Prologue

Wake Forest, NC

The morning was cold and brisk. The trees bare and most people were huddled inside in the stores. For those caught outside were walking or old up in their vehicles. The year is 1934 and Saturday was the busiest of days in town. The local farmers came into town to sell their goods and shop at the stores for the next week. Ladies and kids were wrapped up in their coats and scarfs to keep the wind from contacting their skin.

In the distance, the sound of a steam locomotive was close to the station. The main railroad line was Seaboard Air Line which ran through Wake Forest and was a major stop for freight and passengers. With Wake Forest University just to the west of the train station, many of the passengers were students, parents and faculty that worked and attended the university.

The man turned his attention to the sound of the locomotive and the wailing of the whistle was heavy. He knew that Billy J was at the Throttle. He had an urgent message to get to Billy J this morning. He had been awakened at 3 AM with a telegraph from Western Union and it was urgent. Billy J was to contact his uncle here in Wake Forest as his uncle had an item that had to get to Washington, DC at once.

The small package was from Dr. Philias Francis Stanhope who lived just north of Wake Forest University. The package was very heavy and with the package, there were two letters. One was for the intended recipient of the package and the other was for Billy J. Dr. Stanhope had made the matter clear to him that he MUST be sure to get this to Billy J today. There were lives counting on this package to arrive in DC today.

He saw the locomotive pulling it. The locomotive was one of Seaboard Air Line’s crack locomotives used to move passengers and this was also the inaugural run of the Silver Meteor. The locomotive was a huge 4-6-2 Pacific locomotive. The sight and sounds coming from the behemoth was a sight itself. He walked towards the locomotive, tipping his hat to passengers disembarking the train. He got closer to the locomotive, and he could feel the heat from the beast.

“Billy J, you have a minute to spare?”  
 Billy J was stepping down from the locomotive and heard his name and turned. He walked up to the man that was coming towards him

“How are ya doin Mr. Clive? Sure, is good to see you.” Billy J removed his gloves and hat and ran a comb through his hair.

Mr. Clive took his hand and, in the process, shifted his fingers so that two fingers would go outside while the rest would fold in. In the same response, Billy J did the same. This was significant as both were Mason’s.

Billy J spoke up with enthusiasm. “Ya like my girl?” As he pointed to the locomotive.

Mr. Clive nodded his head, but his attention was focused on the task at hand.

“Billy J, I have something here that you must get to DC. There is a package and two letters. One of the letters has your name. You can probably imagine as to whom the letter is from so you will know the urgency of the letter and package.”

Mr. Clive handed the package over to Billy J.

Billy looked up at Mr. Clive. “Why do I have the feeling that Stanhope is behind this which means he does not trust our most wonderful post office and sees fit to have me be his personal carrier.

“Billy J, you know then why he is entrusting you with this package. Ours is not the reason to question rather our duty to follow orders from the boss.”

Billy J handled the package, noticing the weight for the package was rather heavy.

“Alright then, usual place then to drop this package?? Billy J pulled his pipe out. A nice-looking briar pipe that showed great care. He pulled tobacco from his pouch and inserted the tobacco into the pipe. He then pulled out a box of stick matches, pulled out one and struck the match. The match lit up in a flame and he put it to the top of the pipe and dragged a few times until the pipe was lit.

Mr. Clive proceeded to pull out a cigar and snip off the end and take the match and light the cigar.

“The letter will tell you the instructions. Do not waste any time as this was told to me. Be quick about it was Dr. Stanhope’s words”

Billy J saw the conductor coming towards him. He shook Mr. Clive’s hand and returned to the locomotive.

The conductor spoke up “Was that Mr. Clive, Billy J?”

“Yep, it was. Was can I do for you sir?”

“Well, funny thing you see. There is something that has your name on it in the baggage car. You want to have a look? It is a rather large case.”

Billy J was thinking. “Giles, how bout I take a pass on it. I will look at it once I am in DC.”

Giles nodded and before he turned “Billy J, is everything okay? You know with the war going on in Europe, you think we going to get involved in any of it?”

“Mr. Clives, I hope so. I wouldn’t mind killin me some krauts myself. Guess I’m too old for that kinda stuff.” And with that Mr. Giles turned back and headed to the platform and Billy J climbed up into the cab of the Pacific. He sat, with his pipe still showing signs of life, decided to open the letter.

