

# Trust Your Eyes

LINWOOD BARCLAY



An Orion paperback

First published in Great Britain in 2012  
by Orion

This paperback edition published in 2013  
by Orion Books,  
an imprint of The Orion Publishing Group Ltd,  
Orion House, 5 Upper St Martin's Lane,  
London WC2H 9EA

An Hachette UK company

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © Linwood Barclay 2012

The moral right of Linwood Barclay to be identified as  
the author of this work has been asserted in accordance  
with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be  
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted,  
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior  
permission of the copyright owner.

Except for those in the public domain,  
all the characters in this book are fictitious,  
and any resemblance to actual persons, living  
or dead, is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-4091-2031-5

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd. St Ives plc

The Orion Publishing Group's policy is to use papers  
that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and  
made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging  
and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to  
the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

## ONE

“Come on in, Ray.”

Harry Peyton shook my hand and led me into his law office, pointing me toward the red leather chair opposite his desk. About the same age as my father, he looked years younger than Dad had. He was six feet, trim, with a head smooth as a melon. Baldness aged some guys, but not Harry. He was a long-distance runner, and his expensive suit fit him like a second skin. His desk was a testament to orderliness. A computer monitor, keyboard, one of the latest smartphones. And one legal file folder. The rest of the desk was as clean as a canvas before the first brushstroke.

“Again, I’m so sorry,” Harry said. “There are a hundred things one could say about your dad, but Reverend Clayton summed it up nicely. Adam Kilbride was a good man.”

I forced a smile. “Yeah, the minister did a pretty good job, considering he’d never met Dad. He wasn’t much of a churchgoer. I guess we were lucky to find anyone to preside. Thanks for coming to the service. It almost got us up to a dozen.”

Eleven people showed up for the funeral, and that was counting the minister and myself. There was Harry, and three of Dad’s coworkers from the company he’d worked for, including his onetime boss, Len Prentice, and Len’s wife, Marie. Also there were a friend of Dad’s who ran a hardware store in Promise Falls before the Home

Depot opened up outside of town and put him out of business, Dad's younger brother Ted and his wife, Roberta, from Cleveland, and a woman named Hannah whose last name I never got who lived just down the road from Dad. And there was a woman Thomas and I knew from high school, Julie McGill, who worked for the local paper, the *Promise Falls Standard*, and had written the story about Dad's accident. She hadn't come to report on the funeral—how Dad died had made him a small news item, but he wasn't citizen of the year or head of the Rotary or anything. His service to the community was not newsworthy. Julie had come to pay her respects, simple as that.

The funeral home had a lot of egg salad sandwiches left over. They insisted I take some back to the house for my brother. I'd explained his absence by saying he wasn't feeling well, but no one, at least no one who knew my brother, believed it. I was tempted to pitch the sandwiches out the car window on the way home. Let the birds enjoy them, instead of my brother. But I didn't. I took them home, and they all got eaten.

"I'd hoped your brother might have come," Harry said. "It's been some time since I've seen him." At first I thought he meant to this meeting, which puzzled me, since my brother was not an executor. Then I realized Harry meant the funeral.

"Yeah, well, I gave it my best shot," I said. "He wasn't really sick."

"I figured."

"I tried to talk him into it, but it was pointless."

Peyton shook his head sympathetically. "Your father, he tried to do his best by him. Just like when your mother—Rose, God bless her—was still with us. How long's it been?"

“She passed away in 2005.”

“After that, it must have been even more difficult for him.”

“He was still with P&L then,” I said. Prentice and Long, the printers. “I think, maybe, after he took that early retirement not long after that, it got tougher. Being there, all the time. It got to him, but he wasn’t the kind of man to run away from something.” I bit my lip. “Mom, she found ways not to let it bother her, she had a way of accepting things, but it was tougher for Dad.”

“Adam was a young man, really,” Harry said. “Sixty-two, for Christ’s sake. I was stunned when I heard.”

“Yeah, well, me, too,” I said. “I don’t know how many times Mom told him, over the years, that cutting grass on that steep hill, on the lawn tractor, was dangerous. But he always insisted he knew what he was doing. Thing is, that part of the property, it’s way back of the house—you can’t see it from the road or any of the neighbors’ places. The ground slopes almost forty-five degrees down to the creek. Dad would mow along there sideways, leaning his body into the hill so the tractor wouldn’t tip over.”

