics. When I was a kid, I realized I could teleport places I knew well or could see. As I got older I realized that I could travel large distances. Also, I realized I could go to places I'd seen on TV – even if I had not been there before."

"But not a place on a map? It has to be visual?" I asked.

"Yes. Visual and, before I get there, I can feel the air and sometimes hear noises."

"Can you take things with you? Like a whole suitcase?" I had a feeling that there was a trauma around this so I was trying to ease into it.

"Inorganic material only and not much of it. You see the farther I go, the more weight I lose. I pretty much have to eat right after a big trip."

This explained the steak.

"Say you had a fly on your jacket when you went, what happens?"

"It dies."

There was an obvious follow-on question but, seeing she was thinking *please don't ask*, I chose to skip it.

"It occurs to me that when I first thought about what you do, I was thinking more *Star Trek* or *Dr. Who*. But if what you do is actually natural, it makes sense that nothing that wasn't you would be allowed because you could take invasive species anywhere."

"Hmmm, maybe, but I'm still a freak."

"Yeah ... get in line."

Her phone in her jacket made a high pitched chirping sound.

"Excuse me," she said. "Work."

She pulled out the largest Samsung cell/smart phone I'd ever seen and started tapping away at it. "Oh, man. Lebanon?" She then started swiping away at what looked like an airline schedule.

"What do you do for a living?" I asked.

"Courier."

"You must save a lot on gas."

"Ha ha. Very funny. No, I'm a private courier that specializes in very last minute deliveries worldwide."

"Why the airline schedule?" I asked.

"You're the psychic and criminologist, what do you think?"

The trick with being a psychic is that if you have it turned on all the time, you go crazy with all the dreck that comes in. As a result I find the mental discipline of simply figuring it out for myself quite enjoyable.

"I get it." I said. You *pretend* that you are taking the next flight wherever. Or, better yet, have a *pretend* network of frequent fliers who are happy to take packages. But in the end you do most of it yourself.

"Pretty much. I have a network of trusted local couriers who deliver packages when it's time to put the material into the recipients' hands. That way I don't have to hang around in sometimes rather unpleasant locales. I still look like a miracle worker as opposed to an impossible miracle worker."

"Pays well?" I asked.

She turned her smartphone screen to me with a dollar figure on it. I took in a breath.

"Half up front. Half on delivery." She beckoned for the server and quickly settled the bill.

"I should pay my half," I said.

"Please," she said, "I hope you're not one of those guys who can't handle a woman paying the bill. Besides, you couldn't handle my food bill."

We finished lunch and she said, "Look, I have to go. But give me your phone number. The universe finally granted me a wish and I am not losing it."

"What wish?"

"Someone I can talk to about my life without having to lie. This is a gift and maybe even meant-to-be."

We traded phone numbers and she then stood up and looked around to see if anyone was watching and did something she'd never knowingly done before. Vanished in front of someone. There was a quiet "whup" noise. Like someone taking a quick breath. And that was it. If it

weren't for the plates from her meal, I would have had doubt that our conversation had ever occurred.

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Two days later, I received a call from Jacques at the Sûreté du Québec. (I only call them the Quebec Provincial Police, or QPP, when they aren't in earshot.) It seems there was another body found that loosely met the pattern I'd been working on. It's just too much to put down here, but Jacques was working on a series of disappearances in the Montreal area that were confined to the South Shore and Highway 20 toward Cornwall, Ontario. A couple of years earlier, Jacques invited me in on the case to see if I could shed light on the killings. The deaths were always violent and the burials were always in a fetal position, with hands in a prayer position.

Jacques was uploading information to a secure site and would text me when it was done. In my Danforth apartment, I had a specially modified armoire that folded out with information about the case and a large map. I opened it up and started to look at the material. It was important for my sanity (and occasional visitor) that I could hide this monster case away.

I had a folder of missing persons. Henri Tremblay was a professor from McGill who went missing two weeks ago. I placed a green pin on my map showing his last known location and a red pin for where he was found near Saint-Zotique.

Then I got a twinge. Normally I detect people more in advance. I went to the door and opened it. Kendra was about to knock. "I'd ask how you got in without buzzing but that would be silly."

"You must have totally sucked when your kids wanted to give a surprise party."

"Totally. Come in. So ... how was Lebanon?"

"A bit too close to Syria for me."

"How did you find me?"

She was looking around my one bedroom apartment. I got the impression she was the type to snoop in the bathroom medicine cabinet.

