

## Chapter 1

Text  
He looked at his watch. It was 8:00 p.m. He just arrived home. It was a long, tiring day in court for Christopher Kane.

He was able to get an acquittal on a technicality for his client, Darrell Shotgun Mason, the man behind the scenes of just about every major crime in the state of Georgia. Shotgun Mason was the Don of the Dixie Mafia and one of the most feared men in the state. If you crossed him, or if he thought you crossed him, the next time anyone would see you would be in the morgue, with a shotgun blast to your face, making a visual identification virtually impossible.

Christopher Kane was a criminal lawyer, one of the best, if not the best, in Georgia. Most of his clients were notorious for the way they brutally enforced Omerta, the mob's word for the code of silence, which they lived by. If he wasn't busy in his high-rise office, which encompassed the entire top floor in one of the tallest buildings in downtown Atlanta, one of his clients would be calling him on his private line in his home office at all times of the night. That's because most of their business were conducted under the protection of darkness. If they required his assistance, then the darkness of night didn't provide the protection they needed from local law enforcement.

They paid him well and they expected him to be there for them when they called. His job kept him busy around the clock, seven days a week. It was a price he paid for the benefits he received. He was very wealthy, one of the wealthiest men in the state.

He was glad to be at home. He was glad his wife, Helene, had already gone upstairs to bed. He was tired. He made himself a sandwich from the leftover meatloaf, Rhonda, their maid, had cooked earlier in the day. He hadn't been home to share a meal with his wife, Helene, in years. She didn't care and neither did he.

He took his plate and grabbed the Wall Street Journal off the counter and walked to his study. Their marriage had turned into just an arrangement. A comfortable arrangement for both of them. Neither one asked anything from the other outside of him giving her enough money to appease her every need, or, to put it more precisely, her every want. He just wanted her to leave him alone. He didn't have time for her anymore. He told his colleagues that as soon as he gave her a ring, her body changed and her face got lumpy. He didn't enjoy looking at her and she just wasn't very smart. Her interests were completely foreign to him and; he supposed, his were to her.

They lived in a beautiful mansion, less than a block from the Governor's Mansion in Buckhead, the wealthiest neighborhood in Atlanta. The mansion came with a manicured lawn, two tennis courts and a pool the size of the local public pool. Christopher never set foot on the tennis courts nor did he ever use the pool. He employed two-yard boys to care for his lawn and shrubs. A four car garage housed Christopher's Ferrari Dino 246 GT, named to honor Enzo Ferrari's deceased son Alfredo. Christopher had had this car built to his specifications.

He met Enzo Ferrari right after World War II and they became close friends. Christopher was a top notch pilot in the Army Air Corp, known as an ace, and Enzo was fascinated with flying and respected those who did. The Ferrari logo was a personal emblem of Francesco Baracca, a highly decorated Italian World War I pilot, who had it painted on the fuselage of his aircraft. The Baracca's allowed Enzo Ferrari to use the Cavallino Rampante, the Prancing Horse, symbol. He adopted it as the logo for his racing car, placing it on a yellow shield in honor of his hometown of Modena and he topped it with the Italian tricolor.

Both Enzo and Christopher shared a love for big engines, power, and speed plus the appreciation of wealth and what came with it.

Christopher kept a quote of Enzo's on a plaque in his downtown office; "Think As A Winner And Act As A Winner. You'll Be Quite Likely To Achieve Your Goal."

The garage also housed his Bentley and Helene's Cadillac as well as a yellow Corvette.

Helene bought a new Cadillac Fleetwood Convertible every year. One of the many gifts he pampered her with.

Every day, she drove her Cadillac to the Cherokee Town and Country Club, a club Christopher helped draw up the Charter for in 1956. It was recognized as one of America's premier private clubs, designed and built on the Grant Estate on West Paces Ferry Road in Buckhead, located within walking distance from their house. Neither Helene nor Christopher would dream of walking anywhere, let alone to their private prestigious country club. Also, they never set foot on the beautiful golf course. They didn't golf. It was a place to socialize for both of them. To be seen. Helene met friends every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon for a round of bridge and a few martinis.

Christopher's personal driver, Nicholas, also served as his bodyguard. He was armed with a

.22 caliber Ruger Standard semi-automatic pistol, known for its reliability and accuracy. He was an alternate on the 1956 United States Olympic Team in the 25M 60 shot rapid fire competition. He didn't miss. He transported Christopher around town in his Bentley. It had been months since Christopher drove either the Dino 246 GT Ferrari or his bright yellow Corvette. He didn't have time.

Always in the back of Christopher's mind was the concern about what would happen to him if he ever failed to get the charges against his clients dismissed. It wasn't just the loss of his income he worried about, it was the potential loss of his life. He knew too much. It was Nicholas' job to make sure nobody suspicious was lurking around the places Christopher went. Nicholas also checked the undercarriage of the Bentley every morning for bombs. Christopher knew he knew too much and he did not trust his biggest client, Darrell Shotgun Mason, in the least. Lately, he felt his days were numbered.

After turning the light on by his leather recliner, Christopher set the paper down on the end table and walked behind his desk to the credenza where he kept his liquor; grabbing a crystal decanter filled with a single malt scotch, he poured a couple of fingers of the amber liquid into a matching crystal tumbler. Next he opened his cherry wood humidor and removed a cigar, a Cohiba, and walked back to his recliner to sit down. He clipped the end of the cigar and struck a match, turning the cigar slowly in his mouth while he drew in the smoke. Relaxing, he closed his eyes and turned his head toward the ceiling and exhaled. The cigar had a perfect draw.

The scotch looked inviting and he took a sip before removing his reading glasses from his shirt pocket. He picked up the Journal to check how his investments were doing. This was his favorite time of the day.