“How long do they think your father was out there before they found him, Ray?”

“Dad probably went out to cut the grass after lunch, and wasn’t discovered until nearly six. When the tractor flipped over on top of him, the top edge of the steering wheel landed across his middle”—I pointed to my own stomach—“you know, his abdomen, and it crushed his insides.”

“Jesus,” Harry said. He touched his own stomach, imagining the pain my father must have felt for God knew how long.

I didn’t have much to add to that.

“He was a year younger than me,” Harry said, wincing. “We’d get together for a drink now and then. Back when Rose was alive, we’d play a round of golf every once in a while. But he didn’t feel he could leave your brother on his own for the time it took to play eighteen holes.”

“Dad wasn’t very good at it, anyway,” I said.

Harry smiled ruefully. “I’m not going to lie. Not a bad putter, but he couldn’t drive worth a shit.”

I laughed. “Yeah.”

“But once Rose passed, your dad didn’t even have time to hit a bucket of balls at the driving range.”

“He spoke highly of you,” I said. “You were always a friend first, and his lawyer second.” They’d known each other at least twenty-five years, back to when Harry was going through a divorce and, after giving his house to his ex-wife, lived for a time above a shoe store here in downtown Promise Falls, in upstate New York. Harry used to joke that he had a lot of nerve, offering his services as a divorce attorney, after getting taken to the cleaners during his own.

Harry’s phone emitted a single chime, indicating an e-mail had landed, but he didn’t even glance at it.

“Last time I talked to Dad,” I said, nodding at the phone, “he was thinking about getting one of those. He had a phone that would take pictures, but it was an old one, and it didn’t take very good ones. And he wanted a phone that would be easy for sending e-mails.”

“All this new high-tech stuff never scared Adam,” Harry said, then clapped his hands together, signaling it was time to move on to why I was here. “You were saying, at the funeral, that you’ve still got the studio, in Burlington?”

I lived across the state line, in Vermont.

“Yeah,” I said.

“Work’s good?”

“Not bad. The industry’s changing.”

“I saw one of your drawings—is that what you call them?”

“Sure,” I said. “Illustrations. Caricatures.”

“Saw one in the *New York Times Book Review* a few weeks back. I can always tell your style. The people all have really big noggins and the tiny bodies, looks like their heads would make ’em fall over. And they all have these rounded edges. I love how you shade their skin tones and everything. How do you do that?”

“Airbrush,” I said.

“You do a lot of work for the *Times*?”

“Not as much as I used to. It’s a lot easier to run a file pic than hire someone to do an illustration from scratch. Papers and magazines are cutting back. I’m doing more for Web sites these days.”

“You design those things? Web sites?”

“No. I do artwork for them and hand it off to the Web site builders.”

“I would have thought, doing stuff for magazines and newspapers in New York and Washington, you’d have to live there, but I guess these days, it doesn’t much matter.”

“Anything you can’t scan and e-mail, you can FedEx,” I said. When I said nothing else, Harry opened the file on his desk and studied the papers inside.

“Ray, I take it you’ve seen the will your father drew up,” he said.

“Yes.”

“He hadn’t updated it in a long time. Made a couple of changes after your mother died. The thing is, I ran into him one day. He was sitting there in a booth at Kelly’s having a coffee and he offered to buy me one. He

was by himself, at a table by the window, staring out at the street, looking at the *Standard* but not really reading it. I'd see him in there every once in a while, like he just needed time alone, out of the house. Anyway, he waved me over and said he was thinking of amending it, his will, that is, that he might need to make some special provisions, but he never got around to it."

"I didn't know that," I said, "but I guess I'm not surprised. What with how things have been with my brother, I could see him wanting to give more to one than the other."

"I think, to be honest, if Adam had come in here wanting to make some changes, I might have tried talking him out of anything that would have favored one child over the other. I'd have told him, the best thing to do is treat all your kids the same. Otherwise, that's going to lead to resentment after you're gone. Of course, it still would've been his decision. But while this existing will is fairly straightforward, there are things you're going to have to think about."

