

# **Rock & Roll Homicide**

**A NOVEL BY**

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# Prologue

“I’d say that’s a keeper, Terry,” Jack said as the band finished the 12<sup>th</sup> take of *Full Moon Following*.

Terry glanced at the recording engineer who nodded his approval. “If I waited until everybody got it exactly right, this CD wouldn’t come out till our fans were all dead or in nursing homes,” Terry replied.

Ten songs down, four to go. “Take fifteen while I check my notes for the next song,” Terry said. “And, don’t get lost.”

As the band members exited the studio, Terry turned again to the recording engineer behind a wall of soundproof glass and asked, “Do you need a break?”

“No, I’m gonna review that last take, just to be sure,” he replied.

“Good man.”

Terry set his guitar on its stand and carried a red nylon bag to a small table a few feet away. He removed an iPod, a set of headphones and a custom-made audio recorder. He plugged in the recorder and inserted the iPod into its dock. Then he put on the headphones, which were a heavy-duty model, guaranteed to eliminate almost all external noise. Terry hated when his concentration was interrupted by roadies making equipment changes or other musicians tuning up for the next song.

He took a deep cleansing breath and assured himself that the last take was fine. It was time to move on. The next song would probably be the #1 track on the CD. Cerise

Records had already signed an accomplished director for the video. When the band returned from their break he would give them one of his infrequent compliments to set the tone for the making of their next blockbuster. But first he needed to review his audio notes.

After one more deep breath Terry pushed the *Power* button on the recorder and both of the cups of his headphones exploded. Terry died instantly. Blood and brain matter spattered his white guitar.

# Chapter 1

Chelsea Tucker entered my office exuding the kind of attitude I had come to expect from my financially privileged clientele. I took the lead.

“Before we get started let me express my condolences. Although I never met your husband, I found him to be a truly gifted musician.”

“Thank you,” Chelsea replied. “I understand you were a rock & roll musician yourself before you became an investigator. I’ve got to tell you, that’s a major concern for me. For every responsible adult I know in the music business there are a thousand flakes.”

“I played the San Diego club scene for ten years. But I wasn’t in it for the party lifestyle. I financed two degrees playing cover tunes until 2:00 AM most nights,” I replied.

“I went to college too, Mr. Duffy. I met as many flakes there as I did in the music business. Put my mind at ease. What can you do for me that other investigators can’t?”

Since this would be my first homicide investigation I couldn’t dazzle her with a track record of success and, since I’ve only been an investigator for two years I couldn’t impress her with my vast network of contacts.

“The music business is very unique. Most PI’s work either in a world of corporate executives or unfaithful spouses. I understand what motivates musicians, promoters, club owners, agents, roadies and groupies. Also, I liked Terry’s music and truly want to see his killer brought to justice.”

Sitting forward in her chair, locking her intense green eyes with mine, Chelsea asked, “Can you give me some references of clients you’ve worked with in the past?”

“A very important part of the service I provide is complete confidentiality. I’m sure you’d like me to show you the same consideration when we conclude our business,” I said.

“Right answer.”

“Why don’t you tell me how I can help you,” I said, assuming I passed the audition.

“The San Diego Police Department has been investigating Terry’s death for the past two weeks. I don’t like the direction they’re taking. I have a pretty good idea of who did it. But apparently they prefer to spend their time trying to link it to me because we took out an insurance policy within the last year. I understand that the police have to investigate me, but it doesn’t seem like they’re doing much of anything to track down Terry’s real murderer. That’s why I’m here,” she said, pushing her long black hair away from her face.

“The police managed to keep many of the details out of the press about what actually happened in the recording studio. I know it was a bomb that killed Terry. What else can you tell me?” I asked.

“Terry was a perfectionist. When the band was recording he’d work night and day to get just the right sound. He had a high-quality, portable recorder that he worked with at home to note ideas, changes and things that needed improvement. During recording sessions he kept the recorder on a little table next to him in the studio. Between songs he listened to his notes, and then told the band what to do.”

“Was the bomb in the recorder?”

“No, it was in the headphones. Terry complained that his old headphones weren’t able to screen outside noise. His band mates and sound techs were distracting him. So he asked me to buy a heavier set, designed for noisy environments. On the day he died, the band finished one of their songs and took a break. Terry put on the headphones,

pushed *play*, and they exploded, killing him instantly,” she said as her voice shook noticeably for the first time.

