

Two Shades of Vice

**Based on the True Story of an Interracial
Couple's Life Together in Crime**

DEWEY B. REYNOLDS

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*For my parents—Gordon Reynolds and Alla Mae Briggs.
You were two of the bravest souls to ever come to earth.*

And in loving memory of Aurora Lee Bryson and Jacqueline Wylie.



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Chapter 1

Four-Foot-Eleven of Pure Hustle

ALLA MAE BRIGGS literally stood tall, even at four-foot-eleven, since she knew the hustle of the Kansas City streets. Coal black processed hair covered her medium-sized head. A thin part straight down the top center of her head, with two curly bangs overshadowing her forehead, became the signature hairdo of her generation. Her smooth, dark complexion glowed with a radiance, which compared to many other beautiful women of color.

Weighing in at a solid one hundred twenty-five pounds of dangerous curves, she certainly knew how to flaunt what her mother had given her. As the daughter of an ordained minister, she'd gotten way off track and went far to the left. Ever since the age of seventeen, Alla Mae started working the north end streets of Kansas City, Missouri as a prostitute.

She knew the game much too well. There weren't too many tricks that she didn't know by name or by face. White men were her specialty. The working class and well-to-do white men were absolutely more suited toward her hustle lifestyle.

Even as a budding teenager, she knew that white men lusted for colored women. Rarely did any of them fall hard when it came to displaying true love. Alla Mae reasoned that white men enjoyed spending money on colored women.

Whether it was their wives or girlfriends, or just some hooker that they picked up on the streets, they didn't mind spreading some of the money around. Alla Mae and many of her hustling sidekicks stayed as far away from colored men as possible.

It didn't take them long to learn that colored men often posed as tricks wanting to pick them up, then pretended to have a hotel or a house available for some unadulterated sex. That's when things turned for the worse.

Once the women were lured to these locations, they'd beat them and threaten to kill them if they didn't come and work for them. Pimps were the worst kind of vultures. They always sought out the weakest women for their prey.

Preparing for the worse would be the greatest survival tactic for Alla Mae while working the dangerous streets of Kansas City. Shrewdly, she kept a razor in her purse and another razor tucked away on the side of her bra strap.

It was early 1962, and prostitution was booming at the far north end of Kansas City. Deep within the northeast section of the city, brothels, bawdy houses, rundown motels and cheap resorts were stationed along several long and short blocks. East Twelfth Street became dubbed as the "*Immoral Hotels and Strip Joint District.*" Noted brothels along the Sixth Street and Locust District were potentially for or staffed by the colored people.

An even larger concentration of solicitation occurred along East Sixth Street, between Grand Avenue and Cherry Street. Smaller rundown motels were a goldmine for the organized crime figures who profited from both the whores and the tricks.

Several of the brothels and bawdy houses were widely known for having colored women. Saturday nights usually brought out the hookers and tricks in droves. Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Streets were the exact locations where strolling men were solicited by temptingly clad prostitutes. The watchful eyes of law enforcement were ever-so-eager to arrest either party for their participation in acts of prostitution.

Many ladies of the evening knew Alla Mae quite well. At the ripe age of thirty-one, she'd become a veteran of the prostitution game. Numerous arrests didn't stop her. Threats from pimps and rival hookers didn't stop her. Extensive jail sentence warnings from judges and prosecutors didn't stop her. Once her mind was made up, Alla Mae was determined to do whatever the hell she pleased.

Nightfall had crept upon Kansas City, Missouri like a split-second eclipse of the Sun. The action on the streets was hot. The pimps and so-called pimps turned their whores loose on the eager tricks.

The prostitution racket turned out more than lucrative for the Italian, Irish, Jewish, and a very small percentage of colored pimps. The Italians were very smart in the sense that the others gave a percentage of their earnings in exchange for protection and to avoid intimidation, beatings, and even being killed.

Alla Mae decided to take the more dangerous route. She didn't have a pimp. She refused to work for anyone who took more than half the money that she sweated in bed for. Other women warned her that many hookers were viciously beaten and killed and then found in alleyways and in between abandoned houses. Still, she didn't care.

Kansas City time had moved towards 12:15 a.m. The action between Eighth and Ninth Streets, close to where Tracy and Lydia intersected, escalated to heights where the tricks were picking up the hookers every ten or fifteen minutes. Near the intersection of Ninth and Lydia, Alla Mae spotted a white man driving a 1951 Plymouth Tudor.

The sparkling maroon paint job had sort of caught her eye. The man behind the wheel of the automobile drove slowly to the corner and stopped. The streetlights high above were beaming directly into the face of the potential customer.

Alla Mae stepped closer to the driver's side of the pristine car. Upon approaching the man, she noticed that the car had license plates for Kansas City, Kansas.

"Looking for a good time?" Alla Mae asked the strange white male, looking all around the inside of his car from the outside. Caution became a mainstay for women like herself, someone who knew the Kansas City streets much too well.

"Depends," said the young man whose body language sent vibes into the atmosphere that he'd been sex-starved for quite some time.

"Look, don't waste your time or mines," Alla Mae made clear right from the very start. "Either you wanna have a good time or you don't."

"All right, we can have a good time. Won't you climb inside?"

"Don't mind if I do."

Alla Mae walked around the hood of the car and got inside. She carefully studied her potential trick. Making sure that he wasn't carrying any type of weapon, like a gun or knife or icepick, was only exercising one of her many street lessons that she'd been taught early on. Stories about how some tricks were known to beat and butcher the hookers that they'd spent time with became legendary on the streets.

"So, what's your name?" Alla Mae inquired, sizing up the Caucasian male who only possessed average looks. He had slicked-back brown hair, a relatively clear complexion, and just plain facial features. There really wasn't anything special about him.

"It's Edward Mark Chop," he answered with slight hesitation, his rolling, lustful eyes watching the toned, curvy physique of Alla Mae. "But my family and friends call me 'Eddie Chop.'"

“Well, here’s the deal, Eddie Chop. I’d like to know what you’re looking to do.”

“Can I be as honest as possible?”

“You sure can.”

“I wanna fuck.”

“Is that all?”

“I’d also like a blowjob.”

“Anything else?”

“Maybe have you jack me off rather good.”

“It’ll be ten dollars for each one of those.”

“Isn’t a blowjob and a jackoff one and the same?”

“Not with me it isn’t. Those are three different acts performed individually.”

Edward Chop, the conservative white man who’d been a life-long resident of Kansas City, Kansas, tried rather hard to keep his hormones under control. “I’ve got the thirty dollars in my pocket. Is there anywhere around here that we can go?”

One of her most deceitful smirks had spread across the face of Alla Mae. “I’ve got just the place where we can go.”

“By the way, what’s your name?”

“It’s Annabelle Jenkins,” Alla Mae said, known by the police for using several aliases.

“Man, that name sure sounds Southern.”

“I’m from the South.”

“Where in the South?”

“Lydia, Louisiana. It’s barely a thousand people who live there.”

“That’s a very, very small town.”

“Indeed it is. Nothing but dirt roads, swamps, rednecks, and lots of the poorest colored folks.”

Alla Mae learned early on how not to give strangers her real name. She’d been schooled to also not give them your correct birthplace or

place of employment. Annabelle Jenkins was a fictitious name that she'd concocted from a story that was read to her as a child.

"All right, Annabelle, where are we going?" Edward asked, starting up his classy automobile and shifting it into drive.

"Eddie Chop, we're going to a house just down this alley and around the corner."

"Is this place safe?" Edward worried, well aware that the neighborhood was predominantly colored and infested with crime. The worst criminals in the city lived in the area, with robbery, burglary, assaults, rapes and murders at the top of the list of crimes.

"Safe as safe could ever be," Alla Mae assured him, pointing to the end of the alleyway.

Little did either one of them know that a pair of KCPD patrolmen were tailing them. Patrolmen Charles Galanis and Lewis Anderson had been watching them all the time. Both patrolmen knew that the area was heavy with prostitution, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, and that mostly white men frequented the north end of Kansas City in search of the colored hookers.

Edward drove almost to the end of the alleyway.

He put his Plymouth in park and shut off the lights.

Alla Mae pointed to the house that was next to the one on the corner. The house was severely worn down. White chipped paint and hanging gutters and ripped window frames gave the appearance that no one lived there.

"Is this where we're going?" Edward wondered.

"It sure is."

"But the house looks abandoned."

"Believe me, it's very much habitable."

"All right, if you say so."

"Now, can I see the money?"

Edward dug deep into his left pocket and displayed a roll of ten-dollar bills. Having the ability to sniff out money, Alla Mae

figured he had a small wad of about one hundred dollars. Dollar signs surely surfaced through the pupils of her eyes.

Alla Mae snatched the money and quickly sprung from the car. She ran between the corner house and the one next to it.

“Hey!” Edward yelled with all the might of his lungs. “Come back here with my money, you thieving colored bitch!”

Two colored boys, appearing to be in their late teens, jumped over a fence and in front of Edward’s car. Seeing them come from out of nowhere nearly frightened him out of his mind.

“Hey, white honky, what are you doing in this neighborhood?” one of the ravaging teenagers asked boldly. He slipped out a straight razor. Gladly, he and his fellow teen were ready to commit a violent robbery.

Speeding down the alleyway were Patrolmen Galanis and Anderson. Both teens saw the flashing police lights and quickly jumped back over the fence and into the blackness of the nighttime. Before Edward could consider making his getaway, Patrolman Anderson jumped out of his patrol car and pointed his pistol at him.

“What the hell are you doing down here this time of night?” Patrolman Anderson inquired, giving Edward the direct instructions of placing his hands at the top of the steering wheel.

“Only going out for a ride, sir,” Edward lied; heavy perspiration and the shaking of his hands indicated he wasn’t telling the truth.

“Who were those two colored boys?”

“I’ve never seen them before. I believe they were going to try to rob me.”

“You think my partner and I are stupid, don’t you, mister?”

“No, sir.”

“You were down here soliciting, buddy. Who was the colored woman in the car with you?”

“Just some woman named Annabelle who wanted to sit in my car and have a friendly conversation.”

“Annabelle who?”

“Annabelle Jenkins.”

“You’re lying!” Patrolman Anderson confronted Edward, watching his demeanor closely, able to tell that he wasn’t used to being in a harsh ghetto area. “You sit right where you are, and don’t move.”

“Yes, sir.”

Patrolman Anderson rushed back over to the squad car, where Patrolman Galanis sat behind the wheel talking into the radio.

He set the radio down and told Patrolman Anderson, “Lew, I’ve called for a backup unit. You and I both know that this northeast end is a jungle. While you keep an eye on him, I’m gonna cruise the block over and go looking for that colored girl.”

“Great idea, Charlie. By the way, that colored woman looked real familiar. If my memory serves me right, she’s been hooking in this area for quite some time.”

“You’re probably right.”

Patrolman Galanis drove over to the next block. He cruised at a less-than-normal speed. Using a very bright flashlight, he hoped to find the subject who might’ve gotten away. Right at the middle of the block, he spotted Alla Mae running up some stairs and toward a light blue house.

He floored the accelerator and swooped over to the curb. Alla Mae ran up another set of stairs and toward the front door. She knocked as hard as she could. A tall, slender, colored woman with a youthful pretty face answered the door. Alla Mae rushed inside, only to have Patrolman Galanis a few feet behind her.

“Stop right now!” Patrolman Galanis ordered Alla Mae, his left hand planted firmly on the handle of his gun. He didn’t necessarily want to pull his gun out and point it directly at her. She did as ordered and threw both arms up in the air. “Who are you, ma’am?” he asked the woman who’d been standing in the middle of the floor in the front room, presumably waiting on Alla Mae.

“Linda Johnson is my name,” she replied in a low, squeaky voice.

“Where do you know this woman from?”

“She’s a very good friend of mines.”

“Whose house does this belong to?”

“It belongs to us and a couple’a other women.”

“Are you using this house for the purposes of solicitation?”

Patrolman Galanis asked in the most accusatory fashion.

“Definitely not.”

Patrolman Galanis grabbed Alla Mae’s right arm and swung it behind her back. He grabbed the other arm and then placed a set of handcuffs around her wrists. “I’m placing you under arrest.”

“For what?!” Alla Mae shouted, humping her shoulders and grumbling with gestures as though she were uneasy.

“Solicitation, what else? Besides, my partner and I know who you are.”

“You don’t even know my name.”

“Alla Mae Briggs is who you are,” Patrolman Galanis said with no hesitation. This really shocked Alla Mae since she’d never been arrested by either of the patrolmen. Her years of soliciting on the streets had gained her a widely accepted reputation among local law enforcement.

“No, my name is Annabelle Jenkins.”

“Silly games is not what I’m into. Annabelle Jenkins is some alias that you use to evade arrest. We’re not stupid, lady.”

Alla Mae used one profane word after another in her attempt to convince him to release her.

Patrolman Galanis escorted Alla Mae out of the home. As they walked down the stairs leading to the street, gunshots rang out halfway up the block. Galanis already knew that that particular neighborhood was the worst of its kind in all of Kansas City, Missouri. A notorious housing project was several blocks away. A murder occurred almost every other day in that part of town.

Patrolman Galanis displayed his gentlemen’s side by shielding Alla Mae from possible harm. He snatched his service revolver out

of the holster and cautiously looked up the street. Almost within plain view, both Galanis and Alla Mae witnessed one colored male shooting another colored male several times in the head with a Ruger .22-caliber pistol.

In the loudest voice imaginable, the colored male executing the shooting told the other colored male, "I'll bet you won't rape nobody else's sister, motherfucker!"

He took off running down the street with the pistol dangling down by his side. While trying to handle one crime, which involved the apprehension and arrest of Alla Mae, Patrolman Galanis witnessed another crime in progress. The man who'd been shot appeared to be in his early to middle thirties. The man who shot him could've easily been in his late twenties to early thirties.

Little did either Patrolman Galanis or Alla Mae know that the man who'd been shot was a known rapist. Over a period of about ten years, he'd raped fifteen women and had gotten away with it. Some even claimed he'd molested several underage girls and boys.

The murder scene was gruesome. From a distance, Patrolman Galanis and Alla Mae had seen how the gunshot wounds to the victim's head had splattered part of his brain matter into the street. Blood formed a small pool around his head. Neighbors up and down the block rushed from their residences.

Sitting inside of a 1960 blue Chevrolet Bel Air was a very charismatic white male. Cleverly, he disguised his face from the two veteran patrol officers with his car parked parallel on the shoulder of the curve. He carefully made sure that his face remained in the patch of darkness, far away from the beaming lights that were high above the streets.

Alla Mae was the subject that he concentrated heavily on. She'd caught his attention right from the very start, from the second that she'd sprung from Edward Mark Chop's car. This was one woman he definitely wanted to pursue.

Patrolman Anderson cruised around the corner with Edward Chop handcuffed in the back seat of his patrol car. Another patrol car pulled up behind the first one. Alla Mae was placed in the second car. Patrolman Anderson parked his patrol car so he could consult with Patrolman Galanis.

“Charlie, what happened over on this block?” Patrolman Anderson asked his comrade of over ten years.

“More urban-jungle madness, Lew,” Patrolman Galanis explained in brief detail. “One colored guy shot another colored guy.”

“Yet another homicide, huh? Did you get a good look at the suspect?”

“Not really. It’s still relatively dark out here. I did overhear the one colored guy who shot the other one say that he’d never rape another guy’s sister.”

“Are you serious?”

“As a full day of cardiac arrests.”

“Think the victim is a known rapist?”

“I’d say so. He’s probably got a rap sheet a mile long with sexual assault convictions. This time, I guess his crimes caught up with him.”

Patrolman Galanis reached for the radio inside the patrol car. “First, we’ve gotta get these two down to headquarters for booking. Then, we’ve gotta get the morgue wagon down here and some backup to help process the homicide scene.”

Patrolmen Galanis and Anderson led the other squad car into downtown Kansas City after the other patrolmen and detectives arrived at the murder scene.

CHAPTER 2

Book the Crook

THE KANSAS CITY, Missouri Police Department spent the first forty years at Fourth and Main Streets. On November 19, 1938, the department moved to its new location at 1125 Locust Street in the heart of downtown Kansas City.

The new building came to be known as the Municipal Courts Police Building. Higher law enforcement officials boasted that it would be the most modern police building, being equipped with the most advanced scientific devices to combat crime in the United States.

One legendary police director from the late 1940s once said to his colleagues, “The wages of sin in Kansas City, Missouri are real long jail sentences.”

Alla Mae was escorted straight to the booking desk on the first floor of the police headquarters. She knew the entire process since she’d made several trips to the headquarters over the years for soliciting. The routine actually became boring to her.

Patrolman Galanis explained to the booking officers that Alla Mae had been picked up for soliciting on the streets.

“Name?” asked the baritone-voiced booking officer.

“Why you have ta know that?” Alla Mae mouthed off, a look of utter annoyance on her face.

“Name, ma’am?” the officer asked again.

“Alla Mae Briggs.”

“Date of birth?”

“June twenty-eighth, 1931.”

“Race?”

“Colored.”

Patrolman Galanis thrust his arm out with an open palm hand to the booking officer. “Wait just a second, Roy.” He turned to Alla Mae. “I thought you told me that your name was Annabelle Jenkins.”

“Huh, Annabelle Jenkins is just one of my many names,” Alla Mae replied with the highest dose of sarcasm.

“It’s obvious that you use a lot of aliases . You only do it to try to evade arrest.”

“Whatever it takes.”

“Patrolman Lewis and I caught you red-handed trying to solicit. No alias on earth is going to get you out of this one. Roy, you can keep doing what you were doing.”

The booking officer continued with the process. Once Alla Mae was fingerprinted, Patrolman Galanis escorted her past two offices that were near the booking desk. At the end of a softly lit lobby were two elevators with on-duty operators.

“What floor, sir?” asked an older white woman with a thin frame and coiffed brown hair.

“Third floor, please,” Patrolman Galanis politely requested.

“Third floor it is.”

Alla Mae sort of squirmed around by pressing her back against the wall of the elevator. “You’ve got these cuffs too tight on me.”

“When we hit the third floor, I’ll remove them.”

“Why did you have to put them back on me, anyway?”

“It’s part of my job, Alla Mae,” Patrolman Galanis said to Alla Mae with serious, direct eye contact. “Or should I call you Annabelle?”

“Ha, ha.” Alla Mae didn’t find him too amusing. “At this point, I don’t care what you call me.”

The elevator reached the third floor and the pair stepped off into another section of the headquarters. News desks lined the walls, facing the tall, wide windows. Gleaming typewriters were being used by clerks who easily typed sixty words a minute.

The latest filing equipment filled almost every inch of cabinet and drawer space. Nearly everything looked quite familiar to Alla Mae except for some new office equipment and the carpet. A color photo of Police Director Clarence Kelley measuring eleven inches high and fourteen wide hung from a wall facing south.

Upon walking into the first room after getting off the elevator, people had the impression they were stepping into a small theater. Brand new equipment for the laboratory and photographic units impressed Alla Mae to no end. Even though she had been arrested and booked at the police headquarters, now she was being exposed to a world with upcoming technology not yet showcased to outsiders.

An array of brand new office machines glistened from the bright sun shining through the windows. Patrolman Galanis led Alla Mae over to the photographic machines. They, too, appeared to be new.

Alla Mae held up the placard with her name, date of birth, booking ID, and weight. The officer who served as photographer instructed her to turn sideways and then turn with her looking straightforward.

She turned around and focused her attention at the spacious room, which housed the dispatchers’ office. Four dispatchers aggressively worked the streamlined equipment. Their rolling eyes carefully watched the electronic map showing police cruisers’ locations. Alla Mae noticed that a young attractive lady was the only black dispatcher who worked among the other three white dispatchers.

They made close, yet intimate, eye contact. Alla Mae sent silent signals that she was proud of the young lady. It proved to her that some of her people were professionals with clean records. The tingling

sensation felt in her heart gave her some sense of assurance that her people were hopefully on the road to becoming upwardly mobile and securely prosperous.

Once the mugshots were taken, Patrolman Galanis took Alla Mae to the fourth floor. There, a small room with a desk and two chairs were off to the right. Smaller rooms around it were where arrest subjects were intimidated into regurgitating the truth.

Captain D. L. Denison from the Crime Prevention Bureau of the KCPD walked into the room. His presence was that of a man who commanded respect and honesty. Six-foot-two was the height in which he stood. A solid one hundred ninety-six pounds was the weight in which he carried with pride. He'd spent the last seven years investigating vice activities for the KCPD.

Captain Denison took a seat across from Alla Mae. She didn't look too familiar to him.

Their body languages were quite uncomplimentary toward one another.

"Evening, Miss Alla Mae Briggs," sounded the high-pitched, not-so-intimidating voice of Captain Denison.

"Evening to you, too," Alla Mae spoke back, an expression of utter outrage on her face.

"I'm Captain D. L. Denison of the Crime Prevention Bureau. You do know why you were brought to headquarters and booked, don't you?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know the routine." Alla Mae tried to ignore him.

"I see you've been a very busy woman."

"Yes, busy taking care of my business and leaving other people's business alone."

Captain Denison flipped open a manila folder with a thin stack of papers inside. "You've got quite an impressive rap sheet here."

"Did you bring me in here to recite my entire life history?" Alla Mae smarted off.

Captain Denison pulled the first sheet of paper closer to his face and pressed his index finger to it. “Hmmm. On May twenty-third, 1951, you were investigated for charges relating to vice activities. During this arrest, you had used the alias Jacqueline Carilee Briggs. Do you personally know someone named Jacqueline Carilee Briggs?”

“No I do not,” Alla Mae lied, knowing very well that it was the name of her sister, who was two and a half years younger than herself.

“On November twentieth, 1951, you were investigated again for activities relating to vice. The alias Louise Simpson was used at the time of this charge. Who is Louise Simpson?”

“Never heard of the woman.”

“On February twenty-fifth, 1953, you were arrested for being an inmate of a bawdy house. The alias Annabelle Jenkins is listed here on the rap sheet. Who’s Annabelle Jenkins?”

“The name doesn’t sound familiar.”

“All right then,” continued Captain Denison. “On March fourteenth, 1951, police arrested you again for being an inmate of a bawdy house. The alias Annabelle Jenkins was used again. Maybe Annabelle Jenkins doesn’t sound familiar to you because no such person exists.”

“Maybe not.”

“With dates ranging from June twentieth, 1954 to August twenty-second, 1959, you were arrested and booked for vagrancy and soliciting prostitution on the streets. The aliases Frances Simpson and Louise Baker were also listed here on the rap sheet.”

Captain Denison closed the folder and dropped it on the table. His overall demeanor sent vibes of great frustration into the atmosphere. He needed for Alla Mae to cooperate in every way possible.

“All right, Alla Mae,” Captain Denison said as he released a long sigh of disappointment. “The facts don’t lie. Neither does the hard proof from police records. Do you currently reside at the home where Patrolman Galanis arrested you?”

“No,” Alla Mae answered truthfully.

“Is the home a bawdy house?”

“No.”

“So it isn’t used for immoral purposes?”

“No, it isn’t.”

“Then what is it used for?”

“It’s a social club that’s ran by me and my girlfriends.”

“Are you chartered?”

“What do you mean by chartered?” asked Alla Mae, showing serious signs of restlessness by slumping down in the seat.

“I mean, you know, chartered,” Captain Denison tried explaining further.

“First, you will have to explain yourself.”

“The city ordinance says that any club where dues are collected, a record must be kept of the officers, and that such secretary or treasurer must keep a record which is open to the public and that such organization shall pay in the city treasurer such certain percentage. Is your club such a place?”

“I don’t know.” Alla Mae nodded, trying her best to keep Captain Denison from picking up a stronger scent.

“This club that you and the other ladies run, are either you or another woman the president?”

“I’m the president and another woman is the vice president, all right?”

“Are your folks living?”

“No, they’re not.”

“Did you ever go to school, and where?”

“Yes, in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was many years ago.”

“Under what name?”

“The same name I got now.”

“How old were you when you left home?”

“About sixteen, I guess.”

“You’re much older than sixteen now, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“How many times would you say you’ve been arrested?”

“So many times that I lost count.”

“Where?”

“Right here inside the Municipal Courts Building.”

“What name did you use?”

“Annabelle Jenkins.”

“Why were you arrested?”

“For cursing a police patrolman.”

“What was the reason as to why you cursed him?”

“Because he was meddling with me.”

“So you did curse out Patrolman Galanis?”

“I sure did. When he brought me here to headquarters, there was another woman and an officer getting on the elevator. He started meddling with me, and I gave him a piece of my mind.”

Captain Denison quickly read over a document near the end of the stack. “Have you ever filed a Self-Employment Missouri State Tax?”

“I said no!” Alla Mae grumbled through clenched teeth, a glare of fury filling both eyes.

“Don’t be going and getting sore,” Captain Denison tried slowing her down. “Didn’t you state before that you run a dress shop at 3913 East Sixteenth Street?”

“I said yes!” Alla Mae yelled, this time at a more intimidating octave.

“How long have you known this June Hicks of 1319 Park Avenue?”

“About a year or two, I guess.”

“What’s wrong, Alla Mae, you don’t like policemen?”

“Yes, lots of them, well...some of them are real gentlemen.”

“Name one for me.”

“I don’t care to.”

“Did you ever room with Mrs. Hicks?”

“No, I have not.”

Captain Denison placed the folder down on the table. Speaking calmly and with a soothing demeanor, he asked Alla Mae, “Would you happen to know anything about the shooting on the block where Linda Johnson lives?”

“No,” Alla Mae said quite nonchalantly.

“Did you get to see the face of the shooting victim or the shooting suspect involved?”

“No, because they were quite a ways up the street.”

“Patrolman Galanis explained to me that the man firing the gun said to the man being shot, ‘I’ll bet you won’t rape nobody else’s sister, motherfucker.’ Did you hear any of those words?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Do you think that those guys could come from off the block where Miss Johnson lives or they could’ve come from over in the Wayne Miner Housing Projects?”

“That, I couldn’t tell you.”

“Do you know anyone from over in Wayne Miner?”

“Lots of people.”

“There have been several rapes in the area within the past two years or so.”

“If there have been, then I don’t know much about it.”

“Do you have anything else you want to say?”

“No.”

Captain Denison exited the room. There to meet him in the hallway was Detective Willard Maxwell from the vice unit. Detective Maxwell had bushy, reddish-brown hair and bluish-green eyes. A thick, shaggy mustache covered all his upper lip and part of the tip of his nose. The suits he wore were cheap but fit his stature as a detective just fine.

“Old habits die hard,” Detective Maxwell greeted his colleague, slipping a microfilmed document out of a tan folder.

“Isn’t that the truth,” Captain Denison agreed. “Whaddaya have for me, Willard?”

Detective Maxwell held the document straight out and up toward the light. “I’ve got a line on this Alla Mae Briggs, alias Jacqueline Briggs, alias Annabelle Jenkins, alias Louise Baker, alias Louise Simpson.”

“This colored woman has sure used a lot of aliases over the years,” Captain Denison said, reaching for the document with a long narrative written from top to bottom, almost every inch of paper space occupied.

Denison exercised some patience by reading only the top portion of the paper. “I see that she has two children.”

“Yes, a son and a daughter.”

“Who’re keeping her children?”

“Haven’t found that out yet.”

“Let’s see here.” Captain Denison paused, his eyes focused on the very top paragraph. In a calm, yet low voice, he began to read, word for word, “Says that Investigator McGarvey of the KCPD received a KC-81 from Caseworker Clark Achelpohl indicating that there was a need for Kansas City, Missouri Police Department records on a Alla Mae Beverly, alias Alla Mae Briggs, for the purpose of a report to the Jackson County Juvenile Court. Information needed is a copy of arrest dates, dispositions, and any serious offenses the subject has been charged with.”

“One of the lead caseworkers over at family services provided this information.”

“I’d say that she’s been a very busy woman over the years.”

“And then some.”

Silently, Captain Denison began reading over the remaining information:

A check of the record bureau of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department revealed information regarding a Alla Mae Briggs. She is a colored female, 4-foot-eleven, one hundred twenty pounds. She was born in Missouri on June 28, 1931. According

to the records on this subject, now on file in the KCMOPD record bureau, this subject has been arrested, charged and found guilty on charges of prostitution since she was sixteen years old. Numerous reports were read in her jacket by this investigator, where she has constantly been found in the company of white men on Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Streets. Upon being stopped by the police, the white men in cars on or near these streets would always admit that they had just been propositioned with a definite price for an act of prostitution. They were given a price for performing an act of prostitution on the body of Alla Mae Briggs. This subject's arrests are too numerous to dictate, and as they are all pertaining to the investigation of vice activities, a copy of the subject's file cards has been thermo-faxed by this investigator and forwarded on to the caseworker for his information. As the worker can see by these thermos-faxed copies of the card files, this subject has been in and out of jail for prostitution, soliciting for immoral purposes, renting rooms for immoral purposes, selling whiskey without a permit, being the inmate of a bawdy house and anything having to do with prostitution and vice. Investigator McGarvey ran across numerous reports where this subject has been arrested for attempting to sell her body both on the street and in bawdy houses. Any further information that the caseworker would like regarding this subject, if he will contact Investigator McGarvey, immediate action will be taken.

Captain Denison had learned the criminal history of Alla Mae in one page.

The facts didn't lie. Words carried power, and they practically jumped off the page.

CHAPTER 3

Crazy For Colored Women

VICE DETECTIVE EARL King sat across from Edward Mark Chop inside one of the interview rooms on the fourth floor. Detective King could've easily been the proud owner of one of the most handsome faces within the police force. His features were striking. Almost on the matinee-idol level. Thick coal-black hair covered every single inch of his head. Not a single imperfection could be found on his face.

"Let's start from the top," Detective King said, the pen that he held ready to stroke across the paper. "What were you doing in the alleyway at Tracy and Lydia, somewhere between Eighth and Ninth Streets?"

