

Anne Thatcher

The Antigone of the Angels

Nathan Wong

Prof. Lydia Spielberg

Classics 199

Honors Capstone

Table of Contents

Chapter One	The Email	3
Chapter Two	The Motion	9
Chapter Three	The Statement	14
Chapter Four	The Transcript	20
Chapter Five	The Notification	28
Chapter Six	The Verse	36
Chapter Seven	The Paper	42

Preface

Sophocles' *Antigone* has inspired a transformative cycle of adaptations and re-adaptations, of expressing stories that build on one another, all to offer up a voice of challenge against traditional power structures. Written around 441 BC in Athens, *Antigone* has shaped centuries of subsequent literature across the globe, ranging from Africa and Europe all the way to Asia and the Americas.

Whether she lives during the German occupation of France during World War II (*Antigone* by Anouilh, 1944), during the social unrest of Milan (*I cannibali* by Cavani, 1970), or during post-colonial Africa (*Tegonni: An African Antigone* by Osofisan, 2007), she always has a willingness to confront authority, to the point where she accepts that she may be martyred for her convictions. She may be Tegonni, Antígona González, or even Antigone, but no matter her tongue, her name, or her birthplace, she will always call upon the fierce determination of the original Antigone.

Anne Thatcher continues the legacy of all the Antigones before her. She is not only a reexamination of Sophocles' Antigone, but also a reimagination of every single Antigone-like heroine in between. She gives up her life to honor her brother and expose the corruption in her city. She fights for the right to share her voice in modern-day Los Angeles.

She is the Antigone of the Angels.

Chapter One

The Email

“He’s a liar!” Anne wished she could shout as her father stepped forward to speak. She wished she were brave enough to jump to her feet and snatch the microphone off the lectern before her father could ensnare the mourners in his lies.

As soon as her father stepped onto the podium, Anne felt as if he were towering over her. Leading to the podium were but three modest steps, but the podium was a platform, a platform that her father sought to weaponize.

She watched as her father took in the moment. Hundreds of Angelenos’ eyes were on him. Grief could not mask the insidious glint in his pale-blue eyes nor the crafty curl of his lips. He ran his hand through his gelled, graying hair before removing the silk pocket square from his Armani suit, pretending to wipe a tear from his face.

Anne rested her hand on her sister’s lap. While the church was about to fall for their father’s lies, at least she and Isabelle knew the truth. Or, rather, knew a glimpse of the truth.

“Good afternoon,” their father began, “I am Creighton Thatcher. I stand before you today, not as the Mayor of Los Angeles, but as the father of the Thatcher family, a family torn by tragedy but supported with love from our own family members, our friends, our neighbors, and our city. I am humbled by the outpouring of support for my family, in the face of this devastating loss.

“My son, Edmund Thatcher, I love you with all my heart. My precious boy, my miracle. After years of your mother (Mum, as you called her), praying for a child, when your Mum and I found out that we could have a child we can call our own and we could have a family we can call our own, I dedicated my life to God—all because of you.

“Your name, Edmund, means ‘rich protector.’ You, my child, were the embodiment of the most important transformation of my life. I was about to become a father, but through you, I realized that I would also become a son, the son of God. The riches I now sought were not gold or money, but rather the treasures in Heaven. You, my Edmund, were the protector of my heavenly riches.

“As you grew older, your Mum and I were extremely proud of you. Like your father, you realized that you were called into public service, to lay your life down for your fellow man. You were not just a police officer, you were a damn good police officer. You fulfilled your duty as a man, to protect your household, and your duty as a man of God, to protect your neighbors. Officer Thatcher, I salute you.

“You were the living embodiment of the ideals of a Thatcher: humble servitude. You went to work each day, like an angel protecting the City of Angels, knowing each day you could find yourself before the angels guarding the gates of Heaven. You protected us every day, even on your last mission when you fell in the line of duty. Because of you, our guardian

angel, you uncovered the dangers of a mastermind deep within City Hall—Percy Thatcher, your brother.

“Your heroic sacrifice helped us discover that your disgraced brother abused his power as a Deputy City Attorney to plot to undermine the sanctity of our city. It would do a disservice to your memory if I did not share your heroism. While investigating his apartment in the service of our city, you were murdered by your brother, who had to be brought down by your partner.

“Because of you, your city is safe. Because of you, your family is safe. Let us honor your memory today. Let us honor your memory forever. In the next City Council meeting, I will formally announce my plans to dedicate a new park in your memory. Officer Edmund Thatcher Memorial Park will forever enshrine your Thatcher values of humble servitude.

“This park will be a place of comfort for Angelenos. Though they will fail to beat your near-perfect batting average, children will play baseball here. Families will have picnics on the lawns. Dogs like your K9 Booster you are leaving behind will have the space to run here.” Creighton paused. “And—fathers will bring their sons and play catch.

“This is the city you served, these are the people you are leaving behind. As the Mayor of Los Angeles, speaking on behalf of the millions of Angelenos, we are forever grateful to your service and your dedication to us. As the father of the Thatcher family, I will forever keep your loving devotion in my heart.

“And for you, my Edmund, let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for blessing me and this city with the life of Officer Edmund Thatcher. Through his words and his deeds, you were glorified. I lift him up to you and pray that he will be received into your arms. I pray for my family, for this city, and for this church: Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. May we find peace, knowing that he is finally in your loving arms. Amen.”

As Creighton spoke, Anne stared at the tapestries adorning the side walls of the cathedral. Dozens of saints were marching from the back of the tapestries toward the front, all of them looking toward the altar. While she was confident that the saints were supposed to appear in deference to the altar tapestries of Jesus and Mary, she could not help but feel as if they, instead, were worshiping Creighton.

As her father stepped down from the podium to let Msgr. Thomas offer up a benediction, Anne felt a deep thumping in her chest. She knew that Edmund was, indeed, a hero of some sort. There was no doubt that he dedicated his life to serving others.

But what about Percy? The night before it all went down, Percy met up with Anne and Isabelle and told them that he was investigating Edmund and Creighton. Of course, Anne did not know the details, but what if Edmund wasn't the hero that Creighton tried to convince people to believe he was?

As soon as the funeral service ended, Isabelle whispered, “We could've done a better eulogy!” She was absentmindedly fidgeting with her black fascinator, and a strand of her blonde hair fell loose.

Readjusting her sister's hair, Anne nodded. "I still can't believe that Dad won't let us speak at our own brother's funeral."

"Not to mention how he refuses to hold a funeral for Percy, our *brother*," Isabelle added.

"This whole situation is ridiculous," asserted Anne. "We are Edmund's sisters—we begged Dad to let us speak, but what did he tell us? 'Edmund's father, father-in-law, and partner officer should speak at his funeral.' So three men—two of whom aren't even blood related to him—get priority over his sisters and his wife?"

"So much for the progressive platform he claims to run on," snorted Isabelle.

"Exactly! And Percy is dead, too. We need to honor him. Dad should not speak ill of the dead. We must honor both of our brothers. Instead of letting you or me speak to honor Edmund's legacy, Dad used his eulogy as a platform to smear his other son's name. It doesn't matter what did or didn't happen; we don't know the full story. But Dad is basically picking sides."

"What is he hiding?" asked Isabelle.

Anne noticed people gathering in the aisle next to them to wait to speak with Creighton, who was shaking hands with the mourners. What a politician! She whispered, "Dad? Or Edmund? Or Percy?"

"All of them!" replied Isabelle. "There's so much more to the story than what Dad is telling the world. The night before Edmund raided Percy's apartment, don't you remember how Percy told us how he was investigating Edmund and Dad? We never got the full story from Percy, and could we even trust what Dad is saying?"

"I agree with you, Bella. We've always known that Dad is notorious for lying—he's been in politics for decades. But what if Dad is right? What if Percy was actually the corrupt one and was lining his own pockets?"

"I don't believe that's true."

Anne nodded. "Okay, then what if Percy is right? What if Edmund and Dad are corrupt? Would you believe that?"

"I don't know! I just don't understand why someone has to be corrupt in this situation."

"We are Thatchers," mocked Anne, "and Thatchers stand for 'humble self-service.' Dad built his entire career on blackmail and lying. How far-fetched is it to think that he is corrupt?"

"Very! That is a very serious accusation to level against anyone."

"Yet he freely smears our brother's name and refuses to hold a funeral for him."

"Still," Isabelle said, "we have no proof that anyone is corrupt. Dad does have the authority as head of the Thatcher family to not hold a funeral for Percy. That doesn't mean he's corrupt."

"As mayor, isn't he supposed to be bound by the law? I feel like there should be some health code prohibiting anyone from preventing a body from leaving an inhabited apartment building. Right?"

"It still doesn't mean he's corrupt. I hate it as much as you do, but we need to drop this assertion that our dad is this corrupt man, just because our brother alluded to it."

"Isabelle, you said it yourself. He's hiding something."

"We need more proof."

Anne stared into her sister's hazel eyes. Isabelle was her best friend. Anne felt like she raised Isabelle, despite them having two older brothers and two parents.

With Percy seven years older and Edmund nine years older than Anne, her brothers had felt more like uncles. The first—and only—time she could remember feeling that she actually had a brother was when she was fifteen.

She had been just a sophomore in high school, and she had been asked to go to the Senior Prom with one of her classmates in Honors Pre-Calculus. The level of effort that her brothers—then a law student and a police deputy—had given to investigate this guy meant the world to her. They had found out that he had been actually eighteen and lying to the school district about his age.

Even though this was essentially the only time they acted like her brothers, that moment stuck with her ever since. Isabelle had never had any experience with them. Anne was her only true sibling, and that meant that the sisterly bond between them was even more special.

So as she stared into Isabelle's eyes, she understood. Isabelle was right. No matter how angry she was that Creighton used her brothers' deaths as political maneuvers, they needed proof.

With most of the crowd outside by now, Anne and Isabelle rose from their pew and shifted into the center aisle. Some of the mourners glanced at them, but unsurprisingly none of them bothered to offer their condolences. Why would they care about two college girls? What connections did Anne, a member of the Trojan Family, have to offer them? Or Isabelle, who studied mechanical engineering at Caltech?