"Jeez Stephen-with-a-ph, there's this thing called the Internet. You keep a relatively subtle digital profile, but you are there."

Kendra saw my open armoire and said "Whoa, is this what you are working on?"

Did I forget to close the armoire? Or, like her, did I want someone with whom I could share my work?

"There're some pretty graphic pictures and I'm kind of under a confidentiality agreement," I said.

"Oh, come on. Walk me through it. Is this one case?"

"To me it is, but I work for three different detectives (they all have different funky titles) in Quebec, Ontario and New York State. For a lot of reasons, they don't see the links I see. Typically they call me in to do a reading on suspects to see if they're worth digging into. People are generally horrible liars, but the police become so bogged down in the trail of evidence that they lose their people sense. There are only perpetrators and victims, it seems."

"So are you seeing something they aren't?"

"Sort of." I opened the laptop dedicated to this investigation and opened up the files on Professor Tremblay. "My detective associate with the Sûreté sent me this because it met the basic parameters of the other mystery deaths."

"He's dead?"

"Yes. You knew him."

"Sort of. I took Economics from him at McGill for three weeks before I left the class."

"Why'd you leave the class?"

"His interest in the female students and regular invitations to sit closer was creepy. He also was showing early signs of rice fever."

"What?"

"You know. Rice fever. White guys who are sexually obsessed with Asian girls."

I looked at her blankly.

"Honestly," she said, "Where have you been?"

"Uh, raising two strapping boys with my rather white ex-wife."

"Nevermind. The guy was a perv."

"Did he ever get in official trouble?"

"Not that I recall."

I Googled him doing a deeper search on Montreal news sites and university pages and there was nothing official. Most profs these days have horrible things written on student blogs and the clutter made finding real information difficult.

"Why are you looking?"

"He was shot in the genitals before being shot in the head before being buried in a fetal prayer position in a shallow grave."

"I see your point." Kendra was very interested in my map. Without all the pins on it, the outlined area looked like this.



"How accurate are the pins?" Kendra asked.

"Fairly I guess."

"So they aren't to actual latitude/longitude values?"

"No, no."

"I want your data. This pin collection might reveal something. There's a hint that the drop spots are deliberate. Do you have a USB key? I can just pull it all off the laptop."

I hesitated because I didn't want to have this stuff "out there".

"Don't worry," she said. "I won't transmit any of this. It'll stay on the key drive and on my laptop."

"OK. You don't have to do this."

"I love a good puzzle," she said. "Besides, I'm thinking this may be what I was meant to do."

"Destiny is a big thing with you," I said.

"Let me guess. You think life is a roll of the dice."

"Pretty much. Maybe it's an excuse not to believe in some supernatural being in the clouds. I also find that destiny is a convenient excuse for bad behaviour. But, hold on. We're off topic because you dropped by and I haven't asked why."

"Well, you are the only person who knows. It was so refreshing that I had to come by for more of the feeling of not having to keep a secret."

I handed her a USB keydrive and she went to my laptop. I told her the names of the main folders with the case information. As it copied, she asked, "You have anything to eat?"

We went to my kitchen. She opened the fridge. "Wow, you don't eat much."

"Uh, no."

"Kids don't come over?"

"Not much. One doesn't talk to me and the other worries about me."

Kendra grabbed a ½ litre yogurt container, found a spoon and ate it all.

"If you are going to come over like this I'm going to have to buy more food," I said. But then for some reason it made me think that now she'd been inside the apartment, she could just pop in at any time. "When you come over next time, you're going to still knock, right?"

She frowned and made a pouty lower lip. "Yes, I promise." She walked back to my computer, removed the key drive and said, "Well, since you don't have a good enough computer, and almost no food, I'm going to take this data home and see if I'm right."

"Right about what?"

"Never you mind." And before I could read her mind she was gone.

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It was Christmas week before Kendra reappeared. I got a text. It said, "Stay out of the living room." I heard some soft steps coming from the living room, which kind of freaked me out, but then her voice said. "Come on in for a surprise."

I walked into the living room and said, "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

She said nothing. Taped to my wall were two large diagrams. One was an enlarged image of a drawing of the human lung, obviously taken from a medical text book. The other was my map, enlarged to the same scale, with pins more accurately placed than before.

"Do you see what I see?" she asked.

"Yes. That's extremely creepy." The placement of the pins were close to being the outline of the lung diagram. Someone was killing people and dumping the bodies in very particular places to form an outline of a human lung.