"First, let me say this." Edward wanted to clue in Detective King. "You do know that my rights were read to me before I was arrested and booked."

"Certainly," Detective King said. "This is how I make my living, sir."

"All right, detective," Edward continued. "I could easily lie to you, but I'm gonna give it to you straight. I saw this colored woman somewhere over there between Tenth and Eleventh Streets. Man, I must admit that she was looking mighty good. We're talking face and body and all. Since I knew that she was a hooker, I pulled over

and propositioned her for a date. She gave me a price of ten dollars, and I agreed.”

“You solicited her for a date and agreed to the price that she quoted to you?”

“That’s right.”

“Where’d you go from there?”

“To the alleyway over by Lydia and Tracy.”

“You get to alleyway near Lydia and Tracey. What happened once you got there?”

“She asked me what specifically did I want.”

“She, of course, being Alla Mae Briggs?” Detective King inquired, wanting his report to be written down to the finest details.

“She told me that her name was Annabelle Jenkins.”

“No, Annabelle Jenkins is actually Alla Mae Briggs.”

“Didn’t know that. She asked me if I wanted a blowjob or a straight fuck or both. I told her that I wanted both.”

“Did the both of you consent to her would-be acts of prostitution?”

“We did.”

“What took place after that?”

“She told me that each separate act would be ten dollars. I agreed, and she kept telling me to let her see the money.”

“Did you?”

“Yes. I pulled out a wad of ten-dollar bills. Her eyes got big, and it really got her excited. Next thing I know, she snatched the money out of my hand and jumped out of the car.”

“Where’d she go?”

“Between some houses and onto the next block over.”

“Patrolman Galanis said in his report that your maroon Plymouth Tudor was spotted driving slowly down the alleyway.”

“That’s correct.”

“Where were you headed?”

“Actually, I took off looking for her.”

“Which, during that time, Patrolmen Galanis and Anderson instructed you to pull over?”

“Yes.”

“In which you were questioned before being arrested and booked?”

“Yes, I was read my rights before being taken in.”

Detective King threw his head back and glanced up at the ceiling. As he lowered his head to look straight ahead, he gave Edward a look as though he wanted to dissect his brain for vital information. “Mr. Chop, did you hear any gunshots sounding off around the time of your arrest?”

“Several of them,” Edward said, recalling the aftermath of the gunshot acoustics.

“Did you see anyone shooting?”

“No.”

“Did you hear anything unusual being said after you heard the shots?”

“Nothing, detective.”

“Aren’t you aware that there’s a notorious crime-infested housing project in that neighborhood?”

“Wayne Miner housing projects, I believe.”

“That’s correct. Why would you risk your life frequenting such a neighborhood?”

“I’ve asked myself that same question.”

“Rapes and murders and robberies occur in that neighborhood all the time.”

“Guess I’m one of the lucky ones, huh?”

Detective King took a sip from a frosty glass of water as he wiped a light sheen of perspiration from his forehead. He cleared his throat and asked Edward, “Mr. Chop, do you reside in Kansas City, Kansas?”

“Right across the river,” Edward said proudly.

“How often do you come to Missouri?”

“Every other week, I guess. Some of my relatives live on this side of the river.”

“Usually, what is your matter of business when you come over to visit?”

“To visit relatives, shop, sightsee or just hang out in some of the popular bars or nightclubs.”

“Does that also include maybe the Twelfth Street strip clubs?”

“Detective, I’m a fanatic of those tittie bars.”

“Are you married with children?”

“I’ve got an old lady and three small children.”

“If your wife found out, don’t you think it’d break her poor precious heart to know that her husband was caught trying to pick up a hooker?”

“It’d break her heart even more to find out that I was caught picking up a colored hooker.”

“I’m sure it’d be double the heartbreak.”

“Or quadruple.”

Detective King leaned forward to take another sip from the glass of water, which had lost much of its coldness due to the warm room temperature. Edward Mark Chop and those like him—married men who picked up prostitutes on the streets—kept his job interesting.

“Mr. Chop, let me momentarily play psychologist,” Detective King said, traveling deep into the insecure psyche of Edward. “Is there a certain type of woman whom you really, really like? Is there a certain woman who excites you, the ones that stimulate you both mentally and physically?”

“Detective, that’s a very easy question.” Edward smiled, showing the surface of several of his tobacco-stained teeth. “And you’ll get a very simple answer from me. For me, there’s none like white women in the whole wide world.”

“Then why were you in a crime-infested colored neighborhood trying to pick up a colored prostitute?”

“Well, colored women are just for temporary amusement. To me, it’s like a kid who’s got his major toys to play with, but who keeps those much lesser toys to play with whenever he gets bored with the main ones.”

“Very unusual analogy, Mr. Chop. Are you, in any way, attracted to colored women?”

“Only for sex. It’s no different now than when slavery went on. The white slave owners had access to the slave gals out there in the slave quarters. Their only use for them was for sex and helping to raise their children, and for hard labor.”

“Do you see colored women in the same way that you just described?”

“Honestly, I do. My old man told me that nigger women were only good for fucking, cleaning, and fetching your supper.”

“I see,” Detective King said as he took a strong breather. “According to records, this is your first arrest for soliciting. Have you ever solicited before out on the streets?”

“From time to time, yes, I have.”

“Is Alla Mae Briggs the first colored woman you tried picking up?”

“No, I’ve picked up a few colored women over the years.”

“Any other type of woman, like white or Latino or Asian?”

“A few white women, yes.”

“Any certain preference?” Detective King pressed his interview subject.

“I’d say that... probably... Uhhhh...” Edward faltered, his words like objects falling awkwardly in every direction.

“Truthfully, do you have a voracious sexual appetite for colored women?”

“I do!” Edward admitted vigorously. “It’s no different than the white women who fantasize about the colored guys with the long, big cocks. When I was in the Navy, several white guys told me us white guys don’t love colored women, we only lust for colored women.

Likewise, the white women only lust for colored guys, thinking that package between their legs will give them a cum that will send them way up on Neptune somewhere.”

“Maybe that’s discussed among the experts in the psychology field. Mr. Chop, you will be detained here at the headquarters until your bail has been determined. Do you have any requests before you are placed in one of the holding cells?”

“Only that my wife and kids don’t find out that I was trying to pick up a colored hooker. It’d be bad enough if they found out that I was trying to pick up a white hooker. Know what I mean, detective?”

“We can’t make any promises.”

An officer entered the room and escorted Edward to one of the holding cells.

Detective King decided to relax himself with a warm cup of coffee with cream and sugar.

Meanwhile, only an hour before the questioning of Edward Mark Chop, Alla Mae’s bail had been set at a whopping two hundred dollars. Maybe this time she would finally learn her lesson. However, Alla Mae wasn’t aware that she could’ve been sitting in jail for an undetermined amount of time if not for the help of a mysterious benefactor.

A white male whom she’d never met happened to come to her rescue. He showed up at the offices of one of the top bail bondsmen in the city. Ten twenty-dollar bills that were fresh and crisp were peeled off from a wad of bills, then slapped right into the palm of the bondsman.

The bondsman explained to this strange white man that, before agreeing to be an indemnitor on a bail bond for a friend or family member, he had to make sure he carefully read the contract and understood what he was agreeing to.

The bondsman told him, in plain and simple terms, “It’s now your legal responsibility to make sure that the accused shows up in

court. And it's also your job to help the bondsman find the accused if he doesn't show up."

"Fine with me," the white gentleman calmly agreed.

"Sir, if you believe that the accused is irresponsible and may miss court dates or flee the area, I wouldn't sign this bail bond contract."

"Trust me, she'll show up."

"You are aware that this is a colored woman, aren't you?"

"Very much aware, Mr. Bondsman."

"You have no problem bailing out a colored woman?"

"None whatsoever."

"All right then, sir. Just sign here at the bottom of the paper."

The discreet white male signed the papers and was given a copy.

CHAPTER 4

Five-Foot-Ten of Vicious Criminal

HOW COULD ANYONE describe Gordon McCoyd Reynolds? How could his family describe him? How could his friends describe him? Or his diehard criminal colleagues? Gordon stood five-foot-ten inches, weighed an even, solid two hundred pounds, and had a uniform semi-olive skin tone. For a fifty-six-year-old, he still held on to his good looks.

A well-trimmed mustache and haircut, which were salt-and-pepper in color, along with striking facial features, truly made him a winner with the ladies. He'd possessed charm from a very early age. But along with his good looks and charm, Gordon accumulated a long list of criminal convictions. Beginning as early as 1932, he filled up a rap sheet which stretched across several US states.

Missouri, Illinois, California, Arizona, and Texas were the exact states where he'd been convicted and sent to prison for either several months or for several years.

Even in the present year of 1962, he continued to commit crimes that ranged from compulsory prostitution to attempted murder. Gordon was a very vicious criminal in every sense of the word.

Not a single day in his life did he ever perform an honest day's work. Living on the edge gave him the adrenaline rush that he forever desired. One of his main occupations, even thirty years after his first conviction in 1932, was being a well-known pimp.

Being of pure Irish descent, he'd forged alliances with some of the top local Italian gangsters. If someone was going to operate any type of vice, they were well advised to give the Italians a piece of their action.

With money made from vice over the years, Gordon wised up and bought a couple of rundown houses. The houses were fixed up and made to be livable. The plumbing and wiring were brought up to the highest standards. Unsanitary conditions were quickly made to be sanitary.

Clean and almost-new furniture was placed all over both houses. Despite efforts to present the houses as places for law-abiding families, Gordon knew that the KCPD Vice Squad kept its eyes and ears open for potential bawdy houses. Crime flourished at the north and northeast areas of Kansas City. Pimps were forever busy trying to establish their stable of women.

Gordon was already there. At the present, he had a total of four women working for him. Three of them were colored and one was white. All four women were very attractive, their bodies shapely and well kept.

Gordon's skills extended beyond those needed in the industry of prostitution. He sold beer and whiskey without a permit—small quantities of marijuana, heroin and cocaine, and different brands of cigarettes. Sometimes, he even sold fenced goods

Gordon learned early on in life that there was so much money to be made in vice. Human nature being what it was, people were more than willing to sin. Life's pleasures were always what they sought. It felt so good to have sex, drink, smoke cigarettes, get high, gamble, and to steal and lie and cheat. Living within the confines of society's laws was boring and stressful.

This was what Gordon figured out as a youngster. No way am I going to walk that straight and narrow. So, for Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, who came to be known as “Mack” among family, friends and criminal associates, it was just another day of doing business in the dark world of vice. While he worked with one of his closest friends, someone from his early days of crime, his women worked the busy streets at the deep north end.

One of his main girls, a black woman named Louise Smith, canvassed Twelfth Street near the heart of downtown Kansas City. Twelfth Street became legendary for its brothels, striptease joints, and seedy bars and lounges. Every single establishment was owned and operated by those of Italian and Sicilian descent. The *good old boys of crime* made money hand over fist.

The law usually left them alone. As long as there weren't too many fights, or women soliciting directly in front of their joints, they were allowed to conduct their usual business.

Louise had a smooth, even, honey-brown complexion; she occasionally wore a wig that came to her shoulders and very light makeup. Her body was comprised of delectable curves. She had a set of breasts and a backside that caused men to salivate quite heavily. No nicks, cuts, blemishes or blotches were found anywhere on her skin. Her teeth were pearly white and straight, and she appeared as though she made regular visits to the dentist. She definitely was the top prize in Gordon's stable of hookers.

Wearing a bright red dress with black pumps, she casually walked towards the corner of Twelfth and Main Streets. Whipping around the corner in a 1961 red New Yorker was a white man who appeared to be in his late thirties or early forties.

The automobile he drove had an extremely bright polish on it. Someone could've used the reflection from the paint job to shave or dress themselves.

This particular white man gave off those vibes as though he had plenty of money. He sat behind the wheel of his fancy automobile,

well dressed. It looked as though he'd gotten a fresh haircut and shave. When he pulled over to the curb, Louise could easily smell the cologne he wore.

The clothes, shoes, cologne and jewelry he wore weren't cheap. Two large diamond rings were wrapped securely around the middle finger of both hands. The watch on his left hand sparkled from what might've been fourteen-carat gold.

Whoever this man was, he sent out direct messages that he was ready to have a good time.

The smile on his clean-shaven face went from one ear lobe to the next.

"Good evening, darling," said the seemingly polite white gentleman. "Whatcha up to this evening?"

To sort of entice the potential customer, Louise lifted her dress up to the middle of her thighs. She took her other hand and pulled the top part to the side. Much of her breasts became exposed. "So tell me, honey, ya looking for a date tonight?"

"That's why I pulled over in the first place," said the possible customer, licking his lips as though he had his eyes fixed on a full-course steak dinner.

"You got a name, honey?" Louise asked, massaging her buttocks suggestively.

"Cecil Ray Young," he revealed, having no problem giving Louise his first, middle, and last name. "What's yours, baby doll?"

"It's Louise," Louise said. "Louise Smith is my name."

"Pleased to meet you, Louise Smith."

"Likewise. Can I tell you something?"

"Sure can."

"Cecil Ray Young sounds like the name of a redneck. You wouldn't happen to be one of those Ku Klux Klan hillbillies from the backwoods of Missouri, would you?"

“Heavens, no!” Cecil vehemently denied. “Now, why would you go and ask me something like that?”

“I judge people fairly accurately. Now, why would a nice rich white man like yourself come down here to Twelfth Street, right in the whore district of downtown Kansas City, looking for a date with a colored woman?”

“Gal, if you only knew. I really loves me some colored gals. I loves y’all’s skin and y’all’s bodies and y’all’s voices and y’all’s eyes and y’all’s dark, sweet, wet pussy.”

“You can’t find a white woman with all of that?”

“Yes and no. Are you gon’ let me pay for a date or what?”

“Sure,” Louise accepted. “How much are you looking to spend?”

“How much do I have ta spend?”

“The going rate is twenty bucks. It’s another twenty for anything extra.”

“You’ve got yourself a deal, hot mama. Come on and climb in.”

Louise went around to the passenger’s side and hesitantly climbed inside the car. She took a moment to study Cecil. For some strange reason, it appeared to Louise that he didn’t belong in that part of town.

“So, Louise, where we going?”

Louise looked in the back seat and down toward the floor. She tilted her head to glance up at the roof of the car. “How do I know that you’re not the fuzz?”

“The fuzz?” Cecil questioned her. “Why would I go through all of this if I was a cop?”

“Undercovers bust us ladies around here all the time.”

“Do you want my money or what?”

“Yes I do.”

“Then tell me where we’re going.”

“We’re going to the Capri Motel over by Independence Avenue.”

“The exact address?”

“1437 Independence Avenue.”

Cecil shifted his New Yorker into drive and fishtailed right across Main Street. Louise pointed him in the designated direction until they arrived at the transient hotel. Doors slammed constantly, with hookers and tricks and pimps going in and out. Murders, rapes, robberies, and burglaries took place on a regular basis at the Capri Motel.

The police were called there at least three to four times a day. Why wasn't the slum motel shut down? Money. Cold, hard cash. Local Italian gangsters kept a hefty payroll for the cops who looked the other way. They owned the property and made money hand over all ten of their fingers. Seventy percent of the money the Capri Motel made got kicked back to the Italians.

Cecil drove to the front of the motel and parked. Guardedly, he looked around to make sure that no one was rushing up to his car. The place was rife with white men and colored women going in and out of the rooms.

“So, this is the place, huh?” Cecil asked Louise, shooting her a grimace.

“This is the place.” Louise nodded, her seductive glare sending mixed messages to her trick.

“What a sewage dump!” Cecil brazenly voiced his disapproval.

“We could go to one of those high-class white hotels, but you're guaranteed to spend some real big bucks there.”

“This shithole of a motel will do, I guess.”

Cecil and Louise emerged from the car. Cecil appeared more nervous than a sheep stranded on a wide-open plain of hungry lions. They went inside the motel and were greeted at the front desk by a pale white woman with fire-red coiffed hair. A Pall Mall cigarette hung at the edge of her mouth as she quietly counted large sums of cash.

“What can I do for ya?” she asked the pair, but giving more straight eye contact to Cecil.

“How much for a room?” Cecil inquired, sliding the thick wallet out of his right pants pocket. He opened the wallet, and a very thick stack of five- and ten-dollar bills were bulging inside.

“Ten dollars for a couple’a hours. Twenty-five dollars for all day.”

“I’ll go with the ten for two hours.”

“All right, that’ll be twelve dollars, sir,” the front-desk attendant said, taking a long drag of the nearly finished cigarette. Thick red lipstick covered almost the entire butt.

“Twelve dollars?” Cecil questioned the clerk, a disapproving frown on his face. “What happened to ten bucks?”

“Sir, there is something called taxes.”

“You’re right, ma’am. I don’t mean to go and get all sore on you.”

“That’s quite all right.”

“Why don’t you just take this ten and this five?” Cecil offered, having been clued in that Kansas City gangsters were usually the hidden owners behind sleaze motels like the Capri Motel.

The clerk wrote him a receipt and cordially handed it over to him. “Enjoy yourself.”

“Thank you.”

Cecil and Louise left the motel lobby and walked up a flight of stairs. Their room number was 226. Upon entering the room, they both noticed how the bed wasn’t fully made. Louise looked over by the bedside table and saw a set of clean towels sitting on top of dirty ones.

Empty beer cans and whiskey bottles were piled up inside a trash-can. The odor of somewhat fresh sex filled the air. Cecil entered the bathroom and turned on the lights. Dirt ringed the inside of the bathtub and sink. More dirty towels and washcloths were spread out over the floor.

The toilet hadn’t been flushed. The smell of human waste dominated the air inside the bathroom. Cockroaches crawled around dark corners inside the room.

“Fucking bullshit!” Cecil scoffed. “For fifteen bucks, this is what I get? We’re both going to get the clap even before we start fucking. This goddamned room is a downright dirty dump!”

“A dump to say the least,” Louise also noticed, the stench starting to irritate her sense of smell. “I’ve seen cleaner outhouses than this room.”

“Maybe it’s clean enough for us to do our business.”

“I’d think that they’d have it cleaned up before the next people paid for this room.”

“Tell ya what: Let’s just do our own cleaning up and then we can do what we came here to do.”

“Okay, but at least they could’ve left some ammonia or scouring powder for us to do our own cleaning.”

Cecil and Louise grabbed the dirty towels and washcloths and dumped them in a closet that was opposite of the bed. They opened the door and tried fanning out some of the indecent odor. Fortunately for them, the sheets and pillowcases were clean.

At the opportune time, they began undressing. Cecil quickly turned out all the lights in the front, and only kept on the bathroom light. The bathroom door was left open a crack to allow only a little light through. He handed her two ten and two five-dollar bills. She couldn’t have been happier. Let the sex games begin.

In less than two minutes, Cecil and Louise were completely nude. She didn’t even have to touch him for him to achieve an erection.

He admired every inch of her body. Her full breasts with ripe nipples. Her wide, arched hips. Her toned, muscular thighs. Her smooth, glowing, brown skin. These were the body features that jet-propelled his hormones.

Cecil pulled Louise closer and lifted her off the ground. Lightly, he dropped her down on the bed. She opened her legs for him, much to his delight. A dark, bushy forest stared him right in the face.

Cecil entered Louise with ease, finding her slick with moisture. The coarse hairs massaged his hard shaft. He moved in and out of her in long, pulsating strokes, rubbing her swollen clitoris with his hardness.

Several minutes were all it took for both of them to travel into an orgasmic fairyland.

Cecil removed his hardness from inside her. He had experienced one of the most explosive climaxes ever. Sweat rolled down his face in large and small beads. Trying to get his heart to stop pulsing frantically wasn't easy. Still, he had an erection after removing his hardness from inside her.

As for Louise, she arose from the bed with beads of pearly white semen around her dark bush. Sweat also rolled down her face. The strong odor of raw sex dominated the air. Acting on sheer impulse, Louise turned on the lights inside the front room. She'd been hit with the surprise of a lifetime. Her cupped hands pressed against her mouth.

Covering most of Cecil's chest and upper biceps were all types of white-supremacist tattoos. Louise simply couldn't believe her eyes. She wasn't naïve to the point of not being able to identify symbols of hatred used among some members of the white race.

Cecil had the most cunning, deceptive smirk on his pale face.

Louise felt that trouble was approaching.

The shabby motel room shifted into absolute silence.

"Whoa!" Louise bolted backward, eyeing the individual racist symbols. "You belong to the Ku Klux Klan?"

"That's right," Cecil said as he giggled, pressing the index finger of his left hand into the white-supremacist symbols. "I'm a proud member of the Aryan race. With that said, you niggers are less than the dirt that us white folks walk all over. You're the animals that we have to constantly tame."

“How dare you!” Louise huffed, her eyes watering and teeth chattering together. “You racist white motherfucker, you! Just get out of this room and leave me the fuck alone.”

“I can’t do that,” Cecil said, reaching into a compartment on the inside of his pants. He pulled out a knife with a long, wide, shiny blade. “You see, that’s why I picked you up in the first place. I wanted to prove to you that I could fuck you and wouldn’t have to pay for that good, juicy nigger pussy.”

“You did pay me, and you’re not getting your fucking money back.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that.”

“Oh, I would.”

“We all remember that we had our way with you nigger gals around slavery time, and we can still have our way with you till this very day.”

“Not this one, you scumbag redneck son of a bitch!”

Cecil rushed Louise with the knife aimed at her throat. Forcefully, he tackled her onto the bed. The tip of the knife pierced the dead center of her neck. She felt his hot breath blowing on her face. Louise didn’t know if it was her last day on earth.

Cecil lifted himself off her. He grabbed her purse and dumped the contents on the floor. Money, makeup, a razor, and some photos spilled out.

“Well,” Cecil said, reaching down to pick up the money that she’d made for the day. “I see you’ve done pretty good for yourself. Looks like you’ve been selling a lot of that good nigger pussy.”

“Please, don’t take my money.” Louise tried bargaining with the evil, devout racist. “I’ve got little children to take care of. My pimp won’t be too happy if you take my money.”

“That’s too bad, honey. You and your little ones are just gonna have to starve to death. And whoever your pimp is, I’ll chop him down to size and have him for dinner.”

Cecil hadn’t quite buttoned his shirt up. Louise took a moment to study the racist symbols tattooed across his chest. There was a

Parteiadler—the true emblem of the Nazi party—covering most of the upper left side of his chest. There was a swastika, the first symbol of National Socialism, which covered most of the upper right side of his chest.

The Nazi SS badge was spread out over most of the middle section of his chest. While Louise lay on the bed in tears, Cecil counted the money that he'd given her along with the money that she had sacrificed her body for.

The total came to eighty-six dollars. Cecil stuffed the money into his pocket. He finished getting dressed, the knife still held firmly in his left hand. Louise had never been so utterly disrespected during her nine years of working the dangerous north-end streets of Kansas City. Never had a trick robbed her of every cent that she had earned.

"Who's your pimp, gal?" Cecil inquired, a cunning smile plastered on his face. To get a satisfactory answer, he placed the tip of the blade back up to her throat.

"H-his...n-name...is G-Gordon Reynolds," Louise stuttered, frightened that Cecil might decide to slice her throat. "Everyone out on the streets knows him by Mack."

"Mack, huh?" Cecil snickered. "Well, nigger gal, you tell Mack that he'd better watch himself. Because just like I took your money from you, I'll take all his money from him. You understand?"

"Yes."

"This Mack, is he one of them nigger pimps that's got you nigger gals working for him?"

"No, he's a white Irishman."

"You lying to me?"

"No, I'm not lying."

"Are you the only colored gal working for him?"

"No, there's several others."

"Any white gals working for this Mack?"

"One of them is white."

"I'd like to meet face to face with this Mack."

"Sir, you don't wanna mess around with him," Louise warned Cecil, knowing the brutally violent temper that Gordon carried around like luggage.

"Am I supposed to be scared of him?"

"I'm just saying that you—"

"Shut the hell up!" Cecil ordered Louise as though he'd become her master. "I'd like for you to tell this Mack something for me."

"What?"

Cecil jerked Louise by her hair and then growled viciously into her face. Before speaking, he punched Louise in her eye with his right fist. To add more insult to injury, he slapped her across the face a few times.

"Tell Mack that he'd better watch his back. I'd be glad to dispose of white-trash punks like him. Irish scum like him needs to be exterminated along with them dago sapsuckers."

Cecil then punched Louise in the mouth, instantly busting her upper lip. Blood ran down her lower lip and chin. The vicious redneck tough guy had made his point. But little did he know that there was going to be hell and a whole lot more to pay.

CHAPTER 5

Violent, Vulgar, and Vicious

HOURS AFTER LOUISE Smith had been assaulted by Cecil Ray Young, she'd wasted no time seeking the whereabouts of her pimp, Gordon McCoy Reynolds. Gordon wasn't too hard to find since he was at one of his main bawdy houses; the address was 1414 East Twelfth Street. The location remained nondescript on the outside to keep from attracting the attention of the police.

Kansas City experienced the first sight of nightfall at about six-thirty p.m. Early March provided sufficient daylight. At the residence on Twelfth Street, Louise burst through the door with a severely battered face. Gordon stopped counting money from a table in the dining room. One of his closest confidants and several of his women followed him into the front room.

"Louise, what happened to you?" Gordon asked her, stepping closer to get a better view of the bruises across her face.

"You won't believe it, Mack." Louise paused while taking time to catch her breath. She tried to recall the details about the beating that she'd received at the hands of the white supremacist. "I met a trick up there on Twelfth Street, right up there by the strip joints and bars."

"Right there in downtown K. C.?" Gordon corroborated, his anger on the rise after having one of his main girls had been assaulted.

“Exactly. He picked me up and took me to the Capri Motel over there on Independence Avenue. Once we got to the room and fucked, I found out that he was one of those Ku Klux Klan rednecks. He had those tattoos of that symbol those Nazi men wear.”

“The swastika?”

“Yes, I believe that’s it.” Louise continued, “Anyway, he started calling me nigger gal this and nigger gal that.”

“Did you get this cocksucker’s name?”

“Cecil Ray Young.”

“Why does that name sound familiar?” Gordon asked himself, tapping into his memory bank to see what he came up with. “Louise, describe this guy for me.”

“Slim build and dark-brown hair that’s slicked back,” Louise described. “He had real pale skin and was dressed sharper than ever.”

“The car, what type of car did he drive?”

“A bright, shiny, red Chrysler New Yorker.”

“That’s him!” Gordon shouted as he aggressively snapped his finger. “He’s the fucking son of a bitch who slapped around another guy’s woman who worked up there by Twelfth Street.”

“So, I’m not the first?”

“Definitely not the first,” Gordon confirmed, inspecting the bruises on Louise’s face. “Somebody’s gotta teach that bastard a good lesson. That somebody is gonna be me. He thinks just because he’s rich and a racist, he can go around beating up on women whether they work the streets or whether they come from privileged homes.”

“Mack, he carries around a knife with a long, sharp blade,” Louise warned her concerned pimp.

Gordon reached behind his back and pulled out a Smith and Wesson .45 Colt. The steel on the gun was coal-black and shiny. The handle was solid compressed wood.

“He carries a knife?” Gordon laughed, holding the .45 Colt high in the air. “I carry this forty-five Colt with me everywhere I go. If

Cecil decides to cut me and doesn't kill me, then I'll decide to shoot him and leave him filled with holes from head to toe. But I've got something far worse and way too painful for him."

"What're you going to do to him?" Louise asked, hoping that he'd pay dearly for what he'd done to her.

"Something that one of my closest associates used to do to his enemies."

"Which is?"

"Something that my confidant, Willie 'The Rat' Cammisano would do to his enemies once he beat the living hell out of them. He'd let the rats finish them off. And I know just the place in this city to let the rats feast on this son of a bitch."

"He would deserve every bit of it," Louise said, goading her protector.

Gordon looked at her face once again and asked, "Louise, do you need me to take you to the hospital?"

"Naw, Mack, I'm fine."

"I can take you to Saint Joseph up there on Prospect or KU over there in Kansas."

"I'll be all right, Mack."

Gordon turned to the other women who worked the streets for him and said, "Girls, go in the bathroom and get the First Aid Kit. You girls doctor on Louise while I find and take care of this Cecil Ray Young son of a bitch."

The women did as they were ordered. They took Louise into the next room. Alcohol and ointment were applied over the bruises that didn't require stitches.

Gordon and one of his closest friends from the old days, Rufus Doyle, engaged in a private conversation down in the basement. Gordon and Rufus had met during one of their crime sprees down in Dallas, Texas in 1944, where they had stolen thousands of dollars' worth of OPA gas-ration coupons. Both men did prison terms and remained friends long after being paroled.

Rufus's two hundred fifty pounds were borne by a six-foot-four frame. Indeed a large man, he had a full head of coal-black hair. His eyes were intimidating, like two black marbles surrounded by smoking white flames. Rufus was one mean white which most people didn't want to fool around with.

Surviving a childhood of extreme abuse and neglect, he had no other choice than to be tough. It showed on his face and was displayed in his overall attitude.

"We've gotta teach this Cecil punk a lesson," Gordon suggested to Rufus, a look of fury burning through the pupils of his eyes.

"I agree, Mack," Rufus said, his anger equal to that of his long-term partner's. "Who does this rowdy redneck think he is? I say that we find this punk and give him the ass whipping of a lifetime."

"An ass whipping and a whole lot more. This sissy thinks that we're a buncha softies, like we're rolls of extra-padded toilet tissue. Like I told Louise and the girls upstairs, I've got just the punishment for him."

Gordon and Rufus got inside Gordon's 1960 Chevrolet Bel Air. Their mission? To find the man who beat up one of Gordon's most prized hookers.

Gordon slowly drove along the red-light district in downtown Kansas City. He kept his eyes open for the red New Yorker.

None of the cars parked along the street or in the parking lots fit the description. He drove through the entire downtown area, keeping an eye out from the left side while Rufus kept close watch from the right side.

They cruised around for just over an hour. There was no sign of Cecil Ray Young.

