

Chapter 1

“You are the American?” Saad Boujemma asked, tapping the royal star embroidered on the breast pocket of his crimson blazer.

“Yes, my name is Steven McGuire,” Steven replied, surrendering his passport into the man’s extended hand.

The stout Moroccan motioned for Steven to step to a counter where a second Forest and Water Department employee waited, pen in hand. “It is only a formality,” the subordinate clerk declared, presenting a standardized form.

Steven filled out the sheet and caught glimpses of Saad Boujemma worrying over the passport while stroking his brush moustache. The clerk folded the finished form and passed it to Boujemma.

“My passport?” Steven asked.

“A formality,” Boujemma declared, tucking the passport into his coat pocket. “No luggage?”

“This is it,” Steven answered, re-shouldering his canvas knapsack and patting his Pan Am flight bag.

“Good, I take you along,” Boujemma said, indicating that Steven was to lead the way through an interior door. “I follow you.”

Two Half Brothers

Steven preceded his close-mouthed guide down the government building's dimly-lit corridor; in front of an opaque glass door at the end of the hallway, the Moroccan came abreast. "Please to wait here," he said, buttoning his snug blazer.

Merde, Steven thought, lowering his canvas pack to the floor and glancing at a framed black-and-white photograph of King Hassan II. *Maroc, Maroc*, he mused, peering toward a bulletin board with announcements printed in Arabic, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. *Merde, merde, triple merde*, he thought, not thrilled to be an ocean away from his mother, dying in Manhattan, and an ocean and a continent from his wife, pregnant with their first child back in Northern California. Yet Steven had determined that passing himself off as a small-time drug dealer might be the only way to track down Paul, especially after Audrey McGuire had established the most problematic rule—that neither the American embassy, nor the US military, nor any police should become engaged in the search for her younger son.

The Moroccan civil servant reappeared. "Please to follow me," he said, exiting the building through an unmarked door.

"Excuse me," Steven spoke up. "Where are we going?"

"Monsieur?" Boujemma replied, putting on dark glasses while opening the passenger door of a two-door Renault. "Come, I take you along."

Once Steven had crammed himself and his gear into the passenger seat, Saad Boujemma steered the tiny sedan through the main streets of rebuilt, post-earthquake Agadir. Although his host displayed no trace of diplomatic grace, this official escort was at least simplifying his passage; Steven also

Separating Out

recognized that by accompanying Boujemma, he was already implicating himself in illegal trade.

Boujemma drove to the city's outskirts where, a dozen years earlier, the US Naval Base had been dismantled and abandoned. He parked alongside a low stucco wall opposite a barracks-like building where a small boy, in a faded shirt and ragged pants, sat on his haunches at the entrance to the dirt yard.

"This is where I will find Paul?" Steven asked in disbelief.

"Ali will take you along," Boujemma replied.

"When can I get my passport back?"

Boujemma remained silent.

"I need my passport."

"Your passport will be safe," Boujemma declared, staring straight ahead.

"What?" Steven blurted out. "What about ...?"

"Go with Ali."

The boy's face cracked into a smile so broad that it closed his eyes.

"I don't believe it," Steven muttered, hanging his knapsack over one shoulder, arranging his flight bag's strap across his chest, and stepping clear of the car as Boujemma drove away. The boy led Steven to a dilapidated wooden shack and motioned for him to wait outside.

Clouds were coming in from the Atlantic, and the mid-afternoon sky was darkening to charcoal. Steven set down his bags, extracting his binoculars from their leather belt case and scanning the black-and-gray veils of rain sweeping their wind-driven patterns across the distant surface of Agadir Bay. Lifting the glasses, he confirmed that the dark dots darting back and

Two Half Brothers

forth were Swifts foraging for flying insects kept aloft by the billowing air mass moving ahead of the storm front; he guessed that the larger silhouettes overhead were Nightjars, likewise gliding and wheeling in zigzag pursuit of insect prey.

Ali opened the shack's wobbly door, stepped onto the porch and stretched out his hand. "*Donne-moi dirham,*" the boy demanded. "*Donne-moi cigarette.*"

Steven surrendered a dirham bill as well as a cigarette pulled from one of the two packs that he had purchased expressly for giving out baksheesh; he expected the boy to usher him inside, but, smiling at the prizes in his hands, Ali walked off.