Ding!

The generally subdued crowd filing out of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels looked over at Isabelle. She barely noticed their stares, for she was too busy reading an email on her phone.

"Annie," she hissed.

"What is it?"

Isabelle grabbed Anne's arm, pulling her out of the cathedral and next to the iron fence overlooking the street. They were far enough away from the crowd to talk normally, for everyone else was congregating under the few umbrellas and trees of the courtyard.

"Look who just sent me an email."

Anne looked at her sister's phone. At 3:00 pm, she received an email from percy.thatcher@lacity.org with the subject line HELP ME EXPOSE DAD. Flustered, Isabelle dropped her phone on the concrete.

"Percy must have schedule-sent both of us this email," Anne noted, picking up Isabelle's and holding up her own phone. She had also received the email notification.

HELP ME EXPOSE DAD

Thatcher, Percy <percy.thatcher@lacity.org>
to me, Isabelle

Dearest Annie and Bella,

If you are receiving this email, I am dead. I received word that Eddie is on his way to my apartment as I am writing this. Instead of running from the police, I'm choosing to tell my sisters the truth.

I'm sorry. I should have been a better brother to you all these years. But let me make it up to you by telling you the truth. In short, Eddie and Dad are profiteering off of their positions. They are corrupt. I obtained their bank records, and in the past three years, they have received over \$10 million in bribes. Each.

I hear sirens. i dont have much time left. pls trust me.

insid the fireplace is a small lckbox code 9024, open it & find truth

pls

PKT

Percy K. Thatcher | Deputy City Attorney
Los Angeles City Attorney's Office

Disclaimer: City Attorney, Los Angeles. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee, you may not disseminate, distribute, or copy this email. Please notify the sender by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system.

Anne watched her sister as she finished reading the email.

"Bella, it's our proof," urged Anne.

Her sister was silent for a moment. "No."

"What do you mean 'No?'"

"We can't."

"What do you mean? This is our proof!"

Isabelle shook her head. "We don't even know if this is from Percy! What if this is a trap?"

"No, I know this is legitimate. No one but Percy calls Edmund 'Eddie.'"

"Okay, let's assume for a moment that this is a message from our brother from beyond the grave—"

"I wish he were in a grave," snapped Anne.

"You know I do, too. Sorry, that was a poor choice of words." Isabelle said, "The fact remains that he is asking us to sneak into his apartment, climb into his fireplace, and find this mysterious lockbox. What even is in the lockbox?"

"I'm sure it is the hard copies of Percy's findings. It probably holds Dad's and Edmund's bank records, among other things."

"Percy's apartment is sure to be guarded by police officers. Dad went out of his way to make sure that Percy's body remained where it was. How would we do all of that without being detected? It's impossible!"

Anne glanced over at the mourners. None of them were looking over at them as they were heading to their cars to drive over to the cemetery.

"I will do it," announced Anne. "I will finish what our brother started."

"I won't go with you."

"I won't make you. I would want you to come, but I won't make you."

"It's too dangerous. You'll be caught!"

"I don't care. Dad cannot get away with this."

"You don't know if it's true."

"That's why I'm doing this."

"Please, Annie, you'll go to jail."

"I'll go to jail as a martyr."

"Please don't."

"I will."

"It's not worth it."

"To honor my brother—*our* brother's memory—is worth dying for."

Chapter Two

The Motion

“Mr. Lombardi, will you speak on Item 14 before we vote?” suggested Johnson, President of the City Council.

Lombardi nodded. “Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning. Colleagues, I brought this item forward to clarify the City’s stance regarding the Thatcher dynasty. As you know, we laid the body of Edmund Thatcher to rest yesterday. This resolution would memorialize Edmund Thatcher and would condemn Percy Thatcher in public memory.

“Let us begin with Percy. Like his father, he was a double Bruin—having studied both Political Science and Law at UCLA. When he graduated from law school, I truly believed that he was a brilliant and upstanding young man, like the rest of the Thatcher men, but it was when he arrived at the City Attorney’s office, he became a perpetrator of opportunity.

“Percy’s first years on the job were prosecuting DUI and drug charges. Since I have been a family friend of the Thatchers even before he was born, he confided in me that he wanted something more. As an advisor, I encouraged him to channel his ambitions into professional aspirations, into possibly transferring to the Los Angeles District Attorney, where he could, at least, begin to work on felonies.

“How I regret not having kept a closer eye on Percy. We all saw the signs, but by the time we realized we needed to act on them, it was too late. Instead of taking my advice and working to prosecute larger crimes, he then became the actual perpetrator of these larger crimes. How he was able to obtain these is beyond anyone’s knowledge, but he began amassing a wealth of personal financial documents of people within City Hall.

“He obtained bank statements, tax documents, and other financial records from everyone from low-level bureaucrats all the way to heads of departments and many of us. Percy illegally seized private documents of elected city council members and even the mayor himself. And when Edmund was assigned to the case, he soon found a connection with those whose information was stolen and with those who suddenly resigned.

“Blackmail. Percy was single handedly blackmailing officials all across City Hall. We don’t even have any reason to believe that all of the documents he had or allegations he made were true. When we tried to determine his motive, we realized there wasn’t just one reason. The first was what I previously alluded to: Percy was bored with prosecuting what he perceived to be boring crimes. He wanted to experience the thrill of crime, and he chose the wrong path.

“But the second was financial. On July 14, Edmund discovered that hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, from an untraceable offshore account, were being wired into Percy’s bank account. How ironic, it was, that what Percy tried to use to blackmail public servants was what we used to determine beyond a reasonable doubt his corruption.

“Percy Thatcher was a criminal. There is no doubt about that. He is a stain on the Thatcher dynasty, but fortunately, we can memorialize Edmund’s legacy and wash away the crimes of his brother.

“On the other hand, Edmund remained true and virtuous his entire life. He graduated from Sacramento State with a degree in Criminal Justice before joining the police academy. Having one of the highest ratings on nearly every training imaginable, Officer Thatcher was the ideal man.

“As I mentioned earlier, Edmund was assigned the case to investigate Percy. Like any ethical man would have, he offered to recuse himself from the case once he realized who the perpetrator was. But due to the nature of the police work and his training and experience, he was the most qualified officer to investigate this type of public corruption case.

“Like any man would, Edmund was distraught when he realized the full extent of what his brother did. He confided in me that if he could find anything that could clear his brother’s name, to exonerate his best friend, he would do such a thing. But unfortunately for him, and unfortunately for all of us, Edmund’s childlike optimism was misplaced. There was no doubt that his only brother, the one he practically raised when they were growing up, turned out to turn his back against the Thatcher values.

“The morning that Edmund obtained the warrant to search Percy’s apartment, he called me. I believe I was the last person he spoke with on the phone. He told me how scared he was to find incriminating information on his brother. But he also told me that, no matter what he would find, his duty came first. In fact, it was his duty to his family to spotlight his brother’s dealings so he could hopefully be brought to justice. Edmund was resolved to, no matter the cost, protect our democracy.

“Percy did not feel the same. As soon as Edmund broke down the door, Percy shot him. Percy killed him. It is with great regret that Officer Haller had to neutralize the threat. This was a tragedy. This was preventable. That is what makes it so tragic. If Percy did not choose this path of corruption. If Percy did not choose to kill his own brother. Then there would not be such loss.

“Colleagues, I ask for your vote in clarifying the City’s stance regarding the Thatcher legacy. Let us condemn Percy for his corruption and his ill judgment. Let us memorialize the virtues that Edmund has bestowed on us all. Let us vote.”

And, indeed, they voted.

Seated in the audience, Creighton made eye contact with Lombardi. The councilman spoke true; he was a loyal family friend. And that was how he landed his spot on the City Council.

Thank you, Creighton mouthed to his ally.

As councilman after councilman voted in favor, Creighton felt his heart beat ever more gently. He wiped his palms on his suit pants. Maybe he could actually have the unanimous vote that he needed.

But when it came time for Frederickson, there were at least fifteen pairs of eyes staring him down. Creighton glared at his longtime political foe, and as they made eye contact, he subtly looked down to his lap.

It would be a shame if Creighton leaked the city councilman's affair with his secretary, the mayor indicated.

Frederickson nodded at the clerk and announced, "Present."

Creighton bowed his head. That was not disastrous, for he still got the city councilman to stand down. Creighton could still say that the City Council unanimously voted to condemn Percy in public memory.

As the City Council moved on to less relevant topics to him, he pulled out his work cell phone and began to go through his calendar. He texted his daughter's boyfriend, Henry, also the legislative director for their Congressman:

Hi Henry. Am I still meeting with the
Congressman tonight?

Yes sir. I have your meeting scheduled for 7 pm.

7 pm PST, correct?

No, 7 pm EST. That would be 4 pm PST for you.

Henry, as you know, I have never scheduled a
meeting with the Congressman before 5 pm
PST. We will meet after 5 pm PST, correct?

He has a Tele-Townhall scheduled for 5 pm PST.
Would you be able to meet tomorrow at 5 pm PST?

No. We will meet at 7 pm PST, as we
originally scheduled.

Okay. I will send you the link shortly.

After roughhousing a few more public servants, Creighton started absentmindedly reading the *Los Angeles Times* on his phone. After a few minutes, the articles began blurring together.

As the City Council began to adjourn, Frederickson stood up. "Colleagues, I ask that we adjourn in the memory of Deputy District Attorney Percy Thatcher. He was murdered by his brother—"

Creighton leapt to his feet.

Johnson yelled, "The City Council is now adjourned!"

As Creighton ran to the front of the room, three other city councilmen were holding Frederickson down. Lombardi had his hand around his colleague's mouth to prevent him from speaking.

Policemen lined up to escort the half-dozen Angelenos in attendance out of the chamber as quickly as possible.

"We are now off the record, Mr. President and Mr. Mayor," the clerk confirmed.

"Was any of that on the official televised recording of the proceedings?" asked Johnson.

The clerk said, "When we post the recording to our website, we will cut out the last couple of seconds."

"But what about anyone watching our live stream?"

"Our live stream has a delay, so I stopped the stream in time, I believe."