*Dear Billie J,*

*I hope you are well my brother, and that God blesses you every day. You have been given a great responsibility. To get the package you have in your hand and the travel case in the baggage car to Washington, DC. This is of national importance, and I do not trust our post office to move this as there has been rumors of spies and thieves within the post office.*

*I am entrusting you to get this to DC at the fastest speed possible. There will be compensation for you already at the Bank of Raleigh for your good deed. Understand that this package must never leave you. If you find out you are about to die, pull the string as this will set off an explosive device which will destroy the content. This item cannot fall into the enemies’ hands what-so-ever.*

*You will be met by a man who will be in a black fedora and wearing a red poopy on his left lapel. He will also have a pipe just like you which he will say:*

*“Why sir, I have a pipe just like yours. Would you be interested in sharing my tobacco?”*

*You will counting with:*

*“Why yes, I would as I do not get a chance to purchase tobacco in DC. I have to get mine from wake Forest.”*

*That will confirm that you have the right man. Give him the package and then, walk down and make sure that Mr. Giles gets the luggage to the man.*

*If all goes as planned, you will respond by telegraph to Mr. Clive that you will have lunch with him tomorrow.*

*May God show you the way to truth and light. May God bless you on your task at hand.*

*You Fellow Brother,*

*Philias*

Billy J just sat there for a moment. His pipe going out. A brisk breeze woke him out of his trance. He shook his head and thought to himself. What in the world has Philias gotten himself involved? And what was in the package. He looked at it closely. He saw the string that Philias told him to pull if he was goin to die. Well, he wasn’t planning to die anytime soon. So, he set the package in his bag which was next to the chair. He knew it would be safe from the weather and the heat from the locomotive.

“Billy J, where you at?”

Billy looked at his fireman, “My mind was off somewhere other than here. Guess we need to get the ole girl moving right? How is the water and coal?”

Stan looked at the water gauge. He knew they had plenty of coal as well “We are ready for a highball sir.”

Billy leaned out and looked for Mr. Giles signal. He waited another 3 minutes then he heard the whistle.

“Okay Stan, time to work.”

Stan started to hit the gauges and the coal screw was activated. He blew the whistle two times. Then, he released the brakes, pulled on the Johnson bar and they started to move. Billy J made more adjustments and felt the movement of the locomotive. The ole girl was coming alive and wanted to be opened up. So, he obliged her and pushed the Johnson Bar forward further and the locomotive responded with a tremble through her frame and the exhaust getting louder. They were pacing north of the Town of Wake Forest. Ole man Flaherty’s Farm on the right with the corn fields in the back. He actually saw ole man Flaherty sittin on the front porch and he pulled the whistle as he went by. He loved this job and having the inaugural run of the Silver Meteor was right up there with life itself.

The journey north took Billy J, the locomotive and the passenger cars through open fields and towns that were supported by the railroads. He passed Kittrell, then Henderson which was the largest town and supplied the country folk with stores to buy clothes, a movie theater, and farmers to get supplies. Further on, he blew through Norlina and Wise, NC. Crossing the state line, he would just watch the scenery go by, occasionally spotting deer and fox. He would look over to see his fireman keeping up with the steam and coal. The ole girl was purring like a cat. He wondered if they would ever make some type of unit that would take over the run and he be able to watch the scene of nature go buy.

Three hours later, he pulled the Silver Meteor into Terminal Station in DC. When you came into Terminal Station, it actually took up to 15 minutes to get switched into the right track number otherwise, the roadmaster would be blowing his stack cause you set the wrong cars on the wrong track. He looked over at Stan, watching Stan secured the fire. Billy J was thinking about his meet with the unknown person as he felt the weight of the package in his pocket.

“Stan, I am off now. I am going home now. I will stop by the dispatcher tower before I go home.”

“Okay, sounds good. Job board says we are back in the morning at 7 am, that right?”

“Yep, 7 am. Have a good day.” Billy J climbed down and with his bag headed to the tower.

He had just entered the passenger terminal when a slim, well-dressed man interrupted his thoughts. “Excuse me, what a nice pipe you have. Care to share some of my tobacco?”

Billy J was caught off guard. He had thought he would have gotten his errands completed before entertaining the spy stuff.

“Why yes I would has I haven’t been able to purchase any here in DC.”