A man in his thirties stepped out and stood on the porch. He was dressed in blue jeans, open sandals, and a black T-shirt revealing tattooed forearms; he wore a broad, black leather band around his left wrist. As he looked the visitor up and down, Steven noticed the lazy left eye.

Steven spoke first: "Hello, I'm looking for Paul McGuire. Or maybe you know him as Paul Langdon. I'm Steve McGuire, his brother. Perhaps you know his friend, Jean-Yves Marce," he added, switching to French. "But I'm looking for Paul."

"You find Renato," the man replied in heavily-accented English, shifting his weight on his feet and adjusting the band around his wrist.

"Saad Boujemma dropped me off," Steven volunteered.

"You got more money than those guys?" Renato asked, squinting.

"Well, I don't know, I don't know," Steven parried. "How much do they have?"

"Never enough," Renato retorted. "Never enough."

Separating Out

Stepping off the porch, he signaled for Steven to walk ahead.
“This way, Mac.”

“I said my name is Steve.”

“Sure, Mac, sure.”

Steven’s guide cut a path through a squatter’s camp littered with empty cans and bottles, and, entering a grove of trees, he stopped where a wood-slatted rope ladder hung draped against the trunk of a huge blue gum tree. Intermittent tapping on the eucalyptus leaves overhead announced the rain’s arrival.

“He’s not there,” Renato observed.

“What do you mean?” Steven asked.

“The ladder’s down, Esteban. So he’s not there.”

“Well, can I go up?” Steven suggested, gazing toward a crude wooden structure lodged in the massive tree. “I can wait for him up there, can’t I?”

“Come on, Mac,” Renato replied with a jerk of his head, motioning for Steven to turn back around. “Try later.”

The wind through the treetops intensified and the rain fell harder as they worked their way back to the shack. “Go inside. Go in!” Renato commanded, following close on Steven’s heels.

A faded paisley bedspread divided the barren room. “We fly now,” Renato stated, rubbing his hands and sitting down in the only chair at the rickety wooden table. He opened its single drawer, pulled out a hand-rolled cigarette of some kind and lit it up with a small, disposable lighter. “That’s good,” he declared, exhaling before passing Steven the burning joint.

“No, thanks,” Steven said, brushing rainwater off his bags.

“What?” Renato inquired, squinting through smoke.

“Here, take it.”

“Naa,” Steven declined.

Two Half Brothers

Renato shrugged, shook his head, and took another deep drag. “You like the real shit, my friend?” he asked, letting loose a thick cloud of spent smoke.

I’m not so sure we’re friends, Steven thought but did not dare to say aloud.

“Come on, Mac. It’s good shit, you know.”

“I’m not interested now,” Steven explained and then switched to simple Spanish he had picked up in California.

“I mean, I’m not a user. Understand?”

“I see so, Esteban,” Renato chuckled and coughed. “I see so.” While Renato took another drag, his dark brown eyes—the regular right eye and the weak left one—shifted between Steven’s two bags and the binocular case at his waist. Steven restrained himself from informing his host that he really wasn’t a dealer either. “You think you find shit like this every day? Two, three kilos, it’s okay, Mac, it’s okay,” he repeated. “Not so much money.”

“No, no, it’s not that,” Steven stammered. “It’s just”

“Just what, Mac? I know you got money. Look!” Renato opened the drawer to expose a cache of sealed plastic bags full of a white powder resembling talc.

“What the hell?” Steven exploded. “I told you I’m not dealing now!” Assessing his distance from the door, he stepped backward and then lowered his voice. “I’m not doing any business right now. Not until I see Paul.”

“Come on, Mac. You a tourist? I know your business. I know you got money in that bag,” he said, nodding toward the knapsack. “Or in there,” he continued, eyeing the flight bag. “Or maybe up your ass. No matter what you say. Am I right?”

Separating Out

“Sure. But I’m looking for my little brother before I can do business.”

