

Forward

The name Milwaukee is believed to come from the Ojibwe word *ominokwaiing*, meaning gathering place, or gathering by the water. Milwaukee has at least three different nicknames. One is the Beer Capital of The World. This came about when most of the major brewers in America were located there and still produced beer. Another name, Cream City, which comes from the color of the bricks that were used to make the buildings (there was also a Cream City Brewery) It is also known as the City of Neighborhoods and to this day it consists of many neighborhoods where they have their own churches, schools, restaurants and bars and the residents maintain a strong sense of belonging.

Another distinctive trait that you will find in Milwaukee is what is known as Polish flats. These are two family homes with separate entrances, but with the units stacked one on top of another instead of side by side. This arrangement enables a family of limited means to purchase both a home and a modestly priced rental apartment unit. Since Polish American immigrants to the area prized land ownership, this solution, which was prominent in their areas of settlement within the city, came to be associated with them.

Mader's Restaurant in Milwaukee is famous for its German food and German art collection. It is worth the trip to Milwaukee just to go to Mader's.

It is outside this city in a western suburb named Brookfield, where I grew up and spent my youth. There actually was a Judge's Beyond The Reef in Brookfield on the corner of Calhoun Road and North Avenue. The history of this restaurant described in this novel is true to the best of my knowledge.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

It is Rocco's Pub, however, that I took the liberty to move to Milwaukee. It is Max Fly's favorite hangout and is actually located in Jasper, Georgia. Even though Rocco's doesn't have a favorite booth back by the ladies room reserved for me, you can frequently find me there, enjoying great food and an occasional brandy and listening to fantastic bands pound out some of my favorite tunes . Rocco's chili has been voted the Best Chili in Georgia eight times and probably would have been nine or more but Dan Ciorrocco, the proprietor, decided to give the rest of the population a fair shot at the title and no longer enters the competition.

Most sane people will realize that this novel is pure bull turds and all the characters have to be fictional; although, I don't suppose too many sane people would take the time to read more than this interesting introduction.

In no way have I intended to portray anyone living or dead, while telling this story. I have taken the liberty to use the names of individuals who have crossed my path over the years and made my life fuller.

I hope you enjoy reading this novel half as much as I enjoyed writing it.

David Hesse

Prologue

It was dark, very dark. The clouds kept any stars that might have been in the sky covered and the moon was nowhere to be seen. The dark figure, hiding in the bushes next to the house, couldn't have asked for a better night. For him to do what he had planned, he needed it dark. He was wearing what he always wore at night, his uniform du nuit, black gloves, a black watch cap, black turtleneck sweater, black pants and black rubber soled shoes. It wasn't long before a light went on in the bedroom of the house. It was her bedroom. Soon she walked to the window wearing the same V neck blue blouse she was wearing earlier when he saw her on the museum steps. The blouse revealed a deep cleavage and a promise of something special waiting for him to take. He noticed that she had already removed the black slacks she wore as she reached up and pulled down the shade. He was still able to see her silhouette as she lifted her shirt over her head. He walked to the side of the house and was able to peek into her room between the window sill and where the shade had stopped, just short of covering the entire window. She should have been more careful he thought with a grin. Her back was toward him, her shirt off and she was wearing black panties and a black bra. Her hands were unhooking the clasp of her bra. She shrugged her shoulders forward and her bra fell into her hands. Next she bent over and removed her panties, turning toward the window unknowingly exposing her to him as she tossed them onto the bed. The beauty of her body caused him to catch his breath. He feared she may have heard him. That was crazy. There was no way she could have heard him. His breathing got heavier as he watched her stretch out to remove her bathrobe from the closet. She turned as she slipped her arms into the robe and turned off the light, walking out of the room.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

He withdrew his glass cutter and started to work it on the top window pane next to the latch. When he cut through, he lightly punched the circle of glass causing it to fall in and break on the bedroom floor. He waited a moment to make sure the noise hadn't alerted her. It hadn't. He had done this so many times he could do it in his sleep. He reached his right hand in and opened the latch and pushed up the window. It was open. Again he paused, waiting. Nothing. He put his hands on the window ledge and pulled himself up. Now he was in. He crouched by the window listening. He started to perspire and sweat began to form on his neck and roll down his back. He could hear the water running in the tub in the bath down the hall.

