Home Visit: Mr. & Mrs. T.  
Late Summer, 1973, Newport, R.I.

“Our house is a very very fine house  
With two cats in the yard” 
- Crosby, Stills and Nash. Our House

“Mr. Cuddy, I made these for you. Please have one.”

“Thanks Mrs. T.,” figuring out how to handle this culinary dilemma. Walter warned me about the domestic scene. He wasn’t wrong. He also hadn’t been kidding about the odor. The place stinks. It smells like sewage. My eyes are stinging. I can’t ignore it.

We were sitting in what passes for the T.’s living room. Tough apartment, tough house, tough street, tough neighborhood.

The T’s are greying, overweight and really nervous. Mr. T. sat in what can loosely be described as an overstuffed easy chair, his hands clasped across his more than ample stomach. He grunted occasionally.

“Mr. Cuddy, when can Charlie come home? We love him so much. When can he come home for good? Mrs. T. hasn’t stopped pacing, crying, talking or trying to hand me something to eat since I arrived.

“There’s really a bad odor in here. What’s that about?”

Mr. T. grunts and for the first time moves, slightly shifting his bulk. Mrs. T. babbles something about a leaking sewer pipe under the kitchen floor.

“Isn’t that the City’s responsibility to fix? Would you like me to make a phone call?”
“Oh, would you. That would be wonderful. Please have another cookie. I made them for you.”

I decide to pull out my well-worn basketball coach persona. We’re going to form Team T.

“Mr. and Mrs. T., let’s work together as a team with Charlie and make that happen. There are some things you need to do. There’s a bunch of stuff that you as a family need to do. I’ll help. Let’s talk about them.”

Later, as I hope behind the wheel of my state issued, black, and radioless sedan, I empty my pockets of Mrs. T.’s chocolate chip cookies onto the passenger side of the front seat.

I’m convinced it’s time for Charlie to go home for good.