Episode 2

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4 / Tongass

"I can see the ocean from here, Dad," Cody said excitedly as his father, Nehemiah Dunn, carefully drove on the narrow twisted road along the Massachusetts coast.

"I know," Nehemiah said, gritting his teeth as he felt the wheels of his Hummer start to slide on the iced-over surface. Of all the days I've had to come up here, it had to be this one.

Up in the treetops above their heads, the wind howled — squealing, whining, roaring like an angry animal set loose upon the earth. Huge gusts of wind buffeted the vehicle. Snow sprinkled down from the sky, the white dust swirling and spinning in the frigid air. Nehemiah relaxed only when the road widened and he saw a little wooden sign sticking up out of the ground. Etched across the sign was one word — Tongass.

"Are we there yet?" Cody asked.

"Yes, we're here now," said Nehemiah. "We'll be coming up on the house any minute."

"What does Tongass mean?"

"If I remember correctly, that's the name of an American Indian tribe," Nehemiah said. "I don't know how it came to be stuck on this place."

Cody turned back to the window and the fleeting glimpses of the ocean that he could see between the trees that now obscured his view. Nehemiah watched him. His unkempt black hair and curious eyes reminded him of his late wife, Waverly. She had always been excited and curious. Even though she had earned a degree as a teacher, she went to work writing for a travel agency because she wanted to see the world. When they met at a coffee shop in Trenton, she had peppered him with questions about England — the only place he had traveled to outside the United States.

"Is that a lighthouse down there?" Cody asked.

"Yes, it is," said Nehemiah.

"So, ships used to come here?"

"No, a long, long time ago, the lighthouse was used to keep ships away from here," Nehemiah said. "There are huge rocks in the coastal waters. When the tide is in, you can't see them. Ships could get damaged or run aground."

"Is all of this Grandpa's land?" Cody asked.

"Yes," Nehemiah said. "From that sign you saw all the way north to the river and from about a mile west of here down to the ocean. I grew up here."

Up ahead, the two-story, Georgian-style home loomed into view. It was white with black shutters around the evenly spaced windows — four on the first floor and five on the second. The golden doorknob stood out from the faded dark red door.

Parked on one side of the walkway that led to the front door was a black SUV. Melanie, he thought. A few feet away, a silver Honda Civic with the words "Rex Home Medical Care" painted on its side was parked.

Nehemiah noticed that another set of tire tracks led down the road past the house. Another vehicle had been there before he arrived. That didn't seem right. Or maybe that was the direction the home medical care provider had come from. Nehemiah shook off the uneasy feeling and turned onto the grass across the walkway from Melanie's SUV.

"Okay, bundle up, kid," he said as he grabbed his own jacket from the back seat and put it on. Something heavy weighed in his pocket, and he remembered his police badge and P226 Elite single action handgun. He put the badge in his jeans pocket and stuck the gun in the back of his belt. He didn't expect any trouble up here on this frigid day, but it never hurt to be prepared.

The icy breeze slapped him in the face as he got out. Cody started kicking up mounds of snow. They both stuck their hands in their pockets and hurried up the walkway to the front door. As expected, the front door was unlocked. Nehemiah knocked on the door as he swung it open.

"Hello, I'm here. It's me — Nehemiah," Nehemiah called. He heard muffled noises coming from upstairs. "Come on," he told Cody.

The hardwood floor in the living room creaked and groaned — partly from their steps, partly from the cold temperature. The floor had the feel and smell of a place that had been lived in for a long, long time — stuffed with time and memories and secrets. Prints of Romantic-era paintings hung on the walls — Blake's The Judgment of Solomon and Canterbury Pilgrims as well as Turner's Fire at Sea among others. Cody gazed at them as they walked into the kitchen and turned the corner up the stairs. Nehemiah recalled how his mother, Janis, loved art and kept a huge collection of valuable prints and statues before the family had to sell most of them to settle debts.

The wood on the second floor creaked and groaned even more. Two doors down, and they were at the door that opened into the bedroom of Nehemiah's father, Eli. He was lying in bed, propped up on a pillow, his half-closed eyes turned toward the curtain-less window. The room smelled of oatmeal and cinnamon.

"You remember your Aunt Melanie?" Nehemiah said motioning towards the tall, silver-haired woman standing at the foot of the bed. Her lips were pursed as she eyed the screen of her BlackBerry, her arms folded across her chest.

She looked up, unsmiling, when she heard her name. Her icy blue eyes met Cody's and then Nehemiah's.

"Um, yeah," Cody said. But he didn't sound sure. He squinted, trying to remember, but then shrugged as if it didn't matter.