"However, on a lighter note," I said, "you look lovely. At a party?"

"Yes, sort of. I took a few of my trusted New York couriers out to dinner."

I was in my bathrobe, unshaven, and felt pretty scruffy compared to her wearing a black dress, spiffy boots and a lined leather jacket. "Is texting five microseconds before popping in considered the same as knocking?" I asked.

"I think if you washed up and put some real clothes on, I could load all my additional findings about your case onto your laptop. Then I'll take you to dinner. I'm starving."

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At a Greek restaurant on the Danforth, we went over Kendra's analysis. Her work removed any doubt. All this horror was one person's work. Someone had been at this grisly project for at least three years. What was baffling was, despite the consistent shallow grave and fetal position dumping method, the ways people were killed and what type of people were killed were hugely varied. All races, ages and genders plus knives, guns and blunt objects.

In addition, the murders crossed three distinct jurisdictions. Quebec, Ontario and New York State. Coordination between the SQ, OPP and New York State Police was limited. Add Homeland Security and Canadian Border Services into the mix and it was a real tangle.

"You don't think we'd get any help from the police," Kendra asserted.

"To make these agencies listen to us we'd have to have a smoking gun, DNA evidence, a written confession and extensive Fox News coverage."

"And your psychic stuff ... you have no reading on the killer?"

"None."

"Is that odd for you?"

"Yes and no. I haven't seen all the scenes. I haven't interviewed anyone in connection to it. So I don't have the personal touch that I do when I help in other cases."

"Would it help to visit the dump sites for the bodies?"

"Probably," I said. "But that would take ages."

"Not if I go. I could take pictures, talk to you on the phone when I visit."

"I'd have to psychically tag you. It's something I've only done to my kids and my ex-wife, before we were exes. It allows me to tune into their frequency and know where they are."

"Hey, no problem," Kendra said. "You'll see a lot of the world."

"You don't understand. It's intrusive to the person that's tagged. It makes NSA surveillance look like my grandmother listening in on the old telephone party lines at the cottage."

"Stephen-with-a-ph, I'm expecting by this stage you can control yourself and not drop in on me when I'm flossing and stuff. By the way, why did you and your wife break up?"

"Uh. I read her mind when we were young and did everything possible to make her fall in love with me. It worked great. We got married, had the two boys and time flew by. My anticipation of her needs and wishes ... it wasn't enough. Had I not had my 'gift' I doubt she would have given me the time of day. Were we really meant for each other when the deck was stacked?"

"You just juxtaposed romantic predetermination with the random chance of a card game."

"Mixed metaphors. My favourite is *let's burn that bridge when we come to it.*"

"So, what do you do to tag someone?"

I reached for her ears and very gently and slowly brought my hands down to cup her chin. I let the texture of her skin, the smell of her perfume and the light weight of her hair linger on me. I looked in her eyes and memorized her. When I let go I took a deep breath.

"Done."



"Wow, I got shivers," she said.

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In the end Kendra jumped to seven sites in two provinces and one state where the killer had buried bodies. There was a consistent rural feel to the locations. I tried having Kendra walk around the sites the way the killer might have. When she was back, we augmented the computer files as much as possible. Kendra was a whiz with this stuff.

On December 22nd, Kendra became busy with the courier business. I decided to take a nap on my couch. Normally my flashes of insight are during waking hours, and for me sleep is typically a psychic repair time. The nightmare I had was of a crazed green-eyed version of Kendra trying to strangle me, one handed, and she wore black leather gloves.

I feel off the couch, woke and realized something. The killer was a woman. I pulled myself to the laptop and tried to sort out what had come to me. The symbolism of the fetal positions was sending the people back to the womb. Penance. Renewal. Rebirth. The violence to the people prior to this was plain anger. When I flipped through all the victims' profiles, none were saints. Even the children had a history of behavioural issues. In my mind a demented female mind was disciplining these people and sending them back for rebirth.

I had no evidence. My idea was so out there, I wasn't sure I'd even tell Kendra when I next saw her.

Dream states are very weird and when there's missing information, it grabs what's handy and drops it in. I had a feeling I'd know the killer if I ever saw her.

My phone rang. It was the OPP. "Commander Hawthorne, how are you?"

"Stephen, is there any way you can come look at a scene we have in Brockville?"

"When?"

"Now. The road reports are showing the 401 as pretty good sailing."