“Who do you think is responsible, Chelsea?” I asked.

“Most of the guys were established musicians when they formed about three years ago. Terry and the lead guitarist, Nigel Choate, were both prolific songwriters. It didn’t take long until they had enough material for their first CD. They thought with their experience and hot demo they’d be in a position to, if not dictate terms to a recording company, at least manage to not get screwed. But the timing was really bad. All of the record companies were freaking about shared files on the Internet gutting their CD and download sales. The established record companies were in a wait and see mode, and it looked like the market was going to stay that way indefinitely until some legislation passed to eliminate piracy, or at least limit it. There was no way the band was going to sign one of the usual rip-off contracts the record companies use to swindle unsuspecting new bands. Just when things were looking their worst, this salesman-type Texan approached our manager with an offer that was about half-way between what Terry was looking for and what everybody else was offering.”

“How was the contract set up?”

“In the first part, the band agreed to record three CDs. The money for the first two was marginal. But the contract stipulated that if the first two CDs hit their sales goals that the money for the third CD would be increased relative to how the first two sold.”

It was obvious that Chelsea knew what was going on and did not emerge from the groupie bimchette gene pool.

“The first two CDs more than doubled their performance goals. But, when it came time for the record company to sweeten the pot for the third CD, the company president was supposedly out of the country on other business. The band proceeded with the recording sessions, but it became apparent they were getting the royal run-around.”

“You mentioned it was a two part contract. What was the other part?” I asked.

“It called for locking the band up for another three CDs, but it had an escape clause if they couldn't reach an equitable agreement on the third CD. That's why Terry started recording without definitive answers on the contract re-negotiation. The band figured there was no way they would risk losing their biggest asset. I'm convinced Cerise Records was behind Terry's murder. I want you to find out why and point SDPD in the right direction.”

After explaining the details on my fee, Chelsea reverted to the businesswoman persona she displayed at the beginning of our meeting. “I'm sure you're a great detective, but I'm not committing to a long-term relationship until I see some results. I'll pay you for one week, then decide if I want to continue. Is that satisfactory?”

“Only if you don't expect me to solve the case in that time.”

“I expect significant progress, not a miracle,” she said as she stood up. “I'll also expect regular progress reports.” She walked out of my office without the customary handshake or goodbye.

As a musician, I put up with drunks, hecklers and club owners who refused to pay up. In my three years as a mental health counselor I butted heads with several bureaucrats who routinely put their career self-interest far ahead of the needs of their clients. But these confrontations paled in comparison to what I knew I needed to do next. I had to ask my dad for a favor.

James Duffy spent thirty years with the San Diego Police Department, ten in a squad car and twenty as a detective. He retired the year I became a private investigator. I wish I could report a warm, supportive relationship, but no such luck. From the day Mom bought my first guitar when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Dad was sure he would find me dead in an East San Diego crack house. As a cop, he saw too many rockers end up on a slab in the morgue to let it slide when he saw his only son going down the same path. I don't remember Mom and Dad having any serious fights until I started rocking out. Mom argued successfully that I had the

benefit of good parenting and a strong sense of right and wrong. She wanted me to follow my dreams and Dad started spending a lot more time at the local cop bar. Whenever I started practicing, Dad considered it an open invitation to hang with his cop buddies. The bottom line was that their relationship suffered quite a hit, particularly while I was still in high school.

Dad hasn't said much about my career as a PI. I get the feeling he's keeping his opinions to himself to prevent more problems with Mom. He's happy that I'm no longer a working musician. But I think he's counting the days till I do something that will embarrass him in front of his cronies.

Mom has a fantasy that he'll become my mentor, help me become a success and feel needed in the process. More importantly, she's hoping we'll patch things up and be more of a family now that we have some common ground. For these reasons, Mom was a willing co-conspirator when I called to ask her to keep him around the house so that I could get his advice on the case. I found him in the backyard watering the lawn.

"Hi Dad. Have you been doing any fishing with Kerrigan?"

"Cut the chit-chat. Your mother tells me you want something. Let's just get to it," he said with his usual amount of tact.

At that point I did the only thing Dad would go for - I gave him exactly what I had.

"So, what do you want from me?"