Renato spat air out between his lips, slid the drawer closed, and adjusted his wristband. “You think Renato’s sittin’ in this shit-pot country for stealin’ TV’s?” He paused to lick and seal a loose edge of the extinguished joint. “Go ask the flics in Marseilles about Renato,” he declared. “He was one of the best. The flics in Marseilles tell that. Renato? He was one of the best.”

“Hey, I’m sorry,” Steven declared. “I didn’t mean to yell.”

“That’s right, Mac. You yelled at Renato.”

“It’s just there are problems ... with the money. I have to see Paul first.”

“But we’re friends now, right?” Renato grinned, tilting his head sideways and aiming his best eye at Steven. “Am I right?”

“Right,” Steven agreed.

“The weak make way for the strong. Right, Esteban?” Renato turned the knob of a transistor radio. “Come see Renato to make business. Now get out here.”

“But when do you think Jean-Yves will be back?”

“How fuck I know?”

“Can I wait in here until it stops raining?”

Renato dismissively waved his hand toward the bedspread dividing the room and turned his attention back to the radio’s scratchy broadcasts in Arabic, Spanish, and French. Steven retired behind the makeshift partition and stood stock still, impressed by the rain hammering the roof and aware of his shortsighted failure to pack more outdoor gear. Even before he had left New York, he had reasoned that dressing down might spare him from the infamous beggary any appearance of being well-off could provoke during a sortie south of Gibraltar. He

Two Half Brothers

had planned on traveling fast and had stuffed only underwear, socks, a sweater, a pair of chinos, and his hiking boots into the soft knapsack. A windbreaker, a newly-purchased field guide to Moroccan birds, his toilet kit, his Swiss Army knife—all fit snugly into his flight bag, along with the sealed letter from his mother to Paul.

He looked at his watch: not four hours in North Africa and he was caught in a situation less forgiving than he had anticipated—without new information from Jean-Yves, he might learn nothing about Paul's exact whereabouts. Steven knelt down on the thin floor mat, positioned his pack as a pillow, and—worrying that the mission to retrieve his half brother might have to be aborted in Agadir—plopped down without the benefit of a blanket, sleeping bag, or comforter of any kind.

Reaching inside his coat pocket, he pulled out the photograph sent from abroad in July 1966: a full-length Polaroid of Paul and his friend Jean-Yves Marce leaning against the pedestal of a sculpted lion in the Tuileries. Paul's cheeks were lean; his large, recessed eyes hawkish and lit up; Steven knew that at times those two blue eyes could focus so intensely they seemed almost to cross. That sunny day in the Parisian park, Paul's companion had worn bell-bottom blue jeans and a T-shirt, his neck dressed out in a batik scarf. Steven lingered over their smiles, a pair of curiously shameless smiles, and wondered if Paul still sported such a great mane of hair.

He put the double-portrait away and sank back against his pack, souring on his situation and the sorry prospects for his trip's ultimate success. Did he really believe that flimsy leads from the likes of Jean-Yves' Parisian sister would enable him

Separating Out

to locate Paul? What if he did find Paul—could he force him to return? If his brother had managed to keep himself incommunicado the last two years, what made anyone think he wouldn't keep it up? He couldn't make Paul come home. Steven brooded over his mother's reaction upon his retreat to Manhattan—if his mission failed—and could console himself only with the certainty that, whether he brought Paul back or not, his wife would welcome him home. Either way, when it came time for their mother's memorial service, he would no doubt be left explaining his half brother's behavior to all, yet again apologizing for Paul.

Chapter 2

Brad Steve. Brad here, you copy? You there, Stevie?
Over.

Steve I hear you, Brad.

Brad Where you at, Stevie? Over.

Steve The Ag Station.

Brad Busy right now?

Steve I just finished caulking the skiff, why?

Brad Can we meet up? Over.

Steve Now?

Brad Yup.

Steve What's up, Brad?

Brad Meet up with me at Double Zee, where Twenty-seven hits Double Zee. Over.

Steve You mean right now?

Brad Yup.

Steve But what's the matter, Brad?

Brad Jus' meet me at the end a Twenty-seven. Over.

Steve Yeah, okay. I guess I'm done here.

Brad Talk at you then.