"About time you arrived," Melanie said, putting away her BlackBerry. "Dad wouldn't talk until you were here."

"Sorry it took me so long to get here," Nehemiah said. "The roads, you know, they're bad…"

"Oh," Melanie said, her cold tone matched the chill in the room.

Nehemiah had wondered what he would say to her when he arrived seeing that they hadn't spoken in years. When they were kids, they had been close. They had both attended the U.S. Naval Academy together and then he trained to be a Navy SEAL. After reaching that goal, they drifted apart. Nehemiah served on active duty for a while and then married Waverly, left the Navy, and settled down as a Trenton, N.J., police officer after the birth of their oldest daughter, Tonya. Melanie, on the other hand, climbed the ranks in the U.S. Navy, rising to Admiral, before jumping back into public service when the President nominated her for the position she now held — Secretary of the Navy. Nehemiah and Melanie had communicated via e-mail a few times during the past few years and had only met once — when their mother, Eli's wife, Janis, had died.

The doctor at the bedside cleared his throat breaking the uncomfortable silence.

"One more drop, sir…to help ease the pain in your chest," said a young Middle Eastern man with a sharp nose and clean-shaven face. Nehemiah watched as the doctor squeezed liquid out of a dropper into his father's mouth — like the life slowly draining from his father's body.

Eli swallowed hard and took a deep breath. He turned his head away from the window as the doctor cleaned the dropper with a cotton swab and put it back in his bag. When Eli saw Nehemiah and Cody, his tired eyes lit up with recognition. He struggled to sit up.

"Hi, Dad," Nehemiah said.

"Hi, Grandpa," Cody said.

Eli nodded and coughed. The doctor tried to make him lay back down, but Eli waved his hand for the doctor to leave him alone. Nehemiah stepped up to the bed and stacked the pillows behind his father.

Eli coughed violently, covering his mouth with his fist and waving one hand at the doctor who didn't take any heed.

Nehemiah looked at the doctor curiously.

"He wants you gone," Melanie said. "He will talk with us alone."

"I…it really is not good to leave him alone at this point," the doctor said nervously. "He is very weak." He stepped back into the corner of the room as though he intended to stay but not disturb them.

"You," Melanie pointed at him. "Go," she commanded, pointing toward the door.

"Yes…yes, ma'am." The doctor glanced up at the ceiling and then looked down as he fumbled with his bag. Nehemiah followed his gaze, but the room was only dimly lit by a lamp in the corner and he didn't notice anything particular about the ceiling.

The doctor made a loud noise as he zipped up his bag and swung it over his shoulder. Nehemiah listened to each step groan as the doctor made his way down the staircase, into the kitchen, and out the front door.

He slammed the door. The house shuddered.

5 / The Thirteen

"Well, it's good for all of us to be together again," Eli said after the doctor left. He was in his late-seventies, and his face was lined with deep wrinkles and pockmarks. Constantly breathing in coal dust from his many years as a miner had caused problems with his lungs and his heart. Now, he was nearing the end and seemed to know it. He summoned his strength, took a few deep breaths, and turned his head toward Nehemiah. "Don't you have another kid?" he asked.

"Yeah," Nehemiah looked down. "She didn't want to come."

"Dad, what's this all about?" Melanie asked as she sat down in the seat on the side of the bed by the nightstand where the doctor had been. She took one of Eli's wrinkled hands between her own and patted it gently. Nehemiah pulled two chairs from the writing desk in the corner of the bedroom, and he and Cody sat down on the other side of the bed.

"Is that doctor gone?" asked Eli.

"Yes," said Nehemiah.

"You sure?"

Nehemiah nodded.

"Okay, get my pipe out of that drawer over there. He thinks I don't know where he put it." A violent cough racked Eli's throat.

"Dad, you can't smoke right now," Melanie said gently. The corner of her mouth quirked up in a smile.

"I can at least have one good smoke before I die."

"You might not die so soon if you don't smoke at all," Nehemiah said. He paused for a few moments as he suddenly realized that, yes, indeed, his father was about to leave the world. He would be gone. Of course, Nehemiah had walked through the valley of the shadow of death before. He could get through it, but he felt uneasy about bringing Cody to experience it.

"Tell you what," Melanie said. "You tell us everything you need to tell us and then you can have your pipe."

"Okay," Eli said weakly. He closed his eyes for a moment and seemed to drift off to sleep.

"Dad?" Nehemiah nudged him.

Eli's eyes shot open. "I'm here, I'm here," he said. "I'm not dead yet."

