

And here's how it begins:

1992 NEW SEABURY

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BRETT SIMMONS NOTICED IT driving his BMW to the tennis courts, 'Crap!'

He'd better call Vern. Where the hell was Vern anyway? Vern might be dead for all he knew. They hadn't talked for twenty years to the day ... four years after Timmy and Vern's brother, Amos disappeared. Those early years after the disappearance, Timmy's brother, Colin continually sent his cronies from Southie to the Cape trying to get a line on Vern. Knowing Colin, the snooping wouldn't end until he found Timmy. Timmy and Amos could be anywhere thanks to that damn hole in the ground. Brett saw that road being cleared into the woods would eventually pass right over it. It was bound to be discovered! Just what they did not want to happen. Shit!

Then he wondered about ... the other four. 'Wasn't this the day it happened back then?'

Vernon Otis heard about the proposed development at Witch Pond from a friend at the D.P.W. Since then he'd been spending more nights at Poor Henry's Pub wondering if he should call Brett Simmons after twenty years. He didn't know what to do. Amos always knew what to do. But Amos hadn't been here for a long time. 'Fucking Amos! You were supposed to be back for supper after closing that Pandora's Box we opened!'

To David Bateman the road signified the development of fifty virgin acres and that meant work. He worked for Arsenault Tree Service which had been awarded the contract to clear and grub some three acres to the northeast of the pond – the soon to be Witch Pond Condominiums.

Being the first to arrive at the site on this late August morn, everything was peaceful. No heavy machinery running. Cool morning air filled his lungs. He hoped it would compensate for sucking unfiltered camels and diesel exhaust all day. Fuck it! He was only twenty-six and there was plenty of time to give up the cigs and start his own landscaping concern. Nothing big at first, 'Just pick up a couple of used mowers, snag a few contracts with some blue heads in Osterville and away I go.'

Sipping his coffee, he listened to the birds greeting morning's arrival. He popped

out a Camel and was about to light it when he was distracted by rustling in the bushes about fifty yards to the south. He rose slowly. The sound was too great for a squirrel or other small mammal. One time he had spotted a deer off Red Brook Road not far from here. There were still many in the area and if he was lucky he'd see one. He approached the sound cautiously and peered into the pucker brush. Stopping he cocked his head trying to pick up another rustle. But none was forthcoming. He felt something out there but after a few stationary moments he decided it had sensed him also.

David figured if he cranked the wood chipper up it would cause the deer to bolt. When it roared to life, he scanned the brush for movement. But there was none. "Fuck it, if you're not going to show yourself."

He finished his coffee and tossed the Styrofoam cup into the gyrating blades. An instant later, it came out minced and unidentifiable. Although it was against company policy to operate the machine alone, David thought what the hell, he'd just process some of the shit lying around until the rest of the guys showed up. After all, he was sort of fascinated by the way things went in whole and in less than a blink of an eye were reduced to flying chips.

He put on his goggles and began tossing in loose branches.

WHIRR ... GRIND ... CRUNCHH ... PHUMP ...TAT...TAT... TAT.

Sometimes, when he got into the rhythm he imagined the branch was the uppity prick at the bank, "Sorry, you don't have your account number? How can we be expected to cash your check, sirrr?"

"In the poop chute with you, asshole!"

What a machine! At the end of the day, you're the calmest fella in town. 'I'm gonna miss this when I get my own biz', he thought grabbing another branch. As he rose, he caught the strangest sight out of the corner of his eye.

Standing not more than ten feet away were four small Indians in full Indian garb, they had crude bows and tomahawks and were grinning like all get out.

"What the fuck," whispered David as he slowly rose to an upright position taking in the full scope of this oddity. The Indians were grouped in a diamond formation clad in buckskin cod pieces, moccasins and had painted stripes on their chests and faces. Three had long hair pulled back and braided. The point man had a Mohawk and was bedecked in ornate beads leading David to assume he was the leader.

David sized up the quartet, which didn't take long since the tallest was maybe four feet. Yet, they were well built, leading him to believe they had to be dwarfs and not

children. Their maniacal grins made them look unlike any dwarfs he'd ever seen in the movies or at the county fair.

“Ehhhh ... boys, the pow-wow ended about two months ago.”

“Pow-wow?” mimicked the one in the back, still smiling like a jack-ass.

“Don't you guys speak English?” asked David feeling a bit apprehensive about being alone with these fruit cakes.

“You guuuuysss!” hooted the leader while craning his neck towards the brave on the left. They seemed to get a chuckle out of this for some reason.

The leader turned back and looked David in the eyes. David arched his brow. The leader returned the gesture without losing his maniacal grin. Then he deftly raised his bow with arrow nocked, and in a split second shot ...

In a later chapter, Vern does end up calling Brett and a woman answered. And he wondered about that ...

However, as he drove, his mind wondered about the voice. So, a friend? Brett wasn't married? Or maybe wifey was back up in Concord or wherever getting the kids ready to start school. No, that didn't figure. That girl would be letting the answering machine pick up if there was a Mrs. Simmons. No, Brett hadn't considered marriage for the same reason he hadn't. It'd be tough to hide the stuff they'd seen and been through from someone that close. It would come out in a moment of weakness, drunkenness or self-pity.

“Yep, lost my brother and one of our best friends in a hole in the ground with a time machine in it! They'll be coming back though. That's why I go off into the woods every August, so I can open the trapdoor if they give the secret knock. Been in the hole myself! Yep, brought back some mythical creatures from hell too! That's why they went back in. To save the world that is. Now you can't tell anyone! Don't want the government getting their hands on this thing. They're crazy you know! Probably try and change history!”

No, it was easier and safer to go through life alone, less chance of being committed because of committing.