He knew exactly what I needed but he wanted to hear me ask. "I need to talk with the primary investigator on the case."

"Son, I know we've had our differences, but I've always been on your side. I'll do what I can to get you a sit-down. But I'm going to ask you to take a tip from your old man."

"I did ask for your advice," I replied, hoping the lecture would be mercifully short.

Dad shut off the hose to give me his full attention and read my reaction. "Most cops think of PI's as pains in the ass."

They think you guys are there to tap them for information with nothing of value to trade.

“These days, everybody who thinks he’s been wronged files a civil suit. They usually hire lawyers and PI’s who cite chapter and verse of the damned Freedom of Information Act and expect the cops to help them make their cases. Most cops act tough, like they’re not afraid of those jackals. But the truth is that their chances for promotion go right in the shitter if one of those assholes files a lawsuit against the Department. The sad part is that the cops end up jumping through hoops and hate every minute of it. If you tell the primary you’re there to do the legwork for a civil suit against the record company, he’ll probably cooperate and thank God you’re not wearing a Brooks Brothers suit.”

“I like it,” I said.

“Don’t forget to fill in your client and, for God’s sake, don’t mention that it was my idea.”

“Dad, I had no idea you could be so deceptive.”

“You’re welcome. Now go say hello to your mother and let me finish the lawn,” he said, concluding the conversation on his terms.

As I walked into the kitchen, Mom was waiting for me with an anxious look on her face. “How did it go?”

“Call 911 and tell them to bring the defibrillator. We actually had a productive conversation with no yelling and no sermons. I’m in shock.”

“I’ll be sure to tell Father Lavelle that my prayers are finally being answered,” she said with a genuine smile. “I think he’s mellowed out a bit since he retired.”

“Or was it since my band hung it up?”

“Hard to say. It all happened around the same time. What do you think?” she asked.

“I think we shouldn’t overanalyze it. Count it as a good day and hope it’s the start of a trend.”

“Amen,” she replied as Dad walked in the back door.

“One more thing, son,” he said. “I know the vic was a rock star, but I think it would be in your best interest not to mention your musical career to the primary.”

# Chapter 2

Jeannine Joshlin has been my administrative assistant since I opened the agency. She was also one of my first clients when I went to work as a mental health counselor for the San Diego County Department of Social Services. She is a tall, blond, intelligent, beautiful, obsessive-compulsive 25 year-old. At first glance she adds a huge measure of class to an otherwise modest office space in La Jolla. Fortunately, most of my clients don't stick around the office long enough to pick up on her numerous idiosyncrasies. She's also honest, sincere, and willing to work hard at the business and on her problems. I buzzed her on the intercom.

"Yes Jason," she said as she walked into my office.

"I've got a very busy day planned for you," I said, handing her a *To Do* list. "First I need you to call Chelsea and ask for a copy of the recording company contract. I also need a list of names and phone numbers for each of the band members, support staff, and manager. A copy of Terry's address book would be even better. Let her know that if a cop calls asking about a civil suit, tell him she can only discuss it with her attorney at this point. Ask her for the name, title, and phone number of the president of Cerise Records. Try to set up a meet for this afternoon. Mention that we're working for Chelsea and they should bend over backwards to try to avoid a lawsuit."

Jeannine is a wiz when it comes to computers, and is especially skilled at Internet research. I have no doubt she'll

come up with twice the info I would have found and in half of the time. Right after I got back to my own *To Do* list, she buzzed me.

“Your dad is on Line 1.”

“Hi Dad. Any luck?”

“Am I going to have to go through that every time I call here?” he asked with a large measure of irritation in his voice.

“What?”

“That nut-job receptionist of yours just called me Dad. I never met the woman in my life and she acts like she’s my long-lost daughter. I don’t need to ask where you found her.”

I replied, “Yeah, but she does Windows.”

“What?”

“I thought you liked getting to the point. Do you know the primary?” I inquired, hoping I had successfully changed subjects.

“It’s Walter Shamansky and I do know him. We’re not exactly the best of friends, but he agreed to a meet. Call him at Metro.”

“Thanks Dad. Do you have any advice on how to approach him?”

“Go with what we talked about. Form your own opinion. I gotta go,” he said and hung up.

Three minutes later I was patched through.

“Shamansky,” said the burly voice.

