

Doctor Hightower Novel: The Case of the False Prophet

Chapter 1 A Beginning of the End

Morrison, Colorado

Winter, 2020

“Look, Mister Wallace I don’t have much money but I was told that sometimes you can help people with legal problems on the cheap, is that not true?”

“Well, Mister Davis, I guess I wouldn’t want to say ‘on the cheap’ but I do have a friend, or maybe just a contact with someone who will sometimes help people in distress without any fee. He’s a little odd. Some might even say crazy, but he’s a brilliant man who has all of the money he needs and likes to dabble in a case or two every so often just to amuse himself. Tell me about your legal issues.”

Malcom Wallace was often described uncharitably as being ancient. No one knew for sure his age but it was guessed at seventy something but some thought more like ninety. He had been a high-powered criminal attorney in Denver for more years than he could remember and after retiring had moved to Morrison, a mountain community in the foothills outside of Denver. He was seeking solitude but instead found isolation. After years of boredom he’d opened a small office in the quaint Morrison downtown to have something to do. He mostly handed out free advice on divorces, legal disputes between friends and relatives and where the case demanded; would steer people to one of several practicing attorneys in the area. His law license had long expired but he was ignored by the authorities because he was thought to be harmless.

One of the people he would on occasion refer people to was Doctor Thomas H. Hightower the Third. Hightower had an active law license but was not a licensed medical doctor. It was unknown exactly what he was a doctor of; the most often heard explanation was that he was a shrink. Wallace had bumped into Hightower before he retired and found him to be strange and brilliant; and a little scary. He seemed to only take on a case that amused him and had almost no concern about the poor people who needed his help. He seemed to lack empathy, but was always polite. In a different time and a different world, he would have been called a gentleman. But maybe a cold-hearted gentleman. His manner was almost regal. Everyone thought he was out-of-place.

“My wife, Elizabeth, she’s being scammed by a fake priest or something. She has given him money; money we don’t have to spare. She won’t listen to me. She says he’s giving her a sense of well-being; whatever in the hell that means. I approached the guy. Probably lost my temper, but I didn’t do anything. The creep’s name is Brother Boxer, how phony is that? Anyway we got into an argument and he slugged me; knocked me on my ass, I blacked out. When I woke up I’d been arrested and charged with trespassing and assault. The bastard hit *me*, I never touched him. Their saying I will most likely get sixty days in the county jail for petty assault. I just went back to work in construction; if I’m in jail for two months we’ll be on the street. I just need someone to talk to the cops and get this straightened out. A guy I met in jail gave me your name, can you help me?”

“You need a lawyer. I’m not technically an attorney any more but I can refer you to a lawyer. But your other option is a public defender. They are good honest lawyers and they can help you at no charge. I think I have a card here somewhere.” Wallace started shuffling papers on his untidy desk.

“Yeah, they already told me about that. I talked to this lady, Lucy something or another. She said no doubt if I pled guilty they would give me probation for maybe a year. I told her I didn’t do anything why should I plead guilty? She looked at me like I was stupid or somethin’ and shrugged her shoulders. I don’t want to be on probation for a year, I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Wallace sighed and looked at the man. His legal problems were not major although obviously very serious to him. Based on what he knew about Hightower; he didn’t think he would be interested in something this mundane. Now if he’d murdered the religious charlatan that would be most interesting. But no, he was claiming innocence on a very minor offense. He knew his best option was the public defender but it could be hard for Davis to go back after his last experience. Wallace was thinking about options when his phone rang. It was a land-line with a ring loud enough to be disturbing to the neighbors. In the age of smart phones Wallace preferred the comfort of an old and trusted instrument that was not smart but very efficient at one thing; phone calls.

“Hello.”

“Mister Wallace, hope your existence is going well. Was pondering my lack of stimulus and began wondering if you might have any interesting cases hanging about?”

“Mister Hightower, what an amazing coincidence,” *or was it?* “Just now I’m talking to someone who could sure use some help. But this is really a small matter,” out of the corner of his eye he saw Davis give him a dirty look. “It involves some dealings with a religious man who may have taken advantage of a lady and when confronted by her husband, it’s the husband who ends up in jail.”

“What’s the religious man’s name?”

Wallace covered the phone with his hand. He spoke to Davis. “What was the name of the religious guy who took your wife’s money?”

“Brother Boxer.”

“His name is Brother Boxer.” Wallace listened to Hightower’s response. He hung up the phone.

“He wants to see you immediately. He also said that you should never contact Boxer again unless you don’t value your life.”