Creighton looked at Johnson and Lombardi. "What was that? Why didn't you control your members better?"

Johnson said, "He is a loose cannon. Who knows how to handle Mr. Frederickson?"

Lombardi said, "Frederickson isn't going along with us. If he goes to the media, we could all be toast."

Creighton glanced over at the ruckus on the other side of the room. Frederickson was being escorted out by other council members. What the hell did Frederickson think he was doing!

The mayor whispered to his two closest allies, "How much longer do you think the threat of leaking his affair will take us?"

"After today," warned Johnson, "not much."

Lombardi agreed, "We have to change our strategy. We tried the stick, but what about the carrot?"

"I don't like where this is headed," Creighton said.

"Nor do I. Is there anything else we have found on Frederickson?" asked Johnson.

"Nothing substantial. We could look again, but I doubt we'd find anything we don't already know," replied Lombardi. "This is why I honestly think we need to see if he'd respond well to an incentive."

"Okay, then what would he want? Money?" asked Creighton.

"Frederickson represents West L.A. I don't think he needs money," said Lombardi.

"What if I offered him the chairmanship of a committee?" suggested Johnson.

The president looked at Lombardi, who shrugged.

Creighton shook his head. "What has City Hall come to? Guys, we're making deals with the devil. You're the President of the City Council, and I'm the fucking mayor. Why are we being held hostage by rogue politicians and bureaucrats? We handled the crisis with Percy pretty well; now we just need to manage the fallout from this, and we can move along with all of our lives. Gentlemen, we cannot reward anyone for their disobedience. Let us

pick up our spades and draw a line in the dirt. If you are with us, then you can live. If you are against us, you are dead to us. City Councilmen, is that understood?"

"Yes sir."

Chapter Three

The Statement

"Are you sure you want me to drop you off here? At the Culver Steps? At 2 in the morning?" asked the Uber driver.

Anne nodded as she leaped out of the rusted Nissan Altima. She used Google Maps to orient herself before turning her phone onto Airplane Mode. She didn't want anyone to know where she was headed.

As she marched past the Sony complex, a long-buried memory came to mind. When she was younger, Percy had bought her ice cream at that storefront. And at that Thai restaurant across the street, Creighton had taken the entire family there many years ago. She recalled Edmund complaining how the curry tasted like tacos.

Anne missed her brothers—both of them. She wanted them back.

It hurt her badly that that afternoon, the City Council had voted to condemn Percy in public memory. Talking poorly about Percy during Edmund's funeral was one thing, but passing some sort of city ordinance that would forever condemn Percy? The City Council went way too far.

Isabelle shared her opinions. She really did. But while her sister shared her ideas, she would not pull the trigger—uh, not take a leap of faith and join Anne in vindicating their brother.

The Thatcher family was a dynasty. Their family was one of the most influential in Los Angeles. If Creighton had wanted to exonerate Percy, he could have. But why go through all this effort to try to prove his own son's supposed guilt?

It made no sense.

Percy and Edmund were gone. What was done was done.

But the only reason Creighton went to great lengths to denounce Percy was he wanted to cover up whatever Percy had discovered. And if that discovery were to be made public, then the Thatcher dynasty could crumble.

Did Anne care?

Did she care?

She didn't know.

She did not know what she would do if she found the documents she was looking for in the lockbox. Anne had always known that her father was selfish and self-centered and sneaky, but she never considered that her father could be a genuinely bad person. After what he did to Percy, did he deserve to face justice by being exposed for his corruption?

A dog growling at her jolted her back to the present. Anne was nearly at Percy's apartment. Taking on this task made her feel brave. She was a young woman, walking alone

through a dimly lit Los Angeles street at night, and she did not feel scared at all. She did not feel any fear at performing what would soon become Los Angeles' single greatest heist.

Opening the gate to the front yard of his apartment, she reached toward a rose bush. The leaves felt coarse while the grass underfoot crackled, but at least the flower petals felt soft. The apartment building had a single half-dead light bulb on the outside, so she wasn't certain what color the roses were, but she nevertheless plucked three heads of roses and stuffed them in her left pocket.

And from her right pocket, she pulled out a spare key to Percy's apartment, which she had stolen from her father's bedroom earlier that night. The two-story apartment complex had perhaps ten units, all facing a central courtyard with nothing but a dried-up fountain and a dead patch of grass. Most of the windows were dark, but behind closed shutters, she could see light coming from one of the apartment units.

Climbing the stairs to the second floor, Anne paused each time the wood planks creaked. Even though there could be police officers waiting for her inside the apartment (hopefully not, though), she still felt at peace. She felt that her purpose in life now was to provide dignity to her deceased brother.

She stopped to listen as soon as she reached Percy's apartment. Silence. She slowly inserted her key into the doorknob. She turned the key left, hesitated, then turned it right until her weight pushed the door open.

"Thank you," Anne murmured.

Locking the door behind her, Anne gagged. Taking a big breath of air and holding it in, she swatted away the flies buzzing around her face. She pulled out her phone flashlight. Sure enough, it was empty—there were no cops guarding the apartment. It was a small studio apartment, and on the kitchen countertop was still a cardboard pizza box with the Ranch dressing left out. Stepping past the pile of shoes at the entranceway (why did a bachelor need ten different pairs of shoes?), Anne scanned her phone flashlight onto the floor.

And there he lay.

Percy Thatcher.

A Deputy City Attorney, a graduate from UCLA, a brother, a son.

Percy's normally tanned complexion appeared almost purple. The bright blue of his Nordstrom Rack suit was stained dark red, as was the pool of blood puddled around him. He rested peacefully on his side, almost in a fetal position.

Anne preferred to imagine her older brother napping. He might be cold, she told herself. She walked over to his bed by the window and pulled off his navy-blue pillow. Using the excess pillowcase to lift his head, she slid the pillow underneath his head. And she rested his black and orange blanket (the same one he bought when he and Edmund had driven up to San Francisco for a baseball game a decade ago) over the rest of his body.

"May you now find eternal rest," she whispered to her brother.

Anne stepped into the bathroom to wash her hands. It wasn't until she dried them off that she realized how shaky they were. Not from fear, for there were no police around—perhaps from finally having had closure for Percy's passing on.

She wondered how Isabelle felt. Confused, perhaps. Isabelle might never experience the closure surrounding Percy's death. His sisters and his community were forbidden from honoring his life.

Anne flashed her phone flashlight toward the fireplace with firmness, with abruptness, and with surety. She owed it to Percy's legacy to finish what he started. The question of what she would do if she did find crucial documents in the lockbox, she now knew the answer to.

One hand holding up her phone, the other hand fiddling past the metal chains guarding the fireplace, she moved out the fake logs inside. Leaning in, she grabbed a small metal box the size of a stack of index cards.

"9-0-2-4," she muttered to herself as she fingered the combination. Click.

Inside, Anne found a flash drive and a modest stack of Creighton's bank statements. Rifling through the pages, she found that Percy had annotated some of the transactions, writing down his suspicions of some of them.

CREIGHTON ANDERS THATCHER | Account # 2166 4157 1676 | March 15, 2020 to April 12, 2020

Deposits and other additions

Date	Description	Amount
03/15/20	BKOFAMERICA MOBILE 3680093827 03/15 DEPOSIT *MOBILE CA	500.00
03/15/20	BKOFAMERICA MOBILE 3680094459 03/15 DEPOSIT *MOBILE CA	220.00
03/16/20	BKOFAMERICA MOBILE 3680630324 03/16 DEPOSIT *MOBILE CA	90,000.00
03/18/20	BKOFAMERICA MOBILE 3680848357 03/18 DEPOSIT *MOBILE CA	10.00

Apparently, Percy believed that the man who had written Creighton a check for \$90,000 on March 16, 2020, was Felix Umbris, the former hospital manager for the Los Angeles City Hall Medical Center.

Anne remembered him. This was around the time when Creighton and his public health official had decided to shut down the city for fear of the coronavirus. She recalled Felix's visit to their Bel Air mansion because, at the time, she had been upset about schools being closed and was furious that her dad was still allowed to meet with people in-person. If she remembered correctly, Felix was later fired for embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars from the hospital—never having been charged.

Creighton probably had something to do with that.

And Anne had the evidence to prove it.

She tossed the lockbox back into the fireplace, stuffing the flash drive and bank statements in her pockets, and stood up.

As she opened the door to leave her brother behind, Anne broke apart the heads of the roses—they were, indeed, red—and scattered them over his resting body.

She saved one petal to store inside her phone case.

Ω Ω Ω

“Henry, you are putting me in a difficult position here,” snapped Creighton. The veins on his hands bulged as he gripped the edge of his desk.

“Mr. Thatcher, as I have told you, the Congressman is looking into securing funding for the Port of Los Angeles Economic Revamp Project,” said Henry over the phone.

“Then why hasn’t he requested an earmark for it?” demanded the mayor.

“I assure you, the Congressman may do so after he reviews your proposal.”

“And why hasn’t he reviewed it yet?”

Henry said, “Sir, you are asking the federal government to provide more than 200 million-”

“To the nation’s second largest city-”

“-when the average Community Project Funding request is a hundredth of your request.”

“From what I understand, the Alabama State Port Authority will receive 200 million. Alabama, damn it!” swore Creighton.

“Mr. Thatcher, I promise you, the Congressman does want to provide funding for your project. *I* want to provide-”

“You better want to-”

“-funding for your project. The fact of the matter is, however, the Congressman is wary that an exorbitant price tag will prevent you—I mean, us—from getting any money at all.”

“Then tell the Congressman he needs to work hard to get this earmark passed.”

“I will, sir.”

“You better, Henry.”

“I will, sir.”

Creighton pulled back the cream curtains, the morning sunlight streaming into the room. “Henry.”

“Yes sir?”

“I am unhappy with how yesterday’s meeting with the Congressman went.”

“I am sorry you feel that way, Mr. Thatcher. I want you to know that he does value your suggestions, and he will do everything in his power to make sure you are heard.”

“I don’t want to be heard!” screamed Creighton into the phone. “I want to be listened to!”

"He does listen to everything you say, sir. You meet every week."

"I want him to listen to my advice!"

