



*Dead Man's Switch*  
Mystery written by Penny Pislana  
Mystery quilt designed by Cynthia McNutt Scollard

*Chapter 1 — Follow the Leader*

It was rare for Sequim, Washington, Homicide Detective Dimitri Trevesani to have a day off. If his partner, Homicide Detective Tom Jones, had not decided to take the on-call for the weekend while his wife was out of town, Dimitri would not have been at his parents' restaurant when the courier showed up.

The bell on the door chimed as Dimitri opened it and stepped inside, closing it quickly against the wind and rain that blew fiercely outside. The oldest of his two younger sisters, RosaMarie, was walking past as he removed his wet coat and hung it on the rack just inside the door.

He heard her sharp intake of breath. "Dimitri! Couldn't you have come in through the kitchen?"

"Why?" he asked. "I parked out front."

She shook her head and frowned at him as she walked past. "You let the cold air in."

He shrugged.

"What are you doing here?" she

called back over her shoulder. "Are you here to work?"

He snorted. "No. I came to get coffee. Then I'm leaving."

Wandering into the kitchen, he saw that it was a madhouse. His three older brothers and one of the younger ones were involved in varying stages of cooking.

"Oh, good," said his oldest brother, Antonio, "you're here. Grab an apron and help Vicente chop vegetables."

Dimitri started laughing. "You're out of your mind. It's my day off, I'm not cooking." He turned to his mother, who was putting dishes in the dishwasher. "Did you make coffee, Mama?" he asked in Italian.

She smiled. "Of course, of course." She poured the steaming liquid in a mug and handed it to him. "Are you hungry?"

He shook his head. "Just coffee." He kissed her cheek, waved at his brothers, and walked out into the dining room. Antonio yelled at him to come back but he ignored him.

As he strode into the dining room,

the bell on the door chimed.

"Can you help him?" RosaMarie asked as she hurried past him.

"No," he muttered, but he walked toward the hostess' podium anyway. The man was a courier of some sort and he was holding an envelope in one hand and an iPad in the other.

"Table for one?" Dmitri asked.

"What?" the man said. "Oh. No, thank you. I'm looking for Homicide Detective Dmitrius Trevesani."

Dmitri arched a brow. Other than his parents, no one ever called him by his legal name. If he had to guess, he would say that no one even knew what it was. "I'm Dmitrius," he said.

The courier thrust the iPad toward Dmitri. "Sign here, please."

"What is this?" Dmitri asked, taking the iPad out of the courier's hand.

He shrugged.

When Dmitri had signed on the line and handed the iPad back, the courier traded it for the letter. The name in the upper right-hand corner was Alvares e Francisco, Advogados na Lei. In Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"Wait a minute," Dmitri said, opening the door for the courier. "I can't read this."

The man leaned over enough to get a look at the return address. "It's Portugese."

"I don't speak Portugese. And I don't know anyone in Brazil. What is this about?"

Again, the courier shrugged. "Detective, I'm just the messenger. I guess you'll have to open the letter."

"Dmitri," RosaMarie snapped. "Close the door. You're letting all the cold air in."

The courier made a hasty exit. Dmitri took a step backward and let the door

close.

Coming up behind him and poking her head around his shoulder, RosaMarie looked at the envelope in Dmitri's hand. "Who's it from?" she asked.

He snatched it away from her view. "I don't know who it's from," he said, "but I know who it's not for and that's you. Don't you have customers, Ms. Nosy?" She would get the information out of him later, he just wanted to give her a bad time before he gave in and told her what she wanted to know.

"You're so irritating," she muttered as she walked away.

He chuckled and took the envelope into the office, shutting the door behind him. It took a few minutes for the computer to boot up, then he Googled the return address. His eyes widened when the information that popped up revealed an attorney. Hmm. It was from an attorney in Brazil. Why would an attorney in Brazil be sending him a letter via courier?

He ripped open the envelope and pulled out a manila folder. On the tab was a label with his name written on it. Below his name was his home address, the restaurant's address, and the Sequim PD's address. He opened the folder and found a sheet of paper with his parents' address, and his brothers' and sisters' addresses. Someone had obviously done their homework. He set it aside for now.

Behind the list of his family's addresses was a letter bearing the same name and return address as the one on the envelope. It was also written in Portugese.

"Oh, come on," Dmitri muttered to himself. "How am I supposed to read this?"

According to the translation website

he pulled up, Portuguese is similar to Spanish and Spanish is similar to Italian. Since he spoke Italian fluently, he might be able to figure it out for himself.

