

# FURTIVE

ROBERT BOWMAN



ALSO BY ROBERT BOWMAN

*The Three Vests Series*  
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## PROLOGUE

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Kevin Hendricks walks into the conference room at Hoyt and Celaya, the firm that represents his billionaire father's holdings. It's a clear day in Seattle as he stares out the massive windows overlooking Elliot Bay. He loves this city and today he'll love it even more. In a few hours he's going to be a very rich man.

Alicia Hoyt, senior partner of the firm, walks into the room alone. This surprises Kevin. He's accustomed to seeing her with an entourage of people. Not surprisingly, she's wearing her customary black business suit, with her gray hair pulled back into a tight bun. Her rectangular glasses add to her

look of professionalism. She carries a large, brown leather briefcase which Kevin instantly recognizes. It belonged to his father.

“Good afternoon, Kevin,” Alicia says curtly. “Please . . .”

She motions to the closest of the twelve leather chairs lining the long, granite conference table. Kevin pulls out the nearest chair and sits down. Alicia chooses to sit across the table from him. Distance is needed for the next few minutes, she figures.

She looks at him with a smile. He’s grown since the last time she’s seen him, which was almost a year ago. He’s eighteen now, a rightful adult, though he doesn’t dress like a professional one, and certainly not like the heir to the multi-billion dollar company, Furtive Data. Ratty hair, a collared shirt that has never been ironed in its life, and loose-fitting jeans leads one to believe Kevin doesn’t care much for his appearance.

“Just you today?” Kevin asks.

Alicia opens the leather case slowly and pulls out a manila envelope. She opens it up and glances at the first page briefly. She knows what it specifies,

but she wants to do one more check. She's a thorough lawyer.

"Just me today," she answers, looking up at him. "As you know, your father was worth quite a lot of money, in excess of ten billion dollars."

Kevin's heart races as he thinks of all the things he can do with ten billion. This is the happiest moment of his life, which he admits is a bit cryptic given that his father's death is so recent, but he didn't have much of a relationship with the old man and his death opens up a world of opportunities Kevin would never had if Gabriel Hendricks was still alive.

"The majority of your father's estate is to be given to the University of Washington."

Alicia pauses here. She sees Kevin's vein on the left side of his temple begin to pound. His face grows red as he grits his teeth.

"What?" he whispers in an instant rage.

"The majority of your father's estate is to be given . . ." she begins to repeat but he's quick to cut her off.

"To the University of Washington? THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON!"



“It is the largest university in the state and it’s where your father graduated.”

“I know it is! I don’t need you tell me that! That’s all I heard growing up was how great the university is. It’s like he didn’t realize there are other universities in the state too, not just precious UW.”

“But this one . . .”

“Is getting all of my money!” Kevin rages. “Figures. It’s the old man’s way of getting back at me, the fat a...”

“Kevin!” Alicia raises her voice.

The eighteen-year-old runs his hands through his thick black mop of hair in frustration.

“I said the majority of the estate,” Alicia says, now in a much calmer tone. “He’s given you the Suburban, the mansion at Alki Beach, and the opportunity for a hundred million.”

“What are you talking about?”

The lawyer reaches into the envelope and pulls out an even smaller business envelope that’s been sealed with the Furtive Data symbol. “This is your first clue to the hundred million.”

“Clue?”

“I knew your father for almost thirty years. He was one of the most creative people I’ve ever worked with. It’s one of the reasons why Furtive has been so successful. He was also very eccentric and did things that didn’t always make a lot of sense to me. This is one of them.”

“You know what this clue is?”

“Not exactly, but I do know what you are to do.”

“For the hundred million?”

Alicia nods.

“What?”

“Your father has placed clues throughout the state. You are to find these clues and, if you can determine the message they give, claim the millions.”

Kevin grunts. “A treasure hunt? Really?”

“Like I said, your father was eccentric.”

“A hundred million dollar treasure hunt isn’t just eccentric. It’s insane! I shouldn’t have to go search for a bunch of idiotic clues. That money already belongs to me!”

He pounds his fist on the table.

“Technically, Mr. Hendricks, the majority of money doesn’t belong to you. You have this oppor-

tunity. I would suggest not blowing it.”

“You know where it is, don’t you?”

“I do not,” Alicia answers truthfully.

She reaches across the table, giving him the envelope.

“There is something more I am obligated to tell you,” Alicia says as he takes the envelope from her.

“What?”

This next part she isn’t looking forward to and she curses the dead man’s name silently for making her do this. “You are not the sole heir.”

Kevin instantly frowns. “What are you talking about?”

“Your father had another child fifteen years ago.”

Kevin feels like he just got hit in the face. “What do you mean? You’re just playing with me. Another one of my father’s stupid games.”

“I’m afraid I’m not.”

“How the . . .”

“His name is Gilbert.”

Kevin’s breathing is heavy, erratic. “This can’t be right. This can’t be . . .”

“It was two years after your mother died. I don’t know why your father didn’t tell you about him.”

“My dad kept this from me for all this time? Who is this kid? Where does he live? He better not be getting a cent . . .”

“I’m not at liberty to tell you where he lives. But he’s been given an envelope too, a clue, like you.”

“You’re telling me that this kid has a chance at the hundred million also?”

“Yes,” Alicia answers.

“This is total garbage! I AM the heir. I should be getting all of it, not the University of Washington and not this kid! I’m going to hire my own lawyers. I’m going to fight this!”

Kevin stands up, his left fist clinched white, his right hand holding the envelope.

“Mr. Hendricks,” Alicia continues in a professional tone, “I assure you, we are the most thorough firm in this state. Your father’s last will and testament is going to hold up in court should you waste the time and money to challenge it. And while you fight, this other boy, this Gilbert, will most assuredly be trying to find the clues your father left.”

“So this boy got the same clue I have?”

“I don’t know if it’s the exact same, but he’s going to get one.”

“But . . .”

“My partner, Isaac, is meeting with him this evening.”

“This is wrong!” Kevin shouts. “All of it! That money is mine!”