

Other People's Money (Excerpt)

Marty Wakefield was very unhappy when he heard about the killing. He immediately called for a meeting with Robb Wolff and Ronnie Billy, but it was going to have to wait. Chief Billy had instantly become very much a person of interest by the police investigators from the Quadra Island RCMP Detachment and he found himself in the band council offices, subject to a long and detailed interview with the detachment's commanding officer, Corporal Arnold Borowski, and Constable Lee Quan, one of his detachment officers. They had great difficulty in accepting his denials, especially his claim that he hadn't even known when the third party manager had arrived the previous afternoon, or where he would be housed.

"How can you not have known?" the short, chubby C.O. of the Quadra Island Detachment, demanded, leaning across the chief's fancy carved desk, his face only inches from his interviewee. "According to what we have been told by other band members you were scheduled to meet with him here in your office this morning to review your understanding of the band's financial records. Logically if he was to appear here this morning he would have been required to get to the village earlier than today in order to make the meeting and, as chief, you would want to know the details."

Corporal Borowski took great pleasure in personally heading up the small detachment's investigations and did so in many of its more interesting cases. In spite of his portly physique, the corporal was a high energy operative who took great delight in his work and especially enjoyed interviewing suspects.

"Not my concern," grunted the chief. "The sonofabitch comes here to take away my fucking job and I should head up his welcoming committee? It wasn't even my plan to be in the office to talk to the bastard. Shit, he could have caught the early ferry for all I knew or cared."

"So, you're denying you were scheduled to meet with him today?"

"I dunno who told you that, but I had no intention of meeting personally with the bastard. It's bad enough the feds have decided to take away the right of the Wei Wai Kol to govern ourselves, but then I was expected to cooperate with this stupid decision!"

Forget it."

"It's not really my concern that the federal government has temporarily placed your band under the financial control of a third party manager. I'm here to investigate a murder and you are making it easy for me to think you might have done it. I suppose you think by killing Mr. Metcalfe you could be put back in charge of the band's finances?"

"As far as I'm concerned, I've always been in charge and his goddamn appointment didn't change that. The appointment was done illegally, without the consent of the band, and I sure as hell don't recognize it. There was no point in me killing him, as I didn't authorize what he was supposed to be doing here."

"You say that, but the federal government's allocations to the band would no longer have come to you. It's difficult to see how you could be in charge of the band with no money. I would say you had plenty of reasons to kill him, even if misguided ones."

"I told you already I had no reason to kill this guy since I don't recognize him or his appointment. All his murder has done is to bring a lot of attention down on me and the council and why would I want that? This all came about because of a few shit-disturbing trouble-makers in the band who don't understand what the fuck is going on here. They have no idea about running the finances of a band when the feds allocate us peanuts and they expect miracles. I sure as hell wasn't prepared to cooperate with this illegally appointed third-party bastard, but he would have seen soon enough that the council was doing a fucking good job with the little money we get from the miserly federal government."

"Good speech, Chief, but I'm not here to debate how you spend the band's money, but I see from the surroundings here that the council offices seem pretty posh. Now, let's get to alibis. Just where were you last night when Metcalfe was killed?"

"I was here in my office most of the evening."

"Why was that?"

"Believe it or not, I was working on the band's financial records. As far as I am concerned, Metcalfe had no authority and I am still in charge of the band's affairs."

"That seems highly unlikely. Can anyone vouch for you that you were here?"

"Sure, I told my wife where I was going and she knows that I was here from after

supper until about eleven o'clock."

"Nice try Ronnie, but that's obviously not an alibi. All she would know was that you weren't home. Anyone else see you last night?"

"Nope, I worked alone and nobody else was around."

"That's all very interesting. At this point I don't have the evidence to arrest you, but I believe you had plenty of motivation to kill Metcalfe, or have him killed and you will remain my prime suspect. If you think changing your financial records or killing Metcalfe will help you hide any illegal business you are engaged in, you are sadly mistaken. In the meantime, don't decide to take a vacation."

"Don't worry. I've still got a council to run. Someone has to look after band affairs."

"Maybe, but as I understand it, that doesn't include spending decisions. Someone else will likely be appointed acting third-party manager on behalf of the federal government. So leave the books alone."