Did the floor in the hallway creak?

"Helene?" he called.

No answer.

"Hello?" Still no sound.

Taking another sip of his scotch and then another draw on his cigar, he went back to the paper.

He heard it again. Definitely a creaking of the hardwood floor. Was that in the hallway?

"Helene, is that you?"

What a stupid thing to say. Who else could it be? Their daughter, Candi, no longer lived with them. She had her own apartment off Peachtree Street about three or four blocks from the Georgia Tech Campus. It was only Helene and himself in this house. He put down his paper and placed the cigar in the ashtray before standing up.

He heard it again.

"Who's there?"

Still no answer.

Why did he let Helene talk him into selling his gun, a .38 caliber Ruger revolver? She was afraid that Candi would get her hands on it and hurt herself. At the time, Candi was a toddler and Christopher thought it wasn't a bad idea and a good safety precaution. But that was then. She was grown and out of the house now and there was no reason why he shouldn't have another revolver for protection. His profession certainly brought him in contact with some pretty rough characters. His .38 caliber had been a safe choice, easy to use and, if Helene had ever wanted to learn how to shoot, it was small enough for a woman to handle safely.

Peering down the hall, he saw nothing. It was dark.

He heard it again.

"Who's there?" he asked. Now he was worried.

He walked toward the kitchen where he thought the noise last came from. He reached up to flip on the light switch when he felt something tighten around his neck. A thin rope. He grabbed it with his left hand. It was being pulled tight from two sides, cutting off his air. He fought frantically to get his fingers between the rope and his neck. He couldn't do it.

He twisted around and saw Charles Hogjaw Johnson, a hit man who was on Darrell Shotgun Mason's payroll tightening one end of the rope that was around his neck. Holding the other end and pulling it tight, was Billy Bob Mason, the son of Darrell Shotgun Mason.

They continued to tighten the rope and he was beginning to lose consciousness.

A hand shot out and struck him under his left eye, splitting the skin. He felt the blood drain down his cheek. There was, at least, three of them. Who just hit him?

He tried to speak but the rope was too tight and all he could get out was a gagging sound.

Someone roughly grabbed his right arm and brought it up behind his back, bending him over. His feet were kicked out from under him and he hit the floor hard, causing him to black out for a moment.

His left arm was roughly brought up behind his back and his wrists were handcuffed. Handcuffs?

"What is going on? What do you want?" He croaked.

From behind him, a deep voice responded, "Shut up." It was a voice he immediately recognized.

With brutal force, he was lifted to his feet and pushed back into his study.

He saw his glass of scotch and smoldering cigar sitting in the ashtray next to his chair. He wondered if he would be able to finish his cigar. What a stupid thing to go through his mind at a time like this.

They threw him down on the couch facing his desk. He looked up and for the first time he got a good look at his attackers.

Hogjaw Johnson and Billy Bob Mason continued to keep the pressure on the rope around his neck, while Atlanta Police Officer, Tommy Richards stared down at him with a sneer on his face. His arms were hanging at his sides with a set of brass knuckles on his right hand. Richards was a detective in the vice squad and was on Shotgun's payroll. He was as crooked as a snake. Richards had broad shoulders, a barrel chest, and thick forearms; sitting in the chair behind Kane's desk was Shotgun Mason.

"Darrell? What's this about? I'm your lawyer and friend. Why are you doing this?" He croaked.

Tommy Richard's fist smashed him in the nose. He heard the cartilage break and felt the blood flow into his mouth.

He was surprised that there was no pain. He had never been hit in the nose before. He thought it would hurt, but everything was numb.

"Friends don't steal from friends, you fuck, so shut up," Darrell snarled. "I'll be asking the questions and you had better be giving me the answers or you won't be anyone's mouthpiece anymore, you got that, you prick shyster?"

"I came here tonight to get two things and I ain't leavin' until I got 'em. First of all, I want that book you are keeping that names all my special friends, you big piece of shit; and then you are going to tell me what you did with my money. Do you think I'm stupid? Before you open your trap and try to lie your way outta this, your little weasel of a partner, Lou Crowson, ratted ya' out. I knew one of you was stealin' from me. I honestly thought it was Louie, but I guess it was you all along. So tell me, how are you going to pay me back? Free legal advice? Shit.

"I want my money, Kane. You couldn't have spent all of it, so where are you hiding it? Hand it over."

"Lou told you I stole money from you? Really Darrell? Lou was in charge of dealing with the banks and handled all the money. When you had some problems I was the one who dealt with the courts. I don't know why Lou would tell you that, Darrell. What book? Do you really think I am dumb enough to try to take money from you, Darrell? I don't know what Lou told you, but he is mistaken if he implied that I have your money and keep a book on your associates."

Shotgun nodded and Tommy Richards grabbed Christopher's hair, pulling his head back, he slammed him in the stomach. The brass knuckles added to the power of his punch, causing Christopher to gag and bend over in pain.

"I'm not going to ask you again."

"Honest, Darrell," he gasped, "I don't know what you are talking about."

Shotgun Mason snorted, "Honest? That's a joke coming from a shyster lawyer."

Christopher was having a difficult time catching his breath. His stomach kept cramping up on him and they continued to apply pressure on the rope that was around his neck.

Then there was a high, piercing scream that came from the doorway behind them. They all turned around and standing in the door to the study was Helene Kane. She was wearing a pink cotton nightgown with pink slippers and her hair was up in pink curlers. Reading glasses were perched at the end of her nose. Her terror was visible. Tommy Richards walked over and grabbed her arms and threw her down on the couch next to Christopher.