A thought came to Gordon like a bright light from above.

"Know what, Rufus?" Gordon said to his partner of many years.

"Yeah?" Rufus responded, his eyes wandering from left to right, trying desperately to spot the vehicle driven by Cecil.

“We’re getting nowhere driving through downtown and through the northeast area. I say that we should cruise along Troost looking for this son of a bitch.”

“Why Troost?”

“Troost is one of my main stomping grounds. Every pimp, whore, thief, rapist, murderer, burglar or any other lowlife, they all know me by my nickname of Mack. From the beginning north-end of Troost to the dead south-end of Troost—I know that street better than almost anyone in this city. Therefore, I say let’s go over there to see if we can find this Cecil.”

“I remember you introducing me to Troost when I followed you here to Kansas City.”

“Tonight, we’re going to teach Cecil a lesson that he’ll never forget.”

Troost Avenue was one of those Kansas City streets that rapidly gained a reputation for toughness. The worst type of hoodlums frequented Troost, especially at the near north-end. Several bars and nightclubs and strip clubs turned the north-to-south avenue into a second red-light district inside the city.

Though whites owned nearly all the real estate up and down Troost, many blacks had moved either into apartments on the street or houses that were to the east or west.

Gordon drove southbound until he approached the intersection of Linwood Boulevard and Troost Avenue. Cars were lined up on both sides of the street for blocks to come. Slowly, he drove across Linwood and parked in an alley.

Using his rearview mirror, Gordon watched patrons go in and out of three nightclubs that were right next to one another: Yum Yum Room, Cat Balleu, and The Jewel Box Lounge. These weren’t your normal nightclubs, however. All three were entertainment establishments that featured female impersonators who sang songs live, performing original comedy and improv routines.

“What type of joints are those, Mack?” Rufus asked, watching many gays line up to enter the nightclubs.

“The kind for fruits,” Gordon described succinctly.

“The kind who loves to suck dick,” Rufus said.

“And have it shoved up their faggot asses,” Gordon said.

Gordon and Rufus waited for several minutes. There was no sign of Cecil. He started the car and they casually cruised farther down Troost. Upon approaching the 4100 block, Rufus spotted what he thought might’ve been a red vehicle. From more than a half block away, he couldn’t make out the model.

Rufus pointed down the block. Gordon noticed a red Chrysler New Yorker parked on the west side of Troost. The car sat under a patch of extreme darkness. It appeared as though a man was slumped down on the driver’s side. Gordon and Rufus noticed a woman’s head going up and down in quick jerks.

Gordon reached for his .45 Colt revolver just in case the man in the New Yorker possessed a weapon. Rufus slid a blackjack and a pair of brass knuckles from under the seat. Shrewdly, they approached the car from the passenger’s side and from the driver’s side at the same time.

Staring through the steamed glass, Gordon and Rufus witnessed some woman giving Cecil legendary oral sex. She had her mouth wrapped around his hardness like a tight wrench around a screw.

Gordon tapped on the driver’s side of the New Yorker. Both Cecil and the woman giving him oral quickly jumped up. Cecil’s eyes looked bigger than silver dollars. The woman scooted closer to him while wiping her mouth.

“Cecil Ray Young?” Gordon called out, resting his .45 Colt revolver up against the window.

“Yeah?” Cecil answered, his eyes fixed on the long, shiny pistol.

“Step out of the car,” Gordon ordered, sliding his gun around in vertical motions.

“For what?”

“Because I said so.”

Cecil leaned forward and stuck his right hand under the seat.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you, mister.”

“So you’re going to shoot me through the window?”

“I’d look to your right if I were you,” Gordon suggested, resting his finger on the trigger.

Cecil swiftly jerked his head to the right. Rufus had the blackjack in one hand and the brass knuckles in the other. Cecil knew that he was outnumbered.

Rufus boldly snatched open the passenger’s door, startling the woman. He ordered her to exit the vehicle. Gordon could almost read her mind. The fright in her eyes told most of the story.

Gordon made eye contact with her, and in an earnest tone of voice, said, “Ma’am, if you were smart, you’d leave away from here and go find yourself another trick.”

“No problem here, sir,” the woman replied, still wiping at her mouth while straightening her hair and partly wrinkled blouse. She wasted no time rushing up Troost.

After she was no longer in sight, Gordon took it upon himself to snatch Cecil out of his car. Gordon’s eyes promised death. They told the story of a man who’d either hurt another man rather seriously or just flat out kill him.

“Give it to me straight,” Gordon said, both hands clutched tightly around Cecil’s shirt collar. “Why did you slap my girl Louise around?”

“Louise who?” Cecil tried forgetting, shaking uncontrollably from nervousness.

“Don’t play dumb with me, motherfucker!” Gordon snapped, tightening his grip around his shirt collar.

“Why would I do that?”

“Louise Smith is one of my girls. She works exclusively for me. Out of nowhere, she came to one of my houses and told me that some punk named Cecil Ray Young who drives a New Yorker beat her up

pretty bad. From just looking at her face, I could tell that she'd been worked over pretty good. Okay, whaddaya have to say for yourself?"

"Nothing," Cecil responded rather arrogantly. "Nothing at all. She's nothing but a nigger whore to me. I've never respected niggers, and I never will. I don't give a good goddam who she works for, whether it be you or any other dago-wop son of a bitch."

This was the last straw, the trigger. Since childhood, he'd always had an explosive temper. His long criminal rap sheet proved that he was a very violent man who did not hesitate in beating a man to a bloody pulp.

Swollen red capillaries filled most of the white part of his eyes. Both of his lips trembled. His breathing got more aggressive.

Rufus knew his partner much too well. Those were the signs that Gordon had reached the point where he would not hesitate in ending a man's life.

"You redneck, peckerwood, cocksucker you!" Gordon blasted, shooting Cecil a death glare. "First of all, I'm not Italian. And even if I was, I wouldn't go for such utter disrespect. My heritage is Irish, full-blooded Irish. A lot of my friends and associates are Italians. Therefore, if you don't want to receive the ass kicking of a lifetime, you're going to apologize to me, and you're going to apologize to Louise for what you did to her."

"Do you really love those nigger gals that much?" Cecil spoke racially offensive words. "Do me and yourself a favor. Why don't you go back and be with your whores and junkies, you dope pushing, dago-wop pimp?" Cecil tilted his head downward and spit on Gordon's pants.

Gordon didn't respond right away. An aggressive-looking smirk came upon his face. He giggled loudly. Strong grunting noises echoed from his vocal chords. Surreptitiously, he gave Rufus the signal to do what he'd mastered over the years.

Rufus placed the brass knuckles firmly around his left hand. He rushed Cecil with the brass knuckles and blackjack held outward from his chest. First, the brass knuckles crashed into the man's jaw on his right side, fracturing it severely. Then the blackjack pounded the left side of Cecil's face quite hard. Simultaneously, the brass knuckles and blackjack took turns working over his face. Both of his eyes swelled so much that they appeared to be nearly closed. His upper lip was slashed open so badly that most of his upper center teeth were showing.

To contribute to the beating, Gordon had Rufus hold Cecil up straight. He used the barrel of the .45 Colt revolver to pistol-whip the same facial areas Rufus had already brutalized. Gordon then punched him several times in the chest and stomach.

Cecil wasn't quite dead, but a few more head injuries could've easily pushed him over the edge. Blood oozed all down his face. Gordon took the gun and crashed the handle into his mouth. Two upper and one lower tooth instantly fell out.

"Mack, what're we gonna do with this punk?" asked Rufus, his hands locked under Cecil's armpits like some sort of wrestling move.

Gordon played along, relishing the fear in Cecil's face as he repeated the plan he and Rufus had concocted to further inspire terror. "Funny you asked that." Gordon smiled, studying Cecil's destroyed face. "One of my good old Italian buddies, Willie '*The Rat*' Cammisano, he would do something to his enemies that was unheard of."

"Which is?"

"Willie would have his enemies badly beaten and then fed to the rats."

"What'd you have in mind, Mack?"

"We're not going to kill this guy, but we're going to make sure that he'll never be heard from again. He'll never slap around another girl of mines."

"Well, how're you going to make that happen?"

“I know of a place in KC where rats live by the hundreds.”

“Like a nesting ground for them?”

“Brush Creek is the place where all the sewage in this city goes to. They tell me that there’s sewer rats bigger than Great Danes down in Brush Creek. Let’s give them the treat of a lifetime.”

Luckily for Gordon and Rufus, none of the patrons from the nightclubs had seen them working over Cecil. All of them were too busy getting drunk and passing out inside.

Cecil was dragged to the back of his New Yorker and thrown into the back seat. Rufus got inside the car and followed Gordon to the west end of the city.

CHAPTER 6

Feasting on Fresh Flesh

GORDON AND RUFUS had figured out how they were going to dispose of the brutalized body of Cecil Ray Young. Sure, Cecil was still very much alive. Like any other normal human being, he was still breathing. Gordon decided that his punishment had only just begun, however. No one got away with lashing out at him with racially offensive remarks.

While driving through the red-light district in Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets, Gordon glanced into his rearview mirror. He noticed a colored woman turning the corner at Thirteenth Street and Garfield Avenue. The curves accentuated by the tight, short dress that she wore quickly caught his attention.

Gordon slowed down and caught a glimpse of the side of her face. His heart pumped with uncontrollable delight. There she was, all of four foot eleven and one hundred twenty pounds of brown sugar delight.

Alla Mae strutted her stuff through the burgeoning red-light district. On this night, she wore a form-fitting, glittery red dress with matching red high heels and black stockings. From inside his Chevy Bel Air, Gordon began to salivate.

Gordon turned the corner and pressed lightly on the brakes. Alla Mae looked over her right shoulder and saw a white man who seemed different from the others. Her intuition told her that this particular white man wasn't some trick looking for a date with a colored woman.

The pair exchanged smiles. It would've been nice for them to exchange direct pleasantries, but Gordon had crucial business to take care of. He drove off looking over his shoulder. Alla Mae waved as he disappeared farther down the street.

Rufus, who was driving the New Yorker belonging to Cecil, noticed how sparks went flying between the colored woman and the white man.

Gordon made sure that he and Cecil stayed off the main streets. If caught by the police, they would've easily been taken on another trip back to the penitentiary.

In the back seat of the New Yorker, Cecil's hands, mouth and feet were all bound with black duct tape. His face had been worked over so badly that even the ugliest man on earth probably wouldn't have claimed it.

The clothes worn by Gordon and Rufus during Cecil's beating were lying on the backseat floor. Neither of them wanted to leave behind any trace of evidence.

Gordon led Rufus southbound through a dark side street that stretched for miles from north to south. The street was approximately a half mile east from Main Street.

After driving for just over three miles, Gordon turned onto a busy street known as Swope Parkway. Another four blocks and they were at the largest sewage system in all of Kansas City, Missouri. This area consisted mainly of woods, wildlife, picnic areas, and a stream of creek water that stretched for about three miles from east to west.

Brush Creek was the legendary creek where tons of sewage flowed through on an annual basis. Gordon knew the exact location where he

wanted to dump Cecil. Once he turned off Swope Parkway, he drove a half block up a street known as Brush Creek Boulevard.

Gordon and Rufus parked the vehicles on a concrete drive-thru. Their timing couldn't have been more perfect. It was 2:35 a.m. The spot where the cars were parked was pitch-black. It sat far off the street, and most residents in the area were sound asleep.

Gordon emerged from his car and went to the back to open the trunk. Inside were several jars of jelly, peanut butter, chocolate syrup, and honey. He put the jars into a large burlap sack. The clothes that had become bloody during Cecil's beating were removed from the back seat and placed in a brown grocery sack.

Both Gordon and Rufus lifted Cecil out of the car. They temporarily placed him on the ground. He still had enough strength to squirm and jerk his arms and legs, and tried desperately to free himself.

Rufus grabbed two large clubs, a plastic sack with two flashlights, a set of butter knives, a small container of gasoline, and some matches from the trunk. Since both were rather large men, they easily carried Cecil and the sacks and clubs. Their destination? Somewhere far inside the confines of Brush Creek.

Over one hundred yards from the cars, deep beyond a grassy and marshy area of the creek, there lay a narrow tunnel through which not one iota of light penetrated. The darkness was intense. Creatures made frightening squealing noises from inside.

Gordon knew better than to enter the tunnel without caution. He turned on his powerful flashlight and encouraged Rufus to do the same. The merging of the lights provided a view of where they were going to dump Cecil. Rats, several packs of them, crawled out of holes and from under thick brush. Raw sewage had collected together and created tall mounds.

The stench, the disgusting odor, had Gordon and Rufus twitching their noses. Undoubtedly, they knew that raw urine and defecation

had mixed in with other materials. Spoiled-food particles and recyclable materials also played a part in producing the unbearable smell.

After traveling several feet into the tunnel, Gordon and Rufus moved the beams of light from the flashlights along the walls and floor of the tunnel. Cecil was dropped on top of a large mound of sewage, and the men reached into one of the sacks and brought out the jars of peanut butter, jelly, chocolate syrup, and honey.

The dirty work had just begun. Gordon took one of the butter knives and began spreading peanut butter across the face, neck, shoulders, and chest of Cecil. Rufus scooped out a big chunk of strawberry jelly and smeared it along the stomach and legs.

The chocolate syrup and honey were dumped right on top of the peanut butter and jelly. The butter knives were used to spread the sweet food commodities evenly from the top of his head to where his ankles were exposed. Gordon made sure that he slapped the remaining portion of the chocolate syrup throughout Cecil's hair.

The very large sewer rats must've quickly picked up the sweet scent. A seemingly large nest of rats was ready and willing to begin their feast. But before they were allowed to do so, Gordon and Rufus poked at them with the large clubs. The men knew that it was just a matter of time before the rodents would begin their attack, even with thick wooden clubs being jabbed in their direction. The animals had already begun to hiss angrily.

Gordon looked down on Cecil and said with a devilish smirk, "Cecil, this is your punishment for not apologizing. But I must say to you, my friend, that your apologies have come a little too late."

Flashing the beams of light around, the men walked out of the tunnel carefully, making sure they weren't surrounded by the packs of vicious rodents. Once they got to the grassy area near the woods, they doused their discarded bloody clothes with gasoline, and Rufus a couple of lit matches on them. The clothes caught fire and practically burned to a crisp.

Gordon had been clever in getting rid of any evidence. You could never be too careful. To him, some patrolmen were smart while others were outright dumb. Having had many run-ins with the law, he knew how KCPD detectives wanted to make themselves look good by solving every case handed to them.

Inside the pitch-black tunnel, the sewer rats went to work on Cecil. Rodents particularly enjoyed sugary food products. Screeching encouraged other rats deeper inside the tunnel to join the feast. The others didn't need superior vision to find their prey; the sweet smell led them straight to the treats spread all over Cecil's body.

Before long, nearly a hundred sewer rats were using their sharp incisors to rip into the tender flesh of a helpless Cecil Ray Young. Their short, slender tongues savored the peanut butter, strawberry jelly, chocolate syrup and honey, all mixed with fresh blood. The viciously hungry rats gorged on the food and blood on Cecil's flesh. They gnawed and gnawed until their razor-sharp teeth had reached his bones, quickly consuming his exposed flesh and several organs.

At least seventy yards outside the tunnel, Gordon and Rufus were concluding carrying out their plans. To make sure that no evidence was left behind, Gordon had gone to the trunk of his car and brought out a spray bottle with a cheap cleaning solution. He sprayed the seats and steering wheel of Cecil's New Yorker. The car would be left right where it was parked.

Rufus followed Gordon to his car and they quietly drove off. Silence reigned inside the car for only a moment before Rufus tapped his fingers on the dashboard to sort of get Gordon's attention.

"What's on your mind, partner?" Gordon asked his friend of several years.

"Mack." Rufus paused, his demeanor like that of someone with something weighing heavily on their mind. "Before we brought that scumbag down here to Brush Creek, I noticed how you slowed down and was checking out that colored woman."

“The short, shapely colored woman by Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets?”

“That’s her.”

“Wanna know something, Rufus?” Gordon said, a satisfied grin on his face.

“I’m listening.”

“I bailed her out of jail.”

“When?”

“Not even two weeks ago.”

“Why her?” Rufus wondered, not trying to question Gordon’s sound judgment. “Has she ever been one of your girls?”

“No, she hasn’t.”

“Thinking about making her one of your girls?”

“Not exactly. She comes across as a colored woman with special street skills.”

“In other words, she knows the streets better than most of these broads out here, colored or white or other.”

“Yes sir!” Gordon exclaimed. “I’d like to put her in charge of one of my houses.”

“But you don’t even know this colored broad. C’mon, Mack, you and I both know that you can’t trust those colored people. You turn your back on them for a billionth of a second, and they’re robbing you blind.”

“Not all coloreds,” Gordon corrected. He tried explaining his logic. “Rufus, I’ve got a good feeling about her.”

“How’s that going to sit with your other girls?”

“Remember, I’m the boss.”

“Sure, you’re the boss.”

“Whenever I get a good feeling about somebody, I’m usually right.”

Gordon drove northbound back toward one of his two bawdy houses, satisfied that he and Rufus had finished off Cecil Ray Young in a quite atrocious fashion.

CHAPTER 7

No Rest From Being Arrested

TWO HOURS AFTER Gordon had disposed of yet another enemy, he cruised the east-end corridor of Twelfth Street. Other moneymaking hookers of his were a white woman named Kim Davenport, who went by the street name of Fluff, and a colored woman named Lana Baker, who went by the street name of Starr. Gordon wanted to keep them working until right before daylight.

His stable of whores had to be rested and fed well before they hit the streets again. To perform his duties as a pimp, he had to cruise the streets where they worked. He had to make sure that rival hookers and jealous pimps weren't harassing his girls.

Rufus stayed within close proximity to make sure that his partner didn't experience any type of sudden danger.

Kim wasn't your average white woman. She had a pretty face, one that was clear with striking features. She possessed a shapely body, although not quite with the round, firm backside of a colored woman. However, her large breasts and long legs and arched hips were enough to capture a man's attention.

At the tender age of thirteen, she had started running away from home. Those teen years were the hardest for her. Obedience

was one area that she didn't excel in. Several of her neighborhood friends and those from school convinced her to use drugs and drink alcohol.

By eighteen, she'd already been in and out of several juvenile detention centers and alternative schools. Her parents had lost control of her at a very early age, and had just flat out given up hope. To support her recreational-drug and alcohol habits, she turned to prostitution. And guess what? One of the men to recruit her into his terrain was Gordon McCoyd Reynolds.

She'd been shown the ropes. For her, the game wasn't hard to learn. Men paid for sex all day, every day. Prostitution wasn't labeled as the world's oldest profession for nothing. And Gordon, unlike others, didn't believe in abusing any of the women who worked for him. Though he engaged in the trafficking of women, he believed that women were still human beings.

The hustle and bustle of the red-light district of Twelfth Street began to slow down. Gordon threw up a cryptic hand signal to Kim and Lana from across the street. He pressed down hard on the accelerator and sped up the street. A patrolman switched on the siren and rushed in pursuit of Gordon. The squad car with two patrolmen pulled him over after following him just over two blocks.

Patrolmen Thomas Saunders and Maurice Brown approached his vehicle with their hands planted firmly on their service weapons. Upon stepping toward the driver's window, Patrolman Saunders immediately recognized Gordon. He tapped on the glass of the window with his knuckles. That handsome face belonging to the known and convicted procurer was easily recognizable.

The officer of the law looked Gordon straight in the eye and said, "Well, if it isn't Gordon McCoyd Reynolds. Keeping an eye on your girls, huh?"

"Patrolman Saunders, whaddaya talking about?" Gordon inquired of the veteran patrolman.

“Your memory is shorter than a firecracker fuse. Or could it be the wires in your brain that have been disconnected?”

“Why’re you pulling me over this time?”

“Speeding. You were doing about fifty miles an hour in a twenty-miles-an-hour zone. That’s thirty miles over the speed limit. Plus, I know that you were up the street making sure that your girls were doing what they were supposed to be doing.”

Gordon shook his head uncertainly and said, “Look, I rent sleeping rooms for the girls who work the streets. If they need a place to stay, then I provide that for them, and for just a small fee. There’s nothing illegal about that.”

“It’s illegal when their tricks follow them back to your sleeping rooms and then pay them to have sex with them. Look, Gordon, I’ve been working the streets of Kansas City for a long time. It’s my job to know who’s who out here doing what—the hookers, the pimps, the robbers, the rapists, the killers, the psychos, the burglars, and anyone else breaking the law.”

Gordon turned to glance at Patrolman Saunders’s partner. Surprisingly, he was a colored man. Maurice Brown had been hired by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department just over a year ago. He had come from one of the worst crime-infested neighborhoods of Kansas City. At a young age, he decided that he wanted to become a police officer and make a difference. That difference would entail mostly the investigating and arresting of colored people.

Patrolman Brown was the first colored man that Gordon had ever seen on the police force. After many years of having run-ins with the law, every policeman who pulled him over or arrested him was white. Gordon figured that employment opportunities and hiring policies with the KCPD were steadily changing.

Patrolman Saunders smiled at Gordon and said, “Gordon, I’d like you to meet Patrolman Maurice Brown. We’ve been partners for four months now.”

Patrolman Brown replied with a silent nod of his head.

Gordon wondered: Was he shy toward criminals like Gordon? Did he feel the need to be quiet and let Patrolman Saunders handle the situation?

Patrolman Saunders circled Gordon's beautifully polished Bel Air. He stopped at the rear of the car and noticed a broken taillight. Gordon was ordered to step out of the car. Patrolman Saunders didn't hesitate to place the handcuffs on him. He was being charged with speeding and having a light that wasn't in working order.

Upon arriving at the Police Headquarters Building at 1125 Locust in downtown Kansas City, Gordon was booked and fingerprinted for the umpteenth time.

He asked himself the question, *"Why couldn't that prick Patrolman Saunders just write me a ticket and let me pay it after I appeared in court?"*

There were always those people who wanted to make things hard.

After he was booked and fingerprinted, a detective named Lieutenant James Hitchcock requested to speak to Gordon up in the vice unit. Lieutenant Hitchcock had gone through Gordon's criminal-history records. "Intrigued" best described the feeling that he got after reviewing them.

Patrolman Saunders brought Gordon up to the third floor. The main office for the vice unit was just down the hall from a set of elevators. He escorted him into the midsized office. Once the patrolman left, Gordon watched a tall man with a thick brown mustache and slightly bulging stomach walk toward him holding a thick brown folder. The name "Gordon McCoy Reynolds" was written across the tab. He placed the folder on top of a desk and flipped it open.

"Well," said Lieutenant James Hitchcock, picking up a warm cup of coffee from the desk to take a quick sip. "Mr. Reynolds, you've been a very busy man in the last thirty years or so."

"Checking up on me, sir?" Gordon questioned the veteran police lieutenant, a slight redness appearing on his face, which indicated

that his volcanic temper had the potential to erupt once more with little provocation.

“That’s what I do for a living,” Lieutenant Hitchcock replied with sarcasm. “You see, being a lieutenant here at the KCPD is my bread and butter. It’s my livelihood, and it’s how I’ve fed my family all these years.”

“I can respect that.”

“Thanks for understanding. Now, Patrolman Saunders pulled you over for speeding and having a taillight that wasn’t in operation. The patrolman also believes that you were keeping close watch over some prostitutes who work for you.”

“It’s a lie!” Gordon fiercely denied. “Right now, I’m unemployed and find work whenever and wherever I can.”

“If you say so, Mr. Reynolds.” The lieutenant snatched the folder off the table and took about a minute to read over some important dates and depositions. “Your criminal history paints you as a known and convicted procurer. According to your criminal rap sheet from the Department of Justice, on June twenty-fourth of nineteen thirty-two you were convicted of robbery and burglary and larceny. At the time of this crime, you used the alias James Moore. You were discharged from the Missouri State Penitentiary after serving ten years.”

Gordon grumbled loudly under his breath. “Uh, that was almost thirty years ago,” he pointed out to Lieutenant Hitchcock, hoping to put that part of his past far behind him.

“Doesn’t matter if it happened yesterday. The fact remains that you committed the crime.” The lieutenant picked up where he’d left off. “On May fourteenth of nineteen twenty-five, you were arrested and later found guilty in Santa Ana, California of the Dyer Act, also known as the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act. On November twenty-third of nineteen forty-four, you were arrested and later found guilty in Dallas, Texas of stealing and reselling gas-ration coupons at an enormous markup. You served eighteen months for that offense. For

cashing bogus checks in Phoenix, Arizona on March twenty-fourth of nineteen fifty-five, you were arrested, tried, and convicted. Since you broke your parole, you were sentenced to a concurrent sentence of three and a half to five years. Mr. Reynolds, you've been a very busy man."

"So what!" Gordon erupted, growling profusely under his breath. "Can't you give a guy credit for trying to go straight?"

"Not when they're still being a criminal. If I went into detail about all the crimes that you've committed, we'd be in this office until this time tomorrow. Your criminal file also explains how you've been investigated for many prostitution-related activities. You've also been convicted for resisting arrest, failure to appear in court, intoxication in public, assault and battery, operating bawdy houses, suspicion of murder, possession of an illegal firearm, selling whiskey without a permit, and speeding. Mr. Reynolds, was it your goal in life to become a career criminal?"

"Hell, naw!" Gordon exclaimed loudly, the interrogation by Lieutenant Hitchcock starting to upset his nerves.

"Isn't the booming red-light district of Twelfth Street the area that you frequent most?"

"A few of my friends and associates live and work around Twelfth Street."

"Friends and associates who're involved in vice?"

"I wouldn't necessarily say that."

"Then what would you say?"

"These are hardworking, honest people."

"Mr. Reynolds, I'd like to believe that, but you know that I can't. Could these friends and associates be the Cammisano or the Civella gangs of Kansas City?"

"Not necessarily. I'm well acquainted with Willie Cammisano and Nick Civella."

"Who are, of course, the reigning vice lords of Kansas City."

"I wouldn't know that, sir."

“If you’re involved in any type of vice on Twelfth Street, which I’m sure that you are, then it would be virtually impossible not to be connected, somehow, to either the Civellas or the Cammisanos, or other guys involved with Kansas City organized crime.”

“Nick and Willie are acquaintances of mine in passing.”

“Do the names John Amaro, Joseph Cammisano, Nicholas Spero, John Brocato, or Paul Silvio sound familiar at all?”

“Those men, I only know of them. Personally, I’ve never met any of them.”

“Their influence stretches all throughout Twelfth Street. The influence of their superiors stretches far beyond Twelfth Street.”

“Lieutenant, why are you telling me all of this?” Gordon tried to understand, feeling as though Lieutenant Hitchcock had drifted off into irrelevancies. “None of those men who you’ve mentioned have nothing to do with me, and I have absolutely nothing to do with them.”

“The narratives in some of the police reports mention organized-crime figures who you were involved with over the years.”

“Betcha none of the people that you named off are talked about in the reports.”

“Maybe not. But they’re connected to higher sources. I’d go as far as to say that you are too.”

“Prove it,” Gordon challenged the lieutenant, sitting there as cool as a refrigerator.

“The full resources of the KCPD will be brought to bear upon you, Mr. Reynolds. You will be held here at the Municipal Courts Police Building until your bail is determined. Do you have any questions or concerns?”

Gordon leaned back in the chair and nodded his head. “None, Lieutenant. None whatsoever.”

Lieutenant Hitchcock made his exit from the vice unit office. There to meet him in the hallway was Captain D. L. Denison. Talk about a workaholic.

Captain Denison sometimes worked seven days a week, often twelve- to fifteen-hour days.

Fellow police personnel encouraged him to take a vacation, spend quality time with his wife and kids. If left up to him, there'd be no more crime left anywhere in the world.

Captain Denison held a thin brown folder in his right hand. He opened it and gave Lieutenant Hitchcock an odd stare. Both men could almost read each other's minds. In the most intellectual sense, they completed one another's sentences.

"Can't believe that this Reynolds guy is still on the streets." Captain Denison couldn't understand that for the sake of his life. "This guy's criminal record stretches from New York to California. He's committed almost every crime under the sun."

"I'd say," Lieutenant Hitchcock agreed. "Two of our patrolmen picked him up right over there on Twelfth Street. We know that he's got several women working as prostitutes along the corridors of Twelfth Street. The patrolmen were ordered to bring him in for something, anything."

"Which was?" asked Captain Denison.

"Speeding and a broken taillight. Gordon Reynolds is a known procurer around town. This punk has one of those good-time houses where he lets people fuck and drink and get high and gamble. Finding the exact location of this house will be the hard part."

"He'll slip up and then we'll have his ass. I'm going to see if I can have his bail set high enough to where he'll be behind bars for quite some time. But first, Jim, take a look at this."

Lieutenant Hitchcock took some time to glance over the one-page document handed to him by a diligent Captain Denison. The first paragraph started off with a bang. The report made for interesting reading. Gordon McCoyd Reynolds had stayed one busy man for more than thirty years. Word for word, and line for line, the lieutenant became mesmerized by the following information:

A check of the record bureau of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department revealed the following information to Investigator Larry Treasvant. "James Moore" and "Harvey Moore" are aliases used by this convicted felon. This true subject's name, according to the record bureau, is Gordon, middle name McCoyd, last name Reynolds. This individual is recorded under the name of James Moore, an ex-convict born in Kansas City, Missouri on August 27, 1905, white male, five-foot-ten, 195 pounds. Numerous addresses are shown for this individual. This subject's file card show fifty-two previous arrests prior to July 1, 1960 in Kansas City for the investigation of highway robbery, burglary and larceny, numerous vice activities, drunken-driving violations, investigation of prostitution-related activities, selling whiskey without a permit, fencing stolen goods, failing to yield, hijacking, speeding, reckless driving, distribution of narcotics, failing to appear, disturbing the peace, assault and battery, and many bench warrants. On July 11, 1959, he was arrested for an improper turn and did not appear. He paid a \$50 fine on charges involving the investigation of vice. He was also arrested and charged with procuring, keeping a bawdy house and renting rooms for immoral purposes. A judgment of commitment was issued for this subject for failure to appear on an appeal. This subject's record is so extensive that it would be impossible to place it all in this particular report other than what information is already given, and the following information has to do with a request for any charges where the subject has been incarcerated. This subject was sentenced to ten years in the Missouri State Penitentiary for robbery in 1932; he was sentenced to eighteen months in the Federal Correctional Institute in Texas for illegal possession of gas-ration coupons in 1944; and was also sentenced to three and one-half to five years in Phoenix, Arizona for cashing bogus checks in 1955.