He took a deep breath. Coughed. And then began.

"As you know, after the Revolutionary War ended, the founding fathers met again in order to develop a Constitution by which to govern the new nation. There were numerous arguments about what form the government should take. Some states' representatives wanted a strong central government, others wanted a weak central government, and others wanted no central government at all. They thought it would be best for the states to govern themselves independently. You following me?"

Nehemiah nodded. He didn't know where his father was going with this, but he understood so far.

"Well, they hammered out the Constitution alright, but not everyone signed it," said Eli. He reached for a box of tissues on the nightstand and blew his nose loudly. "Not everyone signed it," he said again. "There were fifty-six delegates who went to the Constitutional Convention. Thirteen of them left."

"Why did they leave?" asked Melanie. Her eyes were distant as though she were trying to conjure the historical images in her mind.

"Most of them were anti-Federalists, and left because they didn't like the idea of a central government. They were worried that the government would abuse its power and try to control the people unnecessarily — like Great Britain had done."

Like the government is doing today, Nehemiah thought.

"What you don't read in the history books is that those thirteen held a convention of their own," Eli continued. "In that meeting, they produced a secret document that detailed their concerns about a central government abusing its power, much like the Declaration of Independence detailed the Colonies' grievances against the British throne. When they had each signed the document, they sent a representative back to Philadelphia with it."

"Why did they do that?" Nehemiah asked.

"To get the delegates at the Constitutional Convention to put their signatures on it, or else it wouldn't matter."

"I bet that wasn't easy," Nehemiah said.

"No, it wasn't," said Eli. "The Thirteen laid out their concerns before the other delegates. They argued. They nearly fought. The future of the country was at stake. Finally, the Thirteen convinced the other delegates to sign the Correction."

"The Correction?" repeated Melanie. "You mentioned that before."

"Yes, that's what they called their document. They got the other delegates to sign it only by agreeing to keep it secret. The delegates were concerned that if the Americans who already had anti-Federalist leanings learned that there was a document that prescribed the proper way to dismantle a government that abused its power, they would be too eager to use it. That's why it was kept secret."

6 / Sunrise

"But a secret document? There's no use," said Nehemiah. "I mean, if no one knows about it, then it can't be used."

"I never said no one knows about," Eli coughed. "They — the Thirteen — formed a society to protect the document."

"Like the Freemasons?" Cody suddenly interjected.

Nehemiah looked at him. "What do you know about the Freemasons?"

Cody shrugged. "Nothing. I just have this friend, Carver. He's always talking about the Freemasons and the Illuminati and the Eastern Star Society and stuff."

"A young conspiracy theorist, eh?" Eli coughed. "Well, this isn't the Freemasons. The Thirteen called themselves the Sunrise Society. They kept the Correction a secret for many years, but when the first member of the society died, they realized they needed to pass down the knowledge of the document."

"How did they do that?" Melanie asked.

"That's where our family comes in," said Eli. "Each of the original Thirteen selected one of their descendants to share the knowledge with, and that person in turn selected one of their descendants, and so on until today."

"Wow," said Nehemiah in amazement. He had never known his family had so much history behind it.

"Your mother sort of broke the rules," Eli said. "Her father shared his knowledge of the document with her — like the rules prescribed — and she shared her knowledge of the document with me. She should have shared it with one of you, but I guess there wasn't time before she died." Eli paused as his eyes glazed over as he thought about his wife. Then he suddenly continued. "And here I am breaking the rules again."

"What? How?" said Nehemiah.

Melanie's eyes grew wide. "Ah," she said slowly. "You're sharing it with both of us. So, now there are fourteen."

"Yes, now there are fourteen," Eli repeated with some difficulty. "Or there should be if the other twelve have been doing what they should have been doing."

"Fifteen," corrected Cody, pointing to himself.

Nehemiah looked at him and nodded. "Remember, don't tell anyone anything you've heard today," he warned.

"Not even Tonya?"

"No, not even Tonya."

"Who are the other twelve? Where are they?" asked Melanie.

Eli shrugged. "I don't know. Nobody said the Thirteen had to keep in touch. After the first few generations died, everybody sort of lost track of the others. That's why the Original Thirteen left clues."

"Clues?" asked Nehemiah.

"Yes. Something tied to the original Correction," said Eli. "From what Janis told me, there are only a handful of copies of the Correction. The original is supposed to be preserved somewhere — hidden by the Original Thirteen. The copies were made just in case it got destroyed. They say that during the War of 1812, a British General — Robert Ross, I think is the name — found out about the Correction. Naturally, he wanted to use it to dismantle the U.S. government. Somehow, he heard that it was hidden in the White House. But, he couldn't find it, so the next best thing to do was to destroy it. That's why he set the White House on fire in 1814."