He waited, listening. He could hear her splash in the tub. He walked to the dresser against the far wall, removing his flashlight. He pointed it at the floor and turned it on, bringing the beam of light up to the top of the dresser; scanning its contents for anything that might be of value.

“Just junk here. I wonder where she keeps the good stuff.”

He started pulling out the drawers one by one. When he opened the drawer containing her undergarments, he picked up each piece, gently caressing them. He brought each one up to his face and inhaled deeply, savoring her scent. She had a sachet in the drawer that gave everything a very pleasing smell. In the back, under some lacy bras, she had hidden a small jewelry box. He pulled it out and put it on the dresser top. It was locked but the locks on these boxes could be opened with a butter knife. He reached in his pocket and took out his switch blade. Snapping open the blade, he stuck it in the lock's opening and snapped the locking mechanism and the lid opened easily. Inside were a couple of diamond necklaces and bracelets and some very attractive looking emerald rings. One cocktail ring had what looked like a huge ruby stone surrounded by smaller diamonds with matching ear rings. This will be easy to fence for cash he thought.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

Next he walked over to the chair by the side of the bed and picked up her purse and pulled out her wallet. “One hundred dollars in cash. Wonder what she was planning to buy with this,” he thought as he folded the bills and stuffed them in his pocket. He pulled out her drivers’ license and read the information softly out loud, letting her name slowly slide off his lips, Kathryn Reilly. She was five foot one inch tall and weighed one hundred and five pounds. She had black hair, brown eyes and was twenty two years old. He couldn’t stop looking at her face. She was so beautiful. He wondered who her boyfriend was and where he might be at this moment. Was he thinking the same thing about Kathryn Reilly as he was? Probably. If he had a girlfriend like this, he would be thinking about doing what he had in mind doing to her now, every night. Surely these same thoughts went through Kathryn’s boyfriends mind. Maybe she didn’t have a boyfriend. Maybe she was too stuck on herself to give herself to someone else. He didn’t see her with a boyfriend for the past week that he had been following her. She met a couple of girl friends. They shopped and shared a lunch or two and that was it. Not a very active social life for such a pretty girl. That’s good for him he thought. That meant he could take his time with her and really enjoy her.

He went to a trunk under a window and searched through it for valuables that might be hidden.

Bull’s eye! An envelope containing close to three thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills was stashed in the bottom of the trunk. “This is going to be a great night,” he thought, as he closed the trunk lid and sat on the bed. He counted the money one more time to make sure he counted correctly the first time. He had. He couldn’t help but smile. He wanted to stand up and shout but that would ruin the surprise he had for her. He turned off his flashlight.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

He pulled out his switch blade knife and placed it on the night stand next to the bed. Then he took off his watch cap and placed it on the bed. Then he stood up and pulled his sweater over his head folding it neatly. He untied his shoes and slipped them off and then he stuffed one sock in each shoe. Next came his pants, which he folded as well and then his boxer shorts. He was ready.

He reached out and grabbed his switch blade as he leaned back on the soft pillows stacked against the head of the bed to wait for her arrival. It wouldn't be long now. She would smell good. The thought of her being next to him got him aroused. All he had to do was wait for her.

Finally he heard the water start to drain from the tub. He imagined her standing, naked in the middle of the tub, toweling the water off her young nubile body. He thought of her lingering on her breasts as she gently dried each one, bringing her nipples erect. Next he thought of her bending over and slowly drying her legs, starting at her small rounded calves, moving languidly up her thighs until she reached the core of her being, her womanhood. He was sweating again.