“This is Jason Duffy. I’m a Private Investigator working for Chelsea Tucker.”

“Duff’s boy. Yeah, the wheel’s been greased, as if you didn’t already know. I don’t have a lot of time for this sort of thing. The case is very high-profile and that means I have the brass up my ass looking for results,” he said.

“You’ve got to take a break occasionally. You name the time and place, I’ll be there.”

“I do have to eat lunch.”

“Great! When and where?”

“Larabee’s at noon,” he said.

“Where’s that?”

“It’s in that yellow research manual they give to everybody who owns a phone. If you cross-reference it with a Thomas Brothers Map Book, you’ll have an hour and a half to figure it out. Think you can you handle it?” he asked.

“I can’t wait,” I said and he hung up.

Who says there’s no such thing as a free lunch? Ten-to-one lunch sets me back at least \$50. I hope Chelsea isn’t a grinder when it comes to expense reports.

My next call was to Bernie Liebowitz. Of all of the club owners I worked for, Bernie was the best. He’s a former rock & roll agent who got out of the business because he couldn’t stand seeing his clients constantly getting ripped off by the recording companies. He agreed to meet me at the start of happy hour.

As expected, Larabee’s turned out to be an upscale restaurant just off of La Jolla Boulevard. It was a white Spanish building with a red tile roof, built into the side of a hill overlooking the Pacific. The restaurant had several terraces filled with alfresco diners. Inside the beveled glass entranceway was a hostess who looked very familiar. I was sure she played the part of a mom on one of those sitcom’s that has been in reruns for years.

“Do you have a reservation?” she asked with the warmth and charm you might expect from Beaver Cleaver’s mom.

“I’m afraid not,” I said. “Do you think you could squeeze in a party of two?”

“We’re booked solid until at least 2:30.”

“Actually I’m meeting someone. It’s quite possible he made a reservation. His name is Walter Shamansky,” I stated with raised eyebrows and a hopeful inflection in my voice.

Beav’s mom made a big production of perusing the reservation list carefully. When she finished she gave me a sympathetic expression and a little shake of the head.

“Mind if I wait until Mr. Shamansky arrives?”

“Not at all.”

She extended her arm toward a church pew adjacent to the door. Just as I was thinking Shamansky stood me up, in walked a muscular, 50-something guy with a shaved head.

Beaver's mom lit up like Disneyland's Main Street Electrical Parade.

"Howdy stranger!" she enthused. "I thought you lost our address."

"Not a chance. Where else in La Jolla am I going to find four-star food and a five-star hostess," he said, laying it on thick.

"Where's the benevolent benefactor today?" she asked.

"I'm supposed to be meeting a PI."

Beaver's mom gave a head nod in my direction.

Walter Shamansky turned to face me and asked, "Son of Duff?"

I raised my hand and stood. "That's me."

He flapped his palm indicating he wanted me to fall in line behind him as he turned his attention back to the hostess.

As I approached, I said, "I thought you didn't have a reservation for a Walter Shamansky."

Beav's mom looked at Shamansky and asked, "Is that your name, Kojak?"

"You can call me anything you want, beautiful," he replied with a wink. She feigned embarrassment and showed us to a window table with a view of the ocean.

I started to launch into the spiel I had prepared, but got halted by a raised palm as Shamansky focused on his menu. I wanted to ask if he'd recently been promoted from Traffic Division, but held my tongue. After a couple of minutes the poster girl for anorexia nervosa stopped by our table and asked for our orders. Shamansky flirted as shamelessly as he had with the hostess. Surprisingly, this twenty-one-year-old also knew Shamansky and treated him like a friend.

Once our orders were taken Shamansky said, "OK, let's hear it."

I proceeded with the scenario I worked out with Dad.

Shamansky said, "I gotta give your old man credit. For a guy who's three years retired, he set you up with a very

believable story. Almost any other cop in the department would have bought it.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your dad and me never saw eye to eye. He was with the In Crowd, the Irish Mafia, and I wasn’t.”

“Are you saying my dad was dirty?” I asked, with a pugnacious tone.

“No. Nothing like that. The Irish Mafia in SDPD is a clique. A large group of Irish cops who hang out together and watch each other’s backs in the field and at promotion time.”

“I have a flash for you, Shamansky, he never made it past detective.” The tension mounted.