This subject, who is a well-known procurer, has been found in the company with known prostitutes and apparently makes his living in any way that is illegal. He has never been recorded to hold any legitimate occupation. Any further information that can be given by the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department on this subject, if asked for, will be obtained immediately.

“Wow!” Lieutenant Hitchcock huffed, nearly hypnotized by the extensive criminal report. “This guy’s done had one helluva criminal career. Jeez, he went from state to state committing crimes. I wonder how he got around to engage in all these activities over the years.”

“I’ll say,” Captain Denison agreed, also taking a long breather. “With a rap sheet that long, makes you wonder if Reynolds is connected to either the Civella or the Cammisano brothers, or maybe even other Italian gangsters here in the city.”

“Talk about déjà vu,” Lieutenant Hitchcock replied with a sudden snap of his finger. “During questioning, I inquired whether he had some type of partnership with those guys.”

“And his response?”

“Denied everything. Claimed to have known lots of Italians in passing.”

“Do you believe that?”

“Not for a second.”

“Tell ya what, with a résumé like his, it’s almost impossible to believe that he doesn’t have some sort of connection with those guys. If the Italians knew that anyone in the city was running vice on a highly profitable level, they’d definitely muscle in on the action.”

“Maybe Reynolds knows how to keep the peace with the Italians.”

“Yeah, by kicking back to them. The coloreds have risen through the ranks over the years. Look, you and I both know that Reynolds has got girls out on the streets working for him. The guy’s handsome,

charming, and knows the street-hustle game. I mean, he's got a PhD in vice activities."

"Too bad the system wasn't able to put him away for good. His criminal record explains everything. He commits the crimes, does his time, hits the streets again, and goes right back to the only trade that he's ever known. Not to stereotype, but the only other people who I know that have criminal records clear across the Mohave Desert are those Irish and Italians. Not even the coloreds build up rap sheets that long."

"Think we should keep Reynolds under surveillance for a while?"

"Him and all those other hoodlums polluting the KC streets with crime. Chief Kelley is looking to give us just the tools that we need to lock these bastards up for a long time. Hell, since they can't be productive in society, then lock 'em up and put their asses to work in the penitentiary. At least in there, they'll earn their keep, the three hots, and a cot."

"Couldn't agree more, partner."

Captain Denison and Lieutenant Hitchcock entered the vice-unit office to finish processing Gordon. If they were given a choice, his bail would be set at the max.

CHAPTER 8

The Showdown of Lady Hustler and Vicious Criminal

THROUGH A CIRCUIT-COURT judge's order after Gordon appeared in court for the charges of speeding and a broken taillight, Gordon's bail was set at an astronomical four hundred dollars. That was quite okay. One phone call to Rufus, who made a visit to where he and his partner stashed some cash only they knew about, resulted in the money being delivered to a shrewd bail bondsman.

The judge issued a probationary period of sixty days. By no means was Gordon a first-time offender. The judge simply told him that he never wanted to see Gordon's face in his courtroom again. Gordon had heard that so many times that it had started to sink deep into his psyche. Once released from jail, he went back to the only life that he'd ever known.

Gordon sped around a corner and onto Twelfth Street. His main residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street was right up the street.

Walking on the opposite side of the street just happened to be the woman whom he had had his eye on for quite some time. Alla Mae Briggs strolled the Twelfth Street strip as though she had somewhere important to go.

Gordon felt that he had to make his move. It was now or never. Whipping over to the other side of the street, he leaned over to the passenger's side and said, "How are you doing today, Alla Mae?"

Alla Mae abruptly came to a sudden stop. She looked inside his beautiful 1960 Chevrolet Bel Air and was immediately awed. Who was this strange white man stopping to speak to her? She'd never seen him before. His handsome face made an impression on her.

"Who are you?" Alla Mae asked Gordon, noticing how he wore a welcoming smile on his smooth face.

"The name's Gordon, Alla Mae," Gordon responded, both hands resting on the top of the steering wheel, "but my family and friends call me 'Mack.'"

"Why do they call you Mack?"

"Because McCoyd's my middle name."

"Gordon McCoyd who?" she wanted to know, merely for the sake of curiosity.

"Reynolds."

"Where do you know me from?"

"The night that you jumped out of that car in the alley, I saw everything going on from start to finish. It tickled me to death to see you run between those houses and then into one of the houses on the block over."

"You spying on me?"

"I wouldn't call it spying."

"Then what would you call it?"

"A white dude who's got an eye for a colored woman."

"You must be psychic or clairvoyant because I just love handsome white men like yourself."

Gordon pulled the handle on the passenger's door and opened it. "Then why don't you just climb inside my car and let this white man get to know you better?"

"You ain't some crazy killer, are you?"

“Heck no!” Gordon laughed. “I’m just a gentleman who wants to become better acquainted with you.”

Alla Mae cautiously stepped toward his car. “All right. If you try anything funny, I have a razor inside my bag. I’ll cut you up into a million itty-bitty pieces. You’ve got that, Caucasian man?”

“You’ve made your point, colored woman. It’s done registered with me, darling.”

Alla Mae climbed inside the Bel Air. Gordon took her to his residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street. When they exited the car, she sized up the house that they were walking toward.

Once inside, Alla Mae noticed a bevy of women all dressed rather provocatively. Her street knowledge let her make sense of the scene right away. Those women were hookers. All of them worked exclusively for Gordon.

He escorted her into a first-floor room in the rear of the house. Alla Mae noticed that the furniture wasn’t cheap. A small table with four chairs was placed at the center of the back room. A bright light hung rather low from the ceiling. A pleasant smell filled the air. Vicious dogs were heard barking from the backyard.

Gordon took a seat across Alla Mae. He interlocked his fingers and said to her, “Look, I know what you do for a living. I know that you’ve done what you’re doing for a long time.”

“What, hooking?” Alla Mae smiled cordially at Gordon, making suggestive poses.

“I’d like to put it in more lighter terms. But yes, I know that you’re working the streets, especially around the Twelfth Street District.”

“Honestly, I’ve worked Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Streets for quite some time. I’ve worked Prospect and Troost, from Eighth Street and on over to Sixteenth Street. I usually go where the money is.”

“A smart woman you are,” Gordon praised Alla Mae in the most unconventional sense. “How would you like to come and work for me?”

“Work for you?” Alla Mae echoed, resentment in her voice.

“Yeah, come and work for me.”

Alla Mae threw both legs outward, showing their athletic firmness. She leaned forward over the table and said, “Look, buddy boy, I don’t sell pussy for nobody. I do it exclusively for myself. Now, those other girls, they’ve got pimps watching over them like a nest of vultures, waiting for the next animal carcass that’s about to die. I’ve had plenty of pimps who’ve tried to get me to come and work for them, but I turned them down in a polite, womanly fashion. Some of them have even threatened to kill me. Others have tried to sick their hooker bitches on me. No matter what, I’ve always stood my ground. I know the streets, and I know them well. I’ve learned out there that you’re either predator or prey. I choose not to be prey to anybody. If any of those muthafuckas try to hurt me, they better kill me before I get to my razor. Because, if not, they’re going to be some dead bloody meat, some chopped-up sons of bitches.”

“I like that in you,” Gordon said, genuine admiration in his voice. “Someone fucks with you, then you fuck with them back. But here’s the deal. I don’t want you to sell pussy for me. I want to put you in charge of my girls, the girls that I already have working for me. I have two houses where the tricks come and spend time with my girls. With your help, we can keep the tricks coming back again and again.”

“Are these tricks all white men?” Alla Mae wanted to know.

“Who else? Nothing against colored guys, but they don’t wanna spend money on the girls. They want the girls to come and work for them.”

“Wanna be pimps, huh?”

“They don’t know the game like they think they do. Up there in New York, you had gangsters like Lucky Luciano controlling all the brothels and whorehouses. You had colored pimps running women all through the streets of Harlem. Al Capone ran plenty of whores in Chicago. I’ve got people up there, and they’ve told me many stories about the pimp-and-whore business.”

“So, what exactly would me being in control over the girls involve?”

“Keeping them in line from time to time. Keeping them clean, in which I’m talking about keeping their bodies clean and staying off that dope. Keeping them schooled on how to make the tricks feel like they’re the king of the universe.”

“Us colored women have mastered the game of making the white tricks feel as though they absolutely control the entire universe. After all, doesn’t the white man feel as though he’s in control of everything?”

Gordon stared at Alla Mae with a noticeable smile on his face. “As a white man, I’d have to say that there’s some truth to that. Anything to blow up his ego and then have him spend some money—it is all worth it in the very end. He’s always felt that he was the alpha male.”

“Yes, I do get your point,” Alla Mae said. “I’d like to know what else you can tell me about white men.”

“The white man’s gods are money and power. He worships every dime and every authority position in his possession. Nearly everything that the white man has gained, he stole it from somebody else. Dollars and cents and control over other people are the only things that he lives for. This would definitely include other white people.”

“Would any of those things describe who you are?”

“Not quite,” Gordon said in an inadvertent sense. “You see, Alla Mae, I’m just a man of Irish nationality trying to survive out here. I’ve tried the punch-the-clock bullshit, but somehow it just never works out for me. These jobs don’t want workers, they want slaves. It seems like people just work all their lives just to die.”

“I can buy that, Mack. You don’t mind me calling you Mack, do you?”

“Not at all.”

“Then you and I might be inseparable.”

“Wouldn’t that be something,” Gordon said with a smile. “A white man and a colored woman putting their heads together, making a few bucks while getting to know one another better.”

“You just might be the other half I’ve been looking for.”

“Yes, maybe. Mae, we might have a lot more in common that we realize. You don’t mind me calling you Mae, do you?”

“Not at all. You know the streets. I know the streets. We both know how to make money. So what if what we’re doing is supposed to be illegal? There’s a lotta rich people who made every dime they have the dirty way. Shit, they’re no better than us.”

“Matter of fact, they’re worse than us,” Gordon explained in short, but somewhat concise terms. “Rockefeller, Carnegie, Vanderbilt, Kennedy, Morgan, Dupont, Getty, Hughes, and all those other filthy rich bastards, they lied, stole, cheated, and even killed to make all that dough that they did. Lots of those rich guys are some of the biggest gangsters in the world. They knew how to pay off the right people and make their clean getaway. I’d say fuck all of them since they screwed over a buncha people to have the life that they did.”

Alla Mae felt more comfortable the longer she was in Gordon’s presence. She stared into his eyes. Her intuition told her that he was someone special. “You ever been married?”

“Once. I courted a few women before, during, and after my divorce.”

“Any kids?”

“Three. One son and two daughters.”

“By your wife?”

“A son and a daughter by my ex-wife. Another daughter by a woman who I met after my wife and I split up.”

“Where are your children now?”

“With their mothers.”

“Here in Kansas City?”

“No. They’re in Joplin and Lexington, Missouri. And you? Have you ever been married or have children?”

“Never been married. I have a one-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son.”

“Where are they?”

“Both of them stay with my sister Jackie and her husband sometimes, although most of the time they live with a woman named Annabelle.”

“Where’s their father?”

“Left about three months after my daughter was born.”

“Ever tried to track the bum down?”

“No. I wouldn’t ask for his help if I was falling off a cliff. He likes to drink and fight all the time. Maybe it was good that he left, because if he didn’t leave I would’ve probably killed him and ended up spending the rest of my life in jail.”

“Well, maybe it did work out for the best.”

“How often do you get to see your kids?”

“Not often. Their mothers and I are like wolves and lions every time I try to come around. I hate them, and they hate me. But trust me when I tell you that I do love my children very dearly.”

Alla Mae looked into his eyes and saw his profound sincerity. “I believe you, Mack. You have that tone of voice that speaks straight from the heart.”

“Are your folks still living?”

“They sure are. How about your folks?”

“Yes, the both of them are still around.”

“Any brothers and sisters?”

“Ten altogether.”

“Whoa!” Alla Mae marveled at. “Are there eleven children total?”

“Eleven of us altogether.”

“All still living?”

“We sure are.”

“How many boys and how many girls?”

“Four boys and seven girls.”

“Now that’s a large family.”

“Yeah, mom and dad had always dreamed of having a lotta kids. They’ve always told us that their offspring are their pride and joy.”

"I'd hate to ask how many grandchildren your parents have."

"Forty, maybe forty-five or fifty."

"The Reynolds name will carry on for many generations to come."

"Yes it will. How many brothers and sisters do you have?"

"One brother and one sister. My sister, Jackie, is a registered nurse. She's married with a son and a daughter. My brother Pompeii, he's locked up in the Missouri State Penitentiary."

"For what?"

"Robbery and assault and battery."

"How much time they gave him?"

"Twenty years."

"You know, I also did time in the Missouri State Penitentiary for robbery back in nineteen thirty-two."

"How old are you, Mack?"

"Fifty-six, almost fifty-seven. And your age, Mae?"

"Thirty-one, going on thirty-two."

Gordon took a moment to try to calculate the age difference. Bending and twirling his fingers from both hands, he said in a low voice, "We're almost twenty-six years apart. By the time you were born, me and some buddies of mines were already sticking up crap houses and trying to stick our peters in every woman not tied down."

"They say that with age comes wisdom. I believe that I can learn some things from you, Mack."

"You sure can. Tell me something about your folks."

"My daddy is a minister at a church over on Eighteenth and Spruce. My mama does cleanup for them rich white folks over there by The Plaza and Ward Parkway."

Gordon placed his index finger between his pressed lips. Something unusual had come to mind. "Does your folks know what you're out doing here on the streets?"

"Yes, they know," Alla Mae answered rather straightforwardly. "My daddy is especially heartbroken over this life that

I chose for myself. My mama is hurt too, but she keeps it all locked up inside.”

“Do they have anything to do with you anymore?”

“Sure they do. They both wish that I’d give up the streets and clean up my life. This is what I chose, and I’m not blaming nobody for it. Like the old-timers used to say, “The life that you choose is the life that you live with.””

“True. My folks were never happy with the route that I’ve taken in my life. My dad wanted all four of his sons to become either lawyers or doctors or scientists or businessmen. My mother just wanted all her children to be happy and successful in life. The crazy thing is that life don’t always turn out the way that we planned. You know, we get thrown those curves and unexpected surprises. Sometimes we do what we have to, to survive. We learn sooner or later that this world is mainly every man for himself.”

“And I was always told that it’s every man for himself, and God for us all.”

Gordon reached over the table to place his hand on top of hers. “So, Mae, have I convinced you to come and work for me?”

“You’re halfway there,” Alla Mae said with a chuckle, gazing into Gordon’s eyes and seeing nothing but genuine ambition.

“How about I take you for a tour through my house?”

“All right, let’s see your pad.”

To begin the tour through his bawdy house, Gordon took Alla Mae down to the basement. Plush brown carpet covered most of the floor. Cheap paintings hung on the walls. Moderately priced furniture decorated the room near the stairways.

Alla Mae followed Gordon into a room down a narrow hallway with a sharp right turn. The room was neither large nor small but had enough space to store specific goods. Two and a half boxes of whiskey were stacked over in a corner. A large box with only two cartons of cigarettes sat about a foot away from the whiskey.

A small box with tiny plastic bags of heroin and cocaine sat on a steel shelf about a foot away from the cigarettes. An assortment of latex condoms were spread out across another section on the shelf. Alla Mae quickly moved a few steps backward.

The irritating noise of some unknown creature echoed from one of the corners. A squeaking sound became more pronounced by the second. Suddenly, a giant rat came rushing out of a big hole from one of the corners of the adjacent walls.

“Ahhhhhh!” Alla Mae screamed, parking her short, curvy body behind Gordon. “Jesus Lord, where’d that great big rat come from?”

Gordon didn’t answer her right away. He released a laugh and told her, “In this house, there’s sort of a rodent problem. I put poison down, but it seems as though the brown, furry, sharp-toothed bastards just keeping coming back.”

“Have you called the rodent-control people down there at city hall?”

“Are you nuts? If the city comes to this house, they’ll find all the illegal stuff that I store here in my house. They find all this stuff that I just showed you down here in this basement, they’d lock me up so long that I’d never see the light of day again.”

“You’ve got a good point there.”

Gordon stooped down and pulled back a strip of carpet from one of the corners. A rectangular hole had been carved through four inches of concrete and wood. He reached down and pulled out a deep wooden box that measured about ten inches by twelve inches. Inside the box were thick stacks of five, ten, twenty, and one-hundred-dollar bills. Each stack had thick rubber bands wrapped around it. Alla Mae had never seen that much money at one given time. Her eyes were fixed on the large sum of money like glue stuck to paper.

“Ya see, Mae.” Gordon paused, picking up a stack of one-hundred-dollar bills out of the box. “There’s about two thousand dollars inside this box. There’s a lot more where that comes from. This room here in the basement, I call it the supply room.”

“I see why, Mack.” Alla Mae looked around the room as though she’d become an inspector. “The dope, the liquor, the cigarettes, the rubbers—it’s all stashed in this basement room. Couldn’t think of a better place to put all of it.”

“My supplies are getting low. But I’m not going to fret because I always know what I have to do to restock. My contacts will give me a buzz when they’ve got something going, something that’ll help me build up my supplies again.”

“Who’re your contacts?”

“That, you don’t need to know.”

Gordon walked toward the stairs and pointed upward. “Mae, let’s go upstairs so I can show you the upper floors.”

Alla Mae followed Gordon to the third floor, which was the top level of the house. Up there were three large bedrooms. Gordon took her into the first bedroom closest to the stairways. Inside, there was a king-size bed with a dresser and a bedside table. Large ratttraps were in every corner. Curtains with unique Italian designs covered the row of three windows.

Alla Mae walked across the hall and Gordon showed her the next bedroom. This particular room also had a king-sized bed with curtains featuring geometric figures. This room had big ratttraps in every corner, too. It was evident that Gordon was having a hard time keeping the residence free of rodents.

A dresser with a towering mirror was pressed against the wall across from the bed. A marble table with a large lamp and air freshener dispensers and disinfectant were right next to the bed.

Gordon led Alla Mae into the bedroom at the very end of the hallway. Like the other two, it had a king-sized bed with a table right next to it. Cans of deodorizer and disinfectant were also on hand. The curtains were a solid blue color that matched the blue covers on top of the bed. A dresser with a small, wide mirror was just to the left.

Alla Mae gestured with her head. “The rooms look pretty tidy, Mack. I need not ask what they’re used for.”

“You and I both know what they’re used for,” Gordon replied with playful sarcasm. “The girls bring the tricks up here, where they get down to business.”

“Business, of course, is fucking.”

“Fuck, suck, lick or whatever else they do.”

Alla Mae reached forward and pulled Gordon’s hands toward her warm body. She looked directly into his eyes, which expressed nothing but seriousness, and asked him, “Mack, so far, you’ve shown me all the stuff that you’ve got hidden away in the basement. You’ve shown me these bedrooms up on this top floor. I’m sure there’s more to see inside your house. Why, must I ask, are you trusting me with your secrets? You’ve shown me these things, and you haven’t even known me for more than an hour. Looking at all those rattrops that you’ve got off in the corners, let’s just hope that the rats won’t run everybody outta here.”

“Mae,” Gordon said, releasing a sigh. “I’m a good judge of character. My heart, my mind, my soul, my spirit—they tell me that I can trust you. None of those things lie. I’ve been on this earth for more than a half century, and I’ve been through a lot of women within that time. Several women have stolen from me, have lied to me, have set me up by the police, have talked bad about me, and have talked bad to me. You’re different, and I knew that right away. With that, just trust me and go along with my plan.”

“Inside this house right here, what’re you gonna have me do?”

“Basically, you’ll be in charge of the girls. You’ll make sure that they treat the customers right, and in return the customers will treat them right. They’ll all answer to you in the end. I’ll have you making sure that the girls have bathed, make sure their breath is fresh, and make sure that their underarms and crotches and butt cracks are smelling really, really good.”

“Anything else?”

“You’ll also help me make a little extra on the side.”

“How’s that?”

“By trying to turn the tricks on to some dope or liquor or cigarettes. You know, have them thinking that you sell whiskey and cigarettes cheaper than any store or bootleg house in town.”

“And the dope?”

“There’s always customers who like getting high by taking a sniff of blow or shooting up a little smack.”

Alla Mae always showed concern by taking her baby finger and sticking the fingernail part in between her teeth. “Protection. Sure, I keep a razor on me all the time. But what if that ain’t enough?”

“I knew you were sharp!” Gordon praised Alla Mae. “You’ll never guess what I’ve got for you.”

“I’d like to see it.”

“Follow me.”

Alla Mae did as he requested. She followed him through a sort of recreational room with an old stereo system and television set. Inside a room with piles of clothes and a very large dresser, Gordon reached into a top dresser drawer and brought out a .22-caliber revolver.

Alla Mae’s eyes widened with delight. He handed her the small pistol, and she held it tightly in her right hand. “Now this is what I’m talking about.”

Gordon dropped down to his knees and slid a twelve-gauge rifle from under the bed. She placed the gun on top of the pile of clothes to reach for the rifle. He came behind her and instructed her on how to hold and shoot the rifle.

Alla Mae couldn’t have been more impressed. No way would Gordon leave her in the house without some protection for herself and his girls.

“Listen, Mae,” Gordon whispered to Alla Mae. “I have to go out and make a couple’a scores, honey.”

“Scores?” Alla Mae wondered. “Whaddaya mean by scores?”

“It’s not that easy to explain. Ya see, I’m going to be meeting up with some very dangerous individuals. These men are natural-born killers. Their brains are wired for killing. In doing so, I might not come back alive. If that’s the case, you’ll have to do what you have to do.”

“These individuals, are they gangsters?”

“Probably worse than gangsters. They’re monsters sent up from hell.”

“While you’re out, I’ll be praying that you make it back alive.”

“Rufus will be watching my back when I meet up with these people this weekend. If everything goes right, we should be coming back no later than Monday night or Tuesday morning.”

“Who’s Rufus?”

“A good friend of mines from Dallas who went down with me on an OPA gas-ration-stamps case.”

“When did this happen?”

“When World War Two was going on.”

“Don’t worry, Mack, with my razor, the pistol and the rifle, everything should be kept in order around here.”

“I’m counting on you, Mae.”

“The girls and the tricks will be kept in line. As I told you, I know the hooker business better than anyone.”

“Oh, and by the way, another one of my girls will be coming back to work this weekend. Her name’s Louise Baker.”

“She went on vacation?”

“Naw, she just got into an altercation with one of her tricks, who had to be straightened out.”

As Gordon made the preparations for the dangerous upcoming assignment, Alla Mae settled into her new role of mistress of his bawdy house.

CHAPTER 9

Prime Time for the Criminal Minds

GORDON WANTED TO deliver on his promise to Alla Mae that he'd come back with the goods to fill up the bawdy house again. The goods, of course, were whiskey, cigarettes and possibly some food items. The small quantities of narcotics that he sold came from a different source. To accomplish this, he had to hijack some commercial trucks that were bringing the commodities into Kansas City.

While driving toward the west end of Twelfth Street, Gordon cruised at a moderate speed. Those meddlesome cops were always hiding around some corner, parked in some dark alleyways, waiting for the likes of him to either speed or make an illegal turn.

It was early Monday afternoon, and Gordon had an important meeting with one of the most dangerous gangsters in all of Kansas City, Missouri, certainly an utterly ruthless one.

Rufus sat quietly on the passenger's side as he watched his partner drive through the busy corridor of Twelfth Street.

Rufus turned to look at Gordon and asked once again, "Mack, do you really trust this colored woman to run your Twelfth Street house?"

"Who, Mae?" Gordon responded.

“Yes, the colored woman that you just met.”

Gordon took his eyes off the road for just a split second. He gave Rufus a solemn stare and said, “I’ll tell you like I told Mae. I’ve got a good feeling about her deep down inside of my guts. Almost everyone I’ve crossed paths with in my life, I’ve usually been right about them. Mae’s no exception, Rufus.”

“C’mon, buddy. We both know that you can’t trust them colored people. They start stealing the second they’re born into this world.”

“Really?” Gordon said, giving Rufus one of his more intense smiles. “Whaddaya think we’re on our way to do? Everybody steals. The coloreds, whites, Mexicans, Jews, Italians, Chinese, and every other race of people on earth. Hey, if the opportunity shows up in front of you, then you’ll go ahead and take something that doesn’t belong to you. Lucky Luciano once said that everybody’s got larceny in them.”

“Guess you’ve got a good point there.”

“Look, those bums who run the big corporations in America, they’re all a buncha thieves. The lowlife politicians who make the laws, they’re some of these worst kinda thieves. The policemen who arrest people and then put them in jail, they’ll rip off people from time to time. The only difference between them and us is that they’ve got people in high places to protect them. Rufus, everybody’s got a little bit of thievery in them.”

“Couldn’t agree with you more, partner.”

Gordon had crossed the intersection of Main Street and Twelfth Streets, and he and his partner were now in the heart of all the strip clubs, seedy bars, peep shows and restaurants. The establishments, where high levels of debauchery took place on a daily basis, were right next to one another on both sides of the street. There was even a massage parlor located there.

The Sodom and Gomorrah of Twelfth Street stretched for two and a half blocks. The neon lights hadn’t quite been lit up since it was still daytime. Every single strip club and bar there on Twelfth Street

strip was owned and operated by two of the most vicious gangsters in the history of Kansas City, Missouri: William “Willie The Rat” Cammisano and his brother, Joseph “Joey Dogs” Cammisano.

Willie and his brother Joe owned interests in the Twelfth Street clubs Peyton Place, The Other Room, The It Club, Park Plaza Lounge, Kansas City Shake House, and the raunchiest of them all, The Pink Pussy Cat.

Willie Cammisano stood at a commanding six foot even. Though not toned, his body frame carried around one hundred ninety-three pounds of solid weight. Heavy bags lay under both eyes. An even olive tone gave away his full-blooded-Sicilian heritage.

It was the early 1960s, and Willie Cammisano had become a high-ranking member of Nick Civella’s Mafia organization. After having been given the blessing by Nick Civella himself, the reigning Mafia boss and vice lord of Kansas City, Cammisano now controlled all the vice rackets in the Twelfth Street red-light district of Kansas City. This included prostitution, strip clubs, seedy lounges and bars and some drug peddling.

Gordon pulled over to the curb and parked. The lunchtime traffic had just begun to fill the streets of downtown. Directly to their immediate right was the Pink Pussy Cat strip club. A pink neon sign of a curvy woman was just the bait to lure the sex-starved men inside.

Customers were starting to make their way inside the club.

Gordon turned the ignition to shut off the car.

Rufus already knew the plan. He left the passenger’s side to come around on the driver’s side.

Gordon handed him the keys and told him, “Look, Rufus, I want you to go inside one of these bars downtown for a couple’a hours. Have yourself a few beers or a drink, but please don’t get wasted for God’s sake. I’ve got a meeting here in this tittie bar with one of the heavy hitters. He’s gonna fill me in on the details about the big score later on tonight.”

"I'll see ya in a couple of hours, maybe?" Rufus inquired, climbing inside the car and making himself comfortable.

"A couple'a hours it is."

"Look, I'm gonna have to leave town for a few days. Think you can manage without me?"

"I'll try, buddy."

Rufus turned the ignition and slowly drove off.

Gordon stepped into the Pink Pussy Cat with ten tons of confidence weighing on one shoulder. On the other shoulder, another ten tons of nervousness also weighed just as heavily.

About ten customers were sitting in the main floor. The jukebox played loudly while strobe lights flashed in every which direction.

One of the most gorgeous women Gordon had ever seen served drinks from behind the bar. The men in the audience tried hard to disguise their erections.

She really turned them on. Their crotches made noticeable erection prints.

This woman had long strands of lustrous blonde hair flowing past her shoulders. Her breasts were like two missiles that were ready for serious combat. Who was this woman? One of many women who served as pieces of side ass for Willie Cammisano.

A total of five go-go dancers had started off the first show session inside the Pink Pussy Cat. Four of them were white and the other a mixed-race woman. The five of them were beautiful with extremely shapely bodies. Cammisano only hired the best because the best were the biggest moneymakers.

Once Gordon was several feet inside the club, the owner, William "Willie The Rat" Cammisano, waved him to the very back, which was to the right of the dancing stage. Seconds after stepping into his office, Cammisano and Gordon gave one another the tightest, warmest hug.

Though he wasn't Italian, Willie planted a moist kiss on both of Gordon's cheeks. Though they were cordial to one another, the two

couldn't have been more different. Gordon looked into the eyes of Cammisano and immediately felt a sudden surge of fright.

A veteran police detective with the KCPD once said that Cammisano was one of the scariest individuals that he'd ever met in his entire life. He often told his colleagues that Cammisano had the eyes of a vicious killer, a pair of eyes that were like bottomless, soulless pits. He also had a physical presence that kept even the toughest guys in line.

All he had to do is stare at you, and you knew to straighten up and obey his orders. The legendary stories about how he disposed of his enemies were enough to stop anyone from challenging him.

At fifty years of age, Cammisano boasted an arrest record of seventy convictions, which dated back to the 1930s. At the young age of fifteen, he'd already had an extensive rap sheet. He had been arrested for carrying a concealed weapon, bootlegging, numbers racketeering, extortion, running illegal dice games, pistol-whipping a robbery victim, running an alcohol still, being AWOL from the US Army, disturbing the peace, and gambling. It was said that Cammisano had stolen everything, from the wheels of a truck to the rings off a woman's fingers.