I was picturing my father, sitting in the diner, the rest of the booth unoccupied. He'd had plenty of time to himself in the house since Mom died, even if, technically speaking, he wasn't alone. He didn't have to leave the house for solitude. But I could understand his need to escape. Sometimes you needed to know that you were absolutely alone. You needed a change of scenery. It made me sad, thinking about it.

"So I guess the way it is now, then," I said, "is fifty-fifty. Once the estate is liquidated, half goes to me and half goes to my brother."

"Yes. Property, and investments."

"About a hundred thousand there," I said. "What he and Mom had managed to scrape together for retirement.

They'd saved for years. They never spent anything on themselves. He could have made a hundred grand last him till the day he died." I caught myself. "If he'd lived another twenty or thirty years, I mean. And I gather there's a life insurance policy that's fairly small."

Harry Peyton nodded and leaned back in his chair, lacing his fingers at the back of his head. He sucked in some air between his teeth. "You'll have to decide what to do about the house. You've every right to put it up for sale, split the proceeds with your brother. There's no mortgage on the place, and I'm guessing you could get three, four hundred thou for it."

"About that," I said. "There's nearly sixteen acres."

"Which, if you got that, would leave each of you with about a quarter million, give or take. That's not a bad chunk of change, all things considered. How old are you, Ray?"

"Thirty-seven."

"And your brother, he's two years younger, that right?"

"Yes."

Peyton nodded slowly. "Invested wisely, it might be enough to last him quite a few years, but he's still a young man. And he's got a while before he hits Social Security. He's not really employable, from what your dad told me."

I hesitated. "That's fair."

"For you, well, the money's a different thing. You could invest it, buy a bigger house for the time when you have—I know you're not married now, Ray, but someday, you meet someone, you have kids—"

"I know," I said. I'd come close to getting married, a couple of times, in my twenties, but it never happened. "I don't see any kids on the horizon."

“You never know.” He waved his hand again. “None of my business, anyway, except in an unofficial capacity, because I think your dad hoped I’d look out for you boys, offer you guidance where I could.” He laughed. “You’re hardly boys anymore, of course. It’s been a long time since that was the case.”

“Appreciate it, Harry.”

“The point I’m making, Ray, is for you it’s a minor windfall, but you’d have made out fine without it. You make a good living, and if your work takes a downturn, you’ll find something else, land on your feet. But for your brother, this inheritance is all he’ll ever have. He might need the money from the house to keep him afloat, provided he can find a place, someplace suitable, where his rent’s subsidized or something.”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” I said.

“What I’m wondering is, will you be able to get him out of the house? I mean, you know, not just for the afternoon, but permanently?”

I looked about the room, as though I might find the answer. “I don’t know. It’s not like he’s—what’s the word—agoraphobic? Dad managed to get him out, once in a while. Mostly for his doctor’s appointments.” I found it hard to say the word “psychiatrist,” but Harry knew. “It’s not getting him outside that’s the problem. It’s prying him away from the keyboard. Whenever he and Dad went out, they both returned home pretty frazzled. Moving him out, settling him in someplace else, it’s not something I look forward to.”

Harry said, “Well, I’ll get the ball rolling here. The great thing for you, being an executor, is there really isn’t all that much to do, except to come in here the odd time and sign some papers. There’ll be the occasional item I’ll need your take on, and I’ll have Alice give you

a dingle. You might want to get the property appraised, tell you what it could go for.” He ruffled through his papers. “I got all your numbers and e-mail address here I think.”

“Yeah,” I said.

“And you probably knew—your dad had sent me a copy of the policy for his files—that there was an accidental death provision in his life insurance.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“Another fifty thousand. A little something else to go into the pot.” Harry paused while I digested this news. “So, you’re going to be hanging around for a while, then, before you head back to Burlington?”

“Until I sort things out.”

We were done, at least for now. As Harry led me out of the office, he put his hand on my arm.

“Ray,” he said tentatively, “do you think if your brother had noticed how long it had been since your dad had been in the house, if he’d gone out looking for him a little sooner, it would have made any difference?”

I’d asked myself the same question. Dad, pinned to the ground just over the hill, probably several hours before my brother found him. There had to have been quite a racket when it happened. The tractor flipping over, the rotating blades roaring.

Did Dad scream? And if he had, would he have been heard over the noise of the mower? Would any of the sounds have carried up over the hill to the house?

