

"I'm done, Gumshoe. I've read these depositions three times. Let's go have some lunch; any bright ideas we can discuss them over a beer. Then we should go see Swazer."

"Pretty bossy for my underling, Liz," I chided. "I think we'll *first* see Mr. Swazer, after which we'll have a meal somewhere close to the cop shop."

"If we must, Bossman, but why do you always get to make the big decisions? . . . don't answer that!"

We closed up the office, hopped into my Caddy, and headed for Hermosa Beach.

Sergeant Swazer was expecting us; big, broad smile as he stepped out from around the intake desk to shake hands. It seems the big boys up at IA weren't through with him just yet -- consequently, he had been riding that desk for over a month while their investigation into the shooting continued.

"They should have dropped this thing long ago, Mr. Garrett. I'd have thought they simply forgot about me, except that every Monday the inspector gets a notice that the file is 'progressing'. I don't even know what that means anymore -- 'progressing'. I should be out on the streets.

"Have you seen the old man? He's being run ragged, budget maxed out, handcuffed -- can't hire any more cops, and here I sit. Like they're watching him squirm, Mr. Garrett, right along with me."

"Yeah, well, the 'old man' gave us all the eye witness depositions, and authorized a per diem," Fox said, "so we're covered with the precinct -- right, Bossman?"

"Absolutely," I nodded. "We'll have you walking a beat in no time, Bradley." I winked at Swazer while avoiding Fox's eyes.

"Oh, thanks!" he frowned at me.

“On to something else, Swazer. What was this about guns disappearing from lock-up? A couple of questions: Who brought them in? Is lock-up under a camera? Who mans the cage? And did you take them?”

Liz looked sharply at me, frown on her face. Then with a puzzled look, she turned to Swazer for his response.

“That goes back almost a month, Mr. Garrett. You should be asking Morris, not me.”

“But right now, I’m asking you, Bradley.”

“Well, I didn’t take them . . . let me look at my notes.” He gave us a lame smile. “I always jot down notes. You never know.” Bradley thumbed through his desk files, pulled out a thin folder and opened it. “Aah, yes, December 5. Okay, here we are, the guns.

“Two cops, Friday and Smith from Inglewood station, handed me the paperwork; guns came in a sealed box. I glanced over the paperwork -- three weapons: one Glock-23 and two 9mm. Paperwork had serial numbers and photos attached. Looked in order.

“I questioned how and why guns from Inglewood would be transferred to Hermosa; they replied that it had been approved by people above their pay-grade, so I called down to Vern Yardley -- duty cage officer that day -- to pick it all up. Then the two cops from Inglewood volunteered to walk the guns down to Vern. They knew him, they said.”

“This Smith fellow, was that Frank Smith by any chance?” I asked.

“Yeah! You know him?” I shook my head, glanced at Fox, and raised an eyebrow.

“Anyway,” Bradley continued, “I was busy so I agreed. That’s when the confusion started. I never saw Friday or Smith come back up. In retrospect, I figured the guns were walked right out the downstairs door by

the two from Inglewood and never delivered. Yardley confirmed -- he never saw anyone. I feel pretty stupid."

"Continue," I encouraged.

"On December 7, Morris asked regular cage officer, Denny Moore, about the guns. Denny reported that no guns had been checked into the cage.

"I called Inglewood. Those guns had been processed as part of an 'anonymous gun recovery drive' in Inglewood on December 4 and sent on." Bradley looked up from his notes and frowned.

"Like I said, Mr. Garrett, I feel stupid, but I was involved only as I questioned how a gun recovered in Inglewood could show up in Hermosa Beach."

"What's protocol on gun recovery, Brad?" Fox asked.

"When guns are surrendered, serials are logged, they're photographed immediately at the recovery table, then brought into the precinct -- that's protocol."

"One more question, Sergeant. To your knowledge, did the guns go through ballistics?"

"I questioned Robles from IA about that when he came in a couple of days later for an update on my shooting; I wanted that info for my file, but he ignored my question, so, I'm not sure," Bradley replied.

"We'll be in touch, Bradley. Did you happen to jot down badge numbers of Smith or Friday?"

"No, sir. Didn't seem necessary -- they wore the uniform."

"Thanks, Swazer. You take care. We'll see you out there soon."

"Not soon enough," Bradley growled.

We started out the door. "Aren't you going to see Morris while we're here, Bossman?"

"No, Fox. We're going to lunch. If I know Morris, he'll swing by this afternoon for a chat."

"Right," Liz smiled, "and a cognac."

After a quick burger we headed back toward Manhattan Beach. I turned to Liz. "So, Miss, what did we just learn?"

"That's easy, Bossman. Our burgers are just as good as Hermosa's, maybe even better. Oh! you mean our visit with young Mr. Swazer? . . . Still looks cut and dried to me. A good shoot. Cut him loose, I say."

"What about the three confiscated guns, Liz? Don't you wonder where they ended up? I think we'll make a slight detour." I pointed the Caddy toward Inglewood.