"That's one bad man," people from the streets often boasted. "He's a hoodlum's hoodlum, not a punk in any sense of the word. You mess with Willie C, you'll end up floating face down in the Missouri River or in the sewer for the rats to feast on."

As someone who did respect Gordon, Cammisano offered him a seat inside his office.

"Mack, how the hell ya been?" Cammisano asked Gordon in a gentlemanly manner.

"Fine," Gordon said, sliding an envelope out of his pocket and handing it to Cammisano.

"Staying outta trouble?"

“Me, staying out of trouble? Are you kidding? Trouble is what I live for. Trouble is what we both live for.”

“Got that right, buddy.” Cammisano opened the envelope. He thumbed through the stack of ten- and twenty-dollar bills.

“It’s about five hundred bucks in there,” Gordon told Cammisano, who tried hard to bring in greater revenue during every visit.

“Aw, five hundred is fine.” Cammisano accepted the money graciously, pulling it out of the envelope and laying it on a counter near the wall. “How’s business with your girls?”

“Not bad, except for a little heat from the fuzz. Those cocksuckers stay on my ass all hours of night and day.”

“Your liquor supply and cigarettes, how’s that doing?”

“The five hundred that I just gave you, that’s where most of it came from.”

“Your smack and blow sales, has that been bringing in any dough for you?”

Anyone involved with vice on a high level paid tithes to the Kansas City Mafia. You paid the Italian and Sicilian gangsters in one way or another. Those who were not smart enough to do so were intimidated, beaten or killed. No one dared fool around with the Cammisanos and the Civellas.

“Very little,” Gordon admitted with disappointment. “Those colored guys over there at the east end of Twelfth and Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets, right over by Paseo and Troost and Prospect, they’re pulling in all the money from the junk and blow sales.”

“Goddammit!” Cammisano exploded, the intensity in his eyes enough to frighten even the scariest monster. “Those motherfucking, fucking *moolinyans*! Those brave ass, bold ass jiggs, coons, and porch monkeys. They’re making all that money, and they’re not even kicking back what they’re supposed to up to us. I have to kick back up to my boss.”

Gordon knew without a doubt that Cammisano's boss was Nick Civella. Nick wanted to get paid, and he wanted to get paid on time.

"Doc Dearborn," Cammisano called out, huffing and puffing out of uncontrolled rage. "He calls himself The Godfather of the Black Mafia right here in Kansas City. This nigger, he controls all the dope and whores and gambling and loansharking among those other niggers. In fact, he's been known to work with one of my associates, Joe Centimano."

"Joe Centimano, who owns Joe's Liquors at Nineteenth and Vine?" Gordon asked.

"That's him. Joe tells me that he's been holding back on us. Some of my people tell me that he had some moolinyan killed for raping some guy's sister."

"Are you serious!" Gordon erupted rather strongly. "Did that happen over there by Eighth and Ninth Street, somewhere between Tracy and Lydia?"

"It sure did. How'd you know that?"

"I was close by when it happened."

"Says that one colored guy pumped a slew of slugs into another colored guy," Cammisano recalled from street sources. "Sounds like he might've emptied his pistol into him."

"So that had to do with a rape."

Cammisano slid an edition of the *Kansas City Times* from off a shelf. He unfolded the older edition of the newspaper and shouted, "Can you believe this shit?! Some peckerwood white guy eaten up by rats down in Brush Creek."

Several nerves inside of Gordon felt as though they'd been stung by giant hornets. The first name to come to mind was Cecil Ray Young's.

The front-page headline read:

"MURDER VICTIM FOUND EATEN ALIVE BY
RATS IN BRUSH CREEK TUNNEL"

The article went on to mention that the murder victim, Cecil Ray Young, had been covered in sweet, sticky food products and dumped inside the tunnel. Only through dental records could the victim be identified. Detectives with the KCPD didn't have a clue as to where to start identifying a suspect.

This had raised many suspicions among Cammisano and some of his associates.

"So, someone wants to be a copycat," Cammisano spoke in a high-pitched, accusatory voice. "If I ever found out who the bum was who left the peckerwood guy in the tunnel, I'd skin and gut him alive. It's crap like this that'll have the coppers breathing down my neck." Cammisano folded the newspaper and pitched it back on the shelf.

Gordon knew to put on his best innocent face. As the guilty party, he played right along with Cammisano.

Cammisano locked eyes with Gordon and said, "One of my guys from out on the streets told me how this Cecil Ray Young liked going around beating up on hookers. Some say he might've been one of those Klan guys. Well, maybe the broad's pimp taught him a good lesson."

Cammisano fired up one of his favorite cigars. From inside a cabinet drawer, he pulled out some diagrams and documents. They were given to him by corrupt grocery-store-chain managers and wholesale grocer commissioners.

Mondays were usually the days when most wholesale-grocery-store chains would restock their stores. Trucks transporting fruits and vegetables, dairy products, meats, and non-perishable goods usually arrived in the late evening hours. Trucks transporting beer, whiskey, cigarettes, cigars, and wine showed up in the late nighttime hours. Cammisano made it his business to know such things.

"Mack." Cammisano paused, presenting Gordon a list of several local grocery-store chains. "Safeway, Kroger, Milgram, A&P, and Thriftway are some of the biggest grocery stores around town. United

Super, the Hen House, Muehlbach's Supermarkets, and Sam's Bargain Town are some of the other ones that are either smaller or bigger."

Gordon shot him a swift nod. "I know where every last one of them are located around the city."

"Good." Cammisano continued, "From what my higher-up inside sources have told me, late night Mondays are when they make their liquor and cigarette deliveries to these grocery stores. There'll be trucks filled with whiskey, bourbon, scotch, beer, and wine. There'll be trucks that'll also be filled with every type of cigarette brand. Mack, if we can hijack these trucks without getting caught, it'll be one of the biggest scores ever."

"Especially for your go-go joints and for my good-time whore houses."

"Got that right, buddy," Cammisano agreed in full. He pulled out a map which showed diagrams of the highways that were directly connected to Kansas City. Gordon recognized every highway presented on the map. "All right, the trucks with the liquor and cigarettes will be making a straight shot out of Highway Forty and into Kansas City. I want you and several of my men to be posted near the stop sign that's close to the highway. Once the driver makes his stop over by Troost, that's when you and my men will make your move."

"How many of your men will be going along?" Gordon inquired.

"Four. The trucks carrying the cigarettes and liquor will be right behind one another. They'll be those commercial box trucks that you see parked in front of the grocery stores."

"About what time?"

"Somewhere between ten thirty and eleven o'clock tonight. You've got your Colt ready?"

"Ready as ever. Will your men be packing pistols?"

"No doubt. Like I said, Mack, this could be one of the biggest scores that I've ever plotted. My boss and me are counting on you and my guys."

“I’ll do my best, Willie.”

“My men will do their best, too.”

Gordon felt good knowing the Kansas City Mafia outfit had put him in charge of hijacking and fencing. Gordon’s full-time criminal occupation wasn’t hijacking and fencing, but he yearned to fill his bawdy houses with the much sought-after commodities. The plan would soon be put in motion. Gordon would take part in one of the biggest crimes of his illustrious career.

CHAPTER 10

Keeper of the Indecent Castle

WHILE SERVING AS the madam of Gordon's Twelfth Street bawdy house, Alla Mae proved herself to be quite a natural. The whores and tricks moved in and out of the house like clockwork. To maintain the guise of a respectable residence, Alla Mae had the girls and their customers either come through the side door or through the back door.

She made herself scarce to the cops. Most of them knew who she was. Rarely did they see her at the front of the house. None of the neighbors complained. At least, not for now.

To show her hospitality, Alla Mae would occasionally put on a pot of chili or spaghetti or beef stew. The customers would smell the aroma and their taste buds would get teased.

Alla Mae certainly knew how to hustle. She knew how to make the tricks feel just as special as the hookers made them.

She hadn't seen Gordon for the entire weekend. He'd already explained to her that he'd be out on one of his special criminal assignments.

Monday afternoons around Twelfth Street were sort of uneventful. Business on Mondays wasn't necessarily bad, but it wasn't the best either. The weekends were usually good since most local residents

got paid on Fridays. Most people wanted to get high and drunk and party the weekend away.

Alla Mae had a large pot of beef stew on the stove. The steam forced its way from between the lid and the pot. The aroma almost filled the entire house. Gordon made sure that he kept the refrigerator filled with frozen meats and the shelves stocked with different food items.

A pan of cornbread was baking in the oven. Alla Mae stepped away from the stove to peek between the curtains on the back door. Coming up the small set of stairs was Kim, accompanied by who looked to be a top-spending trick. Alla Mae opened the door and let them in. The customer was a well-groomed and well-dressed white man. Alla Mae looked him over real good. She threw up a cryptic hand signal. This meant for Kim to remain quiet.

To her, cops were some of the sneakiest bastards in the world. Sometimes, they disguised themselves as customers who wanted to pay for a good time with a hooker. Alla Mae maintained that she was a very good judge of character. Her instincts told her who was who.

She looked into the strange man's eyes in order to interpret his intentions. Alla Mae reached forward to shake hands with him. "How are you doing t'day, sir?"

"Fine," the somewhat good-looking Caucasian man replied. "And yourself?"

"Having a great day t'day. I see that you ran into Kim somewhere along the way."

"Yep, she's one fine-looking woman."

"Kim's definitely any man's fantasy girl."

"I'd have to say so myself."

Alla Mae spent a few seconds studying his voice. She'd come up with her own screening process. Looking into his eyes, listening to his voice and checking out how he was dressed, Alla Mae knew that he wasn't some undercover patrolman with the KCPD.

“Here’s how it works,” Alla Mae told the anticipating customer. “It’s twenty dollars with Kim, and it’s five dollars for the rooms. We’ve got towels and washrags and rubbers and air freshener up in the room.”

The customer wasted no time pulling out his wallet. He handed Alla Mae a fresh twenty and a five-dollar bill.

“What’s that cooking?” he asked Alla Mae, the aroma having a hypnotic effect on his sense of smell.

“Beef stew.”

“How much for a bowl of that?”

“If you be a good boy, I’ll fix you a bowl before you leave.”

“Well, all right.”

Kim escorted him upstairs to one of the rooms. Not even twenty minutes later, another one of Gordon’s girls, Lana Baker, came up the back door stairs with a trick. The curves on Lana bulged through the tight skirt and blouse that she wore.

The trick was an old white man who appeared to be in his late fifties or early sixties. Alla Mae opened the door for the couple. Right away, they sniffed the air with their noses. The beef stew aroma brought on a sudden appetite. The old white man wore a brown two-piece leisure suit. His fully white hair was slicked back with a light pomade.

Alla Mae didn’t have to put in too much work to size this customer up. She figured that he was just some dirty old white man who wanted himself a taste of some delectable brown sugar. Many colored people believed that white men didn’t just have a love for colored women—they had an uncontrolled lust for colored women.

Thick patches of ketchup and syrup were all over his shirt and pants. Surprisingly, he didn’t have an offensive body odor.

“Sir, how’s your day going?” Alla Mae asked the older gentleman.

“Not bad,” he said, the constant working of his mouth indicating that all his teeth were gone. He had a strong whiskey smell coming from his breath. Alla Mae knew that he’d been drinking probably well before he ran into Lana. “Not bad at all. And how about yourself?”

“T”day is a good day for me. I see that you ran into Lana somewhere along the way.”

“Yes I did!” he cheered, inspecting the curvier parts of her body. “Forgive me for being too damned honest, but I’s just love that feeling of going up into a colored woman’s pussy.”

“Hey, you’re just being honest with yourself and with us. And while you’re being honest, it’ll be twenty dollars to spend time with Lana, and it’ll be five more dollars for the room. Up there in the rooms, we have towels and face cloths and rubbers and air freshener.”

“Would ya happen to sell whiskey?”

“Sure do.”

“How about cigarettes?”

“We sell those too.”

“Are they cheaper than the ones that you get in the store?”

“They sure are.”

The trick reached into his wallet and gave Alla Mae two crinkly twenty-dollar bills. Being so drunk, he didn’t notice much about his surroundings. Existing in the world that she did, Alla Mae wasn’t about to play the role of a saint.

Honesty wasn’t always the best policy when it came to running vice. If someone slipped up, then they paid the price. Lana and her new customer traveled upstairs for a rendezvous.

Alla Mae spent the next fifteen minutes cleaning up around the kitchen. The beef stew and the cornbread were done. The meat inside the stew was tender enough to melt in your mouth. The cornbread had a sweet, buttery smell to it. She mopped the floor and washed the dirty dishes.

Upstairs on the third floor, both men were having the time of their lives with Kim and Lana. The sounds of moaning and groaning echoed out into the hallway.

Inside the room where Kim and her trick were having sex, the bed squealed with an annoying noise. He pounded rather hard up and

down on Kim. The sex had to be worth the twenty dollars that he'd paid. After reaching the climax that he sought, he wiped his private area with a moist towel and got dressed.

Farther down the hall, the older white gentleman could barely keep an erection. While pressing his body on top of Lana, he couldn't enter her moistness with his soft penis. Thin layers of ketchup and syrup covered the inner portion of the intoxicated man's exposed legs and buttocks. Sometime before visiting the Twelfth Street residence with Lana, he'd carelessly been eating and spilling food everywhere.

On the floor, a large rat nibbled away at the ketchup and syrup that was smeared on the back of his slacks.

While he was still struggling to penetrate Lana with a flaccid penis, she'd become frustrated to the point of turning in every direction. "Haven't you came yet?" Lana asked her trick, ready to leave the house and find another one.

"Not yet, sugah," he answered, frustration in his voice. "Just give me a few more minutes."

"You haven't got a few more minutes."

"Be patient with me. It's about to get up right about now."

"All that alcohol you've been drinking, that's the reason why you can't get your dick hard."

Finally, he achieved a satisfactory erection. He successfully entered her with his stiffness. The juices from her crotch ran down the side of her legs.

Climbing up one of the steel bedposts from the rear was a very large brown rat. It made loud squealing noises. Lana and her trick believed that it was squealing noises coming from the rust of the steel bed frame.

The rat crawled onto the bed. The ravenous rodent sniffed its way farther up the sheets. Its beady eyes zoomed in on the thick layers of ketchup and syrup. Had the drunken man actually sat in a pile of

food without knowing? Did he eat and then unknowingly spill the food all over his clothes?

The smell of the dark maple syrup was what first caught the rat's attention. Like a smaller predator moving in on its much larger prey, the rat jumped onto the fleshy buttocks of the trick. Then it sunk its long, sharp teeth into the right buttock.

He jumped off Lana and shouted, "Shiiiiiiiiit! Goddammit, something done bit me in the ass!"

Lana rolled off the bed and noticed blood dripping down the right side of his leg. He turned around and she noticed that there were small, but deep puncture wounds on his right buttock cheek. She ran into the bathroom to use warm water to wet up a towel. A bottle of green alcohol was pulled out of the medicine cabinet.

Lana returned to the bedroom and instructed him to put some alcohol and the warm towel onto his buttock. To stop the bleeding, he poured some alcohol on the towel and pressed it against the right side of his rear end.

Alla Mae came running up the stairs with the twelve-gauge rifle given to her by Gordon. She ran into the room with the rifle aimed up toward the ceiling. "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what the hell's done happened up here?"

"Something crazy, Mae," Lana answered in distress. "A rat climbed on top of the bed and bit him in the butt."

"I told the owner about those rats. We need an exterminator to come here and flush all those rats out of their holes."

Alla Mae desperately wanted those rodents to take up residency somewhere else, but despite her anger, she had cleverly refrained from mentioning Gordon's name.

"At first, we thought that it was the bed that was squealing."

Alla Mae looked at the traumatized customer and said with the straightest face possible, "Sir, did you clean yourself up before you

picked up Lana? When you first came to the house, I noticed all the food spilled onto your clothes.”

“No, I didn’t,” he admitted in all honesty. “I was sloppy before I’d come over to this house. Drunk as I was, I dropped food all over myself without even being aware. I guess I deserved what I got.”

“Don’t say that. We need to get you to a hospital.”

“Naw, I’ll be all right.”

“Sir, rats carry rabies. If you don’t go to the hospital and get rabies shots, you could get real sick and could end up dying.”

“Maybe you’ve got a good point there.”

“And I do apologize for you getting bit. The owner of the house and I are working rather hard to get rid of all the rats in here.”

Alla Mae led Lana and the bitten customer downstairs. A cab was called for him to go to a local hospital. Too bad he didn’t see the rat bite coming. It arrived in a little over thirty minutes. Alla Mae sent the customer out the back door with a big bowl of warm beef stew and cornbread wrapped in aluminum foil.

So much for visiting the Twelfth Street residence for a good time. However, being hospitable was her job and how she’d been raised. For his troubles, she wanted to make his visit seem worthwhile.

Within the next several hours, Kim and Lana had brought a host of tricks in and out of the house. Alla Mae did everything within her power to make sure the rats stayed in their holes. Having razor-sharp teeth, the big rats had gnawed their way through the wood and plaster. Passageways were created from the outside, which led straight into the house. Some black electrical duct tape was used to cover the holes for a temporary fix.

Most of the men who left after some steamy raw sex were asked to purchase alcohol or cigarettes or both. Alla Mae truly lived up to her title as a hustler. The money made from prostitution and the sale of liquor and cigarettes wasn’t bad for a Monday. The sum she

had last tallied up had been a little over three hundred dollars. The dollars began to stack up.

For some reason, Alla Mae didn't want to touch the dope. Drugs might've proved to be the dangerous end of their vice activities.

She peeked out one of the front windows upon hearing a car. Driving very slowly toward the east end of Twelfth Street were two police patrolmen. Alla Mae could see them approaching, but they couldn't see her peeking from the side of a curtain. Who were they? Alla Mae immediately recognized their faces.

They were none other than Patrolmen Charles Galanis and Lewis Anderson. They desperately wanted to take her off the streets of Kansas City for good. It'd make their career in law enforcement if they could have her locked up for the rest of her natural born life.

She remained looking out the window until they were no longer in sight. Unanticipated, a barbaric knock came from the back door. The hard pounding caused Alla Mae to rush and grab the .22-caliber pistol and the straight razor.

She returned downstairs and moved toward the back door with caution. She pulled the curtain back and saw one of the ugliest faces that she'd ever seen in her life. Standing right in front of Kim was some colored man with a heavily scarred face and crooked, brownish teeth.

His skin looked like shiny layers of black coal. Alla Mae felt as though she could smell his bad breath through the glass. Using extreme caution, she opened the door and allowed the pair entry. She sized this wannabe gangster up right away.

Kim's frightened demeanor quietly projected that she was being held hostage. Alla Mae's years of soliciting on the streets of Kansas City proved useful in this situation. Her strong intuition proved her right.

The thuggish-looking man's breathing had spread some of the worst type of breath into the air. Nicks and cuts covered most of his

face. Alla Mae could clearly see that he'd had a hard life. The clothes and cologne he wore were dirt-cheap.

"Can I help you?" Alla Mae asked the somewhat hostile colored man.

"Who are you?" he asked boldly, redness in both of his eyes.

"I'm the part owner of this house." Actually, Alla Mae was the caretaker for the time being.

"Naw you ain't," he intimidatingly corrected Alla Mae, acting as though he came to take over the residence. "This house here belongs to Gordon Reynolds. I think people out on the streets calls him Mack."

"Mack's not here right now. Do you wanna rent a room with Kim or what?"

"I wanna know where Mack is."

"That's none of your business, buddy boy."

"You one of them tough bitches, ain't you?"

"Tough as they come, motherfucker!" Alla Mae blasted, looking to Kim's left side and noticing that a knife was being held to her back. "Why don't you just leave Kim alone?"

"This white bitch works for Mack. I know that you're watching this house for Mack."

"So what if I am?"

The street rogue pushed Kim forward and held a switchblade at an angle toward Alla Mae's face. Exhibiting her street toughness, Alla Mae reached into the pocket of her housecoat and whipped out the .22 pistol.

For added protection, she brought out the razor from the opposite pocket. Having a pistol and a razor pushed into your face was enough to scare even the bravest of street hoodlums.

"Look'a here, sucker," Alla Mae hissed at the ugly street rogue. "Don't make me use this gun and this razor. I'll shoot and cut you up so good, you'll be left as nothing but mincemeat. Now, if you're smart, you'll get the fuck out of this house and never come back."

“You threatening me, you little colored midget bitch?”

“Sure am.”

“Mack is going to have to answer to Doc Dearborn sooner or later. His girls are cutting into the street action of Doc’s girls. What I should do is take that pistol and razor from you and then whip your ass all over this house. Hell, you look like a colored munchkin from *The Wizard of Oz*. You catch my drift, little bitty woman?”

“No, I don’t catch your drift. Here’s my drift, you dumb piece of street trash. If you think you’re ugly now, when I get through popping you with this twenty-two, and get through cutting you up with this razor, your own mama ain’t gonna know who your ugly ass is. Get the hell outta here, and don’t ever let me see your ugly face again.”

The thug got the message. He made a hasty retreat out the back door. Judging by the look on his face, however, it appeared that he would possibly return.

“Kim, are you all right?” Alla Mae asked the prostitute, who she wanted to protect just as much as Gordon did.

“I’m all right, Mae.”

“What happened?”

“I met that guy up at the other end of Twelfth Street. He told me that he wanted a date, so I brought him back here. He put a knife up to me and told me that he’d cut me if I didn’t show him where Mack lives.”

“The ugly bastard works for Doc Dearborn.”

“People tell me that you don’t wanna mess around with Doc Dearborn. They say that he’ll kill you, just as sure as look at you.”

“Calls himself The Black Godfather of the Kansas City Mafia. Doc Dearborn has got girls out there who work Twelfth Street just like you and Mack’s other girls.”

“I know that, and that’s what scares me more than anything.”

“Somebody’s gotta bring him down a notch or two. He’s a badass today, but he could end up a dead ass tomorrow. I’ve seen his kind

dead all the time. Mack doesn't play around when it comes to anybody disrespecting his girls."

"He's done put a few of my tricks and even other girls in line."

"Your job is dangerous, Kim," Alla Mae told Gordon's dedicated prostitute. "Mack wants to make sure that his girls are safe."

Kim had done enough work for today. She received her pay along with the rest of the girls. Alla Mae told her to go home and get some rest.

Gordon was yet to return from his hijacking mission.

CHAPTER 11

On Track to Hijack

DURING THE LATE nineteen fifties, the Missouri State Highway Department began building interstate highways throughout rural Missouri. St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield were Missouri's three largest urban cities where interstate upgrades were implemented.

Highway 40 and Highway 66 were the main interstate highways that connected the three cities. They were the ones that would receive the most funding from the federal government. Highway 40 would be the precise highway which connected to the thoroughfare of Troost Avenue.

Troost Avenue was the street where commercial trucks would have to make a complete stop. A stop sign rested at a corner that faced the busy Highway 40. Gordon, along with four of Cammisano's men, were positioned in an alleyway that faced opposite of Troost.

One of the main hijackers that Cammisano commissioned for the big score was Anthony "The Lion" Catalano. He'd been given the nickname of "The Lion" since he had the ferocious nature of a lion, never hesitating to strike against even the most vicious opponent. Catalano possessed a face like Frankenstein's monster, minus some of the makeup used by Hollywood.

He wore a black wig and had a pair of sinister eyes that were almost as frightening as those of Cammisano. He had a block-shaped face, his nose wide and flat. Cammisano had enlisted him as his number-one soldier.

Catalano had spent ten years in prison on a charge of assaulting a witness in a narcotics investigation. Cammisano used Catalano as an expert at hijacking and fencing goods for the Kansas City Mafia outfit.

Rarely did the Italians allow non-Italians to participate in highly profitable ventures, but Cammisano knew that Irishmen like Gordon met the key qualifications. His extensive criminal rap sheet spoke for itself.

Gordon had come to know many Italians over the years. The Civellas, Cammisanos, Carrollas, Cacioppos, Mangiaracinas, LaRoccas, Malapontis, Fazzinos, Inzerillos, Sellaros, Tarantolas, and Brocatos, they were just some of the Italians whom he had direct or indirect dealings with.

Several of them took him under their wing. He met the qualifications they'd sought after. Too bad he wasn't Italian or Sicilian because he could've possibly been made a member in their organized crime family faction had he been.

Gordon's Irish background gave him more clout than he realized with his Italian partners. For some unexplained reason, they liked his style. They admired the fact that he had the guts to go after or take whatever he wanted.

Sitting behind the wheel of a shiny black Buick Electra, Anthony "The Lion" Catalano was waiting for the trucks they were going to rob. Sitting next to Catalano was Vito "Hardknuckle" Blando, a short, stout and rather frightening-looking man.

He'd earned the nickname "Hardknuckle" from his days as an amateur boxer. Rumors circulated fast that Blando delivered one of the hardest punches ever known to man. One feel of his iron fist, and most opponents were nearly knocked into a coma.

Gordon sat in the back seat in the very middle. Sitting to the left of Gordon was another one of Cammisano's top henchmen, Frank "Frankie Nose" Cusumano. While doing time in Leavenworth for robbery, Cusumano had pumped much iron, biding his time by engaging in physical activities.

He earned the nickname "Frankie Nose" because he had a long, sharp nose like the Disney character Pinocchio. He combed his hair every which way to try and disguise his receding hairline.

To the right of Gordon was Edward "Eddie Bones" Silvio. Silvio was the total opposite of his fellow partners. He was a frail man with amazing brute strength. He wore his salt-and-pepper hair pushed back while keeping his overall appearance neat and clean. He'd been given the nickname "Eddie Bones" ever since he'd broken a facial bone in a brawl with a bitter opponent.

The five ruthless hoodlums were waiting for what would be one of the biggest scores of any of their criminal careers. The time in Kansas City, Missouri right then was 11:47 p.m.

Catalano tilted his head downward. Coming around a curve off a small strip of highway, which connected with Highway 40, were two large commercial box trucks. He sat up straight and quickly alerted the other four. "All right, men, is everyone ready?"

Gordon was the first to respond by slipping out his .45 Colt revolver. "Ready as I'll ever be, Tony."

"Me too," Blando answered, pulling a .38 revolver from the side of his pants.

"Ready to make that move, Tony," Cusumano said, slowly bringing out his Smith and Wesson .22 Center-Fire Magnum.

All three men put black wigs on their heads and dark sunglasses and scarves over their faces.

"Cool." Catalano signaled, the lights and engine of the car still shut off. "The trucks are about to hit the sign. All right, guys, move out!"

Gordon, Blando, and Cusumano jumped out of the Buick and sprinted toward the stop sign. Before the drivers of the box trucks knew what hit them, pistols were shoved into their frightened faces. Gordon reached over and quickly shifted one of the large trucks into park.

Blando and Cusumano shoved one of the drivers straight out of his truck. Cusumano pointed his pistol at him and ordered him to back away from the truck. Being frightened out of his mind, the driver ran far up the street.

Gordon grabbed the other driver by his shirt collar and tried forcing him out of the truck. Bravely, the driver, wearing a blue uniform with a white nametag, decided that he'd put up a fight. Gordon just couldn't believe it. His mindset toward the man was that of "surrender the truck or I'll end your life."

"Give up the goddamned truck!" Gordon ordered the driver, trying hard to force him away from the steering wheel.

"Not a chance." The driver resisted, reaching around to punch Gordon in the chest. "I've got an old lady and four children to support. I let you take this truck, I'll end up losing my job. And without a job, I won't be able to feed my family."

Gordon took the barrel of his .45 Colt revolver and pressed it deep into the driver's right cheek. "Either give up the truck or you're a dead man."

"You're not getting this truck," the driver insisted, his heavy breathing indicating that he'd become more nervous. Somehow, he felt the need to display an unnatural form of bravery.

"You'll be no good to them dead. A dead man can't feed his wife and children."

"What're you, one of them Italian guys who thinks he's an immortal gangster?"

Gordon knew that he couldn't reason any further with the driver. By nature, he'd always been a very violent man. His level of irritation

had reached critical levels. Gordon drew back the hand holding the .45 Colt revolver.

He thrust it forward and crashed the barrel of his pistol into the side of the driver's face. A long, deep laceration caused blood to gush out like a tiny water fountain. The blood then dripped down the side of his face and onto his clothes.

Blood soaked the seat and the floor of the truck. This only escalated Gordon's already fiery temper. He pulled the driver out of the truck and spread him flat out across the ground. To teach him a dirty lesson, Gordon unzipped his pants and pulled out his member.

For him, the timing was perfect; he had drunk more than five beers and several shots of whiskey before the heist. He released a long stream of dark-yellow urine directly onto the driver's face. To satisfy his brand of perverted sense of humor, Gordon made sure that his urine mixed in with the blood on the man's face. This tickled every funny bone in his body.

Catalano emerged from the car and shouted to Gordon, "Hey, Mack, let's go, man!" Before obeying the direct command, he kicked the driver in the ribs and spit a big glob of foamy saliva on his face.

Gordon climbed inside the box truck and followed behind the truck being driven by Blando. Both trucks followed behind Catalano and the car they'd come in. He led them through a few side streets that were connected to downtown. Eventually, they all ended up under a bridge in the West Bottoms.

Catalano hopped out of the car and rushed toward Gordon. He pointed his finger in his face and shouted, "Mack, what the fuck is wrong with you?"

"Ain't nothing wrong with me!" Gordon shouted back, his uncontrolled rage ready to be released.

"Willie doesn't tolerate no horseshit like that!" Catalano yelled with thunder in his voice.

"I know that."

"Then why'd you pistol-whip the guy and then piss on his face?"

"The prick wouldn't give up the truck."

"Still, you didn't have to piss all in the guy's face. A couple'a whacks across the guy's face would've been sufficient."

"Look, the punk wouldn't cooperate. He kept talking about getting fired if his truck got hijacked. I didn't have time to argue yak all night with him."