Two hours later, he realized he was wrong. He'd only been able to translate half of the first paragraph. His eyes were beginning to cross and he was developing a pounding headache. He needed more caffeine. Picking up his coffee mug, he left the small office and headed for the kitchen.

"You're still here?" Antonio asked as soon as Dmitri reached for the coffee carafe. "I thought you left. Since you haven't, grab an apron and make yourself useful."

Dmitri took a drink of his coffee and sighed. "I'm busy."

"Doing what?" Antonio waved the wooden spoon in his hand in Dmitri's general direction, indicating he obviously wasn't doing anything of any importance.

"Police work." He turned and walked out.

He found RosaMarie sitting at the desk in the office, crossing out parts of what he had written in his notebook.

"What do you think you're doing?" he demanded.

"Your translation skills suck." She drew a line through an entire sentence.

"You think you can do better?" he asked.

"I know I can." She rewrote a few more sentences and handed the notebook to him.

He read what she had written:

*Greetings, Detective Trevasani—  
My name is Mariano Alvares. I  
am an attorney in Sao Paulo, Brazil.  
My client, James MacInany, has  
tasked me with sending this letter*

*and thumb drive to you upon news  
of his death. Instructions for what  
you need to do will be included.  
You can always call or email me if  
you have any questions.*

*Sincerely,  
Mariano Alvares  
Alvares and Francisco, Attorneys  
at Law*

"James MacInany?" Dmitri said. "Why does that name sound familiar?"

"He's that tech expert who went missing a couple of years ago. Remember? The CIA found him in Brazil and he was arrested. While they were working to get him extradited, he killed himself."

Dmitri stared at his sister with a blank look on his face.

"You don't remember the story?"

"No."

She went online and pulled up article after article about MacInany and what he was accused of. He scanned through, remembering some of the details but he hadn't really been interested at the time. Maybe he should have paid more attention.

"Why would this have anything to do with me?" he asked, confused.

"I don't know, but isn't this kind of exciting? Maybe you can solve a case of international espionage."

"I'm a homicide detective from a small town in Washington State. How would this attorney even know who I am? And why me?"

RosaMarie rifled through the letters that came with the one from the attorney and held it out to him. "Here's a letter from James MacInany," she said. "Maybe this will explain it. And you're in luck, it's in English."

He took the letter and began to read...*"If you have received this letter,*

*I am already dead.*”

Arching a brow, he looked up at his sister.

“Oh, see?” she said. “That’s why they sent the letter to you. Someone died.”

He ignored her comment and continued reading. *“I didn’t kill myself.”*

“And it’s a homicide.” She seemed to be more excited at the prospect of this case, if he could even call it that, than he was.

“I don’t work for an intelligence agency, RosaMarie. I’m going to assume that they don’t like the local law enforcement butting into their business. Besides, this is way above my paygrade.”

She looked disappointed that he wasn’t interested. He sighed. “I can get in trouble for this, you know. And I don’t mean a slap on the wrist and ‘don’t do that again’ type of trouble. I mean arrested for interfering in an official investigation with them throwing away the key type of trouble.”

Her eyes widened. “Do you really think they would do that?”

“Yes, I do. I can just about guarantee it. This needs to be left to the feds.”

“I certainly don’t want that to happen.” She picked up all the papers, shoved them back into the envelope, and rose to her feet. “I guess my break is over.”

He watched her walk out and dropped down into the chair she vacated. Staring at the envelope on the desk, something was nagging at him. He pulled up the articles that RosaMarie had found and read them a little more thoroughly. By the time he was finished, he knew what he was going to do. He reached for his phone and pushed the button for his partner, Homicide Detective Tom Jones.

“Why are you calling?” Tom asked

when he answered the phone. “I thought you would be enjoying your time off.”

He told Tom about the letter and articles he read.

“I’ve heard of him,” Tom said. “Why is he having a lawyer send stuff to you?”

“I have no idea.”

“Wait a minute,” Tom said. “You aren’t thinking about investigating this, are you?”

“I haven’t decided...” Dmitri told him.

“Well, let me help you decide. Stay as far away from it as possible. You can’t even begin to imagine what the feds will do to you if you get mixed up in one of their cases. This guy is already dead under strange circumstances. What do you think will happen to you?”

He’d already been thinking along the same lines. But something wasn’t right and he already knew he wasn’t going to be able to let it go, no matter what he told his sister.

