

MARIAH JENNINGS

time. I'd almost forgotten your voice."

"Now, how could you forget me after all those wonderful times we had together?"

"I miss you guys."

"We miss you, too," Ray said. "Just know you're being looked after by some good friends of mine. I've made sure of that. Understand?"

"Sure," Mariah said. Unsure of exactly what Ray meant, she felt comforted. Ray was shrewd enough to cover his bases. He mentioned Andrews-Karlssen only as "work," and didn't mention the files at all.

Ray was an avid art collector, so they spent the rest of the time talking about the new sculptures he had acquired. He did not give Mariah a telephone number where he could be reached. She checked the caller-ID, and it had read "Ron Adams." The number had been displayed, but she dared not call it without Ray's permission. He had told her he was calling from a cell phone. She wondered if Ray had changed his name or if he was using someone else's phone?

After Ray's telephone call, the files he had told her about peaked Mariah's curiosity until it had gotten the best of her. She called the lawyer's office just to make sure the files were still there. The lawyer disavowed any knowledge of Ray's permission to grant her access to the files. He had offered to consult with her on any other issue for two hundred dollars. Mariah knew "they" had gotten to the lawyer.

"I sure hope these are not the friends Ray is depending on to look after me," Mariah said to herself.