"Oh, Willie's gonna love this one."

"I bet he will."

Catalano cooled off and gave further instructions. "Okay, guys, let's get both of these trucks unloaded."

Catalano had a large white commercial truck already parked under the West Bottom bridge. This truck had more compartment space than the ones that they had hijacked. The men had come prepared. Catalano popped the trunk of his Buick and brought out some bolt cutters.

The locks on the back of the commercial box trucks were popped open. The hatches were lifted. Large supplies of beer, whiskey, wine, and cigarettes were inside. The boxes were stacked orderly.

"Will ya take a look there," Catalano said, surprised. "There's enough booze in there to get this town pissy drunk for a whole month."

"I'd say," Gordon agreed. "And to think, they were gonna make their rounds to Safeway, Milgram, Kroger, and A and P."

Looking at all the boxes inside brought the brightest twinkle to the criminals' eyes.

"No deliveries will be made now," Catalano said. "All right, guys, let's get these trucks unloaded so we can get out of here. We'd better make our move now before the cops show up and bust us all. Mack, Willie already gave the okay for you to get your fair share. I mean, we must've struck gold by getting these goods in our possession."

Now the hard work began. Gordon and the others loaded the extra truck with the heavy boxes one by one. The five of them formed

a line where the first guy passed the boxes along to the fifth guy. It took them just over three hours to complete the job.

Catalano gave Gordon permission to grab his share of beer, whiskey, and cigarettes now that they were done. Gordon's Chevy Bel Air was parked several feet away from the three trucks; he popped the trunk and swung open all four doors of his automobile. Several boxes of the goods were stashed into the trunk, the back seat, and the front seat.

By now, the two hijacked trucks were completely empty. Catalano was no dummy. He went around to both trucks and sprayed the steering wheels and seats with a powerful disinfectant. Never would he want to leave behind any evidence. Being a veteran criminal, he knew the law inside and out. Investigators always went looking for fingerprints at a crime scene. And undoubtedly, Catalano had his fingerprints on file with the KCPD and the FBI. Of course, Gordon's prints were also on file along with those of the others who had helped with the hijacking assignment.

Their mission had been successful. Now they had to leave the West Bottoms before some nosy patrolmen came looking around, trying to advance their careers by being proactive.

"Good work, men," Catalano praised the other four hijackers. "Willie is gonna be ecstatic after knowing the great work that we've done."

"I'd hope so," Gordon added, his shirt soaked with sweat. "We broke our backs for this job. Could you imagine doing this shit every day for a living?"

"Hey, it's a dirty job, but somebody's gotta do it."

"You've got that right, buddy."

"Mack, thanks for your help."

"Anytime, Tony."

"Now let's get out of here before we all end up catching a case."

"Now's not the time to be going back to the joint. Believe me, I've done more than my share of time in prison."

Gordon hugged Catalano and the others. Blando followed Catalano with the truck of hijacked goods. Gordon drove in the opposite direction. While trying to use the side streets around downtown, he only hoped that the cops wouldn't spot him.

He presently felt like a hardened criminal being called to deliver a church sermon. The streets were relatively clear around this time of early morning. More than anything, Gordon did everything to stay off Twelfth Street. Hands down, Twelfth Street remained one of the busiest streets in the city at this time.

The pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, drug addicts, strong-arm robbers, burglars, rapists, cold-blooded killers, gamblers, extortionists, hijackers, petty larcenists and any other type of criminal, they partook in any type of crime that suited them.

The east-to-west street became legendary throughout Kansas City.

The Italians practically ruled every square inch of Twelfth Street, along with many other territories.

Gordon casually cruised eastbound along Tenth Street. Patrolmen hardly ever frequented anywhere over by Tenth Street. Getting past Troost and Paseo Streets was the challenge. Constantly, Gordon looked left to right, watching every car on the main streets. No cops were sighted.

He had to stop at a sign at the intersection of Paseo Avenue and Tenth Street. Much to his surprise, a police car had come to a complete stop on the opposite side of the street. Nervous jolts ran all through his body like electrical shockwaves. The boxes of hijacked goods were very much visible.

Talk about being scared. Gordon envisioned himself going right back to the penitentiary. An image of the cops pulling him over and discovering the illegal liquor and cigarettes flashed through his mind.

Gordon locked eyes with the pair of KCPD patrolmen. Nearly half the police force knew who he was. The direct eye contact lasted just over a minute.

The cops crossed the intersection in a rather slow manner. Both looked over and noticed the boxes in the front and backseat. Could they see the markings on the boxes? As men of law enforcement, were they able to know moving boxes from commercial boxes?

A split-second decision would decide if Gordon would be pulled over.

Miraculously, the patrolmen drove past Gordon. They continued their drive westbound toward downtown. Gordon gave a sudden sigh of relief. He drove a few more blocks and turned south onto Highland Avenue.

Gordon parked the Bel Air in the backyard of the house at 1414 East Twelfth Street. Before going inside, he decided to open the boxes in the front seat. Wedged between bottles of Johnnie Walker blended whiskey were thick books of coupons from the Safeway grocery store.

Gordon flipped through the coupon books. There must've been over three hundred dollars' worth of Gold Bond stamps for the purchase of various food items. He searched through more boxes in the front and back. Top Value books of stamps for Kroger were discovered in another box. Like the stamps for Safeway, there must've been over three hundred dollars' worth. Before his search ended, Treasure Stamps for Milgram were found in a box on the floor of the backseat.

Gordon had stumbled upon his own goldmine—a goldmine of food, that is. This brought a true sparkle to his eyes. The way he saw it, he and the others were going to be eating like kings and queens for many months to come.

“Wonder how these stamps got in these boxes?” Gordon asked himself in a low whisper. “Who put them in there, I wonder? The driver? Another driver before him?”

At this point, Gordon really didn't care. He must've had a total of a thousand dollars in stamps from different grocery stores around the city.

CHAPTER 12

Mack Has Come Back

A T AROUND NOONTIME on Tuesday afternoon, Gordon awoke, refreshed after the long day before. He'd completed the hijacking assignment for William "Willie The Rat" Cammisano with much success. It felt so good knowing there wasn't any interference from the law. The wigs and sunglasses and scarves might've proved to be the perfect disguises.

Waiting for him on the table downstairs was a big bowl of warmed beef stew. A saucer with a large piece of cornbread that had melted butter on top sat next to the stew. Gordon's eyes widened after looking down at the big chunks of beef and vegetables floating around the succulent brown juices. The tantalizing aroma worked the muscles inside his stomach.

"Smells good, Mae," Gordon told the caretaker of his bawdy house. "Beef stew, I assume?"

"Beef stew with all the helpings," Alla Mae said, aiming to please Gordon.

"I'm starving about right now."

"Then sit down and dig in."

And Gordon did just that. He dunked the spoon down into the stew and attacked it like a famished beast. The emptiness that once

haunted his stomach was now banished. He took a bite of the cornbread while shoving more stew into his mouth.

“This is amazingly good, Mae,” Gordon praised her cooking. “It’s almost as good as my mother’s and ex-wife’s food.”

“Almost?” Alla Mae questioned him with a straight face. “How about it’s just as good or even better?”

“Okay, it’s just as good or better.”

“Now that’s what I wanna hear.”

“Whatcha got to wash this good food down with?”

Alla Mae went to the refrigerator and poured Gordon a tall glass of frosty lemonade. He gulped down the lemonade like a thirsty man who’d suffered from an extreme heat stroke.

Gordon had one of the meanest appetites around. The man could eat. It was nothing for him to finish off four large hamburgers or three big tenderloin steaks.

In a matter of minutes, the bowl of beef stew was gone. The saucer of cornbread only had crumbs around the porcelain rim.

Gordon released a loud burp and asked Alla Mae, “So, what happened when I was gone?”

“The girls did real good,” Alla Mae said, hoping that the news would produce a smile on Gordon’s face.

“Now that’s what I want to hear. How much money did they make yesterday?”

Alla Mae dug down into her housecoat pocket and handed a wad of cash over to Gordon. Gordon took the money and unfolded it. “I’ll let you see for yourself.”

He counted the money and was pleased with its total. “Three hundred and fifty dollars. That’s not bad for one day’s work. Did ya make any money from the booze and the smokes?”

“Sure did,” Alla Mae said as she reached into her other housecoat pocket, handing him another roll of cash.

Gordon counted the second roll of cash. He produced the smile

that she'd been waiting to see. "Two hundred and twenty dollars. My goodness, you were on a roll yesterday."

Alla Mae stepped closer and placed her hand over Gordon's shoulder. She stared at him with a sad face and said, "Mack, we've got a problem that needs to be taken care of."

"What problem?"

"The rats."

"What about the rats?"

"One of the tricks who went upstairs with Lana, he got bit on his ass by one of the rats."

"You kidding me? How'd that happen?"

"The man came here pissy drunk," Alla Mae explained. "He'd spilled food all over his clothes. Since he was spending money, I didn't make a big fuss about him spending time with Lana. Some of the food was still smeared over his body, especially across his ass. Well, the rat climbed up in the bed and then bit him on his ass."

"Because of some of the food on his ass?"

"Yep. I called for a cab to come and take him to the hospital."

"Let's just hope that he went and got his rabies shots."

"That's exactly what I told him."

"Poor guy. He should've cleaned himself up before he picked up Lana."

Alla Mae rubbed Gordon across the shoulder in a gesture that warned him that she had more bad news to tell him. "Mack, something else crazy happened when you were gone."

"Like what, Mae?"

"Kim came to the house here with some colored dude who I thought was a trick. I don't know where she picked up this dude, but I must say that he was one ugly motherfucker. He had scars all over his face, crooked brown teeth, and he stunk real bad. Anyway, he had a knife to Kim's back."

Gordon jumped out of his seat. The rage inside him began to boil over. “Had you ever seen this colored guy before?”

“Never in my life,” Alla Mae admitted in all honesty.

“The knife put up to Kim’s back. What was that all about?”

“This colored man knew that Kim worked for you. He picked her up on Twelfth Street, close to where downtown is. I believe the bastard was only posing as a trick. Then he got her back here and confronted me.”

“Confronted you about what?”

“Said something about your girls cutting into the street action of Doc Dearborn’s girls.”

“Doc Dearborn?” Gordon laughed rather hard, a light sheen of red steadily spreading across his handsome face. “James ‘Doc’ Dearborn, huh?”

“Kim told me that they call this Doc Dearborn the ‘*Godfather of the Black Mafia*’ here in Kansas City. She said that he—”

“Yeah, yeah, I know about that,” Gordon cut Alla Mae off, himself fuming with extreme anger. “The nigger supposedly got all these other niggers around town scared of him. Let’s see how tough the son of a bitch is when he has to answer to the Civellas or the Cammisanos or the Filardos.”

Alla Mae got quiet all of a sudden. She took a few seconds to internalize the word *nigger*. Coming from the mouth of Gordon, an Irish white man, the word was offensive. She threw both of her hands around her waist, the exact way colored women were known to do.

“Excuse me, Mack,” Alla Mae responded, jerking her head from side to side, rolling her eyes like a woman who wanted to engage in battle. “You said who was supposedly scared of those who?”

“You heard me the first time,” Gordon shot, not afraid to use racially offensive words in the presence of anyone, especially when

his anger had risen to irrational levels. “I said the word *nigger* and that settles that.”

“No, it doesn’t settle it. My people can be wrong sometimes, but they deserve more respect than me hearing a white man call them niggers. You’ve got that, Mack?”

“No, I don’t got that. This is my goddamned house! I can use any type of language that I want. You’ve got that, Mae?”

“Go straight to hell! How about I call your people a bunch of potato-picking Micks?”

Gordon rushed toward Alla Mae and grabbed her neck in a light chokehold. His violent temper showed its ugly face once again. She reached into the left pocket of her housecoat and brought out her straight razor. It was the weapon that she constantly kept with her.

Bravely, she smacked Gordon with her right hand. The smack was hard enough to leave a red handprint on his face. With her left hand, she put the razor up to his throat. It pressed lightly into the skin. “Do you want me to slice your throat until your whole head falls off your shoulders?”

“Noooooooooooo!” Gordon strained hard to answer, the blade of the razor pressed against his Adam’s apple. If she pressed any harder, the razor would’ve caused a deep laceration.

“If you ever put your hands on me again, you’ll be one dead white man. I’ll be one colored woman dead from going to the electric chair for killing a white man. You’ve got that, Mack?”

“Yeaaaaaaaah!” Gordon forced the word to roll off his tongue and out of his mouth.

“All right, then. How would you like me to call white people ‘peckerwoods’ and ‘honkies’ and ‘rednecks’ and ‘crackers’?”

Alla Mae drew the razor away from his throat. Gordon caught his breath and told her, “Depending on who the white person was, some of my people *are* peckerwoods and honkies. Shit, even I know that, being a white man. Now, getting back to this Doc Dearborn...”

"I'm sure that he sent that ugly creature to this house to try and scare us. Of course, you weren't here when it all happened. I sent him a message of my own."

"Which was?"

"I pulled out the twenty-two that you gave me and my razorblade. Had he laid one hand on me, I would've shot him straight through his heart and cut his windpipe in half."

Gordon felt around his throat and said, "Yeah, don't I know about that. I just got a taste of it."

"I've never met this Doc Dearborn, but I've heard stories about him."

"Stories like what?"

"That he's a woman beater, a pimp, a dope dealer, a junkie, a killer, a bank robber, and a big-time gambler."

"Willie Cammisano has some indirect dealings with this Doc Dearborn."

"The Italian gangster, Cammisano?"

"Yep, that's him. 'Willie The Rat' is what they call him."

"Why do they call him that?"

"After he kills his enemies, he lets the rats in the sewers finish them off." Most Mafia executions involved extreme methods of brutality.

Alla Mae snapped her fingers and told Gordon, "Hey, Mack, did you hear about the man they found in one of the Brush Creek tunnels?"

Gordon experienced a sudden flashback. The incident involving Cecil Ray Young flooded his memory. He knew exactly what Alla Mae was talking about. Never would he admit his involvement, however.

Alla Mae tapped Gordon across his right cheek. "Mack, are you daydreaming or what?"

"You were saying something about the police finding a man in a tunnel down in Brush Creek."

"The newspaper said that the rats ate him up. When you mentioned Willie Cammisano, that's exactly who I thought of. The article said

that sweets were spread all over the poor man, then the rats ate him down to his bare bones.”

“Ha ha!” Gordon chuckled. “Wonder what he did to receive such a mean punishment?”

“Your guess is just as good as mines.”

Gordon pulled Alla Mae closer to him and planted a big wet kiss on her lips. “Mae, I’m sorry for grabbing you around the neck. It won’t ever happen again.”

“It better not,” Alla Mae warned him in a playful manner. “Any man put his hands on me, that’ll be his last day alive on earth.”

“Hey, I’ve got something to show you.”

“What?”

“Follow me.”

Alla Mae followed Gordon down to the basement. Inside the room where he stored his liquor, dope and cigarettes, there was barely enough room to walk. Boxes of whiskey, beer, and cigarettes were stacked from the floor to the ceiling.

Gordon flipped open the lids on the boxes and showed Alla Mae the merchandise. “There’s enough whiskey and beer and cigarettes here to last for quite some time.”

“I’d say,” Alla Mae agreed, her eyes wide with excitement. “Mack, there’s a goldmine here in this basement.”

“A goldmine waiting to be changed over into big bucks.”

“Where’d you get all this stuff?”

“Let’s just say that I was compensated for services rendered.”

“What a compensation,” Alla Mae said, peeking inside several of the boxes. She saw labels of Johnnie Walker, Jack Daniels, and Jim Bean whiskey. Inside the boxes for the cigarettes, there were labels on the cartons of Tareyton, Marlboro and Fontenoy.

Gordon walked up and kissed Alla Mae on the cheek. “Look what I found in some of the boxes.”

“Coupon books?”

“That’s right, coupon books. I found them stashed down in between the bottles of whiskey and the cartons of cigarettes.”

Alla Mae thumbed through the coupon books, thoughts of unlimited food racing through her mind. “Mack, there’s hundreds of dollars worth of coupons between these three books. How’d you find them in the boxes of whiskey and cigarettes?”

“Good question. Somebody must’ve stolen them and then stashed them into the boxes. The drivers who brought the goods into Kansas City could’ve easily been the culprits who stole the coupons for their own personal use.”

“I’m taking you shopping around to some of these stores for groceries.”

“With all these coupons, we can buy up half these grocery stores.”

Gordon flipped open several newspaper advertisements for local grocery stores. “Look through these papers and see what we could use for the house.”

Alla Mae scanned through the papers that advertised food prices and other items. Several products at the stores caught her attention. “Prices don’t look bad,” Alla Mae said as she closely examined the prices. “A half-gallon of milk at Safeway is forty-one cents. Catsup is twenty-nine cents a bottle.”

“We can use these Gold Bond stamps at Safeway.”

“Ground beef is thirty-nine cents a pound at Kroger. Ground chuck is forty-nine cents.”

“The Top Value stamps can be used at Kroger.”

“Bananas are forty-nine cents a pound at Milgram. Orange juice is twenty-seven cents for two six-ounce cans.”

“Hi neighbor,” Gordon joked around, reciting the grocery store chain’s signature slogan.

“Potato chips are fifty-five cents for a one-pound bag at A&P.”

“There you have it, Mae. We’ve got enough of those stamps to fill this house up with food for months to come.”

“We won’t be going hungry for a while.”

A knock came from upstairs. Gordon and Alla Mae left the basement to see who was at the door. Lana and Kim were at the back door, reporting to Gordon for work.

“Lana and Kim,” Gordon said, opening the door to allow them entry through the back. “How’re you girls today?”

“Doing just fine,” Lana said to her boss, dressed in one of her sexiest outfits ever.

“Not bad at all,” Kim said, appearing as though she’d picked up some weight, but definitely in the right parts of her body.

“C’mon girls, let’s go sit at the dining room table.”

Kim and Lana followed Gordon and Alla Mae into the dining room. Before they could sit down, another knock came at the back door. Alla Mae turned around to go back to the rear of the house. Standing at the door was none other than Louise Smith.

Louise looked like a brand-new human being. After the beating that she had received from Cecil Ray Young, there wasn’t a single mark on her face or her body. Gordon had given her time to get herself together, to heal her mind and body before coming back to work.

“Mack, guess who’s here?” Alla Mae called out, holding the door for her to come inside.

“Who?” Gordon replied from several yards away.

“It’s Louise.”

“You bullshittin’ me?”

“No, I’m not.” Alla Mae escorted Louise into the dining room area with the other hookers. The five of them sat around the table like one big happy family. Everyone exchanged big bright smiles toward one another.

“Louise, you look really good,” Gordon complimented her, lifting her spirits higher than a towering skyscraper. “In fact, all you ladies look real, real good.” Gordon’s father, Samuel Reynolds, forever told him that the way to take control of a woman’s heart was to shower

her with endless compliments, making her feel as though no other woman in the world was as beautiful as her.

“Thanks, Mack,” Louise said, her hair, makeup and clothing in top form.

“Ladies, I’m glad that we’re all here together. In case you didn’t know, Mae will be helping me run this house here on Twelfth Street while Rufus helps run the other house.”

“By the way, where is Rufus?” asked Lana.

“Had to leave town for a few days,” Gordon said, firing up a fresh Marlboro cigarette, one that came from one of the hijacked boxes. He reached into his pocket and flashed a thick wad of money. “Ladies, Mae tells me that you all did a real good job when I was gone. I can’t tell you how proud I am that you get out there and hustle the way that you do.”

Both Lana and Kim jumped out of their seats to give Gordon a kiss right smack in his mouth.

This stirred up some jealousy in Alla Mae. Gordon wasn’t quite her husband or boyfriend, but she had started to develop feelings for him. No man had ever made her feel so good about herself. Not even her own father.

“Let me say this.” Gordon paused, his eyes going over Louise’s body. “Louise, you look real good, honey. Your face, it looks fresh and healed up.”

“Thanks, Mack.” Louise received the compliment quite happily. “I feel good, too.”

“Looks like you’ve really been taking care of yourself.”

“Trying to.”

“Good to have you back.”

“It’s good to be back. Look, uh, Mack, can I see you privately for a second?”

“Sure.”

Louise and Gordon stepped to the very back of the house. She wanted to open up to him about the tragic fate that had befallen one

of her tricks. “Did you hear the news?” Louise asked Gordon, her eyes glued to the floor, a sad look on her face.

“What news?” Gordon faked interest as he wanted to dance around the question thrown at him.

“Cecil Ray Young.”

“Who?”

“The trick who beat me up real badly.”

“Oh, the white guy who jumped and robbed you at the Capri Motel,” Gordon pretended to remember. “Whatever became of that guy?”

“The police found him down in Brush Creek eaten up by rats.”

“Aw, that’s a shame,” Gordon said sarcastically, a pleased smirk on his face.

“Would you know anything about that?”

Gordon moved closer to Louise and placed a tight grip around her arm. Through clenched teeth, he told her, “Look, don’t ever mention the name Cecil Ray Young around me, Lana, Kim, Mae, Rufus or anyone else ever again. You got that?”

“Yes, I’ve got it,” Louise said meekly, a frown creeping on her face.

Gordon and Louise returned to the dining room. He had more important business to discuss. He wanted to discuss something with Kim.

“Something concerns me, Kim,” Gordon said, his eyes zoomed over at Kim like a pair of high-powered binoculars. “This swamp monster who held you at knifepoint, you say that he works for Doc Dearborn?”

“That’s what he told me,” Kim said.

“Anything else?”

“That you, Mack, were interrupting the money that Doc Dearborn’s whores were bringing in.”

“Is that so?”

“This ugly piece of a man said that Doc Dearborn would have all the girls who work for you killed. Then he said I would be the first one killed if he ever saw me on the streets again.”

“Making idle threats to my girls, huh?”

“Mack, this guy was serious. I thought for sure that he would stab me to death with the knife.”

“Hell, I’m serious too. I’ve got just the Italian men who’ll put this Doc Dearborn punk back in his place. He thinks he runs the streets of Kansas City, but there are guys in higher places who allow him and his boys to operate their vice out there. These guys have personal relationships with police captains, judges, politicians, and businessmen. If he or one of his boys lay a finger on you, or any of my other girls, they’re all dead men. They’ll chew this scum up and spit him out.”

Gordon meant what he’d said. Though he’d never come right out and admit it to them, his hookers were his property. They were his meal ticket. He had to protect his property at all costs. Whether he had a war ahead of him, it remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 13

The Chief Wants Relief

C**LARENCE M. KELLEY** became the thirty-second Chief of Police in Kansas City, Missouri on August 28, 1961. Not even a good year into his post, he vowed to make some serious changes to the growing Midwestern city. First, he pushed through orders for the police department to form a helicopter unit and install modern communications systems.

Second, he recommended that crime-reporting procedures were perfected, the reorganization of the detective bureau, and the expansion of the K-9 Corps. Crime had reached an all-time high in Kansas City, and he wanted to put a stop to it.

The homicide rate had shot up. More rapes and robberies were being committed in the inner city as well as the suburban areas. Burglaries were occurring every day, almost several times a day. Soliciting prostitutes filled almost every street corner in the heart of the urban core. Drug peddling went on in the harshest ghettos with marijuana, cocaine, and heroin being the number-one drugs of choice.

The police chief had seen for himself the seedy bars and strip clubs there on Twelfth Street. He'd witnessed the hookers going up and down the street, signaling for cars to pull over so they could arrange

dates. The pimps who watched over their property were in plain view of him and his patrolmen. Though he never stepped inside any of the strip clubs, he knew that every level of debauchery took place there.

All that criminal activity had to be stopped completely or at the very least curbed severely. Given the choice, Chief Kelley would have rid the city of it completely. Only law-abiding citizens of Kansas City were the type of people he wanted to surround himself with.

However, that was only a fantasy. Crime never took a break. Vice operated around the clock. There was far too much money to be made in vice. Many still believed that corruption ruled, especially within the police force itself.

Chief Kelley knew that some of his patrolmen officers were being paid under the table. Proving it was another thing. The chief threatened to have the patrolmen fired and prosecuted under the fullest extent of the law if they were caught. Hearing their boss express his anger toward crooked cops who took bribes scared them into doing their jobs with honesty and integrity. But still, there were the ones who took chances anyway.

Chief Kelley, who had retired from the FBI, had taken it upon himself to do some extensive research. Having been born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1911, Chief Kelley knew about some of the well-known gangsters who ruled during his younger years, gangsters such as Tom Pendergast and Johnny Lazia and Anthony “Fat Tony” Gizzo. His main focus would be on the gangsters of the present day, however. Someone once asked him, “If you could rub a genie bottle and get one wish, what would it be?” Chief Kelley’s immediate response was, “To get rid of every gangster in America,” believing that that would wipe out most crime.

After going through numerous KCPD and FBI reports, he had learned who were some of the local gangsters who operated vice on a highly profitable level. Some of the names which surfaced were Nick Civella, Carl “Cork” Civella, William “Willie The Rat”

Cammisano, Joseph Cammisano, John Amaro, Anthony Catalano, Nick Spero, Joseph Spero, Carl DeLuna, Joseph Filardo, Alex Presta, Anthony Civella, Charles Moretina, Peter Tamburello, and Anthony Mangiaracina.

Chief Kelley had looked extensively into their backgrounds. Other notable criminals of non-Italian descent were Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, Morris Klein, James Harvey Bradley, and George Beskas. They'd committed almost every crime under the sun. Gordon alone had so many mugshots on file inside the KCPD headquarters that he could fill up a large photo album by himself.

Authorities believed that these men did a lot of the dirty work for the Kansas City Mafia. If ever questioned by law enforcement, however, the criminals denied ever hearing any of the names thrown at them.

Chief Kelley had decided to call in several captains and lieutenants and corporals from other police stations around the city to help in the ongoing war on vice. He also called in two members of the Top Hoodlum Program, better known as THP: Edward O'Reilly and David Burelson, men whom he'd met during his days as a valued FBI agent. The humble, yet tough mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, Harold Roe Bartle, sat just to the right of Agents Burelson and O'Reilly.

Mayor Bartle had dressed professionally for the special occasion. The suit that he wore could've easily been tailor-made at Woolf Brothers or Jack Henry on the Country Club Plaza. Most of his constituents knew that he had taste when it came to fashion and culture.

Captain Denison and Lieutenant Hitchcock were also present for the special meeting. Like their boss's, their police uniforms were pressed to impress. Their faces looked well rested. Both high-ranking officials with the KCPD had the look of professional men who enjoyed their occupations.

All the men, a total of twenty, were assembled on the third floor. Shiny oak desks and tables were positioned inside of a newly remodeled

conference room. The room had a fresh, flowery smell. Refreshments and red punch were set out on a separate table.

Modern office equipment of the early 1960s gave the impression of brilliant minds coming together. The sun came beaming through the windows, like rays of naturally produced light. Some staff members pulled the shades down halfway to block out some of the sunlight, while others set up several charts at the very front and center of the room. The writing on the charts was large enough to see, even from the very back of the room. Photos of known criminals were attached next to the detailed charts.

Spread across most of the front of the room was a chart of Kansas City organized-crime members. Photos of Mafia chieftain Nick Civella and the made members and associates of the Kansas City La Cosa Nostra family dominated almost the entire board.

Chief Kelley made his presence known at the front of the room by clearing his throat. Dressed impeccably, he wore a pressed, light-blue uniform with a white shirt and a dark blue tie. At the ripe age of fifty, he kept a full head of black hair, a toned, lean body, and a youthful face. He wasn't a short man but not necessarily a tall man, either. His presence always commanded respect.

The murmuring in the room shifted to an attentive silence. The Chief of Police of Kansas City, Missouri went behind a wooden podium and picked up a silver-colored microphone.

"Let me first say this," Chief Kelley told all the attendees in the room. "Kindly, I'd like to thank all of you, from the highest-ranking FBI agents to the middle-ranking police officers, for attending this crucial meeting. Let's get right into it, everyone. Regardless of the name used, the fact remains that organized crime still exists in our Kansas City area. The Kansas City Crime Commission is dedicated to spotlighting organized crime in Kansas City. We wish to express our gratitude to the law-enforcement agencies and public officials who are supporting this effort."

Chief Kelley took a drink from a frosty glass of ice water. He wanted his voice to be as clear as possible so as to get his point across to all the men present.

“The Kansas City Crime Commission,” Chief Kelley said, briefly pausing to review some papers sitting on top of the podium, “is a privately supported organization that opposes organized crime, racketeering, and corruption. It stands for crime prevention. It favors effective law enforcement by an adequately paid and trained police. The commission spotlights crime trends, commends good enforcement, and exposes public officials who neglect their sworn duty. It is not a prosecuting agency nor a vigilante group. It works for a good government and responsible citizenship. It is supported by voluntary contributions from individuals and businesses. Before I continue, I’d like to introduce to you a man who has dedicated his life to building an honest judicial system, a man who will eradicate corruption in American society at all costs. Men, I’d like to introduce to you a member of the FBI’s Top Hoodlum Program, Mr. Edward O’Reilly.”

A sudden eruption of thunderous applause filled the room.

Agent O’Reilly stepped up to the podium and moved the microphone closer to his mouth. The diligent agent looked out into the audience and said, “Good afternoon to all my colleagues in law enforcement, my brothers in the ongoing fight against crime and corruption.”

Each man present returned the greeting.

“Good afternoon to you as well, Mayor Bartle,” the agent continued.

Mayor Bartle responded with a simple smile and a nod of his head.

“Let me also say this,” Agent O’Reilly continued, clearing his throat while reviewing a couple paragraphs of notes. “I’d especially like to thank Chief Kelley for allowing Agent Burelson of the Kansas City FBI Field Office and me to come and speak at this important meeting. We’ve received great support from the US Justice Department’s Organized Crime Strike Force in our efforts to alert the honest citizens to the problem of organized crime. We’ve pushed for the Justice

Department's Strike Force to concentrate extra efforts on the Kansas City area. Organized crime is obviously a cancerous growth in our community. The most remarkable aspect of the syndicate is that the public has tolerated it for far too long. If irate citizens demand action, it will go. If apathetic citizens tolerate it, it will stay."