Steve Sure. Give me ten minutes.

Brad Over an' out.

Steve Over and out.

Two Half Brothers

Low-hanging clouds spread over the Bonheur Valley floor and its rim rock canyon walls. Near a billboard—“WELCOME TO BONHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE 4100 feet elevation”—Brad Field’s truck and Steve McGuire’s jeep, headed in opposite directions, are stationed side-by-side, occupying the full width of the hard-packed gravel roadway that slopes off to either side; both engines are left running.

Brad’s 1978 Chevy C-10 series ¾ ton pickup sits high off the ground on heavy-duty suspension; mudguards hang behind a rear set of deep traction tires. A winch is built into the front bumper. Behind the cab, two replacement spares are chained beneath a metal toolbox that runs the width of the open truck bed. The cab roof sports a short-wave radio antenna and emergency lights. On the driver’s side an oversize rearview mirror and a searchlight are mounted behind the fender. A Model 70 Winchester and a fishing rod case are racked across the window behind the bench seat.

Steve drives a colorless jeep with a torn convertible top; the protective wire around its protruding headlamps is mangled. A pair of compact binoculars dangles from the rearview mirror. The exposed fingertips at the ends of his left-hand mitten hold up the jeep’s cracked plastic window. He wears a goose down vest over his field jacket. The flaps of his duck-billed canvas hat loosely hang over his ears. Steve twists sideways in his bucket seat.

Brad rolls his window down, juts his elbow out above the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service seal displayed on the door, and

Separating Out

adjusts the angle of his white, lacquered, high-peaked straw hat. He wears a wool-lined blue jean jacket over a Pendleton shirt unbuttoned at the throat where the chest hair sprouting over the collar of his thermal underwear merges with his untrimmed russet beard. His cheeks are clean-shaven and flushed red. He looks straight ahead, aviator-style sunglasses squarely lodged across his broad nose.

- Steve What's going on, Brad? Why are we here?
- Brad Cuz I don't want nobody lissenin' in.
- Steve But what is it? What's wrong?
- Brad Can't say right off.
- Steve Come on. What happened?
- Brad Now don't go gittin' your knickers in a knot, Stevie. Nuthin's 'zactly happin', yit.
- Steve You mean you found another Crane shot dead?
- Brad Ain't nuthin' to do with no Crane, Stevie.
- Steve So what's it got to do with me?
- Brad Nuthin'. (*adjusts brim of his hat*) 'Ceptin' this guy over at headquarters.
- Steve What guy?
- Brad That's jus' it. He's been all over Bonyur sometime now. (*pauses, scratches beard*) What I mean is, I kinda been keepin' tabs on him.
- Steve So?
- Brad Goldarn thing is
- Steve Who is he?
- Brad Claims he's your brother, Stevie.
- Steve My brother?

Two Half Brothers

- Brad Yup. (*bows head, sucks air through teeth, holds breath*) He claims he's your kid brother.
- Steve (*closes his eyes, lowers his head*) Oh, my God. Paul. (*blows frosty air, fixes his stare out the jeep's windshield*) Where is he right now?
- Brad Jus' told you. Over at headquarters. I left him at that little museum.
- Steve He's at the natural history museum?
- Brad Yup, lessin he's moved on. Twenty minutes back he was. (*scratches beard*) Couple three days now he's been in there jus' about all day long.
- Steve Three days?
- Brad (*removes sunglasses, turns to meet Steve's eyes*) That kid brother a yurn 'pears to be drawin' pitchers of purt near every danged thing in that friggin' place, Stevie.
- Steve (*nods vigorously, speaks quietly*) That's him, that's Paul.
- Brad (*raising voice*) What?
- Steve I said, that's him.
- Brad I still can't hear you. Now git the hell out a that jalopy an' git in here where it's half-warm. I know the heater don't work in that piece a shit. Git in here. *Steve turns off the jeep's ignition and relocates to Brad's cab. Brad sets his sunglasses on the dash and uses the knuckles of both hands to rub his eyes.* He don't look like you do, Stevie.
- Steve We're half brothers.
- Brad Well, he's a skinny half brother. Skinny as a rail. Got long hair tied back into a friggin' ponytail. Some

Separating Out

dirty sock on his head, too.