Her shadow preceded her as she walked down the hall from the bath to her room. He sat up as she turned in and reached up and switched on the light.

Her hand flew to her mouth, stifling a scream. Her eyes were wide with fright.

He brought his finger up to his lips signaling for her to be quiet.

She turned to run but he was too fast. He was on her in an instant, lifting her off her feet and throwing her on the bed, landing on top of her, pressing her into the mattress.

She was no match for his size and strength. She wasn't much larger than a child and he was a full grown man and very strong.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

He ripped her bathrobe down off her shoulders, pinning her arms to her side. He feasted on her breasts as her chest heaved with exhaustion from her fight for survival. Now she screamed. It startled him and he brought his fist up and slammed her hard on the left check, snapping her head to the side. He hit her again, and again and again. Her eyes rolled up in her head and she slumped silently on the bed.

He continued to work on her and finish what he had been planning to do for the past week. When he finished he got up and stood at the side of the bed, looking down at the beautiful young Kathryn Reilly who was still unconscious. The welt on the side of her face was swelling and beginning to turn a darker red. She would have one helluva a shiner he thought.

He casually walked out of the room to the kitchen and opened the refrigerator door. Not much in here he thought. He pulled out a Schlitz beer that was stored in the door. Rummaging through a drawer he found a church key and punched open the lid. The beer fizzed and foamed out of the opening and he brought his lips down to suck the cold liquid down his throat. When he finished he let out a loud belch and crushed the empty can against the counter and threw it on the floor.

I'll do her one more time before I get outta here. As he walked into the room he saw her stagger to the dresser and lean down with her back to him. He was infuriated. How dare she get out of the bed without asking him?

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

“You bitch,” he screamed as he picked up the chair next to the bed and delivered a stunning blow to the back of her head. The chair shattered and she screamed out in pain and fell to the floor. He grabbed his knife and a pillow and straddled her on the floor. He stifled her screams with the pillow. Then he finished his work with the knife by grabbing her still wet hair and yanking her head back he cut her from ear to ear. He could feel the knife going through the cartilage and the head coming loose in his hands, which were slippery from all the blood spurting out of the gaping wound in poor Kathryn’s neck. The artery as well as all the cartilage was completely severed. The only thing still keeping her head attached to her body was the brain stem and he would finish that shortly. He stood over her lifeless body staring down at his work as the blood pooled around her shoulders. His chest was heaving as he was close to hyperventilating. This always happened to him. It took a few minutes for him to get his breathing back to normal. He looked around him and saw the blood splatter all over the dresser and the walls. He picked up Kathryn’s lifeless body and noticed her skull was crushed when he struck her with the chair. He carried her to the bed and gently laid her down, crossing her arms across her chest resting her hands on her pubis.

He walked out of the room and entered the bathroom, starting the shower. When the water was hot he stepped in, letting the water cascade over his body. The water was a bright red from Kathryn Reilly’s blood that he washed from his body and he watched as it circled the drain. He grabbed a bar of soap and scrubbed his hands, arms and face until they were almost raw. He was a bright red from the heat and scrubbing when he stepped out of the shower and dressed. He left through the same window he entered leaving Kathryn Reilly’s lifeless body lying on her blood soaked bed without her head. He took that with him.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

Chapter 1

I wrapped the leather strap around my wrist until it was good and tight. My hat was pulled down as far as it would go and I adjusted my chaps. I was known for my hat always being on my head at the end of my rides, something I was proud of.

It was 1937 and I was leading in points for the all around cowboy award with only two more events to go before the end of the season. Barring any unforeseen accidents, I was a shoo in to beat Mike Scanlon who had won the title three years running. I looked forward to getting the silver buckle, silver studded saddle and bridle as well as the nice check that was waiting for the winner. Saying nothing about a chance of crawling in the sack with that little rodeo queen from Austin who was sitting in the crowd today.