My brother probably never heard a thing.

“I tell myself it wouldn’t have made any difference,” I said. “There’s no point thinking otherwise.”

Harry nodded understandingly. “I guess that’s the best way to look at it. What’s done is done. No turning back the clock.” I wondered if Harry was going to offer

up another cliché, but instead he said, “He’s really off in his own little world, isn’t he?”

“You don’t know the half of it,” I said.

## TWO

I got into the car and drove back to my father's house.

After Mom had died, I'd still thought of it for the longest time as my parents' place, even though Dad was living there without her. It took a year or so for me to move past that. With Dad dead less than a week, I knew it was going to take a while before I could think of it as anything but his place.

But it wasn't. Not anymore. It was mine.

And my brother's.

I'd never lived here. There was a guest room where I always slept when I came to visit, but there were no mementoes from my childhood here. No dresser drawer with stashes of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, no model cars on the shelves, no posters on the walls. My parents had bought this place when I was twenty-one. I'd already moved out of our house on Stonywood Drive, in the heart of Promise Falls. My parents had hoped one of their sons would make something of himself, but put that dream on hold when I bailed on my university career in Albany and got a job at a Beekman Street art gallery in Saratoga Springs.

My parents were never farmers, but when they'd spotted this place, it fit the bill. First, it was out in the country, several hundred yards from the closest neighbor. They'd have their privacy. Some isolation. It reduced the likelihood of another incident.

Second, it was still a relatively short drive to work for

Dad. But instead of driving into Promise Falls, through the downtown, and out the other side, he'd take the bypass they finished back in the late 1970s. Dad liked working for P&L. He didn't want to look for something closer to home.

Third, the house was charming, with its dormer windows and wraparound porch. Mom had loved to sit out there, three seasons out of the year. The place came with a barn, which Dad didn't have much need for, other than to store tools and park the lawn tractor. But they both loved the look of the structure, even if it wasn't storing hay every fall.

There was a lot of property, but my parents maintained only about two acres of it. Behind the house, the yard stretched out flat for about sixty feet, then sloped down and out of sight to a creek that wound its way to the river that flowed into the center of town and cascaded over Promise Falls.

I'd only been down to the creek once since I'd come home. A task awaited me there, when I finally felt up to it.

Some of the flat and treeless land, beyond where Dad maintained it, was rented to neighboring farm interests. For years, that had provided my parents with a secondary—if nominal—income. The closest woods were across the highway. When you turned in off the main road and started up the drive, the house and barn sat on the horizon like a couple of boxes on a flatcar. Mom always said she liked a long driveway because when she saw someone turn in—which was not, she'd have been the first to admit, often—it gave her plenty of time to steel herself.

“People don't usually come to your door with good news,” she'd said on more than one occasion. It had

certainly been her experience, most notably when she was a young girl, and officials of the U.S. government had come to inform her mother that her father would not be coming home from Korea.

I nosed the car close to the steps that led up to the porch, parking my four-wheel-drive Audi Q5 next to Dad's ten-year-old Chrysler minivan. He didn't think much of my German wheels. He questioned supporting the economies of nations we once fought. "I suppose," he'd said a few months ago, "when they start importing cars from North Vietnam, you'll buy one of those." Since he was so concerned, I offered to return for him his beloved Sony TV with a screen big enough that he could actually see the puck when watching the Stanley Cup playoffs.

"It being a Japanese set and all," I'd said.

"Touch that thing and I'll knock your block off," he'd said.

I took the porch steps two at a time, unlocked the front door—I hadn't needed to take a house key from Dad's ring; I'd always had one—and went into the kitchen. The clock on the wall said it was nearly four thirty. Time to start thinking about something for dinner.

I hunted around in the fridge to see what might be left in here from my father's final trip to the grocery store. He wasn't much of a cook, but knew the basics. He could boil water for pasta, or heat up an oven and throw a chicken in there. But for the days when he hadn't the energy for anything that fancy, he'd stuffed the freezer with hamburgers and fish sticks and french fries and enough frozen dinners to start a Stouffer's franchise.

