

## Chapter 1

“Daws, someone is coming.”

“I know, Tres,” I replied, “Thanks.”

I released the intercom button on the remote I carried and looked at the picture. The car was proceeding toward The House at the End of the Road at a normal speed. My backside motion detector system had been first to acquire the intruder, but the camera would have captured him a few seconds afterward. I had two motion detector units (one on either side of the road) at the far extremities of my property that communicated with the house wirelessly and were solar powered.

I had been living here about six months and the first thing I had done after moving in was to install a security system. It wasn't mine by any means, but I knew how to run it. The system was super high tech, some of the stuff I don't even know if the military had. The windows and doors were all equipped with sensors that would detect them being opened. The windows all had glass breaks. I don't know why I put the glass breaks on because all the glass was bulletproof. All the locks were armed with pick sensors. My keys had chips in them and if the wrong key or a lock pick was inserted, then the alarm would sound. I had given up my landline four months ago and all my communication was done by satellite. A security station in the states would pick up the signal and call me. And if I did not respond, they would contact the St. Nantes gendarmes at the same time as Beecher McFalls, my security man who lived on St.

Martin. He was an hour away by private plane but I could not do much better, at least in what he could do for me. The plane could land on the road and he would be at my door in sixty-five minutes tops. We know because we tried.

I had four motion detector systems at the house to pick up any intruders, one under the front deck that watched the front yard down to the slope which dropped down to the Caribbean, one on each end of the house concealed in vegetation and one on top of the carport on the back of the house. But it was the backside motion detector that had found the current intruder – I don't know what else to call him. I am a semi-recluse – except for Tres. I don't get mail delivery and my housekeeper Lynette Duprey had been here only yesterday. “Why no mail delivery?” you might ask. Because there wasn't anyone to write me. All my bills I get on line so all that could possibly arrive by snail mail is crap.

I had an automatic backup generator run on natural gas backed up by a fifty-gallon underground gas storage tank. A wind turbine in the front yard generated the majority of my electricity. It was over to the right side where it couldn't be seen from the front windows or from the deck unless you leaned over at the right end and craned your neck. Anyone who wanted to knock out my security would have to start in the house. I still had landline power but if that supply was severed, I wouldn't even have known it except for the alarm which would sound on my monitor remote which I always had with me, even when I was not home.

I was in the basement exercise room when the current alarm sounded and had just completed my workout. As usual it had started with the weights and ended with the treadmill. Treadmills are basically boring. Well, let's face it, all exercise is basically boring. I had a flat panel TV on the wall and watched CNN International when working with the weights but the treadmill I had in front of the slider and I looked out across the front yard at the beautiful

Caribbean, which is basically all I could see from my house or at least the front of my house. I owned seafront property and, as with most of the people who own such, my front yard was between the house and the Caribbean. My “front” door (where any of my few and far between guests showed up) was in the middle of the back of my house.

My exercise room was under the laundry room that was at the far west side of my house, accessed by a staircase that came out at a semi-concealed door next to the kitchen on the front side of the house. I had missed it the first time I was in the house over a year ago but I was not in any shape to really notice hidden passages. I had just survived a grueling, tortuous, unending, terrifying (you pick the adjective) sixteen hours in the water after being “drowned” and left for dead by my no good brother-in-law Howard and his equally no good friend Keith. Fortunately, I wasn’t drowned and I managed to survive.

Wondering whom the visitor was – let’s call him or her that until we know more – I ran up the stairs and almost knocked down Tres, who was coming to get me.

“It’s a man. He’s driving a Porsche. I don’t recognize him.”

“Okay, then I probably don’t either because you know all the people on St. Nantes that I know. Get your pistol and get down to the control room. If there is any shooting, get into the safe room. Lock it and don’t come out until I tell you to.”

She didn’t question me, just stood on her tiptoes, threw her arms around my neck, gave me a big kiss, turned and ran toward the great room. I was right behind but not at a run. I had a towel around my neck that I had used to wipe the sweat away from my workout. Entering the great room and turning left, I stepped behind the bar, dropped the towel on it and hit a panel on the wall. The door popped open to reveal a safe door about the size of a safe deposit box. I pressed my index finger of my right hand and then the thumb of my left against the security

panel, which turned blue, and the door popped open and the drawer slid out. I took the Beretta and its magazine out of the drawer and slammed the mag into the gun with the heel of my hand. I closed the door to the safe and the panel door. There was nothing else in the safe. I racked the slide back, seating the first shell in the chamber.

Thus armed, I went through the great room into the foyer. On my left was the stairway entrance to what was now my control center, formerly a theater. I crossed the foyer and looked at the flat panel screen to the left of the door. I could see a man out there, pacing. He was wearing sandals, white tennis shorts, a black emblemless tee shirt, a matching black baseball cap and reflective sunglasses. I was about to press the talk button to ask what he wanted when he stopped, looked up at the camera, and removed his sunglasses.

I stared in disbelief. I had been wrong. Tres didn't know everyone on St. Nantes that I knew.

The man was Judge Michel Villar.