It was Austin Texas and it was hot. Austin is a rodeo town, a breeding ground for the rodeo, not just for animals, but for the men who ride them as well. I am an outsider, from Wisconsin and nobody from Wisconsin had won this title. I am going to be the first.

I wiggled my seat around on the back of the big two thousand pound Corrientes bull named Casper, squeezing his sides with my legs to let him know I am taking over today. The bull rolled his eyes back and looked up at me the best he could in the tight chute as if to say, "I'm ready for you. Everyone else thought they could stay on me for eight seconds but nobody has lasted more than two and you won't be any different."

What Casper didn't know was that I had been studying him all season. Oh, he is one tough son of a bitch alright, but I noticed that every time he shot out of the chute, he turned to the right and dropped his head and gave one helluva twist then he would surprise everybody and turn back to the left; but I would be ready for it today; it didn't take much to outsmart a dumb ol' bull. Eight seconds to fame. It doesn't sound like much time but when you are on the back of a beast like this, it feels like an eternity.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

I looked up and scanned the area in front of me. The little rodeo queen from Austin was sitting in the front row off to the left of the chute and next to her was former President Teddy Roosevelt and the famous Chief Quantah Parker, both big rodeo fans. I also noticed the three rodeo clowns standing behind the barrels in the middle of the arena chatting with one another. I looked down one last time and checked my wrap and smiled at Hap Schultz, my team roping partner and header, who was standing on the railing next to me.

“Give ‘em hell Max. It’s been one helluva season. One these damn Texans will never forget.”

I didn’t say anything, but turned toward the front of the chute and nodded to the boy at the gate. He slipped the latch and ol’ Casper burst out like someone had just put a hot poker up his ass. I was leaning to the right, anticipating his first move when he surprised the ever lovin’ crap outta me by turning left. He dropped his head digging his nose in the dirt and twisted his massive body, bringing his hindquarters nearly up to his nose.

Before I knew it I was flying off his back with my right wrist still securely wrapped around the leather strap that surrounded his girth. My feet hit the ground like they were shot from a cannon. My hat flew off my head for the first time that season but that was the least of my worries as I felt my wrist snap. I was bouncing along with Casper, my feet touching the ground every time his hindquarters landed and lifting off every time he kicked up. I kept pumping my legs running as fast as I could, trying to keep up with him and keep myself from falling. If I fell, he would drag me around the arena and I would end up shredded like a head of lettuce.

Then Casper lived up to his reputation of being one mean son of a bitch as he slammed me up against the wall right in front of the little rodeo queen from Austin. Not once, but three times, breaking my ribs and busting my nose. It was as if he knew I had my eyes on that gal and he was letting her and me know that I wasn’t that tough cowboy I thought I was. Where in the hell are those damn rodeo clowns, I thought as Casper slammed me one more time for good measure. I felt my left eye swell up and close.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

The last thing I remember was my wrap finally loosening up and me high flying it in the air over the arena and looking down at the astonished look on the face of that little rodeo queen from Austin and me wondering if I ever would end up in the sack with her.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

Chapter 2

I woke up in the Austin State Hospital with a damn bottle of something hooked up to my left arm and the liquid that was dripping from it into me wasn't brandy. Bandages' were covering what I thought was my entire body. Every time I took a breath I thought someone was sticking a knife in me. I could only see out of my right eye and my head felt like someone had stuck it in a vise and left it there.

I noticed what was left of my hat sitting on top of my jeans and shirt on a Naugahyde covered chair next to the bed with my Dan Post cowboy boots neatly lined up underneath it.

"Well, you fucked up big time, pardner. It was Hap, his grizzled old face smiling down at me.

Damn Scanlon got the check and that little rodeo queen from Austin you were so hot to trot over."