Shotgun Mason had a menacing look on his face. He stared at Helene and snarled, "You don't know me lady and you don't want to. Now you shut your mouth and just sit there and you won't get hurt. No more screaming, do you hear me?"

“Oh, I know who you are. I have seen your face plenty of time; on television and in the newspapers. You don’t scare me, Darrell Shotgun Mason.”

Christopher looked at her in amazement. Was she crazy? Nobody talked to Shotgun Mason like that.

Shotgun nodded his head and Tommy Richards swung and slapped Helene in the face with the back of his right hand, the one that had the brass knuckles on. Her head snapped to the side. Her glasses flew across the room. A trickle of blood ran out of her nose.

Her eyes teared up as she wiped the blood from her face with a trembling hand.

“Listen lady, you just might live through tonight, but the only way that is going to happen is if you keep your trap shut. Do you understand me? ‘cause I won’t tell ya again.

“Now, Kane, where was we? Oh, yeah, you was goin’ to tell me what you did with my money?”

“Darrell, I don’t have your money. If Lou told you I do, then he is lying. I don’t know why he would say that unless he took it and wanted to put the blame on me. Get him here and have him tell you that while I am in front of him. As I told you before, I handle the courts and Lou handles the financial side.” Christopher’s voice was getting raspy from the tension of the ropes around his neck. He hoped he was convincing.

He could get about any jury to believe whatever he told them and he hoped that Darrell Mason would believe him. He had to or both he and Helene would be dead before the night was through. Christopher knew, from his many years of being a lawyer in adversarial situations, not to underestimate your opponent and he knew Darrell Shotgun Mason was a helluva lot smarter than he looked.

“That weasel of a partner of yours took off for Charleston, South Carolina, last week. He had one of my girls with him. Jesus, you lawyers are sure dumb. Did he think she was in love with him? I set them up. She was telling me all his little pillow talk stories. I know he was skimming from me too, and I took care of that. They got sharks in that harbor in Charleston ya’ know, and them sharks think all you lawyers taste like chicken.

“Oh, and I got my money he had in his little suitcase, but it ain’t all of it. So cough up the rest Kane; and I want all the information you recorded on my friends too, ya hear me?”

“Darrell, this is crazy...”

Shotgun nodded to Tommy Richards and said, “Give him his cigar, Tommy.”

Richards picked up the cigar and took two big puffs, making the end glow a bright red. He turned and put the end against Christopher’s left cheek.

Christopher screamed. The pain was excruciating and the smell of burning flesh made his stomach heave and he threw up what remained of his dinner of meatloaf and mashed potatoes that he had eaten a few hours earlier.

“Give them the money and the tape,” Helene blurted out. “Chris, don’t be stupid, he’ll kill us if you don’t.”

“Tape? What tape? What the fuck ya’ talkin’ about, lady?”

Shit, they weren’t aware of the tape. Christopher wished he had never told Helene about the tape. Helene also didn’t know he gave the tape to Candi. He gave it to her so she could turn it over to the FBI if something happened to him. Shotgun Mason owned every badge in the South so it had to be the FBI.

He kept the notebook in the safe in his office and he was willing to give that up to save his hide knowing he still had the tape but now it didn’t matter.

“She doesn’t know what she is talking about, Darrell. She means the book.”

"We'll see." He nodded again to Richards who ripped the front of Helene's nightgown exposing her pale chest. He put the hot end of the cigar against her left breast. She screamed. Tommy Richards then burned her right breast. He continued to torture her with the hot end of the cigar.

Finally, Christopher Kane could no longer sit by and listen to his wife's screams.

"Okay, okay, stop, Darrell. The book and money are in the safe behind the desk."

"What about the tape?"

"My daughter Candi has it."

"Your daughter, huh? You finally is gettin' some smarts. Now, what's this combination for your safe? You give me that and we'll be leavin'."

Christopher Kane gave him the combination.

"That's a good boy. Now tell me where I can find Candi so I can get this tape."

"Don't hurt her, Darrell. I'll tell her to give you the tape."

"Sure you will. Now, what's her address?"

He gave them the address of a rental house he purchased recently off Collier Drive near Piedmont Hospital. Candi wasn't there. He hoped Helene would keep her mouth shut.

Then Darrell Shotgun Mason nodded at his son, Billy Bob and Hogjaw Johnson.

They increased the tension on each side of the rope. Christopher Kane's eyes started to bug out of his head and the color of his face went from its normal pasty white to red and finally to a dark purple before his bowels released and he slumped forward. He was dead.

Helene screamed one last time.

"Lady, you seen too much," Tommy Richards said.

He put his gun to her head and pulled the trigger, shooting her in the left temple. Pieces of her skull mixed with her brain and blood splattered on her dead husband slumped next to her. She fell to the side and slid to the floor. She was dead as well. Shotgun Mason looked down at Christopher's dead body, "Now we're leaving, cocksucker."

## Chapter 2

It was the beginning of another splendid fall day. The leaves on the trees lining the street were starting to turn color and the ground was damp with the early morning dew. A chill was in the air. Dark clouds gathered over the houses along North Fratney Street, foreshadowing the darkness that lay ahead for the city of Milwaukee.

A group of seven-year-old boys, Bobby Waters, Ray Palermo, Darwin Raymore, Anthony Hem and Davy Steckbower, started their Monday a little earlier than usual. Mr. O'Malley, the owner of O'Malley's Corner Store where they met and hung out before school each day, told them he would be putting out his new shipment of Topps Baseball Cards first thing Monday morning. They wanted to be at the store when Mr. O'Malley opened to buy as many packs of cards as their allowance, and the money they got from chores they did around the neighborhood, would allow. They were looking for the elusive Stan Musial card, the star right fielder of the St. Louis Cardinals. Not many were printed so anyone who was lucky enough to find it in his package of baseball cards, was a lucky guy, someone who would be looked on with envy by all his friends. They would also be offering to trade just about any baseball card they had to get the one with Stan Musial on it.