The man stuck his hand out and Billy J had to fumble with his bags and pipe to get the item this man was looking for. When he raised up, there was another man standing in place where the first man stood.

“I would be obliged if you would just hand me the package.”

This came from a different man and he had a hard look about him. His face pocked mark with what could only be from earlier fights that had either fractured or broken his nose.

“Where is the other man? What did you do with him?”  
 Billy J felt the pistol press into him. He knew that whatever the package was, truly was very important and he had a three hour journey to think of what he would do to keep the item safe. He was glad at this very moment that he had considered the idea.

“Sir, you can search me. I do not have what you seek. I am sorry” And in a swift, sure move, he had lifted the bag and dropped it on the assailant’s foot which garnered the result he had hoped for. The man hollered and dropped the pistol. Billy J picked up his other bag and walked fast to the tower. The rouse worked and he was safe.

The next moment, Billy J felt his legs go out from under him. He felt the concrete and tried to figure out what had happened. He caught the sight of the man grabbing his bag and then, he thought. God, I have failed Philias and you.

# Chapter 1

The fanfare of the announcement that Dr. John Stourton was throwing his hat in for the presidency had died down. Well maybe two degrees worth and there were no reporters banging at the door because the gate had been closed at the bottom of the driveway. The honeymoon had garnered a lot of attention in Scotland and many reporters followed them wherever they went. They had spent a week there looking at many of the places that were of interest to John and Sally. It had been 30 years since he had been to Scotland and was very happy to be back.

He had decided to visit Brechin, Scotland and visit the pub that he and his friends had spent so many nights supporting the establishments and receiving many walks home, half in the tank. They had managed to find a sweet shop and decided to take tea there.

“Dr. Stourton, you haven’t said much about your trip to Scotland, or for that matter about anything, why is that?”  
 John looked up and saw that the constabulary had kept the reporters at bay even though he nor Sally had asked for their aid.

“Honestly, it has been 30 plus years since I have visited Scotland. I used to live just north of here in a small development that was leased to the US Navy. I was stationed at Edzell for three years and wanted to come back and visit. I have missed this place so much and wanted to show my new wife this magical place.”

There were many in the group who found the idea rather amusing coming from the American and yet, one could tell he was emotional about his return her.

Another reporter spoke up “How long do you intend on being here? And is it true that you are running for president?”

A man with hair that had its own mind and rather gruff look asked. “Sir, why are you so emotional when you speak? You are a billionaire and run a major company, would it not look rather weak that you are emotional?”

Sally looked at John and knew that it was one thing to question him on being here it was another thing to question his emotion which was rare to see in the public.

“As to the earlier question just asked. My daughter was born here. Actually, in Dundee Hospital on January 22, 1982. She is the best of me and her mom and she was born Scottish. Every time I see her or even hear her voice I am reminded of Scotland and how I miss this place.”

Everyone was stunned. Even the constables looked back at the two sitting at the tables. No one knew that Stourton’s daughter was born in Scotland and after everyone had a chance to take in what had just been stated, they had a new respect for this man. He was part of Scotland, and this was good news for them.

“Sir, my apologies. This must sound rather strange from a reporter. We did

not know about your daughter.” Just then a woman of tall stature, with long flowing hair and pink cheeks walked out of the sweet shop, eating a scone. She was well-dressed woman who had a certain professionalism and a confidence. She finished the scone and wiped her mouth.

“Daddy, were you talking about me?”  
 The reporters caught on and realized that the woman was none other than Stourton’s daughter. A BBC reporter pulled her Apple phone out. She hit the home office “Charlie, Bridgett, you are not going to believe this. Remember you had me follow Stourton and his wife? Well, guess what?”  
 Charlie had just raised his tea with cream and was about to take a drink of it, “I give up Bridgett, he wants to move here, right?”

“Hell, no Charlie, he has a daughter.”

“Yeah, and millions other blokes like him do too. I have to go now.”

“No. wait Charlie. His daughter was born in Dundee Scotland, which makes her a Scottish citizen.”

Charlie was stepping back “What the hell…...” Charlie tripped over the chair and spilled his hot cup of tea with milk all over his front shirt and his mid-section which then resulted in Charlie cussing up a storm.

Bridgett kept calling out for Charlie “Charlie…. Charlie…. where the hell are you, Charlie?”