"What are you doin' here? I asked. Why don't you go find a nurse to ride and let me sleep?" Hap chuckled and shook his head. "I already done that. I ain't here to see you. I need the truck keys; can't go nowheres without 'em. I figured I would load up the riggin' and horses and come back an git your sorry ass and head north. You sure don't have the money to lay up in here and have all them pretty nurses scrubbin' your back since you lost that big check to Scanlon; and you sure ain't going to be ridin' nuthin' for a long time, pardner. Doc said you broke your wrist along with a half dozen ribs. Ya' got a concussion that probably made your brain all mush and a broken nose and a swelled up eye that is as black as Bill Pickett."

Bill Pickett was a black cowboy from Texas. He devised his own method of bulldogging steers. He jumped from his horse to a steer's back, bit its upper lip, and threw it to the ground by grabbing its horns. Soon, there were enough imitators doing the same thing that the event was added to the rodeo circuit.

"I say we head back to Milwaukee and git ourselves a real job and quit this shit." Hap said.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

I sure as hell wasn't in any condition to argue with him. If Hap was ready to hang up his spurs, then maybe it was time. He was one of the best ropers around and had been winning most every time he went out this year. I was his partner in the team roping event. I was the heeler and Hap the header. That meant Hap got after the calf as soon as he shot out of the chute and I would follow and loop my rope around the back legs of the critter after Hap had lassoed its head. I was left handed and nobody wanted to team up with a left handed roper, but Hap didn't seem to care. He could have been a serious contender if he had a different heeler but he said he liked it the way it was. Nobody could drink brandy like I could and he liked that. We did alright but didn't finish in the money enough to be considered a threat to anyone of importance.

"Guess you're right Hap. You want to get that doctor in here to get this shit outta my arm so I can get dressed?"

Heading north on highway 183 out of Austin, heading toward Brushy Creek, I turned to Hap who was chewing on a piece of straw, listening to the Grand Ole Opry on the radio singing *The Cowboy's Prayer*, which was the number one hit in 1934 by Goebel Reeves. "If you are going to keep singing all the way back to Milwaukee, the least you could do is stop up here and get me a bottle of brandy; anything to put me outta my misery."

"You got enough money to buy a bottle, Max?" Hap asked with a grin on his face.

"Probably not; that's why I brought you along Hap. Not for your singing."

After paying the hospital and doctor bills my wallet was so flat it could hide under a snake.

"Alright, I know it ain't my singin' that's gottcha hurtin' and it ain't ol' Casper either. You are just pissed 'cause Scanlon bested ya' once again, and I don't mean by getting' the buckle. I mean that little rodeo queen from Austin. That hurts, don't it? Well Max; don't lose any sleep over her. She's about as exclusive as a mailbox."

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

I looked at Hap and shook my head and said, “You are an abomination, Hap. I don’t know why I keep you around. Just get my bottle, will you?”

“Ha, you know you can’t make it through a week without me being there to pick up the pieces of what’s left of ol’ Max Fly after he messes up. It’s inevitable. Anyway, we’ll burn that bridge when we come to it. I’m getting’ some food. I gotta eat if I am doing all the driving and listening to you complain for fifteen hunnert miles. As we pulled back on the highway after feeding the horses some oats I took my first drink. As the amber liquid warmed my insides, I lifted the brandy bottle in front of my face and stared at the label and said. “Next to you Hap, I guess these Christian Brothers are my best friends.”

“You’re probably right, Max. You’re crazier than an outhouse rat and not many folks can stand to be around you for long and I ain’t lyin. Me? What do I know? I’m just an abomination, whatever that is.” I figured that didn’t deserve a reply so I just leaned back in the seat and pulled my hat down over my face and tried to catch some shut eye.

After listening to the tires hum along the highway for a couple of hours, Hap turned and said, “I been thinking, Max.”

I pushed my hat up with my finger and sat up and grabbed the bottle and said, “Wait a minute that requires a drink. That thought must have been on a long lonely journey Hap.”

Ignoring my remark he grinned, “What do you think about becoming a rodeo clown? You don’t want to spend the rest of your life hooked up to bottles in a hospital do you? I mean I don’t mind waitin’ on you or nuthin’. There sure are enough nurses to keep me occupied until you can sit up and take nourishment; just a thought.”