Topps put five baseball cards along with a slab of stale bubblegum in each package. Mr. O'Malley sold them for five cents apiece. Each card had a picture of a major league baseball player on one side and his career statistics along with a short biography of his life on the other side.

The boys had been friends since they were able to walk, sharing each other's lives in this small community in Northwest Milwaukee. They were like brothers. Bobby Waters loved rock and roll and had memorized the words to just about every top ten song of 1960. He lived in a walk-up apartment over McCoy's Hardware store with his mother and father and three sisters. It was crowded and he hated it. Every day, as soon as he could, he would high-tail it out of there and not return until it was time to eat supper. He was always singing one of his favorite songs. His friends called him the Bopper, after rock and roll legend The Big Bopper. Raymond Palermo, who always wore white socks with hand-me-down pants that were too short, was called Socks. He was the oldest in a family of seven. His mother and father owned a bakery and a butcher shop where he was expected to work on weekends and during the summer when school was out. Anthony Hem was a quiet unassuming boy. His father worked at Grede Foundry in Waukesha. He was a foreman on the second shift, so Anthony rarely saw him. He was glad because his father had a bad temper and usually got in a few whacks to the back of Anthony's head for no apparent reason whenever he saw him. Davy Steckbower, the oldest of the group by six months, was also the smallest, and they called him Little Davy. His father was in advertising sales for WTMJ Radio. They lived in a house known in Milwaukee as a Polish flat. The Steckbowers lived on the lower level and rented out the top level to his friend, Darwin Raymore's mother. Darwin's father was listed as missing in action in the war and they survived on his government benefits. Darwin's mother raised chickens in the backyard and sold fresh eggs to Mr. O'Malley and other stores in the North Milwaukee area to supplement their meager income. Darwin wished he knew what happened to his father.

The boys sat cross-legged on the ground, drinking the soda their mothers told them they could not have, but they purchased anyway at O'Malley's that morning. Their bikes formed a circle around them. Some didn't have kick stands so they were lying on their sides in the dirt by their riders.

A dog barked somewhere down the street. They didn't hear it as they tore into their pack of cards, hoping that today would be the lucky day; the day they all were hoping for. The day they saw the smiling face of Stan Musial, wearing his St. Louis Cardinal's baseball uniform and hat, with his bat resting on his left shoulder, looking back at them behind that slab of stale bubble gum.

Little Davy Steckbower let out a loud burp after he drank the last swallow of his grape soda.

"I didn't get him."

His next burp was louder, dropping the gauntlet.

"Top that."

And the gas war was on. First it was Darwin who gathered gas from deep in his stomach and let out a long, reverberating belch that caused Mr. O'Malley to look up from the morning newspaper he was reading at the front counter in his store. Then it was The Bopper joining in and it wasn't long before Socks Palermo and Anthony Hem were a part of the cacophony of belches resonating in front of the store.

They started to laugh as each one of them confessed that the elusive Stan Musial wasn't in their packs either.

Mr. O'Malley stepped out the front door of his store and placed his hands on his hips before yelling, "You little hooligans get going before you run off all my customers. School's about to start. Now go and don't forget to pick up all your trash." The boys scrambled to their feet and dropped their gum wrappers in the barrel next to the front door where Mr. O'Malley was standing. They put their bottles on the counter so they would get their two cent return deposit.

Mr. O'Malley's wife had died five years before and he didn't have any children, so he liked having the boys around. He looked out for them to make sure the trouble that they got into was never anything serious and he made sure they left his premises in plenty of time to reach school before the bell rang.

He smiled as he watched the boys laboriously peddle their bikes down Auer Avenue toward their school. He hoped they would stop in after school for another soda before they went home. He would make it a point to give each of them a couple of pieces of their favorite penny candy. They were good boys.

### Chapter 3

"Let's play marbles before the bell rings," Socks yelled.

"Okay, let's go," the rest called out in unison, grabbing their bags of marbles and dropping their bikes where they stood. Those whose bikes were still sporting kick stands didn't bother to kick them down. They raced to the back of the playground where they had dug holes in various strategic places for their daily marble tournaments.

The Bopper came to a sudden stop as did the rest of the boys as they caught up to him

They were staring toward the back of the playground by the time Socks arrived.

"What are you looking at?" Socks asked.

Darwin shuddered, "I think it's a girl, but she looks weird. She's just lying there."



“Where?”

Darwin pointed. “Down where we play marbles behind those trees.”

“I can see her too,” Little Davy whispered.

“I wonder what she is doing here. School won’t start for an hour,” Bopper whispered.

All the boys were staring, their mouths open.

“She ain’t moving,” Anthony said. “I think she’s dead.”

The Bopper looked at his friend and scoffed, “You’re lying. I’m going over the fence to see. You guys coming?”

“I guess,” Socks stammered.

The boys climbed over the chain link fence, the same fence Mr. Gruhlke, their principal, caught Socks and Little Davy scaling to retrieve a baseball that was hit off the playground during recess last Wednesday. When the principal caught them, he had grabbed each boy by his arm and picked up a baseball bat. He then called all the boys over and told them to ‘listen up.’ He brought the bat up to Little Davy’s crotch taping his testicles, which made Socks cringe in fear thinking his sack was next in line for the bat. Mr. Gruhlke told them not to crawl over the fence because they might slip and get their water works hung up on the spikes that were sticking up on the top. Little Davy was still nervous about disobeying Mr. Gruhlke; so while he was straddling the fence, he gave a quick glance toward the school and Mr. Gruhlke’s office, before jumping to the ground.