One of the engineers took the phone. “Bridgett, what the hell did you tell Charlie? He just sat back on his chair, and he went over with his tea spilling all over him and he went ahead and cussed us all out as if it was our fault he fell over.”  
 Bridgett was laughing and had started to get everyone’s attention in the group. “I am sorry. I told the ole sod that Stourton’s daughter is Scottish born and that I need him to confirm the news. Cause, if it is true, we could have one of the largest scoops here for weeks.”

Charlie was yelling for the phone, so the engineer told Charlie what Bridgett had said. “I want you to be on him like bees to honey Bridgett. I am sending a broadcasting crew your way so you can get footage. I will have research dig everything up they can on this Stourton fella and his child. Meantime, stick with him, got it?”

Bridgett unknowingly had taken the phone away from her ear as Charlie had been shouting at her. She realized that everyone was watching he and her phone. “Charlie, gots to go, cheers.”

With that, she put the phone back into her jacket pocket while noticing that most of the reporters were still looking at her.

A gruffy looking man who had a twinkle in his eye, spoke.

“Bridgett, do I surmise by the call that Charlie is sending up his camera crew to watch us? Oh, that’s right, that was a secret wasn’t it now dear.” The laughter ensued and Bridgett just stood there and turned red from embarrassment.

“Oh, and I see that you are as red as a poppy now, aren’t you? Got to love Charlie though. He is good for a few pints and when he is off in the wind, he will tell everything. Aren’t you curious though Bridgett as to why Stourton is here and not in Edinburgh or Aberdeen?”

Everyone turned back look at the Stourton’s as they were seated at the chairs.

“What is your daughter’s name?” The question was directed to Dr. Stourton

Chrissy spoke up. “My name is Christina Faith Lawwill Stourton. You can call me Christina. Daddy calls me Chrissy. I am the CEO of LSSL corporation. Daddy is Chairman of LSSL. I am a lawyer, solicitor in your terms, by trade and this is the first time I have come to Scotland, and I have thoroughly enjoyed myself.”

John was thinking to himself, Chrissy be careful. British reporters are the best in the world for gaining information on a person. I bet they have a team already digging up information. How long will my secret be exposed? Dammit, I knew this was a possibility and I could have said no. I guess though, I wanted to dare them to try to dig out the secret. When it does, these people will go nuts.

“Chrissy, please sit down. As for the rest of the questions you may have. We will not answer anymore as we have to leave to go visit some friends. Thank you for your kindness and I promise, we will have another conference before we leave.” And the three of them got up and with help from the constables, they managed to get into the Range Rovers and drove off.

“Well, that was interesting. Anyone for a pint. I bet there is all kinds of information we could dig up around here. Any takers?”

Several hollered out that they would go, and most did except for a few which included Bridgett, Flora and gruffy man who was Ian McGuinness

“Ian, why do I think you know more about what is going on here?”  
 “Bridgett, you are young and have a lot to learn. I met Stourton 30 years ago. And yes, he lived up there, just north off of Trinity Road, on Golf Road Park. He was stationed here for a while and was like most of the Navy personnel, quiet about what they did and willing to help the community. Remember, in the early 80’s we were not financially well, and the Iron Lady had her hands full, so this area survived because of the Navy and many people were very grateful.

“I wrote a story on four of them playing golf at Brechin Golf Club. They were regulars going up there anytime they were off from work. It seemed that they would work five days and off three days. Every day they were off, they would play a round. One day, there was a pack of dogs that showed up. The residence of the local community was having problems with the dogs and the dogs showed up while playing the second round. They decided that the dogs were a nuisance and started to take balls and target the dogs. That didn’t work so they charged after the dogs with their clubs, smacking them, sending them on their way. The site looked like something from Monty Pythons Flying Circus. Hilarious to us all and the dwellers were very thankful. Funny, the dogs have never showed up again.”

Bridgett and Flora were very interested in the story and the fact that Stourton was already a bit of a local hero.

“Is there anything else I should know Ian? Are there any skeletons that I should know about?”

Ian smiled at them. If only you knew girlie and I am willing to bet a quid that once Charlie sends his team of researchers you will find out soon enough and that’s the cat out of the bag, as they say.

“Well, I will say this, if there was, you would find out anyway and I am too old for the game. I would rather play a game of golf which is what I am going to do and have a pint as well. I will leave you now.” Ian left them walking as he headed towards the top where his car was parked.