"The Congressman values your counsel, Mr. Thatcher. However, as you know, he has an entire district to run, and there are hundreds of thousands of constituents-"

Creighton mocked, "Hundreds of thousands? That's equivalent to being the mayor of some random suburb. Henry, I am the mayor of a city of nearly four million constituents. Over a percent of all Americans live in Los Angeles. Can you imagine that?"

"Sir, you are important to him. I promise."

"I better be, Henry."

"You are, sir."

"Henry."

"Yes sir?"

"You missed Edmund's funeral."

"I am sorry, Mr. Thatcher. Edmund was a great friend of mine. I express deep regret that I missed his funeral. Did you receive my letter and my flower arrangement?"

"I don't know," said Creighton. "Evelyn might have."

"Sir, if you haven't heard from me yet, I am sorry for your loss."

"Thank you."

"Mr. Thatcher, I have a lunch meeting with the legislative director for Congresswoman Harberson in two minutes. I unfortunately have to go, but I appreciate you calling. Once again, I am sorry for your loss."

Creighton replied, "Thank you. Have a good day, Henry."

"Bye now."

Before Creighton could hang up, Henry had already disconnected their call. His fingertips felt the smooth leather as he slowly sat down. Damn. Edmund was gone; Percy was gone. They were really gone.

How it felt like yesterday when he had taken Edmund to Washington, D.C., to celebrate his graduation from Sac State. Only politicians would think visiting the nation's capital was a vacation, Edmund had told him. But Creighton had tried his best. He had even posed in front of the Ulysses S. Grant statue with Edmund, sticking out their pinkies.

Stingers up.

Damn. He missed traveling for leisure. He missed spending time with his family.

"My rich protector," Creighton whispered.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

The door swung open.

"Sir, I'm so sorry, he just barged in."

Creighton dismissed his secretary with a wave.

He said, "Officer Haller."

The police officer was notably out of breath, even though Creighton personally knew that he ran a half marathon every other week. Officer Haller waited a few seconds to catch his breath.

"I am sorry, Mr. Mayor."

"For what?"

"The body was tampered with."

Creighton leapt to his feet, slamming both palms on his desk. "Percy's body?"

"I am afraid so, sir."

"Officer Haller, I asked you a single favor: to make sure Percy's body stays where it is. Where is it now?"

"Still there. Officer Srinivasan is assigned to the apartment right now."

"When did it happen?"

"I don't know. I-"

"You don't know?" demanded Creighton.

"All I know is Officer Murdaugh had the shift last night. When I came this morning to relieve him, I did not see him. Instead, I saw that the body was moved. There were roses on the body, and it was wrapped in a Giants blanket. I'm sure it happened during Officer Murdaugh's shift."

Creighton screamed, "Fuck Officer Murdaugh!"

Officer Haller bowed his head.

"Fuck him! Fuck the LAPD! Fuck all of this! Fuck whoever messed with him!" continued the mayor. "Fuck you!"

"Sir, I am sorry."

"I don't care about your apology! I need answers! Now!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Fix your mess! This is your fault!"

"I will figure out who did this."

"And why!"

"And why," confirmed the officer.

"You should've done that before you came to me!"

"I chose to come to you before I did anything else."

"Then why didn't you assign anyone else to investigate?"

"I'm sorry, sir, I should have done that."

Creighton marched up to the officer, thrusting his pointer finger into his chest. "If you don't fix this, then it will be your ass and all of your partners' asses on the line."

"I understand."

The police chief is one call away. Don't mess this up."

"Yes sir."

"Find the man who did this."

"Yes sir."

Chapter Four

The Transcript

"You're up, Miss Thatcher," the bailiff growled. The sweat stains on his beige uniform sapped all fear that Anne had for the law enforcement officer.

She stood up straight, her eyes looking up directly into his own.

"You look too arrogant for a criminal," he told her.

"I'm not the criminal in question," Anne responded.

"Come!"

Another bailiff opened the door to the courtroom as she was escorted to her chair, where she was handcuffed. Although confined to her chair, she still tried to look around the room. Undecorated tan paint ran around all four windowless walls. The overhead lights cast a sad, dim orange on the courtroom. The only point of interest in the entire room was the imprint of the California seal and the American flag behind the judge.

For the most part, the courtroom was empty. There were the usual players: the judge, the prosecutor, the public defender. Lombardi sat alone in the gallery, staring at her silently.

She wondered if that coward knew what she knew.

Even if he didn't, he will soon.

"Your Honor, the People call *People v. Thatcher*," the deputy district attorney announced.

The judge looked at Anne, saying, "Miss Thatcher, you are being charged with violating Penal Code Section 459. Do you have an attorney you would like to represent you, or would you like me to appoint the public defender on your behalf?"

Anne leaned into the microphone on the table in front of her. "I would like to represent myself."

The public defender, having been typing on her laptop the whole time, finally looked up. She exchanged an exasperated look with the prosecutor as she protested, "Your Honor--"

The judge raised his bony finger to silence the attorney. "Miss Thatcher, I would not recommend that. While you do have the constitutional right to self-representation, it is highly inadvisable for you to do so. I must remind you that you do have the right to representation by the public defender, at no cost to you."

"I want to get this ordeal over with."

"Miss Thatcher, I would once again advise you to not represent yourself *pro se*. Virtually everyone in the criminal justice system would not recommend this. And if you are so interested in a speedy trial, legal counsel will ensure that you can have one."

"But I don't need an attorney for me to tell the truth of what was done," claimed Anne.

"It is not up to me, Miss Thatcher, to decide the facts of the case during your arraignment. But in the interest of justice, I must urge you to recall your recorded confession to Officer Haller last night. Based on your background, you are clearly competent, and if you should choose so, I will have to find you eligible to be *pro se*, but this will certainly not be in your best interest. What will you decide?"

Anne leaned into the microphone, glancing at the courtroom clerk. She asked, "Are we on the record?"

"Yes, we are," responded the judge.

"Is there someone recording every word I say?"

"There is no courtroom reporter for an arraignment. For a preliminary hearing or trial, there will be."

"Will waiving my right to self-representation speed up the date for the preliminary hearing?"

"It very well might," replied the judge.

"Fine, appoint the public defender." Anne announced, "I look forward to speaking my truth."

Ω Ω Ω

Every call with the public defender, Anne hung up the phone. Every pre-trial conference, Anne ignored her attorney.

She was uninterested in defending herself against the so-called charges. Now that she knew what she knew, she lost all her faith in the citizenry. Who cared if she was locked up for two, four, or six years? Continuing to live freely in a society where despicable people lorded over her no longer interested her.

She felt sorry for Isabelle; Isabelle would have to continue living under the roof of someone so purely evil. If only her sister had been brave enough, then maybe they could live in the in-between together. What was a jail but the interim between a lifeless life and a final death?

Jail seemed like the least bad option to her.

The public defender, Karen Pruitt, was intent on putting up an actual defense. Anne couldn't care less about the elements of a charge. Even if she did care, she probably wouldn't understand the minutiae behind the legalese of "intent to commit grand larceny" or whatever the code said, anyway.

All Anne ever wanted to talk to Karen about was ensuring that she would have the opportunity to testify and present evidence. She waived her right to a preliminary hearing, so she could more quickly present her evidence in a public trial. Karen had been intent on prying what the evidence was, but Anne didn't understand why the public defender cared so much.

This was Anne's life. Her freedom was at stake, not Karen's. What did Karen have to lose if she was convicted? In all honesty, nothing. It wasn't like the public defender would have to live out the sentence.

So, at every pre-trial conference, Anne ignored her attorney. Every call with the public defender, she hung up the phone. But Anne had given her sealed manila envelope with a photocopy of Percy's documents to her attorney.

She looked forward to the day it could be opened.

Ω Ω Ω

"Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, good morning. Today, the People are charging Miss Anne Thatcher with a violation of California Penal Code Section 459. Miss Thatcher engaged in burglary in the first degree," the prosecutor alleged.

The courtroom was packed.

Creighton, Lombardi, Johnson, and his mob of city council members were all there. Isabelle and Evelyn were also there. Rows and rows of seats were filled. Henry was supposed to be there, but he wasn't for whatever reason. She hadn't seen him in-person since he flew to Los Angeles for Independence Day. It would've been nice for him to have come to her trial.

But there was only one person whom Anne truly cared about.

She watched with relief as the courtroom reporter typed on his stenograph on the desk in front of the witness stand. He typed and typed away, every word anyone said, every word the prosecution said, and every word a witness will say.

To her left, Karen's legs were shaking. Anne noticed how her counsel was nervously tapping her pen to her notebook. Self-representation? Free representation? It didn't even matter.

She was probably going to be found guilty no matter what.

The deputy district attorney, on the other hand, exuded confidence. His left hand was relaxed in his pocket while his right hand was gesturing toward the jury as he spoke. "In the early morning of July 19, Miss Thatcher broke into the apartment of her deceased brother, Mr. Percy Thatcher, with the intent of committing grand larceny. Let me provide the background for you all.

"Mr. Thatcher died on July 14 of this year in his apartment. His father, Mayor Thatcher, being the agent with the power of attorney, ordered that his body remain in the apartment for seven days, as allowable by law.

"On July 19, Miss Thatcher paid for an Uber with her account, with Mayor Thatcher's credit card where she is the authorized user. By reviewing her receipts and accompanying security camera footage, we know that she used an Uber for the 7.7-mile ride from her home in Bel Air to Culver City. She then turned her cell phone onto Airplane Mode in an

apparent effort to not be tracked to her brother's apartment. This attempt at concealment is prevalent among criminals who have already planned their criminal courses of action.

"But her secrecy was fruitless. We were able to place her at Mr. Thatcher's apartment based on security camera footage from a nearby building. She arrived there at 2:47 in the morning, which is around the time we would expect for someone to walk from the Culver City Steps to the apartment building.

"Miss Thatcher, having stolen the keys to the apartment from Mayor Creighton Thatcher, broke into Mr. Thatcher's apartment. Against the wishes of his father, as well as against the express orders of the mayor and the Los Angeles City Council, Miss Thatcher tampered with his body.