I could make do with what was here for tonight, but

tomorrow I was going to have to make a trip to the grocery store. The truth was, I wasn't much of a cook myself, and back in Burlington, found many nights I couldn't be bothered to make myself anything more ambitious than a bowl of Cheerios. I think, when you live alone, it's hard to get motivated to make a real meal, or eat it in a proper way. Many nights I'd eat dinner standing in the kitchen, watching the news on the TV, or I'd take my plate of microwaved lasagna up to my studio and eat while I worked.

I opened the refrigerator. There were six cans of Bud in there. My father liked his beer affordable and basic. Part of me felt funny, dipping into his last six-pack, but it didn't stop me from taking one out and cracking it.

"To you, Dad," I said, raising the can, then taking a seat at the kitchen table.

The place was almost as neat as I'd found it. Dad was meticulous, which made the upstairs hall all the more difficult for him to accept. I attributed his fastidiousness to his time in the Army. Drafted, he did his two years, most of it overseas in Vietnam. He never talked about it. "It's over," he'd say anytime it came up. He was more inclined to credit his habits to his work in printing, where precision and attention to detail were everything.

I sat there, drinking Dad's beer, working up the energy to defrost or nuke something. I cracked open another as I began pulling things out of the freezer. Given my unfamiliarity with this kitchen, I had to open several drawers to find place mats and cutlery and napkins.

When things were almost ready, I walked through the living room and rested my hand on the banister before heading upstairs. I cast my eye across the room: the checkered couch my parents brought here two

decades ago from the house in Albany, the recliner my father always sat in to watch his Sony. The chipped coffee table they bought the same time as the couch.

While the furniture was dated, Dad didn't skimp on the technology. There was the TV itself, a thirty-six-inch flat screen with HD that he'd bought a year ago to watch football and hockey. He liked his sports, even if he had to enjoy them alone. There was a DVD player, and one of those gadgets that allowed him to order up movies from the Internet.

He watched those by himself.

The living room looked like a million other living rooms. Normal. Nothing extraordinary.

That changed as you got to the top of the stairs.

My parents had tried, without success, to keep my brother's obsession contained to his own room, but it was a losing battle. The hallway, which Mom had painted pale yellow years ago, was totally papered over, nearly every square inch covered up. Standing at the top of the stairs, looking down the second-floor hall that led to the three bedrooms and a bathroom, I thought of how a World War II underground war room might have looked, with oversized maps of enemy territories pinned to the walls of the bunker, military strategists waving their pointers, planning their invasions. But in a war room, there would have been more order to the map arrangement. Maps of Germany, the cities within its borders, would no doubt be collected together along one part of the wall. France would have been on another. Italy nearby.

It seemed unlikely that any war planner worth his salt would tape a map of Poland next to one of Hawaii. Or have a street guide of Paris overlapping a gas station highway map of Kansas. Pin a topographical map of

Algeria next to satellite shots of Melbourne. Staple, right into the wall, a tattered National Geographic map of India next to one of Rio de Janeiro.

This tapestry, this crazy quilt of maps that obscured every bit of wall in the hallway—it was as if someone had put the world into a blender and turned it into wallpaper.

Red streaks from a Magic Marker ran from map to map, making obscure, seemingly irrelevant connections. There were written notations everywhere. Across a map of Portugal was scribbled “236 miles,” for no apparent reason. Latitude and longitude numbers were jotted randomly up and down the hallway. Some destinations were adorned with photographs. A printout photo of the Sydney Opera House was stuck with a short piece of green painter’s tape to a map of Australia. A tattered shot of the Taj Mahal was stuck, with a glob of wadded gum, onto a map of India.

I don’t know how Dad, on his own, tolerated it. When Mom was alive, she was a buffer. Told her husband to get out of the house, go to a sports bar and watch a game with Lenny Prentice, or one of the others from work. Or Harry Peyton. How did Dad handle it, walking down this hall each and every day, week after week, month after month, trying to pretend there was nothing on the walls but the pale yellow paint he’d helped his wife roll on there so long ago?

I went to the first bedroom door, which was, as usual, closed. I raised my hand to rap lightly on it, but just before I touched my knuckles to wood, I listened.

I could hear talking on the other side of the door. A conversation, but only one voice. I wasn’t able to make out anything in particular.

I knocked.

“Yeah?” Thomas said.

I opened the door, wondering if maybe he'd been on the phone, but there was no receiver in his hand. I told him it was time for dinner, and he said he'd be right down.