“Oh crap, Socks, I think she’s dead; look at the blood.” Darwin cried.

The boys stared at the vacant eyes and the purple blotches covering her face and noticed cuts and swelling on the left side of the girl’s head near where her eye should be. Both eye sockets were empty.

Darwin threw up his grape soda pop.

“Someone beat her to a pulp,” Socks whispered, quickly glancing back with fear in his eyes, hoping whoever did this wasn’t lurking in the shadows of the playground.

“We gotta call the cops,” The Bopper yelled. “You keep watch while I go tell Mr. O’Malley

“I ain’t stayin’ here I’m coming with you,” the rest of the boys replied in unison, their voices filled with terror.

“Okay, let’s go,” they turned and ran as fast as they could mounting their bikes, they rode toward North Fratney Street and the light shining, like their beacon of safety, in front of O’Malley’s Corner Store, where they knew the kindly Mr. O’Malley would still be standing at the front counter reading the Milwaukee Sentinel.

Mr. O’Malley looked up from his paper, surprised to see the boys returning to the store. They threw their bikes on the ground and ran up to him; fear was in their eyes.

## Chapter 4

My name is Max Fly, I’m a private investigator. Actually, my real name isn’t Max Fly; it’s Gunther Hjerstedt which means heartland, or something to that effect, in my native country, the Kingdom of Sweden. I say Kingdom of Sweden because the Hjerstedt’s are descendants of King Gustav I and originally came from Jarstad, about seventy-five miles southwest of Stockholm.

Stockholm is, an archipelago, a city that is composed of a chain of many islands. This is where many of Western Wisconsin’s sturdy Scandinavian pioneers originated.

I am told we are an independent, liberty-loving people although I'm not sure how sturdy I am.

I changed my name to Fly because I was tired of spelling Hjerstedt every time I met someone. I know most people can spell Fly, even my close friend Homicide Lieutenant Harry Marshall. If I am anything, I am thoughtful. I want to make life as easy as I can for my friend as I can see his job wearing him down more every day.

I was born in south central Wisconsin in a paper mill town located on the Wisconsin River, called Wisconsin Rapids, but I never saw a rapids. My father was a profligate frontier type who never held a job long, drank everyday, played poker every night, womanized when he could and fought when provoked; these were his good qualities. He was around for a few years after I entered this world but I can't remember much about him. I am told, however, that I did inherit some of his more colorful traits.

So far my life has been about as stable as a woman going through menopause. I spent time in the South Pacific during the war and then on the rodeo circuit as a roper and a bull rider down in Texas where one old bull and I seemed to have had a running feud going; that is until he finally put me in the hospital. It was then I decided it was better to concede defeat and move on to another line of work.

I signed on as a reporter for the Milwaukee Journal, the Beer City's evening paper, before moving on to a failing rag in the small Midwestern town of Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. Those few years in Beaver Dam were like a lifetime anywhere else. After several fortuitous forays into crime solving, I decided to hang up pen and paper and strap on a piece and become a private dick.

My love life has been as stable as my career path. My first wife left me for a guy in Kenosha who tightens lug nuts on Nash Ramblers. It seems the only thing my wife and I had in common was her vagina. Women get rid of me about as often as they change a pair of shoes. Some of my friends call me a Jack Weed, so I don't care to know what I'm called by those who don't like me. But I'm at the stage of my life where I don't really care.

I have a part-time partner who makes himself available to assist me whenever I need it. His name is Hap Schultz. He was my roping partner down in Texas. He was the header and I was the healer. He convinced me I was through with rodeoing so I swore off riding anything more dangerous than a city bus. He said he was going to hang up his spurs too. He returned to Wisconsin with me to keep me from getting in too much trouble. The truth of the matter is, Hap has a greater penchant for finding trouble than I do.

When Hap isn't involved in his full-time profession of chasing skirts, he is helping me track down criminals that I have been asked to find. I go after anyone from cheating husbands to bail bond jumpers to murderers. Hap, however, prefers to not be actively involved with the murderers or cheating husbands. Hap appreciates what the cheating husbands are looking for and feels like he is double-crossing them when he helps me trap them in the act, he feels murderers are too dangerous to mess with. If they killed once, they most likely will kill again, and Hap doesn't want to be the next victim. I can't blame him.

Hap carries a few more years on him than I do and it shows in the lines on his grizzled old face. When he walks, he looks like someone took the horse out from between his legs without telling him. But the girls take a real liking to him and keep him busy just about every night of the week. He has a regular group of young ladies that come around to see him while he tends bar at Rocco's Pub.

“They don’t come around to get a piece of that old cowboy,” Harry says. “They come for free drinks and a laugh.”

I have to admit, it’s funny as hell watching him as he tries to go from one end of the bar to the other on those scrawny old chicken legs bowed out like he was relieving himself while still walking.

This particular morning I woke up and found myself at Lorraine’s again, draped over her couch. That’s Dr. Lorraine Lundgren, one of Milwaukee’s leading sex therapists. We have been seeing each other romantically for the past few months. My life seemed to be running on empty before we met. There were times I felt like a turd in a punch bowl but she makes me feel much better.

She provides me with a reason to wake up in the morning in spite of the fact that she told me my own amorality and self-interest are the cause of most of my troubles; plus I drink too much.

She told me drinking didn’t solve anything. I disagree.

I told her it solved sobriety and sometimes that’s all I needed to get through the day. “If your life is all about screwing things and getting hammered,” she said, “then congratulations, you’re a tool.”

“Thanks, Doc,” I said, “You are probably right, and now I am going to be a screwdriver.”

“Did I include infantile?”