“Rodeo clown, eh?”

After mulling that over for a few moments, I said. “Damn Hap, did Scanlon really take that little rodeo queen from Austin home with him?” changing the subject back to something that was irking the hell out of me.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

Hap shook his head and stuck the piece of straw back in his mouth and smiled and began singing another Goebel Reeves song *Blue Undertaker's Blues*,

“I went down to the undertaker
Saw my best little woman laying there.
Stretched out among them snowy white linen,
So sweet, so still, laying there.
When she gets them wings of an angel,
Let her flit and fly while she can.
She will never get satisfaction
From the words of no one man.”

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

Chapter 3

Hap and I arrived in Milwaukee in 1937 during a September snow storm. It was so cold my nuts shriveled up like a pair of raisins, making me question Haps wisdom of wanting to quit the rodeo scene back in Texas and come back home. Luckily the snow melted the next day and we experienced a mild fall.

Hap still had to have something between his legs beside a horse so he hooked up with a fast growing company by the name of Harley Davidson in north Milwaukee that made motorcycles. He worked the third shift and slept most of the morning so we didn't see much of each other until the weekends.

I, on the other hand, thought I could lengthen my life span by getting a job where I sat behind a desk instead of on the back of a crazy horse or raging bull, so I took an offer from the Milwaukee Journal, the flagship newspaper of the Beer Capitol of the World also known as the city of neighborhoods. I started as a copy boy but took advantage of the early demise of their crime scene reporter, Sammy "Snuffy" Schultz who arrived at a shooting scene a few minutes too early and caught a .38 caliber slug in his gut.

It wasn't long before my heart took a big leap and I married this little cooze I met up in the Town of Brookfield. She was a bartender/waitress at the Railroad Inn and was packed with a top that made you drool long before the salads were served. I swear she was taller lying down than she was standing up. Unfortunately, she believed I was something I never professed to be and when the truth got out, so did she, moving to Kenosha, hooking up with some guy tightening lug nuts on Nash Ramblers as they left the assembly line, leaving me hurting like Casper never came close to doing.

As usual, Hap was there for me when I fell, showering me with his words of wisdom.

Max Fly Private I A Head Of The Game

“When are you going to learn, little buddy, when you see a women like that who has tits from here to eternity, you got to climb off once you reach the top because there just ain’t no more mountains to climb. Look at me; you don’t see none of this crap happen’ to me, do ya?”

“Hap, that’s because you’re so ugly, you couldn’t date a chimpanzee.”

“That may be true, Max, but at least I won’t be paying alimony from now until Jesus returns.”

I smiled as I held my head in my hands and groaned, “Hap, why do you have to be so damn smart after the fact when it doesn’t do me any good?”

Hap threw back his head and laughed. “Hell Max, then you wouldn’t be fun to be around.”

It wasn’t long before the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor and Hap and I decided our country needed our considerable talent at fighting, so we joined the Army Air Corps. Hap going to Europe and I ended up in the South Pacific. Luckily for all the women in Milwaukee, we both came back without any visible scars. We both got our old jobs back and life was clicking on all cylinders.

Hap was working with an ex-fly boy by the name of Sam Galbraith who seemed to fill Hap’s head with some new scheme every night. The newest one was to buy an airplane and start a charter business. Evidently he had a line on a plane that he could get for a song and a few thousand dollars that he didn’t have. Since they worked the third shift, Sam reasoned they could fly business executives or cargo during the day and get back in plenty of time to cover their shift at Harley. The plane was a Model 17 Staggerwing Biplane that had the top wing staggered behind the bottom wing. It was manufactured in 1934 by Beech. It was specifically designed for business travel which was unusual in that era. This particular plane had powerful radial engines rated at more than seven hundred horsepower which made it faster than most military aircraft at the time. This plane also was the one that famed aviatrix, Jacqueline Cochran used when she won the Bendix Trophy Race in 1937.

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