

simultaneously. “I’m having keypads installed this week. It’ll be easier.”

She opened the door, and we stepped into a darkened room, illuminated only by the light that filtered in from the open door. If I stepped in and let the door close behind me, we’d be thrust into a total blackout. I stood fast until Mimi felt around and flipped on a switch that set a row of industrial pendant lights blinking on in sequence. We were in what appeared to be a storage room.

Easily the size of my apartment upstairs, it was stuffed floor to ceiling with...well, everything. Lamps, crates, settees, mirrors, rugs, boxes, chairs, tables, sculptures and more boxes were stacked feet deep and almost to the high ceiling. I was positive if we dug deep enough, we’d find the Ark of the Covenant.

“Wow,” was all I managed to say.

“Right?” Mimi agreed. “This is one of our first projects. Inventory and catalog,” she waved her hand around, “this treasure trove. We’ll probably find the Gardner Museum’s missing Vermeer underneath it all.” She navigated a path through and around everything, to a set of double doors. I traced her steps to follow. She swung open the doors to reveal a long, narrow showroom, glowing with natural light. The front wall was lined with floor to ceiling windows that looked out onto Thayer.

“Isn’t it amazing?” Mimi breathed as she spread her arms wide. “This is only half of it. Come on, I’ll show you the rest.” She walked quickly to the other end of the room and slid open a sizeable industrial door. This one led to another space as large as the one we were standing in, again lined with

floor to ceiling windows, but this time they banked both sides of the showroom.

“The light in here is amazing,” I said as I took in the haphazard array of rugs, chairs, tables, hutches, paintings, sculptures, carvings, mirrors and eclectic knick-knacks. It was overwhelming. I walked cautiously from one area to another, inspecting items as Mimi chatted nonstop behind me. It was a lavish display that needed to be wrangled to order in the coming weeks.

I found my way to a spot distinctively organized as a staging area for sales, orders, and escaping the general chaos. A U-shaped desk arrangement held two computers, an overstuffed tickler file, and a multi-line phone. It was flanked by two small wood filing cabinets, stacked high with books and papers. An assortment of chairs completed the ensemble. All of the furniture was exotic and clearly borrowed from the collection. It fit seamlessly into the showroom.

I continued my trek across the room to an impressive tribal mask, easily standing five feet and leaning against one of the back windows, which overlooked the parking lot. As I gingerly felt its smooth wood, admiring the colors and grain, something outside caught my eye.

“Hey, Mimi,” I said, interrupting her monologue, “there are two cop cars parked outside, and the officers are heading into this building.”

She joined me at the window. “Well, we’d better see what that’s about.”

She guided me through a maze of items to reach the center door, unlocked and opened it to reveal stairs leading to the sidewalk below. Once on the sidewalk, Mimi turned left. I followed closely as she walked a few feet to the stairs that

descended to the mezzanine level. At the bottom of the stairs were banks of plate glass, showcasing two galleries. The walkway opened to the alley and the parking lot. We walked down the stairs just as three officers entered one of the glass doors. A small, decorative sign above the door read: GALERIA CONTEMPORÁNEO CUBANO. The large windows were covered with a kaleidoscope of colorful paintings, but with enough space between them to see everyone gathered at a large desk beyond the door.

The officers were talking with a man about my age, who looked to be in charge of the gallery. Dark skinned with dreadlocks neatly tied up with a colorful scarf, he sported a casual jacket over a deep blue dress shirt tucked into trendy jeans, finished off with black boots. Artist meets gallerist, definitely professional enough to demand respect from the haughtiest of old Boston without losing his cool, artistic style.

He spoke calmly as one of the officers took notes in a small notepad. As he gestured behind him, one of the officers stepped back and disappeared behind a wall divider. Soon, everyone followed and disappeared, just as Mimi and I reached the door and entered.

A small bell chimed as we opened the door. Smartly Dressed and one of the officers reappeared quickly from what I could now see was a storage room, camouflaged by the art covered partition. Recognition spread across Smartly Dressed's face when he saw Mimi.

"Mimi, I'm glad you're here," he said as he moved in to hug her.

"Ricco, what happened?" Mimi clasped his hands in hers and looked from him to the officer.

"I think we were robbed."