"The apartment was filled with valuable property. Ever since he was a child, Mr. Thatcher had kept his most prized possessions in lockboxes. Miss Thatcher knew this quirk of his. Miss Thatcher broke into his apartment with the intent of stealing high-value items inside the lockbox, which fits the charge of burglary.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, over the course of this trial, you will hear testimony from law enforcement officers and eyewitnesses describing Miss Thatcher's early morning burglary. You will even hear her recorded confession to one of our finest officers on the police force.

"At the conclusion of the case, we would ask that you find the defendant, Miss Thatcher, guilty. Thank you," the prosecutor finished as he gave a respectful nod to the jury before returning to his seat.

As her counsel procured her own opening statement, Anne eyed the stenographer. He typed and typed away, every word anyone said, every word the defense said. Every word the witnesses will say.

So as witness after witness came forward, Anne waited.

Until it was time.

Time for the stenographer to write every word she will say.

"Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"I do," Anne said.

"Can you please state your name for the record?"

"Anne Thatcher. A-N-N-E, T-H-A-T-C-H-E-R."

"Thank you."

On the witness stand, the courtroom felt as if it was spinning. Twelve pairs of eyes pierced her own, but her father's entourage's too-arrogant smiles cut into her stomach. Her chest contracted with each breath, and her palms were drowning in a puddle of sweat.

Isabelle and Evelyn were no solaces either. Her mother and sister were hiding their eyes behind tissues, so she couldn't make eye contact with them. So she focused on what ended up being her one constant: Karen.

Karen was her spokesperson, not just to the jury. But to the people—the jury that will end her father's syndicate's tyranny over the city of Los Angeles.

"Good afternoon, Miss Thatcher."

Anne replied, "Good afternoon."

"Do you know why you're here?"

"I do. I broke into my brother Percy's apartment."

"Allegedly," Karen corrected.

"Allegedly committed burglary. Committed burglary. It's all the same to me."

"Miss Thatcher, you are innocent until proven guilty. That right is enshrined in the ideals that this country has been founded upon. I assure you, there's a difference. The prosecution argues that you allegedly committed burglary, but they have the burden of proof—and they have not met the proof."

The prosecution interrupted, "Objection, Your Honor! Argumentative. The defense is not asking a question."

"Sustained," grunted the judge.

Karen bowed her head respectfully. "Miss Thatcher, do you understand the principle that you are found innocent before being proven guilty?"

Anne replied, "Yes, I understand that. If I may respond, I would like to explain on the record what I did. I broke into my brother's apartment. Call it breaking in, call it burglary, call it whatever you want. The prosecution indicated that they didn't know what was in the lockbox. I call it shoddy police work, if you ask me. Would you like me to explain what was in the lockbox?"

Karen looked helplessly at the judge. "Objection, Your Honor. This is a narrative."

The judge glanced at the prosecutor, who remained silent. "Miss Pruitt, this is your witness."

Anne continued, "I broke into his apartment because I knew that there were documents inside the lockbox. I have a myriad of financial documents—the documents that Percy found proving the guilt of our elected leaders. You say that we are innocent until proven guilty? Fine. Let me be found guilty for burglary, but let me prove the guilt of Creighton. Of Lombardi. Of Johnson. Of city council members. Of department heads. Of bureaucrats. Let me prove the guilt of a ring of politicians and rich elites who think they will not get away with anything. Let me prove the guilt of—"

"Objection, Your Honor! Relevance!" yelled the deputy district attorney.

"Sustained!"

Anne ignored the judge. "Let me prove the guilt of my father, Creighton. Karen, please open the manila envelope I handed you. Please enter every document into evidence."

Flustered, Karen struggled to open the envelope. As she handed the stack of documents to the courtroom clerk, the prosecution protested.

He said, "Your Honor, I object to all of this. This wasn't pre-approved, and honestly, I struggle to find the relevance in any of this. Why would any alleged actions of anyone else even be relevant?"

As the judge looked at the paperwork, the room filled with apprehension and curiosity over the financial statements. Finally, Creighton's lackeys finally showed something other than smugness. Was that concern in the furrow of her father's brows? The corners of Anne's lips raised ever so slightly.

The judge finally decided, "Overruled. Let these financial statements be admitted into evidence."

"Your Honor-"

"Overruled."

Karen asked, "Miss Thatcher, why did you break into your brother's apartment?"

"I wanted to recover these documents."

"And they were in the lockbox?"

"Yes."

"How did you know what was in the lockbox?"

"I had received an email from my brother, indicating that there were financial statements of various political leaders in the lockbox."

"Was there anything else in the lockbox?"

Anne nodded. "There was a flash drive, which had even more documents."

"In summary, all the contents of the lockbox were only paper and electronic documents?"

"Yes."

"Did you, at any point, believe that there was anything of high monetary value in the lockbox?"

"Well, I knew the documents would be of high value to prove-"

"But of monetary value? Something you could easily resell?"

"No."

"Ultimately, you broke into your brother's apartment, not to steal something valuable, but with the intent to recover paper and electronic documents?" asked the defense attorney.

"Yes."

"Objection, Your Honor! Leading question," demanded the prosecutor.

Karen replied, "Your Honor, let me withdraw my question."

"Okay, let the last response be stricken from the record," ordered the judge.

Karen rephrased, "Miss Thatcher, why did you break into your brother's apartment?"

Anne nodded. "I didn't intend to steal anything of monetary value; all I wanted to do was recover certain documents that my brother had told me to obtain."

Karen said, looking at the jury, "So you didn't intend to commit grand larceny, which is a key element to the charge of burglary-"

"Objection!"

"Sustained!"

Karen smiled. "Let us move to the financial documents. The Defense would request that Defense Exhibit 1-1, which is already admitted into evidence, be projected." She waited as the courtroom clerk turned on the projector that showed the financial statement on the various television screens around the courtroom. "Miss Thatcher, do you recognize this document?"

"I do."

"What is it?"

"This is the bank statement of my father, Creighton Thatcher."

"Objection, Your Honor!" said the prosecutor. "This has no relevance at all to the case. This is a private financial document of an elected official, being released into the public record. Your Honor, we should not be poring over the financial documents of someone who didn't do anything wrong."

"Your Honor," protested Karen, "these financial documents, as I set the foundation for, are the reason why Miss Thatcher entered Mr. Thatcher's apartment. The prosecution's argument rests on the assumption that there were valuable items in the lockbox, but I intend to prove that Miss Thatcher believed that she was recovering important financial documents. Thus, there was no intent to commit grand larceny or any other felony, and thus, the prosecution will not have satisfied the elements of PC 459. Your Honor, this case centers around these documents."

"What is the People's response?" asked the judge.

"Your Honor, the defense is attempting to slander public officials, using this courtroom as a platform to do so. It is clear that that is her intention."

The judge announced, "Thank you. I will overrule your objection, but I will keep it in mind for the future. Miss Pruitt, you may continue."

Karen said, "Miss Thatcher, if you will please repeat, what is this document?"

"It is a financial document of Creighton Thatcher, my father and also the mayor of Los Angeles," said Anne.

"What is noteworthy about this document?"

"You see, it is his bank statement for March 2020. If you take a look at his normal check deposits, most are in the hundreds. Then all of a sudden, as you can see on March 16, 2020, he deposited a check for \$90,000. There are mandatory filings for public officials for gifts over a certain amount, and I'm sure this check counts as it. Creighton Thatcher was taking bribes," added Anne as she watched the courtroom reporter record every word she said.

"Do you know who wrote this check?"

"I do. Do you want to show the next piece of evidence?"

Karen announced, "I would like to show Defense Exhibit 1-2. Miss Thatcher, are you familiar with this document?"

"Yes, I am. This is a copy of the check written to Creighton Thatcher."

"Who is it from?"

"Well, reading the top left corner, it is clear that this check is from Felix Umbris."

"Do you know who Mr. Umbris is?"

"Yes, he used to be the hospital manager for Los Angeles City Hall Medical Center."

"Do you know why Mr. Umbris would write your father a check of this size?"

"I-"

"Objection, speculation, Your Honor!"

The judge asked, "Do you have any foundation you could lay out?"

Anne pointed to the manila envelope, to which Karen said, "Your Honor, I would like to show Defense Exhibit 1-3." She replaced the financial statements. "Miss Thatcher, can you identify this document?"

"Yes. This is an email between Creighton and Felix."

"When was this written?"

"It says March 17, 2020, the day after the check was deposited."

"Can you read aloud the second paragraph?"

"I understand that you deposited my donation to you. As such, I trust that you will sign the deal for the City to send its stockpile of N95 masks to the Los Angeles City Hall Medical Center. And let me know when the City orders another batch of N95 masks ASAP," read Anne.

"Can you tell us what Mr. Umbris is requesting?"

"Creighton received a bribe of \$90,000, under the condition that he direct Los Angeles' mask stockpile to a single hospital. This is one hospital in a city of around 75 hospitals. Those masks should have been distributed fairly, but because of this bribe, so many Angelenos went without masks, were exposed to the virus, and possibly died. Make no mistake. Creighton is corrupt. Let me repeat: Creighton is corrupt. I have dozens more examples to prove this. So indict me all you want! Let me make my last stand speaking my truth. Let this be on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. Let this be in every Angeleno's mind. Creighton is corrupt!"

"Objection, narrative!"

"Sustained!"

Anne ignored him. "Creighton is corrupt! Let me repeat: Creighton is corrupt!"

"Order!"

"Creighton is corrupt!"

"Order in the court!"

"Let me repeat: Creighton is corrupt!"

"Your Honor! Objection! I move to strike on the basis of relevance and narrative!"

"CREIGHTON IS CORRUPT!"

Chapter Five

The Notification

Anne, handcuffed back to her chair once more, choked on the silence that was lingering over the room like a dense cloud of smoke.

Her outburst insulting her father was stricken from the record; her reprimand from the judge was still on the record. Most importantly, though, remaining on the official court transcript was the actual substance of her testimony. From highlighting financial records of half of the City Council to showcasing the email from Percy, Anne had said what she needed to say.

She said what she needed to say to honor her brother.

Percy was right.

And now, the courtroom knew it.