"Oh," said Nehemiah. "So…about the clues?"

"Yes, Janis said there's supposed to be one hidden on this property," Eli said. He slumped against the pillows and grimaced, clutching his chest with his hand.

"Dad?" Nehemiah said. He looked around the room for something…anything.

"Cody, run to the kitchen and get some water," Melanie said.

Eli started to cough. He leaned over the side of the bed and spit phlegm out on the floor. Cody came back with the water. When Eli sat up again, his eyes were dim.

"I think it's time," he said breathing heavily now.

Nehemiah gave him the glass of water. "Not yet, Dad." He tried to sound encouraging. "You were telling us about the clues. Mom said there was one — here at Tongass."

"Yes," Eli nodded. "There's one…a book…down at the lighthouse."

"We should let him rest," Nehemiah said. "Maybe we can go have a look at the lighthouse and come back."

"No," said Melanie. "Where at the lighthouse, Dad? Where is it?"

"She said…it was hidden," Eli answered. His brow furrowed as he tried to think. "Hidden…in the wall…a tunnel." He patted Nehemiah's hand. "Go, get it, son. Get it."

"I will," Nehemiah assured him.

"One other question," Melanie said.

"Eh?" Eli pressed his head against the pillows and turned toward his daughter.

"Why did they call it the Sunrise Society?"

Eli squinted at the window as though he were trying to see the sun. But nothing was there but white snow and gray sky. "They called it that because…of what Benjamin Franklin said. Something about the sun." Eli's voice faded.

"What did he say about the sun?" Cody asked quietly.

Eli struggled to sit up against the pillows again. "At the Constitutional Convention, there was a chair — one that Washington sat in. On the back of the chair, a golden sun was carved. Just half a sun…so that you couldn't tell if it was rising or setting. Franklin said something about that sun. He said, 'I have often looked at that behind the president without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting. But now I…know that it is a rising…sun.'" Eli paused and closed his eyes. "The Thirteen wanted to see America rise…like the sun."

Melanie stood up and kissed Eli on the forehead. "Thanks for telling us, Dad," she said.

Eli nodded, his head drooping.

Nehemiah noticed a commotion at the window. A black-capped chickadee had landed on the sill. It had what looked like a nut in its mouth. Nehemiah watched as the chickadee placed the nut on the sill and hammered it with its beak. It split open, and the bird swallowed the food greedily. It raised its beak to the sky and chirruped loudly.

Eli's eyes shot open at the sound. He looked around the room, turning his head from side to side. "The sun is rising," he whispered. "I can see it shining." His gaze settled on something across the room.

Cody followed his grandfather's gaze to the tall wooden dresser in the corner. Each of the drawers had a golden latch. He looked at the latches and then exclaimed, "Hey, this one is a sun! A half-sun!"

Nehemiah and Melanie leaned over behind him. Sure enough, where the other drawer latches were simple ovals, the one on the second drawer from the bottom was a half-oval carved with the eyes, nose, and rays of a sun.

"Incredible," Nehemiah said.

Suddenly an eerie silence filled the room. Nehemiah and Melanie turned back to the bed where Eli lay. He had closed his eyes and lay still.

"Dad," Nehemiah said. He put his ear down by Eli's mouth. "He's not breathing. Call that doctor back in."

"He's gone," said Melanie. "There's nothing we can do now." She slowly removed the extra pillows from behind Eli so that his body lay flat. Then she straightened the blanket and covered Eli's corpse with the sheet.

Pulling her BlackBerry out of her pocket, she looked at it. "I'll take care of everything regarding the body and the burial later today. I need to be in Washington in a couple hours," she said. She walked out of the room, down the stairs, through the kitchen, and out the front door.

Nehemiah listened as she started up her SUV and drove off.

He stared at the white sheet covering his father's body, trying to think of something to do, something to say.

It felt right to say a prayer, but the words wouldn't come. So, he just stared at the white sheet, at the white snow, at the gray sky. He thought about Waverly. She would've known what to do. She'd always been a religious person. But she wasn't here. So much death, he thought. First his mom, then his wife, now his dad.

Cody stared at the sheet too.

Nehemiah turned and placed his hand on his son's shoulder. "Let's go," he said.

As they walked down the stairs, Cody asked, "Are we going to the lighthouse?"

"Yeah," Nehemiah nodded. "We're going to the lighthouse."

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