Steve

A beret?

Brad

I know what a beret is, Stevie. (*claws at his beard*)

I cut my teeth mowin' down jackrabbits with the Basque boys, okay? I fuckin' know what a beret is.

Steve

Okay, take it easy.

Brad

That ain't no fuckin' beret. That there's a dirty sock.

Silence.

Steve

So he knows I'm here, right? You told him I'm still here?

Brad

Yup.

Steve

What'd he say?

Brad

That's jus' it, Stevie. He don't say much, leasewise not to me. Seems like he knew that.

Steve

Knew what?

Brad

That you're here on the refuge. Listen, I been trackin' that puppy purt near a week now. (*shoots Steve a sidelong gaze*) Kinda strange he didn't contact you, Stevie. Lessin y'all maybe I jus' better let you talk, eh?

Steve

No, yeah, I don't know. I'm just (*sinks chin toward chest, shakes head sideways*) It's a long story, Brad.

Brad

Somethin' you reckon I oughta not hear, right? (*grips steering wheel with both hands*) Goldarnit, Stevie, iffing I need to know, I need to know. They pay me to enforce the regs. You know that. Any deep duck shit goin' on I got to turn over to Myrick.

Steve

Myrick?

Brad

You know Myrick.

Two Half Brothers

Steve Oh, the sheriff.

Brad *(adjusts rearview mirror, lightly chuckles)* “Oh, the sheriff.”

Steve Has he broken the law?

Brad Shitfuck yes ‘scuse my French, I’ll say he’s broke the law! Can’t you read?

Both men gaze in silence toward a 4 X 8 foot brown metal sign:

THE FUTURE OF YOUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE DEPENDS ON YOU!

VEHICLES are permitted only on established roads open to public.

FOOT TRAFFIC off-road is prohibited to protect nesting birds.

COLLECTION of artifacts, plants, or natural objects prohibited.

HUNTING and **FISHING** permitted in designated areas only.

WEAPONS must be unloaded and dismantled or cased.

CAMPING and **FIRES** are prohibited anywhere on the Refuge.

The REFUGE is closed from dusk to dawn.

Brad *(Brad replaces sunglasses)* Hikin’ the hell all over without no special permit. Trespassin’ after dark. Campin’ out in a closed campground. Seems to me he’s broke the law. An’ he stands out, Stevie. ‘Ceptin’ a handful a duck hunters, he’s the only outsider left on Bonyur.

Steve Except me.

Brad ‘Ceptin’ you, Stevie Wonder. That’s true. ‘Ceptin’ you.
Silence.

Steve Does he know you’re onto him?

Separating Out

- Brad He knows all right. I already took him in once, almost. (*glances sideways*) Hey, I didn't know he was no brother a yurn 'till jus' now when I told him to clear the hell out. Or come to town with me. (*pauses*) Anymore I jus' can't go for it.
- Steve You already told him to leave?
- Brad I did. Either that or he's payin' a visit to the Honorable Myrick Jackson's motel up in Brine.
- Steve You mean the county jail?
- Brad Yup.
- Steve Is he?
- Brad Is he what?
- Steve Is he clearing out? Is he leaving?
- Brad I don't know what he's doin', Steve. That fool brother a yours got me so puzzled I don't know if I'm on foot or horseback. Normal man leasewise answers when some big hunkin' ranger shows a badge an' starts askin' questions. Him, he jus' sorta looks away. I jus' don't git it. What locoweed's he smokin' anyway? (*Steve closes his eyes, rubs his forehead with his exposed fingertips*)
Nope, I can't hardly go for it, not no more. Already lied to me once 'bout his name.
- Steve Could you just arrest him?
- Brad I could an' I've a mind to, next time I catch him breakin' one a those there regs. Be for his own danged good, Stevie. Nobody in his right mind What I mean is, nobody period's sleepin' out on the range this time a year, not with the gear he's got.

Two Half Brothers

Lessin he's got some stuff stashed somewheres I don't know 'bout.

Steve He's sleeping outside?