And soon, once the press will have caught wind, the city will know it.

And so will the voters.

During her testimony, Anne had consistently been making eye contact with Creighton. Sweat had been trickling along his hairline and eventually dripping onto his suit. Angelenos kept on glancing over at the mayor and other city councilmen. And she could have sworn that there were one or two people typing on laptops, hopefully working on news stories.

Whether she was found guilty or not guilty, that didn't matter to her.

Her work was finished.

But unfortunately for the public defender, the trial was not yet.

Her defense attorney had just stood to give her closing statement. "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my name is Karen Pruitt, and I am the defense counsel for my client, Anne Thatcher.

"It has been an honor to appear before you in the past two days during this case. I appreciate your patience and your attention as you listened to both sides of this very important case. This case—is about truth. My client is devoted to proclaiming the truth. That is why she went into her brother's apartment—to discover the truth.

"In the case before you, the prosecution presented insufficient evidence to convict my client. You heard his wild speculations of what could be in the lockbox. His best guess was there was something valuable inside. This was blatant negligence on the part of the police and the prosecution. They brought charges against my client, without even having had any idea of what could be inside the box.

"But, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my client went to her brother's apartment because he told her to. She had received an email, where her brother begged her to come to his apartment and retrieve his paper documents. Contrary to what the prosecution wants

you to believe, paper is not of high monetary value. And because the owner of the apartment, my client's brother, directly asked her to come by, he gave her consent to enter his own apartment.

"My client does not have to prove that she is innocent. Rather, it is the burden of proof of the prosecution to establish that my client is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The prosecution has not met that burden.

"In the charge of burglary, there are two elements that the prosecution must prove: that someone entered a locked building and that she intended to commit a felony while inside. If either of these elements are not met, then you must find my client not guilty.

"The prosecution has not proven the first element. My client was explicitly asked to come to her brother's apartment. And the prosecution has not proven the second element. The prosecution asserts that my client intended to commit grand larceny, which is stealing something over \$950, or another felony. But this is not where the facts lie. My client only retrieved papers and a USB drive.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the prosecution has not met its burden of proof. I ask that you render the only verdict that is fair, which is not guilty."

Ω Ω Ω

Creighton, despite his phone being on silent, could feel the millions of emails, text messages, and calls on his phone. He was sure the *Los Angeles Times* was trying to reach him for a comment, or that Felix was calling him to rebuke him, or even that Percy was emailing him from beyond the grave.

It was just his luck that his own fucking children were in a conspiracy to get him. First Percy got it stuck in his stupid little head to undermine the family that gave him life, and now Anne was determined to ruin her own life just to destroy Creighton's. What did he do to deserve this horrible treatment from his own children?

Creighton had been the best father he could be. He gave them a chance at life. He gave them opportunities to succeed. He paid for their travel baseball teams, for their cooking lessons, for their college tuitions. He might not have been around to see the fruition of that, he understood that, but the fact was, he set his children up to be leaders of their own dynasties.

Instead, he fathered a hero, a traitor, a psychopath, and a mute. Aside from his firstborn, his favorite child, his Edmund, he was disappointed in all of his children. He always had been. No wonder they turned out to be such failures.

To actively undermine her own father. That was disgusting. He had to have a word with the L.A. District Attorney about firing so-called Deputy District Attorney Joshua Hollister. That prosecutor was a nightmare. Honestly, he was a disgrace to the field of law. How could he fail to convince the judge to block the financial documents from being shown

in a court of law? Even though Creighton hadn't practiced law in two decades, he still would have done a better job at suppressing the evidence. What a joke.

And that Karen Pruitt was a horrible public defender. The way she handled the evidence made him want to laugh at her from the gallery. It was as if she didn't know what the evidence was until she opened the envelope. And she didn't even lay out any foundation to introduce the evidence. The judge was far too lenient. The judge was out to get him, too.

The judge, Anne, Percy, Frederickson, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the whole city were in a conspiracy against him. They were jealous of him, that was it! It made no sense to be jealous of a public servant. Did they think he was too good at serving the public? He was literally in civil service. He dedicated his life to serving his community. Who could complain about that?

But nevertheless, they did. It was a good thing he had a good connection with one of the county court administrators. He was able to figure out who would be on Anne's jury. All he could say was the jury was taken care of.

The verdict was taken care of.

So when the bailiff yelled for everyone to rise as the jury took their places, he was unworried. Returning to the worn-down velvet cushion, he nodded assuredly toward Lombardi.

"Has the jury returned a verdict?"

"We have, Your Honor."

"What say you?"

"We the jury, in the case of the *People of the State of California versus Anne Thatcher*, find the defendant guilty of the charge of burglary in the first degree."

Silence.

More silence.

"Anne," sobbed Isabelle.

More silence.

Silence.

Creighton lunged and grabbed the back of his younger daughter's shoulder. "You were complicit, too," he growled.

"Father, no!" Isabelle squealed.

Hearing this, Anne turned her head. "Creighton, it is you who is corrupt. You are complicit in all of this. Leave Isabelle out of this!"

Creighton snapped, "Isabelle will be charged! She was sent the email, too!"

"Order! There will be order! Mr. Mayor, please return to your seat."

"Sit down!" yelled Anne.

"Miss Thatcher, you will be silent. Or I will find you in contempt of this court!"

"Shut up, Your Dishonor!" Anne turned around again. "It is the burden of the State to prove whose deed it was! Isabelle was too cowardly to dare. My sister, I hope you enjoy all

twelve bathrooms in the Thatcher lair. As for me, I will have a bucket. A bucket for providing honor to *our* brother.”

“Let me come with you!” said Isabelle.

The judge banged his gavel. “Order! Miss Thatcher, the bailiff will now take you out of here. And you, the rest of the Thatcher family, figure out yourselves. Your numbers are dwindling, and will continue to drop if you don’t figure something out. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, thank you for your time. You are free to go.”

Walking in front of the jurors, Creighton stormed out of the courtroom, followed by his political allies. His wife and daughter trailed behind like defeated puppies, and when he reached the elevator, he moved aside to let a few city councilmen in, but even though there was enough room, the women waited for the next one.

“This whole thing was bullshit,” he bellowed once the door closed.

His sycophants agreed. “Exactly!”

“Anne deserves to be locked up for a long time for what she did to you.”

“To me.”

“To all of us.”

“To this city.”

“Who does she think she is?”

“She better get the upper term,” said Creighton.

“What is that? Three years?”

“No. Six years, for burglary in the first degree,” Lombardi said.

“Exactly,” the mayor replied. “Six years in purgatory should teach her and anyone else to not mess with me.”

“How should we respond to her accusations?”

“They’re not true, right?” said Creighton.

“Creighton-”

“They’re not true. Right?” he repeated.

“No, they are not.”

“Then it’s settled. Gentlemen, we cannot admit anything. None of us can validate any single accusation. If even one complaint is validated, then we’re all done for. Our syndicate will crumble,” warned Creighton. “We are not going to be brought down by some college girl.”

“How should we handle the press?”

“Deny everything,” he answered.

“And the city is just supposed to believe that?”

“If we all work together, they will have to.”

“Guys, we’re here.”

The elevator door swung open to a swarm of journalists. They buzzed around, trying to land on the political leaders as if they were flowers. They clamored to draw out confessions from them, but—as instructed—Creighton and his friends pushed their way

past the press corps. But what awaited them outside of the courthouse were even more people. Protestors, this time. Angelenos brandished signs calling for his resignation and calling him corrupt.

"Mr. Thatcher, get in!" called out a familiar voice as a black Escalade pulled to the side of the road.

Creighton nodded at his allies and hopped into the car. "Henry, thank you."

As the car sped away from the courthouse, he looked over at Henry. His long blond hair was combed and gelled back, and he was starting to grow a beard. The copper hue to his rounded glasses complemented his lustrous earthen tie. He was Anne's boyfriend, but before that, he was friends with Percy and Edmund—and Creighton, of course.

"Mr. Thatcher, was she found guilty?"

"Yes."

"I see."

"Where are we going?"

"You'll see, Mr. Thatcher." Henry looked forward, speaking to his driver. "Mr. Thatcher."

"Yes, Henry?"

"Is it true?"

They were stopped at a red light in front of the great obelisk of local governmental power, City Hall. Creighton turned around to see if there were cars behind them, contemplating whether he should run out of the car and spring into the mayoral office.

"Is what true?"

"What Anne said. About you. And about everyone else."

"No, of course not."

"Are you sure, sir?"

"Are you doubting me?"

"What reason do I have to not, Mr. Thatcher?"

Creighton looked to his left at his daughter's boyfriend. "How dare you."

"How could you, sir? I looked up to you my entire life. You were the reason I sought to enter public service. I thought that, if there was one good politician, it would be you. But how wrong I was. How could you do that?"

"Do what?" Creighton asked. The judge had been strict on cell phones in the courtroom, so he genuinely had no idea what was leaked from the trial.

"Do all of this! Mr. Thatcher, you aren't who I thought you were. You played the system, and in doing so, you played with all of our lives. You played me."

Creighton laughed. "You're young. You're new to politics. Believe me, your idealism will vanish. Fast. Once you're in politics enough, you will soon realize that every politician is where they are for a reason. The ones who have scandals, those are the ones who got caught. And the ones who don't, they have just covered their tracks."

"What tracks do you have to hide, sir?"

“What tracks does the Congressman have to hide?”

“Mr. Thatcher, your name is on national television. Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, Newsmax, ABC, you name it. If you’re innocent, I can help you. I will leverage all my connections on the Hill to help you. But you have to tell me if it’s true. Please.”

“That night. Did you know what she was going to do?” asked Creighton.

“No, I did not.”

“Before today, did you know what she was going to do?”

“No, I did not.”

“Henry, it is not true.”

“Sir, I don’t believe you.”

Creighton pulled out his phone to show he wouldn’t answer him. 191 missed calls. 7,214 new text messages. Millions of news articles.