“That man knows much more than he is telling us. I need to place a call back to my office, excuse me.” Bridgett was back at her rental car and was inside. Just as she picked her phone out of her purse, the rain started down. She was happy to be dry now. Poor Flora wasn’t that lucky and was running to her car. That will teach you to be better prepared Flora.

Bridgett dialed the phone and put it on speaker. That way, she could drive while talking.

“Bridgett how are you doing?” this from Delvia. She was research and was a well-liked woman at BBC. She also had the ability to sniff out news too.

“I bet you are calling because of Stourton are you not?”

“Delvia, your mind-reading skills are sharp as a pin I see.”

“If I was honest, Charles told me about Stourton and asked me to look into him. I say girl, you have stirred up a huge hornet’s nest too.”

Bridgett held her breath. “What do you mean Delvia?”

“You have no idea do you young lady, the hornets’ nest and all?”

“Delvia, out with it. I don’t have the time to guess your game.”

“Oh, I have all the time in the world and when I tell you, you will have all the time to focus. I have given Charles a heads-up too.”

Oh crap, which means I will hear from him which means he will be yelling at me. Just wonderful, what a way to end a raining, cold day here in Scotland.

“I would recommend to you that if you are driving Bridgett to find a place to pull over because when I am done, you will have a fit. I will guarantee it.”

Whatever may be said, Delvia was never into boasting at all which meant she had to find a place to pull over. Five minutes later, she was in the village of Edzell and managed to find a tea shop as well.

“Okay, advice taken. I am going into a tea shop as it is being a usual Scottish day up here and I need something warm.”

“Oh, I understand, I know the area well my dear.”

That is the second time someone has called her ‘dear’. The first was Ian and that brought up what he said.

“Delvia, I am sure you know Ian McGuinness, right?”  
 “Oh yes, I do. Was he there as well?”

“Yes, he was at the impromptu conference with the Stourton’s. Why do you ask?”  
 “You know, he has been at this a long time, and he knows all of the skeletons in the cupboard too. Did he tell you anything?”  
 “Funny, you should say that. He said that something would be found out so why don’t you just tell me.”

“Well, to start with, you need to address him as Sir. As in Sir John Stourton.”

The door hit Bridgett in the butt as she had stopped when she heard the news. “How the hell did we not know that, Delvia?”  
 “Oh my dear, I am not done yet.” Bridgett heard a brief laughter then Delvia continued. “Like I said, you have stirred the hornets’ nest. I am surprised too with the news you have covered that you had not stopped and done some thinking. Like, his name. Had you considered his last name, Stourton? You are not as good of a reporter as I thought you were. I thought surely, Bridgett would have picked up on the name. But, alas, you haven’t and now I am here to make your life, how shall I say this dear, explosive.”

Bridgett was worried now. This was not fun and games anymore and she had that feeling that she knew something with the name but why was it not coming forward.

“Bridgett, the Stourton’s are one of the oldest clans of Scotland. Stourton name is currently the 28th generation if my memory serves me right. Oh, and He was knighted in in 1982 after the Falklands War for help with the us in the war. His relatives are about 15 miles south of you. And I bet, if you waited long enough, you would see his vehicle going in.”

Damn, damn, damn. She missed this and Delvia was right, she should have gotten the connection. And even more serious is that a knighted person was roaming around here with no escort at all. I wonder if Buckingham Palace is aware of this. The sensation of this news was going to be ground shattering when it came out and it happened right under everyone’s nose.

“Delvia, you are right, and I do owe you one. How did he even get here if not by commercial airlines?” As she said that, she realized, he has billions, why not his own plane. “Okay, so he has his own plane and flew in here. I am sure though he would have shown his passport, right?”

“Think dear, what would have been on his passport? Maybe as Dr. John Stourton and wife who is Sally Stourton. Or Sir John LS Stourton of Finavon and maybe he did not need a passport.”

“Delvia, I have missed this all this. I am not doing well here. And I know that Charlie is wanting me to call. What do I say to him that will not cause him to yell at me?”

“Go to the gate where the family is located and wait for a vehicle. Take a picture, then call Charlie and tell him you have a photo of them coming out. That will pour cold water on Charlie.”

“Thank you, Delvia. You have saved my bacon.”

“Dear, remember, a hornet’s nest has been toppled over and now, you have to keep from being stung by a hornet.” And the phone went dead.