Brad An' he ain't prepared for it, far as I can see. Nuthin' but a backpack an' a tackle box an' a pile a scrap-books or some such shit. *(pauses)* I'm tellin' you, a man has got to be poppin' some powerful pills to stand it out here at night like that. It's gittin' too cold.

Steve Does he look sick?

Brad Sick?

Steve You know, like he's not eating. I don't know, you said he's skinny. Does he look sick?

Brad Needs a shave an' a bath. Yes, sir, that boy sure does need to clean up. I told you, he's skinny as a whip. Tell you the truth, Stevie? *(winces)* He looks purty bad. Lower lip's swoll up bad, like maybe he fell or hit a branch. Or got hit in the face. *(pauses)* Iffin he's sick he's holdin' up cuz that sucker sure can walk! But then I never did hafta hunt no man before. *(scratches beard)* Over in 'Nam we went lookin' for our boys in the city, for sure. That was most a what we did do. They 'bout always turned up D-an'-D or strung out on dope an' that was that. This one's got me baffled. Couple three days now I been watchin' him real close. Doris turned me on to his monkey business.

Steve Who?

Brad Doris Halberson, lady runs the campground. You know, the camp hostess.

Separating Out

- Steve Right, the BLM camp.
- Brad So Doris calls me up a week back an' says this hippie kinda guy's still there.
- Steve It was closed, wasn't it?
- Brad Yup. Folks cleared out a month back. It's November 15th, Stevie. Even the duck hunters are gone 'ceptin' that one bunch a college kids from Portland holed up in the Brine Hotel. An' I won't let 'em back on the refuge till they stop fuckin' drinkin' so much. Anyhoo, nobody's out in this countryside, leasewise nobody I know 'bout. So Doris goes to haul her trailer out an' she spots his camp an' tells him to move out. Couple three days later she's back for her other rig an' his campfire stuff's still there so she calls me. *(scratches beard)* Don't know why she called me not BLM. *(continues to scratch beard)* Nice lady, Doris. Big birder. Nuthin' like you but you know what I mean. Bird feeders hangin' up all 'round the place, pair of beenox hangin' 'round her neck. Lives up to John Day country somewheres an' spends purt near every danged summer down here runnin' that campground. I'm thinkin' she can't stand to be 'round that dumb fuck Eye-tal-yin from Spokane she married—
- Steve Come on, Brad, about Paul. What else about Paul?
- Brad I got to lookin' for signs a that boy. Not that hard to spot, really. Ain't easy for a man to hide out here goin' inta winter. *(Brad lifts eyes, scans the distant horizon toward Mount Deception, a 10,000-foot-high and 30-mile-long massif)* Snowstorm's closin' off the upper road, radio says. Anyways, he left me

Two Half Brothers

a trail. Seems like he's jus' wanderin' the buttes an' the bottomland. Jus' moseyin' 'round without no disregard for nuthin'. Private property, government property, nuthin'. An' whoa, can that boy hike! So one day I stopped him where he oughta not be an' told him to git in the truck. That's when he showed me some Canadian ID. Name, purty pitcher ID, the whole shootin' match.

Steve Canadian?

Brad You don't know 'bout that?

Steve What'd he say his last name was?

Brad London? Yeah, London, I think it was. Anyways, I checked it out. Nuthin' on him, not by that name. Then I made my mistake. I told him to wait in the cab an' went to check on these rock chucks. Two ranchers fightin' mad 'bout fence lines an' both of 'em pissed at the refuge. So I walked up into this draw an' by the time I git back, that grasshopper's done lit out on me. Jus' broke an' run for it. I thought, damn, he's good! I mean, slippin' away like that back into the big sagebrush? He's a tricky one. Don't ask me what that skinny son-a-gun's been livin' on. I figger he's got hisself a grubstake stashed away in some empty ky-oats' den.

Steve So he got away.

Brad An' the very next day he shows up at Round Barn.

Steve All the way up there?