Los Angeles Times

Now

Follow our investigation into the Thatcher Files as we dive deep into the documents accusing Mayor Thatcher of corruption

The Wall Street Journal

1m ago

Creighton Thatcher, mayor of Los Angeles, accused of corruption, bribery during daughter’s criminal trial

The Washington Post

1m ago

Documents unveiled at trial implicating Los Angeles mayor, city council members, others of public corruption, bribes, and threats

Fox News

2m ago

Bombshell allegations against leaders of Dem-run city.

“I need to get back to work. Take me to my office!” ordered Creighton.

“Mr. Thatcher, where do you think I’ve been taking you?”

He looked out the window again. They’d been in the car for at least ten minutes, but outside of the window, he could still see the familiar buildings making up the civic center complex.

“Have you been circling around this whole time?”

“Yes sir.”

“Why, Henry? Why?”

“I just wanted to talk to you before you resign.”

“By the time you were born, I was the number three at the L.A. District Attorney’s office. I’ve dedicated my life to serving this city. I’ve been the mayor for the last five years, and I will serve out the rest of my term. You don’t get to decide my authority.”

"Nor do you. Mr. Thatcher, that is up to the people."

"Is ruling here my task—or someone else's?" asked the mayor.

"Ruling is your task, but deciding who to rule belongs to the people. The people are already calling for your resignation. The people side with Anne for bringing to light the Thatcher Files. If Anne is sentenced, she will become a martyr who went to jail for speaking out against a democratically elected leader. You will be forced to resign or be recalled. But if Anne is not sentenced, then the backlash from the Thatcher files will be more manageable."

"So you trapped me in a car to plead for your girlfriend to not face the penalties for breaking the law?"

"Sir, I know you bribed Juror Number 11."

"You know nothing," asserted Creighton.

"Mr. Thatcher, I know for a fact that you bribed him. If you confess to the judge, he will order a mistrial, and she will not be sentenced. Trust me, this is better for your career," Henry urged.

"I will not have a boy lecture the mayor of Los Angeles on career advice."

"Mr. Thatcher, do not discount me because of my age. I'm not advocating for Anne just because she is my girlfriend. I'm also advocating for your career. You have five seconds to decide."

"Why? What are you going to do?"

Suddenly, the car pulled over. They were back in front of the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, where protestors and journalists were still gathered. Unlocking the car, Henry leaped out of the Escalade and yelled at them all to come over. The people began banging on all sides of the car.

"CREIGHTON IS CORRUPT! CREIGHTON IS CORRUPT! CREIGHTON IS CORRUPT!"

Creighton screamed at Henry's driver to keep on driving, who ignored him. Even if Creighton had grabbed the steering wheel and pressed on the gas, he couldn't have escaped the hundreds of protestors swarming around the car.

Henry, gesturing for the Angelenos to step back, opened the back passenger-side door. He announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, the Mayor of Los Angeles!"

Creighton flexed his chest muscles and pointed his nose slightly upward as he exited the car. He selected a reporter at random and stared down the barrel of the camera for one of the local news stations.

"People of Los Angeles, my friends, the allegations you heard against me are unequivocally false. At no point in my career have I ever been bribed or have I ever bribed anyone. At no point in my career have I ever threatened anyone. At no point in my career as a public servant have I ever demonstrated any actions of self-service.

"These claims leveled against me are a conspiracy to destroy the great city of Los Angeles. They are targeting me and all levels of city government because they know that my administration will hold them accountable. But we live in the United States. If they break the law, they will face the consequences.

“And today marks the first of many times when a perpetrator of this conspiracy will be held accountable for their treasonous decisions. She broke the law. She broke into an apartment. She will face the consequences. Even if that means my own daughter will be sent to jail for up to six years, that is the law.”

Chapter Six

The Verse

The lower term was two years, or 24 months, or 730 days, or 17,352 hours. No matter which unit of time Anne preferred to think about her sentence, it didn't matter. Two years were two years.

And two years were a lot of time. Even the past couple of days, where she sat alone in her cell, felt like a lot of time. The canary uniform top she was ordered to wear reminded her of the yellow marigolds planted all around USC; her peacock pants resembled the blue books that she used for her finals.

"Fight on to victory," she murmured to herself.

When she had been locked up awaiting trial, Anne had missed the beginning of her fall semester. Every day, she had wished that she had been reading her textbooks about the covariance of a multivariate model, instead of reading the decades-old carvings on her concrete walls. And since no one had dared to pay for her bail, she had been sitting in a shithole of a cell, with nothing but the fire inside of her to burn away the stench of living next to a clogged toilet.

In the months she had spent before her trial, that fire had been her life. Every night, she had imagined the look on Creighton's face during her testimony, and each morning, she had fantasized the words she would use to say it. Her urge to burn her father consumed her fire to vindicate her brother.

If it hadn't, then two years would have become unbearable. With the trial completed, Anne was fortunate to live day after day, knowing that she did her best to exonerate her brother's image in the public eye. But there was still work to do to fulfill her brother's dying wishes, to condemn Creighton to the same fate he bestowed on everyone else.

Two years were a lot of time, but at least, she could rest in peace.

Until—

"Thatcher, you have a visitor," a corrections officer informed her.

"Who is it?"

"It's me."

Anne, having had a spark of curiosity, turned around and faced the back wall of her cell. Shadows of monsters moved back and forth as her cell door opened. She tensed as his footsteps stomped upon what personal space she had left. The hairs on the back of her neck died as his warm breath suffocated all life out of them.

"Are you still the mayor?" she asked, her back still facing him.

"Yes."

"You aren't a man enough to resign."

"Your sister is organizing a recall petition against me."

Energy surged through her calves, propelling her into the air. She spun around, coming face-to-face with her father. He still towered over her, but it was wonderful what her time in jail had done to her. She, for the first time in her life, noticed the lopsided shape of the dimple on his tie and the wrinkles on the front of his dress shirt. He was but a man.

"Does she still live at home?"

"Yes."

"So she is leading the recall from your own house?" asked Anne, laughing, unable to contain herself now affronted with the shell of a man she once knew as her father and mayor.

Creighton, obviously refraining from breathing in with his nose, took a step back from her. Anne stepped forward. He said, "I can't stop her."

"You can't? That's not a very powerful sentiment, Mr. *Mayor*."

"She'd say I'm interfering with the legal organization of a recall petition."

"Welcome to the legal system."

"I came here, Anne, because your family misses you."

Anne crossed her arms, grinning. "You mean, my mom and my sister miss me?"

"My point is, I can shorten your sentence."

"By how much?"

"By forever."

Anne stared at him. With all the light behind him, he looked as if he were glowing. "Why would you do that?"

"It'll get Isabelle to stop."

"How will you do that?"

"I can pardon you."

"No you can't."

"I can have you pardoned."

"By the Governor?"

"Yes."

"The Governor will not pardon me. Not even if you combined all the bribes you received over the years and donated it to his Senate campaign. You have no influence to pardon me, even if you wanted."

"Maybe, maybe not."

"Then are we done here?" asked Anne.

"No. We still have some time."

"Then hurry. I have some things I need to attend to."

"Pooping on your own bed?"

"Creighton, you put me here. I know you bribed the jury."

Creighton's eyebrows betrayed his consternation for a nanosecond. As every great politician, he quickly recovered. "What makes you say that?"

"You're not my only visitor."

"Henry," he breathed. "The next time I speak to the Congressman, I will have him fired."

"I know you no longer have the political clout to have even an intern fired," said Anne. "And thanks for confirming Henry's suspicions."

"He didn't know?"

"He had some evidence that you were planning on bribing one of the jurors, but he didn't know if you actually did go through with it. With what information my boyfriend had amassed, I could have freed myself long ago."

"Then why didn't you?"

"I like it here."

"Seriously. Why did you?"

"Creighton, my role is to exonerate my brother."

"From your perspective, you succeeded."

"Hmmm. Do you know what his dying wish was?"

"Tell me," replied Creighton.

"To see you and Edmund face the consequences of your decisions."

"And how does you being in jail help that?"

"You're still the mayor."

"And?"

Anne snorted. "For having been in politics—or, as you prefer to call it, public service—for this long, you are certainly losing your touch."

"Just get to the end already, dammit."

"I am a symbol."

"I know what you're thinking."

"Creighton, I am a symbol of resistance against the establishment. You and the rest of City Hall are that establishment. You are the beginning of the end. Once you forcefully leave office, the rest of the Los Angeles city government will collapse. What would have taken election cycle after election cycle to accomplish, I can accomplish by staying in jail."

"You fashion yourself as a female Nelson Mandela," taunted Creighton.

"Who rebuilt the country of South Africa on the rubble of the apartheid he was imprisoned for fighting against?"

Creighton roared, "You only seek power. I finally understand you. You think that by ruining my life, ruining my family, you can become the next mayor? I don't think so. You are a good-for-nothing, self-centered, selfish, pain-in-my-ass curse that God placed on me to test my resilience in building up a kingdom. I came here to have you pardoned, but instead, I will condemn you to an eternity here. I gave you life, but your entire life, you threatened to tear down mine. You insult me and my family. You are nothing now. You do not belong in the world of a citizen. Nor are you a citizen of the world after death. So let me leave you here and rot. For I would rather die than be stuck in this purgatory for eternity."

"Two years, and I am free. Or I can speak two words, and I am free. I have the power of my fate. You do not. And besides, I would rather spend twenty years in jail than twenty seconds living under your roof."

"I gave you the chance to join me, and this is how you repay me?"

"Tell Isabelle I'm cheering her on," sang Anne as she pushed her father out of her cell.

Ω Ω Ω

Creighton clinked his glass of Old Fitzgerald with Lombardi's and Johnson's. Drinking it in its entirety, he reached over his desk drawer and poured himself another. Unfortunately, he didn't keep ice in his mayoral office, but his desk was enough to keep his bottles passably cold.

"Round two, already?" laughed Lombardi.

"Second round that you know of," said Johnson. "Over-under four and a half, Lombardi?"

"Over. For sure."

"Creighton?"

Creighton smirked. "Lombardi."

"What's the number?"

"Gentlemen, the correct number is six."

"That's not gonna be enough for today," said Johnson.

"How come?" asked Lombardi.

Creighton answered, "Because they just hit the 300,000 signatures mark."

"Fuck," said Lombardi. "And they need, how many again?"

"316,550 signatures."