"What's the urgency?"

"This one matches your portfolio. There's also a problem. The site was uncovered by an excavator during a farm house burst pipe repair. There's a storm in the forecast that's going to ruin the rest of the site."

"Ship me the details."

"Your stay is already booked at the Best Western and I'm sending details to your secure email."

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I debated, but I decided not to let Kendra know I was on the move. As far as I could tell, she was flitting about the South Pacific. According to Hawthorne the find was a couple of years old. Kendra had not only plotted our lung diagram based on the locations of the find, but also had an animation showing the order in which the killings occurred. I wasn't sure what that told me, but it did look pretty cool.

It was the usual boring four hour drive to Brockville. (In winter, boring is good.) Hawthorne was waiting for me at the burial scene. From what I could gather the couple living in the nearby farm house was totally freaked out. While trying to fix the burst pipe, they had dug out from the house to locate the problem and uncovered the body. The OPP had a tent with big lights to protect the scene. The body was a male, in the classic fetal prayer position and had died from head trauma.

"What do you think made the head injuries?"

"Baseball bat is my bet," said Hawthorne.

Something else I noticed was that all of the victims were facing the water. Another part of the renewal symbolism?

"Has he been ID'd yet?"

"No, we have to get him out and to the lab. Obviously I've got one of my guys going over slightly older missing persons reports."

I was looking at the scene trying to look for an indication of my green-eyed woman. Any hint of a woman at all. The fact that only about 15% of serial killers are women led me to want to keep my trap shut until there was something resembling evidence.

"Anything new?" asked Hawthorne.

"Yes, but I don't know if it helps. There's symbolism to all this that you can see from this." I handed Hawthorne a map of the entire Ontario/Quebec/New York State area that I'd been looking at with Kendra's more accurate markings. There were no other indicators on the sheet.

"Are you serious?" asked Hawthorne.

"Yep. All fetal position. All turned to look at the water. Zero in the DNA/Fingerprints department."

"Crap. Have your contacts in Quebec and New York seen this?"

"No," I said. "I just refined this. Turn the sheet over." Hawthorne looked at the picture of a lung.

"That's unbelievable," Hawthorne said.

"That's why I haven't brought it up."

"Why now?"

"The SQ pulled one this week in Saint-Zotique."

"Look we've got to pull up stakes here. Can you write a summary of them and ship it to me? I need to see if I can get permission to connect the dots properly."

"OK. I'll do it over the holidays," I said.

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Back at the Best Western, my intent was to order a late dinner and go to bed. I decided to text Kendra and let her know I was in Brockville and that Hawthorne was interested in the analysis.

Now, before you say "Hey why didn't you see that coming?" realize that just because I **can** detect people near me doesn't mean it always works.

As I was getting out of my car, a lady walked through the parking lot, saying, "Excuse me, do you have the time?" And then she tasered me. I felt the pain and I hit the ground like a sack of potatoes.

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I woke up zip tied and duct-taped to a Muskoka chair. I had a strange taste in my mouth. I figured I'd been drugged. Conducted energy weapons don't normally render you unconscious.

And there she was. Green eyes, black gloves. She looked nothing like Kendra. Sandy blond-coloured hair and Caucasian. I was in serious trouble and the panic wanted to surge.

She, on the other hand, did appear panicked. And, judging by the vibe, borderline psychotic. She simply wasn't sure what was real.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Stephen."

"You were at the crime scene."

"Yes. I hate to ask an obvious question, but why am I here?"

As she thought about the answer I picked out of her mind that she was indeed the killer and that her intent was to kill me. This begged the question as to how she knew about me. However, a more pressing question needed to be asked.

"I'm very fond of rustic barn architecture but, where am I?"

Her mind gave me that we were east of Cornwall, further east down the 401.

"What do you know about me?" she asked.

I was getting more anxious as her fear grew. I needed to be able to read her mind. The Muskoka chair was slightly wobbly; it had not been a quality item and this was a good thing.

"What do you know about me?" she repeated. She had a hint of a Quebecois accent.

I looked right into her eyes and dug into her mind a little.

"Celine? Seriously that's your name?" I said out loud.

She slapped me. Hard.

"Do you sing? Married to an older man?"

She slapped me again, even harder. I took the moment of pain to absorb details of the barn I was in. Every sound. Every scent.

"You should know," I said, "that I have a file on 53 killings that I can link to you. It doesn't matter if you kill me and try to send me back to where ever the heck you think all the others went after you buried them."