“I don’t think so but we can add it to the list later.” I grabbed her hand and led her to the back bedroom where we made love and she yelled like a Tourette’s patient. I felt like I was back in the rodeo again and, for that moment, I forgot all the Freudian hangups she claims I have.

I always tell myself, “Max, if you’re going to do something tonight that you’ll be sorry for tomorrow morning, sleep late.”

I didn’t sleep late enough, so I went back to sleep and she went to work. Later, still suffering through the worst hangover in my life I turned to God for help.

“Please God,” I begged, “I’ll never drink like this again if you will make this pain go away.”

He heard that prayer a few times before and sometimes I had the feeling He didn’t want to answer me; so I had a backup plan, just in case.

I walked in the bathroom to relieve myself and threw water on my face.

I wondered what I was doing to myself and Doc wasn’t there to give me an answer. I walked to the kitchen. Lorraine had left a half pot of coffee along with a little love note and a hard boiled egg.

I read the note while I filled a cup half full of coffee and reached into the cabinet above the sink and pulled down a bottle of my backup plan, Paul Masson brandy, and added a couple of fingers to the cup.

Lorraine’s note was nice. She asked me to return for a repeat performance that evening. A triumphant smile spread across my face as the memory of Lorraine lying provocatively in bed crossed my mind. She had a nice enough body, built more for comfort than for speed. Her breasts were nice, her ass was even nicer.

I sipped and smiled.

I grabbed a bottle of aspirin. I rated my previous evenings by the number of aspirins I took the morning after and this morning was a four tablet morning.

I washed the aspirin down with my second cup of coffee and brandy.

A few swallows later, I could feel God’s helping hands, with a little goose from His friend, Paul Masson, finally brings their calming influence over me and I felt renewed.

It was time for me to go. I looked for my shirt and shoes. Somehow they ended up under the couch last night along with Dr. Lundgren's panties and one of my Cohiba cigars.

My pants were balled up next to her fireplace. I shook them out and pulled them on. Nothing incriminating or unseemly fell out.

I staggered back to the bathroom and stared at my reflection in the mirror. I looked like the loneliest guy I ever met. The bags beneath my eyes appeared heavier than usual and my eyes were accusive, glaring at me with a look of disgust and humiliation. They were streaked with bloody red lines that twisted wormlike around the whites of my baby blues, the results of the debauchery I was involved in the previous evening. I wasn't too impressed with what I saw. I can see why Lorraine thinks I should make a change in my lifestyle.

My skin had a gray pallor to it, accentuating a scar running along the left side of my lower jaw ending behind my ear. That scar was a souvenir from a mean son of a bitch who told me I had a smart mouth after I asked him if the woman in the corner of the bar was his wife or did someone put a dress on the jukebox. The next thing I remember is this big fella looking down at me apologizing saying, "Sorry, I should have told you I was going to hit you."

"That's all right," I replied. "Your wife should have told you she was going to get fat."

He hit me again and this time, I went halfway through the bar room window and ended up with a six-inch sliver of tempered glass sticking out of the side of my face.

Once again my honesty got me in trouble.

After brushing my teeth and splashing on a little English Leather cologne the doctor keeps around for when I start to get a bit gamey, I moved to the kitchen and brewed another pot of coffee.

I washed the dirty dishes and then I left.

My Edsel fired up on the first try and I pulled out of her driveway and out of Brookfield heading toward Pewaukee Lake and home.

I should be happy like the rest of America but, I'm not and I'm not sure why. It could be the hand writing on the wall, informing me I have reached middle age.

It's 1960 and the end of the Dwight David Eisenhower years. He negotiated an armistice in the Korean War during his first six months in office, turned the economy from an \$8 billion deficit in 1953 into a \$500 million surplus. The country is now cruising into a new decade on an interstate highway system he dreamt up plus he was finally able to shut up Wisconsin's obnoxious Senator Joe McCarthy. Not bad for a guy armed with only a golf putter. Now we were waiting for a changing of the guard. Ed Gein was in the news again. Like a bad penny, he keeps turning up. He is Wisconsin's most notorious criminal, next to Senator McCarthy. Gein decorated his house in the small town of Plainfield with human body parts. He made skulls into bowls and jewelry and upholstered chairs with human skin. The coup de grace was the human lips hanging from the ceiling. He was indicted in 1957 and was deemed too crazy to stand trial. His Den of Death was a human slaughterhouse. Neighbors smelled the foul odors. They heard the power saw buzzing in the dead of night. But they never imagined the horrors happening right next door. They thought he was just another industrious German working away in the wee hours of the night.

He was being transferred from the Central State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Waupun, Wisconsin, to the Mendota State Hospital in Madison. Gein is a certified nut job and he will fit in nicely in Madison, the state capital, with the rest of the nut jobs running the government there.

Lorraine and I were up late last night discussing Ed Gein and what the psychological motivations were that made someone like him achieve some form of sexual gratification from brutally murdering women.

Lorraine said, "There is a police officer in San Leandro California who has written a paper while attending the University of California at Berkeley, chronicling the parallels in abnormal psychology and criminal psychology. He terms the rituals displayed by repeat killers as their signature. He claims the patterns they display become obsessive and the sexual gratification that they seek are fulfilled by repeating these specific acts over and over again. Very fascinating and I will be presenting at the same seminar that he will this upcoming week."

"What do you mean by their 'rituals'?"