Agent O'Reilly flipped through several sheets of paper, focusing on some more notes in the middle of the stack. "Now," Agent O'Reilly said, picking up where he'd left off. "The Mafia in Kansas City and elsewhere is comprised mostly of leeches, parasites. It is important to point out that those few unscrupulous Sicilians and Italians who dominate the syndicate will also exploit others to do their dirty work. This latter group may consist of Irish, Jewish, Dutch, Negro, Hispanic, Oriental, and even other Italians unfortunate enough to become indebted to the syndicate. It is essential to bring these facts to the public's attention and increase their interest in the situation."

Agent O'Reilly paused for a brief minute or so. He turned around to position the wide, square chart before all those present. Using a long wooden yardstick, he pointed to the upper center of the chart. "Men, details of the sinister organization known as the Mafia, which has spread its influence across the nation, with Kansas City being a key location, are shown here, provided by investigators of the Kansas City Crime Commission."

He moved to the opposite side of the chart to point out some key facts about mob influence throughout the city. "All right, this chart, prepared by the commission's staff members, shows the expansion of the Mafia. It shows how the organization is a secret society. Listed here are alleged members of the organization, unsolved murders that might have been perpetrated by its members and revenue sources of the group.

This other chart here indicates how Charles Binaggio, the front man, was linked to murders and narcotics-dealing activities of the Kansas City Mafia. It details the mechanics of a corrupt political

regime, the workings of the gambling rackets that provide funds for the gangs, and the place of the enforcers in the scheme of things. The chart also shows that organized crime and syndicate operations are not new to Kansas City, but in fact were prevalent twenty years ago and even as far back as fifty years ago. It must be noted that some of the individuals listed are either deceased or have been deported to either Italy or Sicily.

“The Kansas City Syndicate can be described as a tightly knit group of hoodlums at the top with petty criminals who contribute to its existence at the bottom. At this moment, I’d like to turn the meeting over to my esteemed colleague, Agent David Burelson, a man whom the FBI respects and holds in high regard.”

Agent O’Reilly moved away from the podium. Agent Burelson approached with a set of notes in his hand. The others in the conference room received him with mild applause.

“Thank you for that warm reception.” Agent Burelson acknowledged all the men present. “I especially thank my colleagues, Agent Edward O’Reilly, Chief Kelley, Mayor Bartle, and all of you men who protect and serve the citizens of Kansas City, Missouri and America.”

Agent Burelson picked up the wooden yardstick and pointed to the oversized chart. “Men, many individuals are pawns who do the bidding of the mob, those who break the law and take most of the risks. This is done to insulate ‘Mr. Big’ and his lieutenants and soldiers from courts of law. This list on this chart includes ages and last known addresses that purport most of the inclusives. Many names under indictment or investigation have of necessity been omitted.”

The yardstick moved along the chart, coming to some very familiar faces. They were the faces of Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, Morris Klein, and James Harvey Bradley, the career criminals who had been involved in just about every facet of crime.

“This enchanting face here,” Agent Burelson said, poking at the chart, the yardstick pressed right to Gordon’s mugshot, “is that of

Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, a very well-known procurer along the Twelfth Street strip and probably other areas of Kansas City. Gordon has over fifty-two criminal convictions starting as far back as nineteen thirty-two. The crime that brought the eyes of the FBI on him was a nineteen forty-four federal conviction for the OPA ration coupons. Gordon has done a lot of dirty work for the Kansas City syndicate, everything from murder to hijacking. If only the law could lock him up for good, along with a lot of other gangsters, this city would be free from a lot of the syndicate's crimes."

"I couldn't agree more," Captain Denison spoke up. "Reynolds is nothing but a low-level pimp who traffics women. The guy, he's never worked a legitimate job in his life, like the filth gangsters who he works for. Let's face it, they're nothing but detrimental to society."

"I also agree with the captain," added Lieutenant Hitchcock, someone not happy with the takeover of the streets by notorious gangsters. "Reynolds has several women working the Twelfth Street strip for him. This piece of scum wants to be labeled as the King of the Pimps. What the department wouldn't do to shut this street garbage lowlife down for good. Him and all the others who pollute our streets with whores and dope and alcohol."

"Right you are, Lieutenant," Mayor Bartle concurred, his chubby, round face an angry red color. He held a finger high in the air. "As mayor of this city, I know who controls the dancing girls and the girls who prostitute themselves on the streets, especially up and down Twelfth Street. I also know who controlled them during the Prohibition days of the saloons and speakeasies. They were none other than Tony Gizzo and Gaetano LoCoco."

"You're correct, Mayor Bartle," Lieutenant Hitchcock confirmed. "Twelfth Street is a high-profile red light district, almost like a real tiny version of Forty-Second Street in New York City. Morris Klein is another one who should've been shut down a long time ago. I know that he's one of them Jewish gangsters. For the mob here in KC, he's

done assaulted a lot of guys who've gotten behind on their loan shark payments or protection fees. Morris is like the brainchild, if you will, of most of the syndicate's operations."

"The man's no dummy," Captain Denison noted. "The raucous collection of joints along Twelfth Street are known for gambling and prostitution and dope peddling. Morris Klein can be found at the center of its web, doing a lot of the bidding for the Italians and the Sicilians. It's like a breeding ground for crime."

"Great insightful information, men," Agent Burelson told his colleagues, pointing to the far right of the chart with the yardstick. "Let's take a look at how the social cancer known as organized crime affects us all, and how they move in on a community. Take a look at the word *Syndicate*. The first letter, S, stands for the social acceptance of hoodlums in decent society. The second letter, Y, stands for the community's indifference to ineffective local government. The letter N stands for the notorious mobster personalities in open control of businesses. The letter D stands for the deceptive handling of public funds."

Agent Burelson let the yardstick point towards the floor for a second, taking a break to sip water in order to continue speaking clearly without growing hoarse.

The attendees were mesmerized by his knowledge of the Kansas City Crime Syndicate and how they operated their day-to-day vice activities.

"The letter I," Agent Burelson continued, the yardstick pressed back up to the board, "stands for the high interest rates forced on poor, high-risk borrowers. C stands for the close association between mobsters and local authorities. A stands for the arson and bombings carried out by organized crime. T stands for the terrorizing of legitimate businesses. And finally, E stands for how easy it is to come across gambling, narcotics, and prostitution throughout the citizens' everyday life."

“David,” Agent O’Reilly interrupted, rising his hand. “If I may interrupt you here for a second. How much more estimated revenue would the government receive if all of these hoodlums paid their fair share of taxes?”

“That’s a very good question,” Agent Burelson responded.

“I’d say so myself,” Mayor Bartle agreed.

“Let’s all of us ask ourselves some questions,” Agent O’Reilly said, looking all around the room at his attentive audience. “Is that golfing partner at the country club the one who receives the ultimate profit from teenagers hooked on drugs and prostitution here in the year nineteen sixty-two? Is that businessman who only sometimes has legitimate business dealings the one who gave the okay that resulted in one of the mob’s gangland slayings? What about the criminal who cannot legally own a tavern or bar but keeps his hands in the cash register?”

“Imagine this,” said Chief Kelley, his deep voice echoing around the conference room. “What if everybody decided to stop being patrons of the bookie, the dope peddler, the prostitute, the loan shark, the gambling joints? Would organized crime go completely out of business?”

“Not a chance,” Captain Denison was quick to answer. “You’ve got scum like Gordon Reynolds who’ll always find women to solicit on the streets for him. You’ve got filth like Morris Klein who’ll find ways to intimidate or extort or kill to keep the mob in business. Then there’s evil geniuses like Willie ‘The Rat’ Cammisano and his brother, Joe Cammisano, who’ll run dope and prostitution through those sleaze joints that they have up and down Twelfth Street. If you look closely, there’s the Civella brothers, Nick and Carl, who are considered to be the Kings of Kansas City when it comes to Kansas City Organized Crime. They’re cold-blooded, calculated killers in every sense of the word.”

“Let’s look even deeper, gentlemen,” Agent Burelson said, moving the yardstick across the chart to the picture of an angry-looking

colored man. “Here you have James ‘Doc’ Dearborn, a colored man in his mid-twenties, someone who calls himself The Godfather of the Black Mafia here in Kansas City, Missouri. Dearborn controls loansharking, gambling, prostitution, burglary and narcotics trafficking on the city’s east side. Between nineteen fifty-eight and nineteen sixty, he’s been arrested twenty times for violent felonies, including armed robbery, burglary and assault and battery, which includes the pistol-whipping of a seventy-seven-year-old man.”

Chief Kelley grunted discontentedly, loud enough for everyone to hear. “Dearborn has the ghetto areas of Kansas City under his complete control. This control comes through fear, intimidation, violence, and the corruption of public officials. Their entire criminal organization nets as much as a hundred thousand dollars a day. Their organization hoards cash and jewels and tucks them in safe-deposit boxes and foreign bank accounts.”

“A hundred grand a day?” Mayor Bartle repeated, incredulous. “The combined salaries of all the men in this room couldn’t light a match next to their feet. That’s some serious money.”

“I’ll say,” Captain Denison agreed, anger bubbling deep within his guts. “And these are colored men who are bringing in that type of illicit cash? They’ve must’ve had some good teachers.”

“Good teachers, indeed,” Lieutenant Hitchcock said. “With the Civella brothers and the Cammisano brothers in full operation, Dearborn’s Black Mafia syndicate has gotta be kicking back to those Mafia dogs. If not, we all know that those same Mafia dogs will come barking and then they’ll start biting, and then there will be some people who’ll end up dead, floating face down on the Missouri River somewhere.”

Agent O’Reilly took a deep breath. “Men, the Civellas and the Cammisanos’ barks and bites can prove fatal. You don’t pay them, you end up dead. I’ve deduced that this Gordon Reynolds who we

mentioned earlier has to be kicking back to one of them guys. That holds true for anyone bringing in big money from vice.”

“The question remains,” Agent Burelson said, turning to stare at every individual in the room, “how do we shut these guys down? How do we put them out of business? Where do we start?”

Each man in the conference room took a moment to process the questions directed at them. All of them knew how powerful organized crime really was. They knew the corrupting power of money. Whether in Kansas City or elsewhere, gangsters were like phoenixes that would rise from the ashes. Kill one or put one in jail and someone was always there to take their place.

Chief Kelley looked toward the windows and gazed into the sunset.

CHAPTER 14

Wrong Place for Your Race

ALLA MAE PROVED to be a natural when grooming the whores who worked exclusively for Gordon. She made the customers feel quite special. The customers felt a special kinship to her right away.

Alla Mae worked her charm and charisma on them, forever showering them with big compliments. Even Rufus had learned to trust her more since Gordon convinced him that Alla Mae never took one thin dime from off the top.

Life seemed rather strange since she left the streets and started working for Gordon almost two months ago, performing her duty as a madam with great pride. However, she still held to her belief that if a woman was going to sacrifice her body in exchange for money, then she should reap all the benefits that came with that sacrifice.

1414 East Twelfth Street became her regular residence. Presently, upstairs there were three whores occupying the rooms with their tricks. Kim, Lana and Louise were working near the downtown area, soliciting on or near the west end of Twelfth Street.

In the room at the very end of the hallway, Gordon's latest recruit, Linda Johnson, was stooped down on her knees giving a customer a platinum blowjob. This particular customer only desired oral sex and

only from a colored woman, even though legend had it that white women could suck a basketball through a straw.

Back and forth Linda's mouth went along his erect manhood. The shaft and head of his hard member were teased by the pointed tip of her tongue. She was actually the first colored woman who he'd been with.

Coming from an extremely racist background, he'd been told to stay away from the coloreds. They were nothing but trouble. They were the worst type of liars, thieves, murderers and cheats, his white supremacist father had always told him. Despite his father's warnings, this particular customer just had to sample himself a colored woman.

Linda sucked and sucked until he reached an explosive climax.

"Yaaaaaaaaaah!" the customer shouted, his voice so loud that he was heard clearly downstairs. He turned beet red in the face, his body shaking from head to toe.

A creamy white load shot all over Linda's face and some into her hair. At that moment, he felt that he'd gotten his twenty dollars' worth. He pulled up his pants and peeked out the bedroom door. The hallway was clear.

Linda went into the upstairs bathroom to wash her face, gargle her mouth, and wipe out some of the white spurts from her hair. As she'd been trained, she walked hand in hand with the satisfied customer.

"How you feel, sir?" Alla Mae asked the pleased customer, making sure that she would be standing at the bottom of the stairs to greet the pair.

"Fine, ma'am," he replied, sounding mighty satisfied. "Tonight, I know that I'm gonna sleep real good."

"Good," Alla Mae said with a smile. "Can I interest you in some whiskey or some cigarettes, or some smack or blow?"

The customer took several seconds to think. He shook his head and told Alla Mae with a smile, "Actually, you can interest me in all

three. A good buddy of mine is having a college party tonight. He's receiving his master's degree in business administration."

"Well, congratulations to him."

"Thanks. What kinda smokes and drinks and sniff do you have?"

"For starters, we've got Marlboro, Fontenoy, and Tareyton as far as smokes are concerned. As far as liquor, we've got Johnnie Walker, Jack Daniels and Jim Bean. Weed, coke, and heroin are your choices as far as sniff or blow."

"Cool. Let me get two packs of each brand of smokes. Is your liquor in pints or half pints?"

"Pints."

"I'll take two pints of each of the liquors that you have. How do you sell your sniff?"

"Grams and half-grams."

"I'll get a full gram of coke."

"Order coming right up. I'll be right back."

All the time that Alla Mae served in the capacity of saleswoman, Gordon stood in the adjoining room listening to her sales pitch. As she turned the corner to open the door to the basement, she saw Gordon with his body pressed against the wall. They winked at each other. It pleased him to no end that she knew how to make money for him. He'd tried putting other women in the same position, but they just didn't know how to relate to the customers.

Alla Mae still reasoned that white men were easier to deal with. If they said they were going to pay you, then they would pay you, and on time, too. If they requested something, then they would wait patiently to receive it. Those were qualities that she couldn't find in most colored men.

She went down to the basement to gather up the cigarettes, whiskey, and narcotics for the customer waiting upstairs. When she went back up, he looked at the goods cradled in her hands and the brightest smile came on his face.

“You’re getting these at a discount,” Alla Mae explained to him, using her skills to soften up the eager man.

“How much are we talking for everything?” the customer inquired, reaching into his pocket for a wallet that was stuffed with fives, tens, twenties, and four one-hundred-dollar bills.”

Alla Mae was no dummy. At the same time, she was no mathematician, either. But when it came to dollars and cents, her intelligence automatically kicked in.

“A hundred and fifty dollars,” Alla Mae quoted, giving him dead-serious eye contact. She played the role of a scrupulous businesswoman so well.

“Tell you what,” he said, flipping around inside his wallet. “Take these two one-hundred dollar bills. What the hell, I say. You only live once, and life is definitely for the living.”

“That’s the spirit, buddy.”

Alla Mae went into the kitchen and grabbed a black plastic bag, one that was about three sizes smaller than the average trash bag. All the contents were placed inside. Before allowing the customer to exit the home, Alla Mae peeked out the back door. She wanted to make sure that none of the snoopy patrolmen or police captains and lieutenants had their watchful eyes on the house.

As he walked down the backyard stairs, Alla Mae sent him away by saying, “Enjoy the college party tonight.”

Upon returning to the front room, Gordon jerked her close to him and gave her a light bear hug. He lifted her off the ground and shouted in her face, “Mae, you are goddamned amazing! Honey, you just got a trick to spend two hundred more dollars before leaving here. You must know how to work magic spells on people.”

“Not necessarily, Mack,” Alla Mae said, disagreeing with him. “I know how to tap into people’s souls and how to tap into their minds.”

“How do you do that?”

“Simple. I look people straight in their eyes. As you know, the eyes

are the windows to the soul. Once our spiritual vibrations connect, then I can tap into their souls. And once I tap into their souls, I can move them toward my direction.”

Gordon moved his face closer to Alla Mae’s. Their lips were only a tenth of an inch apart. “Can you tap into my soul?”

“If given the chance, you know that I can.”

“Let me give you the chance.”

“All right.”

Gordon and Alla Mae wasted no time engaging in a long, passionate kiss. Their tongues intertwined like a short rope tied into the tightest knot. Gordon moved his hands down to her voluptuous backside. She felt his erection rub against her waistline.

“Wait, Mack,” Alla Mae said. “We’re still on the clock, remember?” she said sensibly.

“You’re right, Mae. There’s still money to be made.”

“If we’re going to get all lovey-dovey, then let’s do it after we’re off the clock.”

“Business first, love later.”

“That’s what I’m talking about. Besides, I hope that you can afford me.”

“Hee hee!” Gordon belted out loudly. “So you’re going to be an expensive playmate?”

“Expensive and difficult. You might be the pimp around here, but even you have to pay if you wanna play.”

“Me, pay? That’s like asking a guy who’s a millionaire to pay to spend his own money.”

“Remember what I told you when we first met?”

“Which is?”

“Every man’s got a pussy bill. Women want security. They want to know that a man can produce—you know, provide for her and the family. A lowlife smelly bum will have to jerk off his wiener until

he cleans himself up and gets a job. A woman can't help a man do absolutely nothing."

"I couldn't agree with you more. I remember my pops used to tell me that if a man lost his job and couldn't provide anymore, then the woman would move out on him in a heartbeat."

"Your pops was never lying."

Gordon and Alla Mae heard footsteps coming down the stairs. Yet another one of Gordon's ladies and her customer had finished their sexual escapade. Before he left, Alla Mae convinced him to purchase some whiskey and two packs of Marlboro cigarettes. The money was stacking up like pancakes in a popular diner.

From seemingly out of nowhere, a thick Coca-Cola bottle came crashing through a window on the east side of the house. Gordon rushed to the back room to grab his .45 Colt revolver. While stooped down, he peeked out one of the curtains. Speeding up the west end of Twelfth Street was a green Chevy Impala. At a quick glance, it appeared that a group of middle-aged white men were inside. Gordon caught a quick second glance of them.

Alla Mae picked up the Coca-Cola bottle. She turned it sideways and flipped it upside down. Inside the bottle was a rolled-up piece of white paper. Gordon took it from her and momentarily studied the contents inside.

"Mercy me," Alla Mae fretted, she and Gordon caught way off guard. "Who'd wanna throw a Coke bottle through the window?"

"Same question I'm asking." Gordon noticed that there was some writing on the paper inside the bottle. "Looks like they've written something on the paper in there."

"Can you get the paper out?"

"I don't know."

Gordon turned the bottle upside down and shook it repeatedly. Despite his efforts to make the rolled-up paper fall out, it got stuck

at the opening. To make things simpler, Gordon went to the kitchen and found a hammer in one of the drawers.

He placed the bottle on the hard surface of the kitchen counter. After banging on it for several minutes, the thick bottle split open at the center with none of the sharp glass springing into the air. Gordon reached inside and rolled open the small piece of paper.

Written in black ink was a racially offensive cryptic note that read:

“Poor white trash, peckerwood bastard! Why can’t you find a white woman for yourself? Poor ghetto nigger bitch! Why can’t you find a colored nigger man for yourself? Race-mixing sickens us righteous, law-abiding white folks to our goddamned stomachs!”

Gordon couldn’t believe what he’d just read. He handed the note over to Alla Mae. She read it and her eyes rolled around like balls on a roulette wheel. “Sons of bitches! The nerves on those people. Mack, did you get a look at who sped off the street?”

“Saw the back of their heads,” Gordon said.

“White or colored?”

“White.”

“Punk, prejudiced pigs!” Alla Mae growled. “What are a buncha racist white men doing in this colored neighborhood?”

“Pulling pranks, I assume. Mae, we’re being watched.”

“By who?”

“Only God knows who. I never stopped believing that the cops were watching us. The car, a green Impala, I’ve never seen that car in this neighborhood before.”

“Ku Klux Klan, maybe?”

“Could be.” Gordon could only assume, but would’ve placed a big bet if it came to that. “Missouri is full of the Klan and those hick rednecks and peckerwoods.”

“Do you think the note in the bottle was just a warning to us?”

Gordon’s explosive, violent temper began to bubble deep inside of him. He turned redder than ever in the face. The anger in his eyes, it expressed a level of hatred that could prove fatal to whomever it was directed toward.

He slammed his fist down on the counter and shouted, “Goddammit! Klan or no Klan, if I ever catch them cruising this neighborhood again, I’ll load and empty and reload this revolver as much as possible, and shoot every last one of them a buncha times in the back of their heads.”

Gordon had killed once before, maybe twice. He wouldn’t hesitate to kill again. With his temper of titanic proportions, he’d get his point across one way or another.

“Hear me good, Mae,” Gordon said, letting out as much steam as possible. “Nobody, I mean nobody, disrespects me or my girls. You put your hands on them, I’m going to put my hands back on you. But my hands will wrap so tight around your neck, they’ll suck the life right out. Anyone hurt any of my girls, I’ll impose a death sentence on them with the quickness. I have a mother and seven sisters I love dearly. I’d kill anybody who’d hurt my women.”

Knowing how Gordon really felt about women made Alla Mae feel secure in every sense. His volatile temper was what she feared the most, not that he’d ever assault her but there was a possibility he’d go off on a killing spree if he ever got pushed to that point.

“We see that people haven’t changed,” Alla Mae said, having seen the true consequences of colored women becoming involved with white men, either on a criminal or sexual level. It was the summer of 1962, and race relations between whites and coloreds hadn’t shown much improvement.

Gordon and Alla Mae knew that in racist America, interracial relationships and marriages were still taboo. “Stick with your own kind” was the mantra of most of America. But it was usually whites

who stressed the fact that it was both unlawful and sinful to become involved with someone outside of your race.

“The bottle flying through the window is proof of that.”

“Us coming together might’ve started up problems that none of us need.”

Gordon took Alla Mae by the hand and drew her closer. “Mae, I never would’ve thought in my worst nightmares that I’d start liking colored women. Before I started being around colored women, I always believed that white women were the nicest, prettiest, smartest, and best-shaped women in the whole wide world. After the first time I kissed and had sex with a colored woman, my thoughts about colored women changed right away. Yeah, I know that prejudiced white America believes that whites and coloreds shouldn’t go together, be married or have children. Here’s what I say, Mae. If two people love one another, then their race shouldn’t matter. Love has no color. When that man and that woman lie down next to each other in bed, and when the lights go out, neither one of them can see each other’s race.”

“You’re right, Mack,” Alla Mae agreed wholeheartedly. “The person’s color shouldn’t matter. It seems like white people are more against mixed couples than the colored people are. You know, I made it to the tenth grade in school, and I did learn something while there. If the white man is so against different nationalities coming together, especially whites and coloreds, then why was he raping all those colored girls during slavery? And with all that raping going on, he produced lots of mulatto children. The white man will say one thing, and then turn around and do another.”

“His own double standards,” Gordon concurred as someone who saw the world from a different set of eyes. His criminal dealings with other ethnic groups had opened his mind to many things. “Mae, I’ll be straight with you. I’m the first person in my family to get involved with someone of the colored race. There’s eleven of us, and none of

my brothers and sisters would dare to bring someone colored around the Reynolds family.”

“My two children are mixed,” Alla Mae explained to Gordon. “Their father, William Alexander Beverly Sr., he was a Scottish-Canadian man.”

“Where’s he now?”

“I don’t know.”

“Have you tried to get into contact with him?”

“Several times. There’s no address or phone number for him. I will tell you this much, Mack. I believe that he left because his family warned him about being involved with a colored woman like myself. Personally, I believe that he’s living somewhere up in Canada.”

“Speaking of children, I need to check up on my son and daughter.”

Alla Mae looked at Gordon with an enigmatic smile. “Mack, you and I knew what we were getting ourselves into when we first came together. In fact, you knew what you were getting yourself into when you first had colored girls working the streets for you. I’ll bet the KC cops really started bothering you once they found out that a white man was pimping colored women.”

“They bother more the colored guys who’ve got women out there working for them.”

“Anyway, we’d better start watching our backs closer.”

“Yes, I think we better.”

CHAPTER 15

Rock Solid Doc

FRIDAY NIGHTS ALONG the Twelfth Street red light district were very profitable for the hookers and dope peddlers. The strip clubs, massage parlors, bars, and restaurants were in full swing. The tricks were in for a sweet treat since all the hookers had fixed themselves up to look like the glamour girls of the streets. Their bodies were toned to perfection. Their faces were made up to bring out their hidden beauty.

Kim and Lana were working the Twelfth Street end that was between Central and Wyandotte Streets. A big convention had come to Kansas City, and the duo was ready to cash in. The big spenders went looking for some action while in town. To remain respectable, their approach towards the ladies of night had to be executed right.

Driving around the corner from Wyandotte Street were two colored men. They were inside a dark-red 1958 Ford Galaxy 500. The vehicle had the most beautiful paint job on it.

Kim and Lana saw them turn the corner, noticing how well dressed they were. The women were not used to seeing such professional-looking colored men in that part of town.

Coming to an abrupt stop, the man on the passenger's side said to Kim and Lana, "Hey there, ladies. How's the coffee and cream of the evening doing?"

“Doing just fine,” Lana was the first to reply.

“Great,” Kim answered, thinking they might’ve finally landed an evening with two big-spending colored men.

“How would you ladies like to make a lot of money tonight?”

“Depends,” Lana was quick to answer, having been schooled to closely watch the cunning colored men.

“On what, sugah?”

“What we’ll have to do.”

“Me and my friend here, we’re just looking for a good time.”

“Whaddaya looking for? You want a blowjob, a good fuck, a long butt screw or all of them?”

“Maybe a blowjob and a good fuck.”

Lana placed her hand on her hip, as only the colored women were known for, and told the men in the simplest way, “Look’a here, honey. Don’t be wasting our time. To do what you wanna do, that’ll be fifty dollars apiece.”

The man on the passenger’s side pulled a thick stack of ten and twenty-dollar bills out of his pocket. Kim and Lana began to loosen up. Those dollars brought a sparkle to their eyes.

“Money’s no problem, baby.”

“All right, where are we going?” Lana inquired.

“I don’t know. We’re not from around here.”

“Where are you from?”

“We’re from Saint Louis, babygirl.”

“Maybe the Capri Motel over there by Independence Avenue sounds like a good spot.”

“Then let’s go.”

Kim and Lana climbed into the back seat. They let their guards down for the time being.

The driver cruised eastbound on Twelfth Street. Strangely, he kept looking into the rearview mirror. Lana picked up on his sudden strange behavior. He pressed hard on the accelerator, speeding three blocks north

toward a huge parking lot surrounded by multiple high-rise housing projects. The neighborhood was one of the biggest slums in the city.

The front-seat passenger pulled out a black Smith and Wesson .38-caliber pistol. Kim and Lana's mouths dropped wide open from shock. Both were scared beyond their senses.

Lana acted on impulse. She reached for the door handle, and he moved the pistol closer to her chest.

"Listen up, goddammit!" yelled the criminal, who was posing as a respectable gentleman. He told Kim and Lana, "Do what we tell you, and neither one of y'all will get blasted on."

"Why're you bringing us to Wayne Miner?" Lana questioned one of her abductors.

"Cause there's somebody up in one of the towers who wants to see you and the white girl."

"Me and Kim? For what?"

"You'll find out when you get up there."

"What's this all about?" Lana asked, tears starting to roll down her cheeks.

"Stop asking questions. We're the ones who'll ask all the questions."

Anyone who'd lived in Kansas City, Missouri for some time knew about the notoriously brutal reputation of Wayne Miner Housing Projects.

Ninety-eight percent of the residents were colored with ninety percent of the households headed by single colored women—just the way the United States government wanted it. The conspiracy marched on. The evil would spread like wildfire. Separation of the black family.

A home headed by a single colored woman was a surefire recipe for teenage females to become unfit unwed mothers while the males were destined for the penitentiary or the cemetery. Not having a disciplined, gainfully employed father in the house only led to their guaranteed failure.

Most of the units in all five buildings were infested with roaches and rats. We're talking some of the biggest rats in all of creation. Roach-extermination sprays flew off grocery and hardware store shelves because of it. The rodent-control division of the city made regular trips to Wayne Miner.

The assaults, shootings, murders, rapes, burglaries, robberies, tenant unrest, plumbing and electrical problems, vandalism and more, spawned ongoing headlines on the front page of the *Kansas City Times*. The high-rises also had the reputation of being tough and having the lowest incomes in all the city.

Where did the housing project get its name from? A colored hero who served in World War 1, who'd been killed in France three hours before the end of the war, received the honor of having a series of buildings named after him.

The man dressed in the double-breasted dark-blue suit first escorted Lana out of the back seat. The driver, who was dressed in a dark, charcoal-gray suit, removed Kim from the back seat. To make sure that neither one of them would make a run for it, they had a gun and a knife to their backs. At ten o'clock at night, a group of children were jumping up and down on several burned mattresses. The parking lot had limited lighting.

The men in suits posed as nice gentlemen who were escorting a pair of women to their apartments safely. Tenants were coming and going from the high-rise building at 912 Euclid, just three blocks off the Twelfth Street strip. None of them had a clue that Kim and Lana were being held at knifepoint and gunpoint.

Once inside the lobby of the 912 Euclid building, the foursome moved rather slowly toward the elevator. The urine and feces of both humans and animals sent a godawful odor into the air.

One of the elevators opened and a crowd of people poured out. The fever to go out and party on a Friday night gave them the biggest

adrenaline rush. Kim and Lana were pushed into the elevator. The man in the blue suit pushed the button for the ninth floor.

On the ride up, both women were scared beyond their craziest nightmares. Each moment afforded them the opportunity to think the worst. Lana regretted having let her guard down. Her mother had always told her to follow her gut instincts. They steered you in the right direction.