She pulled out a ball peen hammer. I simply cannot describe how much it hurts for a hammer like that to land on the top of your hand.

KENDRA!!

In my mind I yelled for her. I pushed out into her mind where I was with every detail, every smell. Everything. If this worked, I thought, she'll have one hell of a headache.

My other hand took a blow from the hammer.

"Where do you keep your files?" she screamed.

I started laughing through the pain because Kendra was on the toilet in a London hotel.

Celine punched me. It was odd I could not pull out of her mind what her full name was, but for some reason she was worried I'd find seven more bodies.

"Jesus lady, seven more? Do you have no sense of proportion?"

Kendra popped into the barn behind Celine.

"What the hell are you doing?" yelled Kendra.

Celine spun around fast and lunged at Kendra with the hammer. Kendra executed a deft Taekwondo block and kicked Celine in the knee. I forced myself up and ran hard against a barn pillar and partly broke the chair. I saw Celine pull a knife and slash at Kendra.

Kendra screamed, but managed to block the second thrust of the blade.

"Kendra," I yelled. "You have to do it now! She's psychotic strong!"

I took a second run at the beam and broke more of the chair off me. By the time I looked up, they were gone. Another two hits against the beam and I could stand up properly. I ran outside.

In a couple of inches of snow, Kendra was kneeling, crying and holding her side.

Celine was seriously dead. I touched her body and it was warm, but the skin and flesh were slack. It was like what I read bodies were like after about two days of decomposition at room temperature.

"Was that the serial killer?" Kendra asked.

"Yes."

"Bitch."

"Look," I said, "you are bleeding a lot. Can you do a jump? Like to St. Michael's Emergency? Do you know it? Make up a story of getting stabbed outside a club or something. You simply can't be found here."

"You'll come and get me?"

"As fast as I can. I've been tasered and drugged and, uh, hammered; it may be tomorrow."

"OK. I'm feeling faint," she said. "Gotta go. Stand back."

She was gone. My problems at the moment included getting the bits of chair off me and extricating my personal belongings from a rather disgusting dead body. My hands weren't working so well and it took a minute to retrieve my cell phone and my car keys. I had been abducted with my own car, which was handy.

I took the knife that Celine had used on Kendra to cut the tape and zip ties from me. I was expecting a bloody blade, but it was clean. Not a drop. I was puzzled, but it occurred to me that when Kendra did her jump thing, she literally took all of herself with her. This meant that nothing of Kendra was at this scene.

It occurred to me that I should do the same for myself. I thought that when someone found this soon-to-be-frozen corpse, it would be quite the mystery. I hoped that the snowstorm would cover my car tracks. I put the pieces of the Muskoka chair in the trunk of my car and drove back to the Best Western in Brockville. I got into my room unseen and ordered room service. Buckets of ice and Tylenol were used to try to alleviate the swelling in my hands. I was developing a whopper of a black eye too.

It frustrated me that I could not call Kendra. But to try to drive at night for four hours with swollen hands ... it didn't take a psychic to predict what would happen.

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On December 24, I finally managed to sneak into St Michael's Hospital and visit Kendra. I had texted her so she knew I made it back from Brockville in one piece, but the hospital was not allowing anyone but family to visit.

When I arrived she was sitting up in bed and staring at the hospital food. I walked in and put a gigantic smoked meat sandwich in front of her.

"Don't let the nurse see this," she said.

"Knowing you, it won't last long."

She looked at my face. "You look like crap."

"You look great. The hospital gown is so you."

She dug into the sandwich. "I still have a headache because of you."

"Sorry. Unusual circumstances."

"So, who was she?"

"A 35-year-old wife of a Canadian Border Services agent."

"Get out."

"It explains a lot from a 'how' perspective, but not from a 'why' point of view."

"Do you think we'll ever know?"

"It depends on what they find in her home. I bet she kept mementos. I hope so because when I read her mind, there were seven more graves and that should not be ignored."

"Ick. But maybe we can figure it out from the data."

"Are you OK with how this worked out? I know there's an old trauma for you regarding teleporting living things."

"Well, with 53 dead, and me with a big knife wound, I really can't work up much guilt or regret. You were right to tell me to do it."

"I've never been in a situation like that before," I said.

"Hey, so what's our next case?" Kendra asked.

"Huh. Don't know. Personally, I'm taking the rest of the year off."