"Rituals are things we do every day, taking a bath can be a ritual; setting up a Christmas tree can be a ritual. He claims a 'signature' is the same thing. It is created in the mind of the offender years before his first crime is committed. As the offender starts to daydream, he begins to create a fantasy of what he would like to do with a victim, what the victim would say, how he would inflict wounds, how the body would be displayed. He claims, and it makes perfect sense to me, that over time, the fantasy becomes solidified in the mind of the offender, and all of the events that he had fantasized about will take on an almost religious significance to the offender. These are things that have to occur in a certain order for the crime to be as similar to the fantasy as possible. It becomes an obsession and without them knowing it, they are leaving behind clues for law enforcement to use in tracking them down."

"So I should stop taking a bath every day?"

"You are proving my point that you are infantile too. You don't bathe every day anyway."

"Have you told this to Harry?"

"That you don't bathe every day?"

"He knows that. I mean about this signature thing?"

No, I haven't. Many law enforcement officers are still close-minded and skeptical of anything to do with studying the mind of criminals to use in the process of apprehending them."

"Well, Harry is pretty open-minded."

"So you say. I don't see that at all."

"Okay, Doc, but I'm going to mention it to him anyway and see what he thinks."

"Good luck."

I do enjoy these late night chats we have, especially when they end up with her Tourettes imitation.

But I still didn't sleep well... I kept dreaming of lips smiling down at me from Lorraine's ceiling.

I feel miserable and it's not Paul Masson's fault. I think the underlying cause is I just turned forty. I can't seem to shake the feeling of being close to the end.

Paul Masson and I commiserated the Milwaukee Braves' loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers as they blew another chance to go to the World Series.

It was their seventh season in Milwaukee. Over that time span, they drew over ten million spectators, more than any other team in the major leagues. They ended the National League regular season in a first-place tie with the Los Angeles Dodgers. They played a special best-of-three tie-breaking series to decide the National League Championship for the World Series. The Braves lost in two games and the Dodgers went to the World Series.

Maybe that isn't the only reason I feel like hell. Maybe it's because a little Yaqui Indian deputy sheriff in Tombstone, Arizona named Debbie Red Eagle, tore my heart out and stomped on it.

I needed to get back to work or get back somewhere, anywhere but where I was.

My head was throbbing. I needed to go to Rocco's Pub.

After I left Lorraine's, I stopped at home to feed Bear, a big mongrel dog who adopted me, and to check on the horses that were grazing in the pasture. I cleaned their water trough. I made a mental note to ride them later in the week.

After everything was in order, I went to my office which is located at a back table in Rocco's Pub.

"Morning Rocco."

"Hiya Max. Did you get to throw a leg again last night.?"

"Might have."

"You with my shrink?"

"Yep. I just can't understand that woman, Rocco. Hell, I can't understand any woman."

"Don't fret about it Max. I don't know anyone who understands women, except maybe bisexual hairdressers."

"You know many of them?"

"Not really. She didn't talk about me, did she?"

"Who?"

"Come on, Max."

"She did say something about a sexual deviation called frotteurism. Do you think she was referring to you?"

"Nah, that one's about my customers rubbing up against one another for sexual gratification. That's all she said?"

"This time."

Rocco has been seeing Dr. Lundgren for the past few years, trying to straighten out his convoluted sexual deviations. He worries she will spill the beans on him.

Rocco's Pub is located on the Northwest corner of North Avenue and Highway 100 in Wauwatosa, a suburb on the West side of Milwaukee. Dan Cirrocco opened the place fifteen years ago. We go back a few years. We met at the Milwaukee Turners, sort of a local boys club, located in downtown Milwaukee. It was started by two German immigrants, named Turner, around 1900, to provide a place for boys to learn gymnastics and the fine art of boxing. It was the birthplace of some pretty famous local pugilists. I have been in a lot of fights that didn't have a positive ending. I was bullied and learned early on to stand up for myself. The only way I could do that was through fighting and most of those I ended up on the short end of the stick. So I joined the Turners.

Danny and I trained under a scarred up ex-professional fighter whose eyes bulged like a terriers. He had cauliflower ears and a busted up nose and went by the name of Mad Dog Coogan. Mad Dog wasn't his birth name but his mind was scrambled and he couldn't remember what it was, so he was always Mad Dog to everyone at the Milwaukee Turners.

George Orwell once said that by the age of fifty, every man has the face he deserves. So we assumed Mad Dog deserved to look like road kill.

Mad Dog told me I was a rubbish fighter due to my inexperience. He showed me some tricks that weren't necessarily sanctioned under the King of Queensbury rules.

His pep talks during my fights went something like, "When you die you want to look dead. Not now!" He was an awesome motivator.

The Chinese have a saying "When two tigers fight, one limps away horribly wounded, the other is dead." There were many times when old Mad Dog jumped into the ring to call the tiger off my prone, rumped and flattened body.

But Danny? Oh boy. He had a pair of quick hands. He did a pretty good job of knocking me and others around.

We would always fight the Jews. It seemed that every Jew in Milwaukee wanted to be a boxer in those days and some of them were really good.

Thursday night was fight night at the Abraham Lincoln House, located on Milwaukee's Ninth and Vine Streets. It was like a Jewish Community Center. When we entered we could hear a lot of Yiddish and the old Jewish men admonishing their sons, "A box-fightah? So that's what you become? For this, we came to America? So that you should become a box-fightah? Better you should be a gangster or even a murderer. The shame of it. A box-fightah!" Then they would slap their boy along the side of his head and say, while looking in our direction, "Kill that gentile."

The auditorium held 300 people, standing room only, with the ring in the middle. There would be a person standing in the middle of the ring and he would ask for the next fighters. There was no weight class, height was the only factor. There was one fight after another. Each fight was two rounds and the winner was declared by the amount of applause he received after each fight. It was rare for a gentile to get more than a few claps from the crowd of rabid Jewish spectators so the only chance for us gentiles to win was to knock a Jew out. Rocco would only get boos and plenty of them. Every Jew in the place wanted to see him killed in the ring.