“Don’t get me wrong. I like your dad. When we were both at Western Division we had two of the highest clearance rates in the department. He was a damn good cop. I just didn’t care for the company he kept.”

Just as the smoke was clearing, Olive Oyl arrived with lunch. We ate in silence for a couple of minutes.

“Here’s what I’ve got to offer, Shamansky said. “If you read the papers you probably know the assholes on city council cut our budget to shit. No overtime, hiring freeze, and something they’re calling *total accountability*, which is short for more paperwork/less field time.” He shoved an artichoke heart into his mouth and, once again, held up his palm, telling me it was not yet my turn to speak. “Your little scam about a civil suit tells me you’re willing to do some legwork in exchange for some information. Here are the rules: If I give you an assignment, you give me exactly what you find - no holding out on me and no partial truth. If you can do that I’ll keep you in the loop on the investigation. Deal?”

“I can live with that, on one condition: No bullshit assignments to satisfy the brass. You ask me to do something we need to know to move forward, I’ll give it to you straight,” I said while returning his stare with equal intensity.

“You are definitely the son of Duff. That’s a good thing. OK, no bullshit assignments. What do you need to know?” he asked.

Before I could launch into my questions our server rolled a dessert cart to our table and looked like she was auditioning for the role of game show hostess as she hand-gestured from one confection to the next. When it was mercifully over we ordered coffee.

“What did forensics have to say about the bomb?” I asked.

“It was a combination of BBs and a blasting cap in each ear pad of the headphones.”

“Wouldn’t that make the earphones noticeably heavy?”

“Here’s something you’ll find very interesting. The headphones were a recent gift from your client. According to her, he had been asking for a heavier, tighter seal to block out extraneous noise. A studio sound tech confirms that he asked for a recommendation on a pair that had those features.”

“Is that the only reason you like my client?”

“Not at all. She inherits five million bucks from an insurance policy. Her husband, like all rock stars, may have had infidelity issues. And, everyone I’ve talked with tells me Terry Tucker was a sonofabitch,” he said.

“Don’t tell me you’re relying on clues from the National Inquirer.”

“Talk to the band,” he said as he stood.

“Anything else?”

“Yeah,” he replied, “Leave a big tip.”

I waited until I got down to the street before calling Jeannine. “Were you able to get me an appointment at Cerise Records?”

“Everything else on the list is going very well. But Cerise Records was really weird,” she said.

“Weird, how?”

“I told the receptionist who I was and everything, then she put me on hold. She must have put her hand over the phone, but I could still hear her explaining it to her boss. He said, ‘Tell them I am out of the country and won’t be back for

at least a couple of weeks.’ When she came back on the line she told me what her boss said.”

“What’s the boss’s name?”

“John Koflanovich. I couldn’t hear him very distinctly, but he definitely had a foreign accent.”

I got the address and decided to try a drop in. It’s infinitely easier to blow someone off on the phone than it is in person. Twenty minutes later, I entered a large business office complex that was decidedly more upscale than my modest quarters, but definitely not in the same league as the major record labels. Fortunately, they had an on-site management company listed on the marquee.

I walked out of the elevator and was disappointed to see an interior hallway with no windows. There were only two office suites on Cerise’s side of the hallway. The other was Cleason Enterprises. As I walked into the Cerise reception room, I was again disturbed by the absence of interior windows. No way of telling the size of the suite or how many people were in their offices. The receptionist was an attractive blond in her mid-twenties.

“Hi. I’m with Cubic Property Management. We’re having an electrical problem on this floor and I need to take a look at your panel,” I said.

“Let me speak to the boss.” She left her desk and opened a heavy, walnut door just to the side of her reception desk. When she returned she said, “I’m sorry. There’s a confidential meeting going on right now and no one is allowed in the interior suites. If you would like to leave your name and number I can call when it’s OK. Or, I can just call Cubic.”

“I’m afraid you don’t understand,” I pleaded. “I just came from Cleason and their computers are completely down. They’re losing money by the second.”

“We work with some very big name acts in the music business. When they’re in negotiations it’s imperative that we maintain the highest standards of confidentiality. *Entertainment Tonight*, the *Hollywood Tattler*, *California Confidential* and the tabloids are constantly snooping around here. I’m sure you are who you say you are, but if a

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