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People had described Hightower as being tall, maybe six two or three and also as medium height, maybe five ten or eleven. He had a full beard that was neatly trimmed and wore his hair long, sometimes in a pony-tail. His hair and beard were mostly gray, but he did not seem that old. He wore simple no-frame glasses. He was noticeably over-weight but no one had ever described him as fat. He had described himself in the past as a widower, but never provided details. He always seemed to be alone.

He lived on Spring Street in Morrison. His house was a small, modest wood-framed house with several large trees in the yard. On one side of the house was a small sign carved in wood; “Doctor Hightower.” His neighbors thought he was rude, maybe a snob, no doubt unfriendly; some thought he might be hiding from something—not an uncommon condition in the mountains. His immediate neighbor who had only talked to him a few times told others he was an asshole. Few people bothered Hightower which was the way he liked it. There had been

rumors some years ago that he might have been running a meth lab because of mysterious smells that could be detected from the house on occasion. This was a live and let-live neighborhood so nobody complained.

In his basement Hightower sat at his massive desk with papers and books scattered haphazardly across its top. He had several computers with multiple screens arrayed on the desk. The basement resembled mostly a lab of some sort, with work tables and a large amount of scientific equipment. As he sat he puffed on a pipe, not a normal habit of the day; but something from his past that he clung to as illusive comfort.

Boxer alive. He couldn't believe it. He'd seen him die. Maybe this was someone else. As soon as he thought it, he knew it wasn't true. Boxer had been his nemesis, the man who swore to end Hightower's existence. Once dead, now alive. He had no choice but to take action; leave evil alone and it only grows. But here in Denver, how did he find him?

A light, one of a series along the top of the back wall, was blinking. That indicated someone at the front door. He pushed a button and on a large screen monitor there was a picture of a plain man, who looked worried and maybe angry, standing at the door. Hightower pushed another button and spoke into a microphone. "You from Wallace?"

The man looked about surprised at the voice. He hesitated. "Yes, yes. He sent me." He looked like he was ready to bolt at any minute.

"Come into the living room and take a seat. I will be there in just a minute." Hightower turned on some other monitors and watched as the man entered the house and finally sat down. He was obviously nervous and was constantly looking around for anything that might happen."

Hightower walked into the room. He was wearing his most glorious black robe. He also had on his special lift shoes which made him almost six foot five inches tall. The man sat on the sofa and stared with his mouth opened. A look of shock and stupidity. Hightower chuckled to himself.

“What’s your name?”

“Davis, Davis sir. Jim Davis.”

“Calm down Mister Davis. I will help you with your problem but I need you to promise me something.”

“What, uh, what do I have to promise?”

“You can’t tell anyone about our arrangement.”

“Even my wife?”

“Especially your wife. You will leave here and never see me again and you will never talk about this to anyone, can you do that?”

“I don’t understand Mister. How can you help me if you don’t exist? What’s this about, some kind of rich man’s fuckin’ joke.” Hightower could see the transformation from a terrified man to someone who thought he was being made fun of. Even the mice will attack if you push hard enough.

“Your problem’s not a fuckin’ joke to me. I’m going to make it go away. But you can’t be connected with me or you and your wife could be in danger. If you don’t want my help you can go now.” Hightower turned his back and headed to the kitchen.

“No, no wait. I need help. It’s just, well it’s just that, how can you help me, are you going to court? Will you talk to the prosecutor? How?”

“I’m sure it doesn’t matter to you how as long as you’re relieved of this problem, right? Do you have paperwork on your arrest and charges?”

“Yes.” Davis pulled out the copies of the documents he’d been given and handed them to Hightower, careful not to touch the huge man.

“The answer to your question is magic. You don’t need to know any more, okay. Now go and never come back and in three days your problem will be resolved. Go.” The last word was said in a booming voice. Davis jumped up and ran out of the front door.

Hightower went back to the basement and made a connection with an ally in Bangkok, Thailand. Using the most sophisticated encryption software and a VPN server he was comfortable this was a private conversation.

“Need to change some data in government server. Jefferson County, Colorado. Case CV-8725602 Mister Jim Davis. Magistrate Court. Ryan Fitzgerald. Division V. Want this case dismissed by DA. Quote cost.” The message was sent. Within minutes there was a response.

“Have accessed before, easy. Cost \$1,000 USD. Wired to same account as before.”

Hightower moved to a different computer and accessed his bank account in Ireland. He put in his wire request and waited. Soon he had confirmation. Funds transferred.

A response came in. *“Thanks. Will have results in one day.”*

Hightower smiled. Davis would soon be out of the system and forgotten. No file, no case; no problem. Magic. Now it was time to deal with Brother Boxer. When, how and other details were not clear at this point; but there was no avoiding the confrontation ahead. His hands were sweating, his heart we racing and he was smiling. The bastard Boxer will die again.