Brad Kid spooked the cattle an' barn owls an' purt near everthin' else within a couple three miles. Gave his location away's all he did. So I got a call from Ranger

Separating Out

Jack on that 'un. That's Orygun state land. Tryin' to stay warm we figgered, with all the calves in there an' all. Next I flushed him from the pump house at Big Dry Creek an' I still don't know how in goldum heck he managed to git there from the last place he was way the hell out past Mineral Fields. It's gittin' so I been busier than a one-legged man in a butt-kickin' contest keepin' track a ol' Paul. Then three days ago he turns up right at headquarters. Funny, eh? (*folds arms over chest, gazes out across the land*) Funny strange.

Steve What if I take him out of here with me?

Brad (*lowers hat brim on brow, purses lips*) That's jus' what I been thinkin', Stevie.

Steve What if he won't come along?

Brad He better come along! The way I figger, iff in somebody else gits hold a him, trespassin' or stealin' food or some such monkey business? Why, they jus' a soon shoot him then call Myrick. Might say he was rustlin' cattle. Might say anything. Hey, that's like to happin' up around Basque Outpost, for sure. Listen, seein' how he's your little brother? Best thing'd be to hook him up an' reel him in, nice an' easy like, so nobody'd do him no harm. (*turns eyes away from Steve, stares outside*) Tell you the truth, Stevie? My guess is ol' Paul's crazier than a loon an' needs some ser-yus help. (*winces*) Wanna know why?

Steve Why?

Brad While back I was one hundred percent lost as to where the heck he was at. So I stopped at Outlook Rock to

Two Half Brothers

have me a look-see through the big scope. Hell, from up there you can see from Rook'ry Ranch to the government camp, right? Up past the first aspins on Deception, and iff in it's clear—

Steve Yeah, yeah, go on. So? Go on.

Brad So I was us up there gittin' the big pitcher an' I spotted somethin' fishy over in the watchtower past headquarters. *(pauses)* There was somethin' up in there. *(pauses)* You know what it was?

Steve Yeah, I know.

Brad Waal-ah, there he was, halfway up with his arms hangin' out like one a them divin' birds. I ain't makin' this up, Stevie. He was up there with his arms spread out like one a them big black cormorants, jus' kinda sunnin' hisself. Time I got there he was gone. *(chuckles)* Flew away.

Both men silent. Steve moves to open his door. Brad turns up his coat collar then uses the back of his hand to test the flow of heat through the vents below the dash.

Steve You think he's still at the museum?

Brad Beats hell out a me. He's made hisself a messy little nest in there. Dang drawins spread out all over the place. Headquarters told me to haul his skinny little ass out today or they'll be callin' Myrick to-mar-ah.

Steve Hickman wants him arrested?

Brad Hickman wants him off refuge land period. He's got no account bein' here, Stevie. Iffin he was

Separating Out

hurting anybody but himself, I'd-a hauled him in by now, for sure.

Steve But where's he staying tonight?

Brad chortles.

I mean, where'd he say he's staying?

Brad He ain't sayin', that's jus' it. *(pausing)* Eyes like a friggin' hawk, Stevie. The whole thing gives me the willies.

Steve *(opens door)* I'll get him to the trailer.

Brad Sounds good to me.

Steve I'll get him to leave with me in a few days.

Brad Perfect.

Steve I'll try. *(holds door cracked open, hesitates)* He didn't tell you anything else?

Brad It's like he don't even hear me.

Steve I know, I know. Blasé.

Brad What's that?

Steve You know, indifferent. Cool.

Brad That kid? Oh, he thinks he's one cool dude. *(pinches the bridge of his nose, replaces his sunglasses, regrips steering wheel)* Might jus' as well be flippin' the bird right into my face. *Steve opens his door, gets out, then sticks his head back inside the cab.*

Steve Thanks, Brad.

Brad You got 'er, cowboy, now close that friggin' door an' good luck.

Steve I'll take care of him. I'll call you.

Brad Don't be callin' on the walkie-talkie. Leave word

Two Half Brothers

at the station for me to call you. Or call me at home.
I don't want this on the airwaves.

Steve closes door, rounds the front of the cab.

Brad *(rolls his window down, juts his face outside, raises his voice)* Still got my numbers?

Steve Yeah, sure. At the station and at home.

Brad Work with him, Stevie. Reel him in. Else I'm gonna hafta haul that puppy in myself.

Steve gets in jeep and drives off.