

## 198 SUNSET



### WHAT IT IS

Williams sat on the park bench, somewhat puzzled, even bewildered at the ability of a sandhill crane having the wherewithal to grab a sack of munks and fly away. His perplexing trance was abruptly shattered by Clive Clifford who arrived panting profusely as he had run some two miles to see Williams.

INSECT had poorly paid and seriously untrained ‘associates’ in most every state and Clive was one of three in Pennsylvania. Originally from Missouri, Clive was recruited by INSECT after his world fell apart when his hot air balloon business was shut down due to a tragic mid air accident that claimed the lives of several army veterans. Between deep breaths, Clive explained to Williams he heard on the INSECT radio frequency about the munks and that he saw the crane landing near the township reservoir and they must hurry if they wanted the munks recaptured. Johnson showed up with the van and all three were off to find the munks.

Those black trees that look into the very last whispers of light shooting from the setting sun are not the same trees that stand in the rain, that bake in the hot noon sun, that get struck and broken from the lightning. The secretive transformation rides on the winds that rustle through the branches and when the winds don’t blow it is the almighty hand of the unknown that completes what must be done. Those sunset trees are the story tellers of the forest, they spin tales of the cicada, of raging fires, of woodcutters and they tell their stories during the dying seconds of the

disappearing sun. That is when Williams thought he heard the three monks made good their escape.

### **WHAT IT IS NOT**

Cinder Willoughby and Mutt Jefferson got what they came for, a smidgen of junco blood, a handful of junco feathers and some leg scrapings from four different birds. The task now was to get the samples analyzed and see why these Plot 82 refugees survived.

Mutt dropped off Cinder at the St. Louis airport for a flight to Pennsylvania and he took the big rig to Michigan and his eventual destination of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Somewhere outside of Fort Wayne with the sun pushing down into the St. Mary's river, Mutt first noticed a black SUV following him at a discrete distance. Within a half hour a fleet of Escalades and Explorers, green lights flashing and sirens whaling, gave notice to Mutt to pull over to the shoulder of the highway. INSECT agents in white hazmat suits and breathing apparatuses combed through his rig, cab and personal belongings looking for his junco samples.

Cinder Willoughby enjoyed the early morning walk past the modest houses with their well kept lawns and flower gardens. The morning air was fresh, the symphony of aromas from the lilacs filled his nostrils as he approached the small one story post office in Beaver Falls. He quickly glanced at the parcel he was carrying, destined for Hunter River he thought.