

Signal 30, J.T.Twerell

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A Novel

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SIGNAL 30:

A police code put out over the radio when an extreme or imminent emergency exists such as bombing alert, officer down, high speed chase of a felony suspect, or any other emergency where back up is required.

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This is dedicated to Richard Sala who served his state with honor and now serves his friends with good stories. Thanks Captain.

Chapter 1

The wipers pushed back the light covering of snow, producing streaks filled with rainbows of countless Christmas lights. Remembering this kind of clean snow from his childhood, Donald glanced in the mirror to watch the vibrant house lights mesmerize his daughter. She was the image of her mother, with long blond hair and blue eyes that lit up with every smile. While only 12 years old, she was already getting boys' attention, and that made Donald somewhat sad. Trish was growing up, but she was still his little girl.

"It's beautiful, isn't it sugar?" he asked his daughter as she continued to absorb the magic of the snow-filled Christmas tint.

"Oh Daddy, it's my favorite time of the year. Can we keep the lights up so we can see them in the summer?"

"Somehow they just don't look as good in the summer honey," he said as he turned the car into the driveway. "But we'll leave them up until after New Year's and then see how long we want to keep them".

Turning off the engine, Donald leaned back in the seat and exhaled a deep sigh of relief. "Six hours and thirty two minutes in ice and snow; never again."

A sleepy voice next to him said, "I know. Next year your brother and his family come to us for Christmas. You say that every year after that long drive back, and every year we pack up and go to your brother's."

Turning to look at his wife's sleepy smile, he laughed to himself. She was right, but maybe next year he'd win the toss and his brother would come to New Jersey. "Humor me," he said as he reached out and lightly squeezed the back of her neck. "It's six o'clock at night and after such a long drive, I need sympathy and love

He heard the rustle in the back of the car as his daughter opened the door and put her tongue out to catch the falling snow flakes. “Can I go to Cindy’s and see what she got for Christmas?”

“Take your backpack upstairs and put your pillow on your bed, Trish,” her mother replied. “Then call and see if she’s home, but you have to be back by 8:00.”

“Ok, will do!” Trish hollered out as she made a mad dash for the front door. Donald hit the remote to unlock the doors of the house as Trish charged through on a run. “Someday she’ll remember we lock doors when we leave the house.”

Clearing the stairs two at a time, Trish took a flying leap into her room and onto her bed. “I’m home you wonderful room,” she shouted to the familiar surroundings as she grabbed the phone next to her bed and called her friend Cindy. Reaching for her pillow, she realized she’d left it in the car, and knew she had to retrieve it before her mom discovered the mistake. Dashing out of her room, she almost collided with her dad dragging the suitcase and box of Christmas gifts up the stairs. She ducked under his arms, bounded down the stairs, and ran into the backseat of the car. Her mom was entering the house with another box of Christmas gifts and Trish decided to wait until mom was upstairs before she took her pillow to her room.

The snow was coming down harder and the windows were starting to cover with thickening flakes as she sat and watched her neighborhood turn into a winter wonderland. Christmas had been fun, but she was glad to be home as it was the first day after Christmas and she still had ten more days of vacation before going back to school. Sitting, watching her front door, she spied something colorful to the left of the landing. Exiting the car with her pillow in hand, she closed the door and wandered toward the colorful area. To her amazement and joy, she saw the bright arrangement was an unopened Christmas present someone must have dropped off while she was gone.

Trish grabbed the gift and looked for a card or note to indicate who it was for, or at least who’d left it there. Looking at the beautiful green paper and colorful red ribbon, Trish tucked the pillow under her arm and entered the house with the gift tightly grasped in her hands. “Mom, Dad, someone left a Christmas present by the door.”

Her mother shouted down from upstairs, “Put it in the kitchen, Trish.” Looking at her husband she quietly asked, “Are you expecting anything?”

“I’m expecting to put away these suitcases and take a nap for a few hours. I’m expecting that the thought of more Christmas will make me nauseous. I’m expecting that I’ll be very hard to get along with until I

wake up in a few hours.” He set the suitcase on the bed and placed the box of gifts on the floor.

Softly his wife purred, “I love it when you talk nasty, makes me hot all over.”

He turned to look at her and smiled. “But I will be awake in a few hours, so hold that thought.” Though he was exhausted, he still admired the woman who laughingly teased him with a quick lift of her skirt. He never got tired of looking at her well-toned body and disarming beauty. He was a very fortunate man.

Trish carried the package into the kitchen and set it on the counter. She wondered why it didn’t have her mom’s or dad’s name on it, and thought it might be a surprise from one of her friends. Deciding it was after Christmas, and it wouldn’t hurt to take a quick peak, she tore open the paper and found a box inside. It didn’t look like an adult present, so it just might be something for her. But then again it might not, so she decided to let it go and head to her room. Going to the refrigerator, she pulled out a cold 7up and took a drink. Looking once more at the box, she decided to peek inside just in case it was from one of her crazy friends. Sheila would do something like that. Leave a box all wrapped up and put a note inside that said, “Fooled you.”

She set the 7up on the counter and opened the cover. Lifting the lid, she heard it make a strange hissing sound. “Daddy!” she screamed up the stairs.

Donald threw himself on the bed and breathed a sigh of relief. Five minutes in the prone position and he would get under the covers. He took consolation in knowing that at least they’d be home for the New Year holiday. His wife suggested a vacation in Vale, Colorado, but he’d convinced her home was a better idea. In addition to his hating skiing, the thought of flying and fighting with commuters at the airport was more than he could handle.

His wife stretched out next to him, “I wish you would let me drive on these excursions, that trip’s too long for one person.”

He laughed as he reached out and took her hand, “That’s a good idea. Next time you fall asleep one hour into the trip, I’ll wake you and let you drive.”

“I would if you asked me too,” she replied in mock anger, “but you always say you make a lousy passenger, so I figure why torture us both.”

From downstairs, he heard Trish call out, "Daddy!" and immediately heard what he would later describe as a noise that sounded similar to a gunshot under a pillow. Leaping from bed, he rushed to the stairs and hollered out, "Trish, what was that noise?" The only reply he received was a huge cloud rapidly rising up the stairs. As he flew down the staircase, he smelled the smoke and a terror flooded his body. It was only a preview of all he would discover.