"So they need, give or take, 20,000 more people within two weeks?" asked Lombardi.

"They're shooting for at least 30 more," said Johnson, "because many signatures come back invalid a lot of the time."

"Who invalidates them?" said Lombardi.

"The Office of the City Clerk."

"So then let's talk to the City Clerk! Her name is Marsha, right?"

Creighton shook his head. "We can't do that."

"Why not?"

"He already tried," reported Johnson.

"We have nothing on her. She's as uptight as the judge on my civil case. And if word got out that I am trying to influence my own recall election, that will just add fuel to the fire. It's hopeless."

"Then what do we do?" asked Lombardi.

Creighton held out his hand for the councilman's empty glass. He poured a generous amount of elixir for his colleague. And topped off everyone else's, too. "We enjoy the time we have left in office."

Lombardi said, "You don't think they'll recall us, too?"

"If I go, you will, too."

"So let's try to fight this recall!"

Johnson nodded. "What do we have to lose?"

"Creighton, there's still hope!"

Creighton finished his drink. "Gentlemen—"

The door swung open. A man, wearing robes the color of darkness and a collar insert as white as the full moon, stormed into the office. "Mr. Thatcher, I had a vision."

"Msgr. Thomas, how did you get in here?" asked Creighton.

"I walked in."

"Did you say you had a vision, sir?" asked Lombardi.

"Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Lombardi, this afternoon, when I was praying, I was placed under a sleep where I had a vision of what will become of this city."

"So you took a nap and had a dream?" snorted Johnson.

"Quiet!" snapped Lombardi.

"In my vision," Thomas continued, "the three of you were standing at the top of the Griffith Observatory. You were burning papers—recall petitions—from where a great cloud of smoke erupted, filling the skies all over the city. It was gray and filled with sparks of lighting up above. There were great columns of fire that burst from the sky, burning the city below. And flames consumed downtown, engulfing City Hall in an effigy against you three sinners. What more was the ocean rising, a wave so high that it filled the entire valley. All that was left was the hill that you three were standing on."

"Oh please," exclaimed Johnson.

"What does this mean?" asked Creighton.

"Mr. Thatcher, if you oppose your recall in any way that violates the power that God has granted you, this city will fall, leaving only you and your political allies standing."

"Will I be harmed?"

"I don't know."

"Creighton, he doesn't know anything!" argued Johnson. "He's trying to scare you."

Lombardi said, "Oh, shush, Johnson. You've always been an unbeliever."

Johnson replied, "It's clear that this priest is trying to take advantage of us and of Creighton. He's part of the conspiracy, too. Doesn't Isabelle go to his cathedral? Who's to say that he hasn't been indoctrinated by her?"

Creighton shuffled to the side of his office and dragged another leather chair to his desk. He reached into his drawers and pulled out another glass, filling everyone's glasses equally.

"Msgr. Thomas, please sit down," said Creighton.

Lombardi scooted his seat over to allow the priest room at the desk. "Father, what are you saying?"

The priest bowed his head. "Colossians 3:25. *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*"

"What do you mean by this?" asked Lombardi.

"I urge all of you to repent of your sins. The spiritual damage that you have caused this city requires healing. You can't continue governing this city through sin and wickedness."

"Who are you calling wicked?" said Johnson.

"Mr. Johnson, we who are born of this world are all wicked. But though we are born to this world, we cannot live in this world, for we belong to a different world. We who are bestowed by God the authority over man must refrain from our wickedness and shepherd his sheep with grace and virtue."

Johnson said, glaring at Creighton, "You've been silent."

Creighton bowed his head. He, his family, and his staff had been parishioners of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels for decades; he knew Thomas for even longer. He trusted Thomas with his life.

"Msgr. Thomas, what do you want me to do?" asked Creighton.

"You need to repent, for the sake of your soul and the soul of this city."

"Repent from what?"

"From your career of corruption, bribery, treachery, wickedness--"

"How do I start?"

Chapter Seven

The Paper

OPINION | REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Thatcher's Threats, Thefts, and Theatrics

Amidst new allegations, Mayor's recall gains momentum.

By The Editorial Board

October 29, 2023 2:27 pm ET

It's an odd-numbered year. But that isn't stopping Isabelle Thatcher, daughter of Mayor Thatcher, from organizing what could become Los Angeles' biggest mayoral election in decades. Ms. Thatcher is the founder of Creighton Is Corrupt, a grassroots movement aiming to recall Mr. Thatcher.

And yesterday, the recall effort reported that they surpassed the 316,550 signatures required to kick start a recall election against Mr. Thatcher. This number is determined by taking 15 percent of the total number of registered voters in the City of Los Angeles. With momentum behind the recall only increasing, we are all but guaranteed to have a recall election within the next couple of months.

So how did we get here? Within three short weeks, how was Ms. Thatcher able to obtain enough signatures from voters suspicious of recall elections ever since 2021's gubernatorial debacle?

Three words: The Thatcher Files. Through a joint effort with Professor Bercerra, who chairs the UCLA Department of Political Science, the Journal has created an interactive website for all of the documents purporting corruption by Mr. Thatcher and other politicians in Los Angeles. This website has had more than 40 million views.

Mr. Thatcher should be recalled.

First, Mr. Thatcher ordered that his son Percy Thatcher's body rot in his apartment. According to his lawyers, he was his son's agent with the power of attorney, so he had seven days to do whatever he wanted with his son's body before making efforts at burial. There is a civil lawsuit filed by Ms. Thatcher asserting that leaving a body purposefully unattended falls outside of the spirit of the law. Even if it was legal, we find it inhumane for

a father to intentionally leave his own son's body on the floor of his apartment for an entire week.

Second, Mr. Thatcher dedicated the eulogy that was supposed to go toward Edmund Thatcher to discrediting Percy Thatcher. Mr. Thatcher used his children's deaths as a political maneuver. He sought to suppress any claims of wrongdoing by attacking the man who died investigating him. Later on, the City Council not only echoed his sentiments, but they also passed an ordinance decreeing this.

Third, Mr. Thatcher bribed the jury overseeing his daughter Anne Thatcher's criminal proceedings. She was charged with burglary as a result of her efforts to recover the documents from Percy Thatcher's apartment. But instead of aiming to ascertain a not-guilty verdict, Mr. Thatcher paid the jury to place his own daughter in jail.

In this past month, Mr. Thatcher has become the embodiment for public corruption. This description is truly deserved. The Thatcher Files, as we have previously reported, has revealed the largest syndicate of corruption in public office in the history of this state.

But we believe that Mr. Thatcher is more than corrupt; he is inhumane. He is uncompassionate, selfish, repugnant, unpleasant.

Mr. Thatcher is not fit for any public office; he should be recalled.

HUMAN INTEREST

Mayor's Imprisoned Daughter Found Dead in Her Cell

Anne Thatcher is remembered by her sister, Isabelle Thatcher, as a “strong-willed fighter for justice”

By [Marie Chan](#) | Published on October 29, 2023 02:46 PM

Isabelle Thatcher is paying tribute to her beloved sister, who committed suicide this afternoon.

In a statement shared with PEOPLE, Isabelle wrote that “Annie was a beacon of hope to the unseen world of the marginalized. Her life was cut short due to the torment that our father placed on her.”

Anne, the daughter of Los Angeles mayor Creighton Thatcher, was serving a two-year sentence for what Isabelle called “an unjust and corrupt wielding of power.”

Meanwhile, Creighton is facing allegations of corruption, the most recent accusation being that he bribed the jury. So far, the wheels of justice have moved slowly and not acted on those claims.

“Perhaps, if the State had done what it was supposed to do and served equal justice to all, not just the rich and powerful, then my sister would still be here today,” added Isabelle.

She described Anne as “loving to everyone and loved by all. Her joy filled any room.”

CALIFORNIA

Evelyn Thatcher, wife to L.A. Mayor, found dead at Bel Air home

BY JAQUELYN FLANDERS | STAFF WRITER

OCTOBER 29, 3:07 PM PT

One of Forbes' 100 Most Powerful Women, Evelyn Thatcher – the CEO of bakery giant Calcifer Cookies and wife to disgraced Los Angeles Mayor Creighton Thatcher – was found dead at her home this afternoon.

Evelyn, 63, spent this morning at Mass with her daughter Isabelle, 19.

“My mother was the strongest woman I knew,” wrote Isabelle in an Instagram post. “She inspired me every day, telling me that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. Her life was a testament to the American Dream.”

The founder of Calcifer Cookies, Artemis W. Jones, wrote in a statement, “Evelyn was my best friend. She was the wisest and most patient person I have ever met. In an industry dominated by men, Evelyn defied all obstacles and became the world’s role model. I will miss her beauty, her humor, her intelligence.”

Randall Manne, the lead investigative officer, told The Times that he believed this was a suicide.

“However, we will not know for sure until we finish with our investigation.”

POLITICS

LA Mayor Thatcher attempts suicide

Following the deaths of his daughter and wife, Thatcher attempts suicide.

By **ROB GARCIA**

10 / 29 / 2023 09:12 PM EDT

LOS ANGELES – the mayor of Los Angeles attempted to commit suicide by jumping off the City Hall Observation Deck this afternoon, City Attorney Peter Nunes said.

Thatcher's suicide attempt follows the suicides of his daughter and wife, which took place in sequence just hours before. He was taken to the Los Angeles City Hall Medical Center and immediately underwent emergency surgery.

Thatcher had faced a perilous last couple of weeks, both personally and politically. His family members alleged various actions of corruption, including taking and giving bribes, threatening other public officials, and embezzling public funds.

These accusations led to a movement to recall Thatcher. The organization spearheading the recall petition announced yesterday that they reached the total number of signatures to kick off a recall. The petition has not been delivered to the City Clerk as of yet. Due to the circumstances, however, the fate of the recall election is unclear.

According to the Los Angeles Charter, once the City Clerk receives the recall signatures, she is statutorily required to review the validity of the signatures. And if enough signatures are considered acceptable, then she is required to present the certificate to the City Council, which must announce a special election.

Los Angeles Times

Now

L.A. Mayor Thatcher died in hospital after attempting to commit suicide