

Chapter Fourteen

No boulders appeared. What a crazy development! When couldn't you find boulders in the desert, and if not a boulder, how about a cliff face, or even a cottonwood tree? But no. LeAnna laughed at herself, at first just on the inside, then out loud.

"Can't even goddamn-" she began, but then- this was on highway 79, closing in on the Valley-she heard a scary high-RPM buzz from right above. She wrenched the wheel to the side, jammed on the brakes, came to a fishtailing stop ten or twenty yards off the road, then threw herself on the floor, hands clasped behind her head, mouth pressed into the dirty rubber mat. After that came sounds pretty close to whimpering. The *buzz buzz buzz* seemed to circle above her before receding. LeAnne rose and got out of the car. She saw a helicopter, altitude maybe three thousand feet, range close to a mile, moving north. Close enough to be identifiable: a Little Bird, easy to tell from its chubby, egglike shape.

"One of ours," she said. But who else would be in our airspace? So what was there to be afraid of? LeAnna's mind stopped being afraid. Her body kept shaking and sweating a little while longer. Also she'd pissed herself. She stood by the side of the road, hands on hips. An eighteen-wheeler blew by and the driver checked her out and leaned on his air horn, a horrible noise that didn't scare her, just made her mad. She waved her fist and shouted something at him, smothered by the air horn.