

Bronx River Parkway

Friday, 3:55 p.m.

It wasn't rush hour—not quite yet. So the drive was an hour plus away. That now left a short distance to go.

Ryan remained quiet and tense, staring out the passenger window as he had throughout the trip to Westchester County.

"Where are we going in New Rochelle?" Marc finally asked, glancing at his GPS, aware that he didn't recognize the address Ryan had given him.

"To my cousin, Shane Walsh's, house," Ryan replied.

Marc nodded as they reached their exit and he eased his car around a loop and off the parkway.

"Tell me only what I need to know. I'm not going to pry."

"You're not prying. I'm just really freaking out." Ryan cleared his throat and relayed the entire situation to Marc.

Marc took it all in. "You've mentioned that you had a cousin with the Bureau. But that's about all you've said, other than the fact that he has a wife and a young daughter."

Ryan shrugged. "Shane's a private guy, so I don't talk about him much. He's a Special Agent, Violent Crimes division, at the New York field office. He's been there since he joined the FBI about eight years ago."

"Does Hutch know him?"

"I never asked. But I doubt it. Hutch is in charge of all the Violent Crimes divisions. That's too high up to know every agent who works under him." Ryan pointed, shifting to the edge of his seat, and reiterating what the GPS was already showing them. "Make your next right. Two blocks down and make a left. Go through a few lights. You'll see a cul-de-sac on your right. Marigold Terrace. Shane's house is number 15."

Marc understood that Ryan's redundant supply of information was a manifestation of his anxiety. He just nodded again, then pressed his foot a little harder on the gas pedal to speed them up without accelerating too much. Suburban cops lived for speed traps.

Four minutes later, Marc turned onto Marigold Terrace and eased slowly around the curvy road.

"Three down on your left," Ryan instructed. "White clapboard house, blue shutters." His tension intensified as Marc reached Shane's home. "That's Caitlin's car parked in the driveway. And Shane's parked in his usual spot on the street. If they're both home...but they don't want Kennedy there... Shit."

Ryan flung open the passenger door before Marc had brought the car to a complete stop. He was halfway to the front door, digging in his pocket for the key Shane had given him long ago, when Marc reached his side.

“Ryan, wait.” Marc grabbed his arm, stopping him in his tracks.

“Why?”

Marc tugged out the two pairs of latex gloves and shoved one pair into Ryan’s hand. “Put these on.”

Ryan gritted his teeth, while he and Marc worked their hands into the gloves. “Can’t leave any new fingerprints,” he muttered. “In case this is a crime scene.” He sounded ill.

“Is the door unlocked?” Marc asked, quickly assessing the garage door, which was up. He might have suggested accessing the house through there, but Ryan was already in motion. And time was precious.

Ryan jiggled the doorknob. “No.”

“Okay, use the key. I’ve got my Glock. Let’s go.”

Ryan’s hands were shaking as he turned the key and pushed open the door.

He and Marc stepped inside. The foyer was empty and quiet. In fact, the whole house was silent in a way that suggested no one was home.

“Shane?” Ryan called. A pause. “Caitlin?” No response. No sound of footsteps. Nothing.

Marc eased his way in front of Ryan, then crept ahead, sweeping the area with his gun.

Ryan followed behind him, aware that, not only was Marc armed, he was former FBI. He was trained at this. Ryan was not.

They’d barely gone fifteen feet, when Marc caught something in his peripheral vision, and swerved to his right. “Shit,” he muttered.

Ryan peered around him and gasped. Just outside the bathroom was a crumpled body, unmoving and lying in a pool of blood. Beside it, were two shell casings and a cell phone that had been crushed. On the other side of the cell phone was a jagged line of blood.

The inconsistency of the blood pattern struck Marc at once. Reflexively, he whipped out his cell phone and took a few quick photos.

Ryan was in a whole different headspace. Pushing past Marc, he strode over, squatting as he reached the body. “Shane,” he managed.

“Oh my God. Shane.”

Marc was beside Ryan in a heartbeat, restraining him from doing anything that would contaminate the scene. He leaned over Shane’s body, checking for a pulse, a breath—any sign of life.

There were none.

Marc gripped Ryan’s arm, standing and pulling him to his feet. Ryan’s entire body was stiff with shock, but Marc knew that consolation would have to wait.

“Ryan, we’ve got to get out of the house,” he said, visually sweeping as much of the ground floor as he could. “The killer might still be inside. He might have Caitlin.” A hard swallow, as Marc considered the possibility that she might also be dead. That additional jagged line of blood didn’t bode well. “I’ll call 911 as soon as we’re on the front lawn.”

Ryan didn’t budge. He was staring, wild-eyed, down at Shane’s lifeless form. It was only when Marc tugged insistently at his forearm that he regained some semblance of awareness. “No, Marc.” He gave a firm shake of his head. “I have to stay with him.”

“He’s gone,” Marc stated simply, placing a supportive hand on Ryan’s shoulder. “But Caitlin might not be. Let’s get the EMTs and the cops here. We might be saving her life.”

Slowly, Ryan turned, allowing Marc to lead him outside the house and to the front lawn, where he sank down on the grass, still unable to process this horrific occurrence.

Marc kept his Glock at the ready—just in case it was needed. “I’ll watch the windows and the doorways to block any attempt at escape,” he told Ryan. When there was no response, Marc glanced down, giving Ryan a worried look. The poor guy was staring off into space and wasn’t even hearing him.

Stationing himself close to his friend’s side, Marc took out his iPhone and called 911.

“What is your emergency?” was the immediate response.

Marc supplied his name, the address of the crime scene, and then, in staccato phrases, the necessary information.

He disconnected the call, knowing that it would be two minutes, at the most, before the ambulance showed up. He used the time wisely, pressing the button to Hutch’s private cell phone line.

One ring. Then, “Marc?”

“We’re in New Rochelle,” Marc said. “Ryan’s cousin, Shane Walsh, has been killed at his home. He worked for the Bureau, New York field office, Violent Crimes. I called 911, so the locals must already have been dispatched.”

Not even a heartbeat of a pause. “Text me the address.”

“Already done.”

“Then I’m on my way.”