

Roscoe questioned her about Stoller, but Judy didn't know anything.

"He never told me much," she said. "But I know that man was trouble. He stole two air conditioners—I'll show you."

Judy took us down to the garage, where there were two big boxes against the wall. Each had "Island Air-conditioning" and a long, handwritten number on it. Both boxes were empty.

"He drove air conditioners down to Florida. I'll show you a picture," she said as we went back upstairs. She took out a book of photos. "That's his truck," she said pointing at a photo. But I wasn't looking at the truck. I was looking at a man in the background. It was Paul Hubble. Behind him there was part of a metal building and a tall dead tree.

"That's Sherman's boss," Judy said.

"Can we keep this photo?" Roscoe asked.

"I don't want it," Judy said. "I'm going to forget that I ever knew him."

Out in the car, Roscoe pointed at the photo. "That's Kliner's warehouse," she said. "I know that tree."

I woke up early in the hotel, thinking about Joe.

Roscoe was already up. "I spoke to Finlay," she said. "Picard has something for us."

We drove to the FBI offices in Atlanta and found Picard.

"It's good to meet you," he said to Roscoe. "Finlay has told me a lot about you." Roscoe smiled. "The burned car was rented by Joe Reacher on Thursday evening." Picard

went on. "He rented it from his hotel, so we know where he was staying."

"Thanks, Picard, that's great," I said, writing down the name of the hotel.

"No problem, my friend," he said.

Roscoe and I hurried off to find Joe's hotel. At the front desk, Roscoe showed her police badge and asked about Joe Reacher. The man on the desk checked his computer.

"The room is empty," he said. "His things were taken out on Saturday. They'll be downstairs."

He took us down to a woman in a small office. "We need to see the things that were taken out of Room 621 on Saturday," Roscoe said.

"He came and got them already," the woman said.

I went cold. We were too late.

"Who came to get them?" Roscoe asked. "When?"

"The man from Room 621," the woman said. "This morning, around nine."

"Who was he?" I asked her.

She looked in a book. "Joe Reacher," she said. "He wrote his name in the book, and he took his things."

"What did he look like?" I asked her.

"Little guy with dark hair. He had a nice smile."

"What did he take?"

She checked the book again and showed us. Clothes, two pairs of shoes, a suit bag, a wash bag, a **briefcase**.

I thought hard. How did someone get here before us?