Rocco would mock them. When they were standing in the middle of the ring before the bell rang, he would say things like, "Hey Finklestein, you're a piece of shit. The last good Jew was Jesus. They don't make 'em like Him no more. I'm going to see what you got and then I'm gonna knock that last nut right outta your grille!"

Most of them didn't appreciate being called Jew Kid or someone saying Jesus was the last good Jew so they would lunge at Rocco and try to land a couple of punches before the bell even rang. That's what Rocco was after. He would laugh and dance away while the referee restrained his opponent.

Rocco wanted them hopping mad so they would want to kill him and forget what they learned about boxing. He told me, "If the fight is going well, you might be walking into an ambush. Ya' gotta get 'em off their game."

I seldom left the auditorium with a victory. Most nights I was hit more times than a hockey puck, but I always left happy with blood flowing out of my nose. I didn't feel the punches. The adrenalin made me immune to pain. It was the next day I suffered. Rocco was a knockout puncher; a knockout puncher with a glass jaw. Most of his fights ended in a knockout. Either he stopped them or they stopped him. He loved duking it out toe to toe with anybody who wanted a piece of him. If it wasn't for that jaw, he might have made it to the mill; the big match.

When Rocco opened the Pub, I hung around a lot. I figured if I have to pay for a drink, I might as well pay a friend instead of someone I didn't know. I became a daily customer. Soon my clients began to meet me at the Pub.

The phone rang.

"Max, phone call; in the back," Rocco said, throwing his thumb over his shoulder toward the ladies room behind the bar where he had an extension.

"Thanks, Rocco," I took my notebook out of my jacket pocket and grabbed the receiver, "Hello, Max Fly, Private Eye, confidential investigations." I heard Rocco hang up the extension.

"Max, it's me, Horace," the excited voice on the other end yelled.

I pushed the receiver away from my ear. Horace is Horace Greenberg, a gay reporter for the Milwaukee Sentinel who flames all over the city of Milwaukee.

I met him while I was squirreled away for a few years working for the Beaver Dam Daily Citizen. He worked in the mail room with aspirations of becoming a reporter. I ended up in Beaver Dam after I was fired from my job as a beat reporter at the Milwaukee Journal for slugging the city editor. I helped Horace land a job with the Milwaukee Sentinel after he helped us nail a serial killer named Jimmy The Peanut Booth. He proved himself a very capable investigative reporter so I keep his number on file in case I need some discrete snooping done.

"Hi Horace, what's happening?"

"You have to get here, quickly," he yelled.

"Where?"

"Behind Auer Avenue Elementary School; it's located at 2319 West Auer Avenue.

They found the body."

"I know where Auer Avenue Elementary School is. What body?"

"What body? Whose do you think? Candi Kane's, did you forget? You asked me to help Hilga Haller find her niece."

"That's right. I almost forgot."

"Almost forgot? You did forget. What's wrong with you, Max? If your memory was any worse, you could plan your own surprise party."

Horace was getting hysterical as he shouted into the phone. He had this habit of yelling. He always yelled when he was excited. It was very annoying.

"Please get over here," Horace yelled again before hanging up.

What I almost forgot was that I asked Horace Greenberg to help one of my neighbors, Hilga Haller, find her missing niece, Candi Kane. Candi disappeared after leaving her apartment. She moved to the area from Atlanta, Georgia, after the death of her parents. She was attending Layton School of Art, taking classes toward a commercial art degree. She lived with her aunt before moving to Milwaukee to live with two classmates.

I didn't know Miss Haller that well outside of the fact she was a spinster and an English teacher at Brookfield High School. She read about me and the role I played in the apprehension of the notorious rapist and killer, Jimmy 'The Peanut' Booth, in Milwaukee last year and found out we were neighbors. She told me her niece was missing and that the police were unable to find out anything on her whereabouts so she pleaded with me to help her.

At the time, I was packed and ready to head to Tombstone, Arizona to help find the killer of an acquaintance of mine, so I made a call to Horace Greenberg, asking him to help her out in my absence.

It had completely slipped my mind until I got this call from Horace and now I found myself speeding to the scene of another murder. I didn't know the world was filled with so much hate and violence until I got into this line of work. My old nemesis, Casper, the Corrientes bull, who nearly killed me twenty years ago, wasn't looking that bad anymore. At least, he had a reason for hurting people. That's more than I could say about some of the human population.



## Chapter 5

I turned the corner and rolled to a stop at 2319 West Auer Avenue, in front of Auer Avenue School. It was a dreary building constructed of weathered dark brown bricks. It is located on the Northwest side of Milwaukee and had been around for a long time. I actually spent my first two years of school there before my mother packed me into the family car and moved us to Brookfield, at the time, a small town situated west of Milwaukee.

I parked my Edsel convertible behind one of the unmarked squad cars. Next to the squad cars was a rusted out yellow Volkswagen bus that belonged to Horace Greenberg. I got out of my car and noticed Horace standing near Harry's partner, Detective Paulie Menjou; it appeared he was trying to eavesdrop while the detective interrogated a pretty young lady. I waved at Horace as I started to walk across the asphalt to the dirt playground in the back. Harry was kneeling beside a body as I approached. Harry and I met in the third grade after I moved to Brookfield. The first time we were in the lunch line he slugged me in the stomach for no apparent reason. I sized him up at the time and decided it would be in my best interest if I befriended the big goof instead of fighting him. He was at least twice my size. Now he's three times my size and it looked like he was still growing.

Harry was vigorously sucking on a Lucky Strike as he stared at the body on the ground. He looked up as I approached.

"What in the hell are you doing here?"

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