The elevator reached the ninth floor. Complete darkness filled one end of the hallway. Kim and Lana were escorted to the pitch-black end of the floor. The man in the gray suit knocked three times on a door and stopped.

He knocked three more times and stopped again. The three and three knock code indicated that no undesirables were at the door. Eventually, the door opened until the chain stretched to its full length. The man standing there slid the latch across until the chain was removed.

Dominating most of the doorway was a colored man who stood at a commanding six foot two. An afro that was shaped and lined to precision covered the top and sides of his head. This man had a smooth, clear complexion and a bushy mustache that hid most of his upper lip. The meanest expression most people had ever seen was on his face. His eyes promised death. Even when he supposedly smiled, it appeared as though he was still very angry about something.

Who was this character? He was The Godfather of the Black Mafia in all of Kansas City, Missouri. His mother had named him James Phillip Dearborn at birth.

As a feared enforcer and executioner, Dearborn earned the nickname Doc because he claimed to have worked on an opponent like a doctor who worked on their patients, but in the most brutal sense. Enemies from his past had learned that if they crossed him, they'd get beaten, stabbed, burned, shot or any other form of human torture.

As a youngster, he'd been in and out of juvenile detention centers. During all his adult life, he stole, robbed, beat, and even killed those who detested him. And like many other coloreds who migrated from the Deep South, Doc Dearborn's parents had moved to Kansas City to escape the abject poverty and even stronger racism.

Doc Dearborn was a madman. A psychotic animal to say the least. But who was he afraid of? Quite naturally, it'd be the Italians and Sicilians. Doc Dearborn knew about the legendary brutality of the Italians and Sicilians.

He'd learned firsthand about how the local gangsters had their enemies castrated, their faces burned off with torches, their bodies badly beaten and then dismembered, and their throats cut until their heads were almost completely decapitated.

Kim and Lana were shoved through the door. Inside the three-bedroom apartment were four other men and two women. They were members of Doc Dearborn's drug, prostitution, robbery, and murder ring. Like him, their faces were hard. Their interiors were even harder. All of them had hearts of pure stone.

The six individuals held either guns or knives or clubs in their hands. The sound of vicious dogs barking came from one of the bedrooms.

The two men who had abducted Gordon's girls pulled chairs away from the kitchen table and brought them into the front room. Two men and two women from Doc's Black Mafia organization tied Kim and Lana tightly to the chairs. Their hands and feet were tied together rather tightly. The thick rope almost cut off their circulation.

"All right, bitches!" Doc Dearborn insulted them through tight, clenched teeth. "Tell me what I want to hear; you might leave here alive. You don't tell me what I want to hear, I've got just the thing to make you wish you were dead. Who's got you all working the streets for them?"

Neither Kim nor Lana would utter a word. Fear had crept upon their faces the second Doc Dearborn began to speak. Was it loyalty

to Gordon that kept their mouths shut? Was it sheer fright that kept them silent?

“Speak, goddammit!” Doc Dearborn yelled, moving closer to be face to face with them. Still, they remained silent. Their lips trembled as their legs shook. No way did they want to give Gordon up. Gordon had both of his hookers trained well. Did they not know that they were in a life-or-death situation here, however?

“The silent treatment, huh?” Doc Dearborn said, gesturing to his hardcore women soldiers.

Both women, who were rather attractive for two people who’d lived a hard life, walked up and placed .22-caliber pistols to the temples of Kim and Lana. They pressed hard with the cold metal barrels. To frighten them even further, they cocked the pistols and rested their fingers on the triggers.

Kim and Lana saw their lives playing out before them in their minds. Was it the end for them?

“Speak,” Doc Dearborn threatened the pair, placing his foot on the edge of the chair where Kim was seated. “Or I’m gonna have my girls blow your mummified brains all over this floor? Are you gonna let that Irish honky motherfucker send you all to the cemetery? I already know who you work for, but I wanna hear it come from you all.”

Kim and Lana were becoming more frightened by the minute. Water filled their eyes, a stream of tears constantly rolling down their faces. Their hands and feet shook until they made noticeable rattling sounds.

“Still don’t wanna talk?” asked Doc Dearborn. He nodded at two of his male soldiers.

The soldiers whipped out two hunting knives. They stepped up to Kim and Lana and placed the points of the shiny, silver-colored blades up to the center of their throats. The two women pressed the barrels of the .22 pistols harder into their temples, their index fingers steadily curling as though they were ready to pull the triggers at any

second. The male soldiers poked harder at the prostitutes' throats with the razor-sharp blades.

Big beads of sweat appeared on Kim and Lana's faces. Kim's face got redder by the minute. She'd never been so scared in all her life.

"So, you're gonna die for somebody else?" Doc Dearborn laughed, switching his foot to Lana's. "Men, women, go ahead and do it."

Just as the two men and two women were about to shoot and stab them, both Kim and Lana shouted in perfect synchronization, "We work for Gordon Reynolds!"

"Mack, huh?" Doc Dearborn snickered, making annoying sucking noises with his mouth as he stroked his teeth with his tongue. "The white Irish dude who looks just like one of them goddamned dagos. Guinea wop son of a bitches! Well, check this out. I done warned that white-honky-peckerwood to keep his girls out of my girls' territory. Somehow, I'm just not getting through to this honky. I'd hate for the dagos to straighten his ass out. Once they get through with him, his balls will be on one part of town while his ass is on another part of town. So, your pimp's street name is Mack. Isn't that right?"

"Yes," Lana was quick to answer.

"I'm losing lots of money because of Mack. He wants to claim territory that doesn't even belong to him. He thinks I'm stupid, but I know that he's running that goodtime house on Twelfth Street, somewhere over there by Garfield or Brooklyn. My ears and eyes out on the streets tell me that he's running hookers out of that house, and dope and whiskey and cigarettes, too. I'm told that some skanky colored whore named Mae is helping him run that house. Tell you what. I want you two girls to come and work for me."

Kim and Lana wouldn't give Doc Dearborn a direct answer. Both remained loyal to Gordon. Their lack of a reply conveyed their refusal.

"What's wrong?" Doc Dearborn wondered as he stared at them with intimidation. "You bitches scared of your pimp? You scared of that Mick pimp, that Irish white man with a pair of cotton-soft balls?"

“We can’t work for you, Doc,” Lana admitted to Doc Dearborn, displaying bravery.

“Did I hear you right? You won’t leave that white man and come work for me? Are you crazy in the mind or what?”

“Mack is our pimp, and that’s all it is to it.”

Doc Dearborn smiled and turned his full attention to Kim. “Look at you, missy pooh. I had one of my men force you to take him to Mack’s pad over there on Twelfth Street.”

“The one who put a knife to my back?” Kim inquired, the tight rope causing the circulation to cut off from around her hands.

The thug who had held Kim at knifepoint stepped farther into the light.

“This man here?”

“Yes, that’s him.”

“He did what I told him to do. You see, white girl, I know all about you. You was raped or molested by your father and uncles, quit school early, got hooked on dope, and started hooking for this pale-faced motherfucker they call Mack. You white girls wanna get away from that evil white man as fast as possible. You know it’s the truth.”

Well, look who’s talking. Doc Dearborn quit school in the eighth grade, opted to take to the streets, became a hardened criminal, got hooked on dope and alcohol himself and quickly filled up rap sheets, serving time in several different penitentiaries.

“Will you please let us go?” Kim pleaded, her eyes almost all cried out.

“Only if you’ll come and work for me.”

“Doc, we can’t do that.”

“Before you leave here, you’ll wish that you did,” Doc Dearborn threatened, a look of rage appearing on his hardened face.

“We’ve been with Mack for quite some time.”

“So fucking what!” he shouted in a thunderous voice. “I want you two in my stable. Mack’s lucky that I haven’t had my boys pump a

buncha holes in him. I want you and this colored woman here to turn tricks for me. You should be out there making my money, not Mack's."

Lana looked up at Doc Dearborn and said, "We can't win for losing. Mack's our pimp and can't nothing change that."

"Oh, shit can change quickly. If you keep turning me down, then you're going to piss me off. Whenever I get pissed off, I get these migraines. And when I get those migraines, people end up dead. They end up all cut up and burned up and chopped up and shot up. Catch my drift?"

"Sorry, Doc, but we're with Mack," Lana said firmly, demonstrating her loyalty.

Doc Dearborn jerked his head to the side. The two men and two women withdrew their knives and pistols from Kim and Lana. He signaled for the other men to untie them from the chairs. The rope was pulled off their feet, but their hands remained tightly bound.

One of the thugs opened the door of the room where the two mean dogs were barking. Chained to steel rings that were hammered into the wall were two large Doberman pinschers. Both canines displayed rows of razor-sharp teeth.

Their bodies were covered with well-defined muscle tones. They eagerly wanted to sink their teeth into some flesh. The taste of blood would satisfy their savagery. Doc Dearborn moved in between the dogs and patted them on the top of their head.

"Bitches," Doc Dearborn said disrespectfully. "If I unchain my two dobies and lock you two in here with them, all it's gonna take is an hour for them to chop you into a million itty bitty pieces of raw, bloody flesh. I've done it before, and won't hesitate to do it again."

"Please let us go!" Kim begged for leniency, trembling with fear.

Doc Dearborn swung his head upward. His soldiers knew what it meant. They pushed Kim and Lana closer to the vicious Dobermans.

"Listen up, and listen good. My Dobermans are named Felony and Convict. Wanna know why I call them that?"

“Why?” asked Lana, playing along.

“I’ve been a convicted felon several times. It never fazed me to go to the penitentiary. The penitentiary is where I got my book education and my street education. In the penitentiary, there are wild, vicious dogs, just like Felony and Convict, the kinda dogs that attack and won’t stop until they kill you. Tell me again, are you willing to lay your life down for Mack? If so, I can let my Dobermans rip into your flesh.”

Kim stuttered, “A-Again, Mack is w-who we w-work for.”

“You bitches are a lot dumber than I could’ve ever imagined.”

“Will you please let us go from Wayne Miner?” Lana begged again, wanting to end this living nightmare as soon as possible.

Doc Dearborn signaled for his men to push the women closer to the bloodthirsty Dobermans. Kim and Lana were only several inches away, almost close enough for the dogs to bite a big chunk out of them. Both women shook like two people caught naked in frigid Artic temperatures.

“Guess what?” Doc Dearborn said, taking both of the dogs into a light chokehold. “Felony and Convict haven’t eaten today. Look at the slobber dripping from their mouths. They want something to eat and don’t care if it’s human flesh. Now, what’s it gonna be?”

His men pushed Kim and Lana forward and pulled them back every time the Dobermans snapped at them. This was one of those games that they loved playing.

Kim had lost control of her bladder. A large wet ring soaked the front of Kim’s pastel-blue dress. Lana suffered a more embarrassing fate—she’d defecated on herself. The odor of human waste filled up the room.

With both the women having soiled themselves, Doc Dearborn thought he had finally gotten his point across. Or had he?

“Who shit?” asked Doc Dearborn, covering his nose with the palm of his right hand. “Smells like somebody done pissed on theyself, too.”

He observed the dresses worn by Kim and Lana. The wet ring at the front of Kim's dress indicated that she was the one who urinated. A dark-brown ring at the back of Lana's dress indicated that she'd made an even bigger mess in her undergarment.

"We're hardly done with you two," Doc Dearborn told Kim and Lana, his mean, nasty expression becoming more pronounced.

With a snap of his finger, he ordered his four soldiers to push Kim and Lana over to a set of windows. The middle two windows were opened. Both women were swept off their feet, turned upside down, and shoved out the window, their ankles held in a tight grip by the men.

Kim and Lana screamed at the top of their lungs. Blood rushed from their lower extremities to their upper extremities.

"You're nine stories up," Doc Dearborn threatened, looking down on the vandalized courtyard full of litter. "I'd hate for you two bitches to land on the top of your heads. It'd be like two eggs crashing straight onto the concrete, your brains like yolk splashing all over the place. Now, are you going to come and work for me? If not, I'll just let my boys drop you nine stories."

Kim and Lana were frightened past the point of sanity. As a scare tactic, the four men began to loosen their grip from around their ankles. Doc Dearborn stood there with a heartless grin on his face.

Both women had to make a decision right away. No one could ever underestimate a psychopath like Doc Dearborn. He posed as the nicest man in the world, then transformed into the vilest man in world.

The soldiers loosened their grip even more. Kim and Lana were possibly seconds away from meeting a tragic end. Their hearts pumped with fear.

"All right, all right!" Lana yelled, her underwear and stockings visible to the Wayne Miner residents looking out their windows. "Me and Kim will come and work for you."

Doc Dearborn signaled for his men to pull them back inside the apartment. The pair of terrified women huffed and puffed as though they were dying from an overdose of cyanide poisoning. They coughed up thick yellow mucus. Tears stained their flushed cheeks.

“That’s what I’m talking about,” Doc Dearborn said. “Here’s the message that I want you all to deliver to your former pimp. You tell that white-honky-peckerwood, that so-called Mick pimp of a motherfucker, that Doc Dearborn said to stay the fuck out of his territory. Tell him that I said that if his girls keep working the streets that my girls work, that I’m gonna have him floating to the bottom of the Missouri River. Better yet, I’ll do him the same way that one of my associates does to people who piss him off: I’ll have him beat up real bad and then thrown into the sewers so the rats can eat him alive.”

Doc Dearborn snapped his finger and pointed to the other women. The females charged at Kim and Lana with their fists drawn back.

Like champion boxers, the women punched them in both eyes, their mouths, and across their jaws. Kim and Lana got a good working over.

By now, Doc Dearborn felt that he’d gotten his point across.

CHAPTER 16

Affording to See Gordon

GORDON DECIDED TO take a break from his vice activities. The police weren't so hot on his trail since he'd disappeared from the city limits for a few days. Cruising at a speed of about fifty miles per hour, Gordon sat comfortably behind the wheel of his Bel Air. Not many cars were on Route 66 as he drove this particular highway on his way to Joplin, Missouri.

He enjoyed the view of the small Missouri towns. There were plenty of farm towns with cows and horses grazing on hay. Gordon drove ten more miles up Route 66 and took the first exit into downtown Joplin. What a far cry from the mean ghetto streets of Kansas City.

Late 1962 had brought about changes to this city. There were several attempts at urban renewal. Most of the population and businesses had moved to a suburban fringe along newly constructed highways. Gordon knew to be careful in Joplin.

He'd heard about cops there being gunslingers. If someone got out of line in that small redneck town, they'd get one right in the forehead. Gordon had also been schooled about the notorious criminals Bonnie and Clyde.

He'd learned how they'd spent some weeks in Joplin during the Great Depression, where they robbed several businesses in the area.

Gordon didn't come to Joplin to rob nobody; he'd come to pay a visit to some people he left behind for several years.

The local residents gave him some unwelcoming stares since they'd never seen him in their city.

The streets provided easy access to the residential areas. Gordon turned several corners and drove slowly down a street where the neighborhood featured newer housing.

Impressive retail centers were about two blocks over. The streets were lined with tall trees. Well-manicured lawns made it appear as though the residents had their own personal golf courses in front of their homes. Not a single piece of trash was on the street or in anyone's yard.

This was a far cry from what Gordon had been accustomed to for the past few years. The silence in the glamorous environment could've driven him out of his mind. He couldn't remember the last time that he'd experienced a complete peace of mind.

Gordon cruised down the clean street looking for a certain address. Most of the houses were two stories with two-car garages. After looking on the right side for about a minute and a half, he spotted the very house that he'd come to visit.

Nervous, he parked on the curve in front of the house. Neighbors up and down the block peeked out their windows and doors. Who was this stranger parking his Bel Air on their street? He was definitely an unfamiliar face.

Joplin, Missouri was one of those smaller Missouri towns where everyone practically knew one another. Some of the locals were friendly while others stayed to themselves.

Gordon got out of his car and walked up to the door of the house that he'd been searching for. He knocked twice and waited patiently for an answer. A woman with a slender build and feathery light-brown hair approached the door hesitatingly.

Her eyes met with Gordon's cryptic eyes. She stared at him without blinking for over a minute. Who was this anonymous woman? She was Gordon's ex-wife, the mother of his two children, Monica and Butch.

Thelma Reynolds couldn't believe that Gordon had shown up at her door after so many years. She was left speechless. The attractive woman in her early forties continued to stare at him with an expression of disappointment. "Mack?" Thelma called out, her mouth wide open from sheer astonishment. "Where've you been all these years?"

"In Kansas City," Gordon answered.

"How'd you find us?"

"Wasn't hard. One of my family members told me that you were living here in Joplin with Butch and Monica."

"Which family member?"

"My sister Doris."

"Yes, the kids had asked about their aunt Doris. And you got the address from her?"

"I did. How're the kids doing?"

"Doing just fine. Butch and Monica should be coming home from school pretty soon."

"Can I come in?"

Thelma cleared her throat and looked back over her shoulder. "Well... uh, I..." Before she said another word, a tall man about six-foot-three with dark brown hair appeared at the door.

"What is it, honey?" he asked.

"Honey, this is Gordon Reynolds." Thelma introduced the man to her one-time husband. "He's Butch and Monica's father."

The tall man with a clean-shaven face and droopy eyes sort of sized Gordon up. He wanted to study him for a moment. "You're Gordon Reynolds, huh?"

"Yes I am," Gordon replied, his demeanor that of a tough guy.

"Gordon, I'm Roy Perkins. I'm Thelma's new husband."

“Congratulations, Roy,” Gordon congratulated the couple. “Didn’t know that Thelma had remarried.”

“Yes, she did. Would you like to come inside?”

“Why, thank you, Roy.”

Roy opened the door rather wide and allowed Gordon entry. Their home was decorated quite fancily. The furniture and wall decorations looked brand new. The television set against the wall seemed like the latest model.

“Can I offer you something to drink? A soda, beer, coffee, tea, water?”

“A beer would be fine.”

“A cold one coming right up.”

After Roy went to the kitchen, Gordon stared at Thelma with the eyes of someone who was heartbroken. He never believed that she would ever get married again. She was the mother of his two beautiful children and the one-time love of his life.

Roy returned with a frosty bottle of beer. Gordon wasted no time in taking a long gulp.

Roy watched Gordon while Gordon watched Thelma. She watched both men. Eyes were going in every direction. None of them were mind readers. The room had gotten quiet all of a sudden. Someone had to say something to break the awkward silence.

“Gordon, whaddaya do for yourself?” asked Roy, having the right to grill Gordon since Thelma was his new wife and he was a visitor in their home.

“I help manage a Goodwill store,” Gordon lied, but still able to keep his composure in the midst of a fabricated tale.

“Sounds somewhat promising. Where’s this Goodwill store?”

“In Kansas City.”

“I’ve got a few kinfolks in Kansas City. Haven’t been there in quite some time. You know, the kids ask about you all the time.”

“Yeah, I think about them all the time.”

Both Thelma and Roy knew that Gordon had practically abandoned his two children. He'd escaped several years of not providing any support to them.

Roy turned to Thelma and asked, "Honey, what time do the kids get out of school?"

"They should be here any minute."

"Look, I'm gonna take off and grab a few things from the grocery store. Do you need for me to pick up anything in particular?"

"No, honey, I'm fine."

Roy walked over to Gordon and stretched forth his hand. "Gordon, it was a pleasure meeting you. I'm going to let you two talk in private." Roy walked out the door, got into his car, and drove off down the street.

Seconds were all it took for Thelma to unload on Gordon. His absence from his children's lives had infuriated her over the years. "Mack, why have you come here to Joplin?"

"To check on my kids," Gordon explained, tilting the bottle to finish off the beer.

"Why show up now? We haven't heard from you since God knows when."

"Thelma, I've been trying to get my life in order."

"Doesn't seem like you've been trying too hard," Thelma berated Gordon, her anger starting to get the best of her.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You think I'm a stupid woman, don't you? You told Roy that you help manage Goodwill stores there in Kansas City, but I've come to know different."

"Different, how?"

"Go ahead and play with my emotions. That's right, just go ahead and insult my intelligence, Mack. You're down there in Kansas City living the gangster lifestyle."

"Gangster lifestyle? Who told you that?"

“Never mind who. Makes you feel good, doesn’t it? Recruiting women to be in your stable of whores. What happened to the Mack that I once knew?”

“Thelma, I’m sorry for running out on you and the kids. I couldn’t look myself in the mirror after I abandoned you all. I felt like less of a man for doing that.”

“And you should. A man’s not a man if he doesn’t live up to his responsibilities. Many days and nights I wondered if you even cared whether we had food to put in our mouths, clothes on our backs or a place to lay our heads. The man who I loved so very dearly let me down. The man who I’d given myself to wholeheartedly, he just up and disappeared on me.”

Gordon could barely look Thelma in the eyes. He felt ashamed, guilty, and outright foolish. “Thelma, I didn’t want to pull you and the kids in the middle of my crazy lifestyle. It wouldn’t have been fair to the three of you.”

“Guess what else I was told?” Thelma told Gordon.

“What?”

“You’ve got yourself a colored woman.”

Gordon felt as though a bolt of lightning struck him in the heart. “Who told you that?”

“People talk, Mack. Instead of you going higher, you went a lot lower.”

“Is that your prejudice talking?”

“It’s my senses telling me to tell you to come to your senses. Whites and coloreds don’t belong together. I really, really feel sorry for those mixed-race couples.”

“Why?” Gordon wondered, wanting to understand his ex-wife.

“People see them as different. They can’t even live normal lives. So, Mack, what’s her name?”

“Who?”

“The colored woman who you’re involved with.”

“Alla Mae, but everybody calls her Mae.”

“Do you even know the danger that you’re in?”

“I’m in no danger.”

“You know for yourself that they lynch those colored boys down south for looking at white women. Those Ku Klux Klan men won’t hesitate to lynch a white man and a colored woman for being together. Look at what they did to that colored boy down in Mississippi for whistling at that white woman. You better listen to me before it’s too late.”

“Thelma, I can take care of myself.”

Thelma gave Gordon a look of great sympathy. She still loved him dearly despite her marriage to Roy. Tears began to fill her eyes.

“Something wrong?” Gordon asked, noticing the sadness upon her face.

Thelma turned sideways, covering part of her face. “Mack, we were so happy together at one time.”

“We definitely were.”

Thelma sprung up from the sofa and went into one of the bedrooms. She returned to the front room holding a 1950 photo of herself and Gordon and many family members.

“Remember this picture?” she asked, wanting to see if Gordon could recall.

Gordon glanced closely at the black-and-white photo. It stirred up memories, both painful and happy. The faces were very familiar. The photos showed Gordon’s mother and father, his brothers and sisters, his nieces and nephews, his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-laws, and, of course, Gordon and Thelma with their two children.

“There’s you and me,” Gordon pointed out, his eyes focused heavily on Thelma and Butch and Monica in the photo. “This picture here was of my dad’s seventieth-birthday celebration. There’s my mom and

dad right there in the center. My sisters and brothers were there, too, along with all their husbands and wives and children. I see that you kept a copy of this photo.”

“I sure did. I wanted to pass it on to Butch and Monica.”

“And they can pass it on to their children.”

“Want another beer?”

“Sure, I could use another cold one.”

As Thelma entered the kitchen, Gordon picked the 1950 photo up.

Over time, Gordon and his siblings had grown apart. His older sister, Anna Doris Ellis, who most youngsters knew as Aunt Doris, was the only sister he had remain close with. Anna told Gordon every chance she got that she loved him .

What he wouldn't give to bring all his family members together again. He would happily pay to see how every last one of them was coming along. Some of them might've passed on, and he had no clue. After twelve years and some months, a lot had probably transpired in the lives of his relatives.

Thelma returned to the front room and handed Gordon the beer. She picked the eight-by-ten-inch photo off the table and placed it inside a photo album.

Much to Gordon's surprise, Monica and Butch walked through the front door just then carrying their schoolbooks and notebooks. When they looked over by the sofa closest to the front door, they immediately stopped in their tracks.

Their father was easily recognizable even though it had been quite a few years since they laid eyes on him.

“Monica?” Gordon spoke his daughter's name, lifting himself off the sofa. “Sweetheart, is that you?”

“Dad?” Monica responded, her mouth gaping wide open. “Yes, Dad, it's me.”

“Butch?” Gordon said, extending both arms to cradle his son and daughter. “Son, is that you?”

“Yes, Dad, it’s me,” Butch answered nervously.

“How’s my son and daughter doing?”

“We’re doing fine,” Monica said, placing her books and notebook down on the sofa.

“Fine, Dad.” Butch nodded, laying his books and notebook next to Monica’s.

Butch’s real name was Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, Jr. He’d been given the nickname Butch because, as a little boy, he favored the character Butch on *The Little Rascals*. The nickname stuck and that was what everybody called him ever since.

Monica and Butch sat next to their father on the sofa. Gordon was all smiles. How happy he was to finally see his son and daughter after several years. Thelma, on the other hand, didn’t have much to smile about. She’d become disgusted with her ex-husband.

To think Monica had grown up to be a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl. As a budding teenager, her face was free from pimples or blemishes. She’d started to develop womanly curves. Her shiny, dark-brown hair flowed down her back.

As for Butch, he’d grown into a handsome thirteen-year-old. His physique promised he would become a handsome man. A broad chest and well-defined biceps pressed against the tight shirts that he wore. He had a glowing, handsome face. Large, brown, curly locks spread all over his head.

Gordon had literally abandoned his son and daughter. Why did he abandon them? Simple. For a so-called profitable life in crime. He had not wanted to assume the responsibility of being a parent. He shamefully left his wife and two kids behind since he felt that he didn’t have what it took to be a real father.

Real men supported their families. That was what Gordon’s father instilled in him when he was growing up.

“How’re you two doing in school?” Gordon asked, jubilantly staring into the faces of his prized children.

“Great,” Monica was quick to answer. “I made five A’s and one B on my last report card.”

Gordon threw both arms around Monica and said cheerfully, “That’s my girl! Dad’s so proud of you.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

“On my last report card,” Butch said, grinning right at his sister, “I got three A’s, two B’s, and one C.”

“Well, we’re gonna have to do something about that C.”

“The C was in math.”

“Maybe you can get someone to tutor you in math.”

“My friend Tim said that he’d help me.”

“Very good, Son.” Gordon expressed praise for the grades. He reached into his pocket and slid out a thick stack of twenty-dollar bills. Five twenty-dollar bills were peeled off and handed to Monica. Another five twenty-dollar bills were counted and handed to Butch.

Their eyes lit up like Christmas trees. No one had ever placed that much money in their hands. Gordon assured them that there’d be lots more where that came from.

“Thanks, Dad,” Monica said, her eyes fixed on all five twenty-dollar bills.

“Yeah, thanks a lot, Dad,” Butch echoed, rubbing the bills together to hear the crispy sound of the paper.

“Promise me one thing. Promise me that you’ll continue to do good in school. Finish school and make something good of yourselves.”

Monica and Butch nodded their heads. They weren’t bitter, but their mother sure was. Thelma continued to give Gordon a stare of utter disapproval.

“Butch and Monica,” Thelma called out her children’s names. “Will you two run to the store and get a gallon of milk so I can finish dinner?”

“Sure, Mom,” Monica volunteered, stepping over to hand her

mother the hundred dollars given to her by her father. Butch also handed his hundred dollars over to Thelma.

Gordon reached into his pocket and handed Monica another twenty. "Here, Monica, this should be enough to buy the gallon of milk and something extra. I'll be here when you and your brother get back."

"All right, Dad."

Thelma waited until Monica and Butch were well up the street. This gave her the opportune moment to unload on Gordon. "Mack, you've come here today to make a mockery of us. You showing up today is an insult."

"Thelma, what the hell are you talking about?" Gordon growled, his violent temper ready to show its ugly face at any moment.

"It's been many years now, Mack," Thelma confronted her ex-husband. "Long, frustrating years. I told you earlier, your kids have to eat every day. They have to have a place to lay their heads every day. They have to bathe and have clean clothes to wear every day. When they're sick, they have to see a doctor. You showing up today and flashing money at them is like spitting right in their faces."

"Thelma, I love my children. They're the apples of my eye. Sure, you and I didn't make it. But I never wanted to see my children suffer because of it."

"Let me tell you this much, Mack. If you only decide to show up every ten years or so, then you'd be better off not showing up at all. Do you know how many days and nights Monica and Butch asked about you? Do you realize how many times they've cried, wondering where their father was? That boy and girl don't need an absentee father in their lives."

"Thanks for indicting and convicting me."

"Don't play games with me. You're guilty as charged. I know what you're doing down there in Kansas City. Maybe you need to stay away

from me and the kids since we don't need to be around that filthy, evil lifestyle of yours."

Gordon lowered his head in shame. He found it difficult to maintain direct eye contact with Thelma. "Thelma, maybe I never knew how to be a real father. Maybe it was best that we went our separate ways. Even before I met you, I'd already jumped from this state to that state, doing my dirt along the way. A woman and her children don't need a man who's not willing to settle down and take full responsibility for them. I admit that I'm restless, that I'm troubled, and that I'm confused. I guess I'm of no use to you and the kids."

"Excuses, excuses, excuses," Thelma berated Gordon, her eyes beginning to water up once again. "A man has to stand up and be a man. Just like a woman has to stand up and be a woman. You know why? Because when they bring children into the world, they're responsible for other lives. They're responsible for making sure that their children have the best chance of making it in this mean world."

"I've learned that it takes more than just money to raise children, even though money does help along the way. But I've also learned that it takes love, caring, compassion, and understanding. Had I known how to give Monica and Butch all of that, maybe I would've stuck around."

"Do yourself a favor, Mack."

"Okay?"

"If you decide to come back and visit Monica and Butch, just don't make it every ten years."

"Thelma, you have my solemn word on it. As long as I have an address to come to, my son and my daughter will be seeing their dad."

"Mack, just be a man."

"I'll work on it."

Gordon finished the beer before saying goodbye to Monica and Butch once they came back.

CHAPTER 17

A Holy Day for Alla Mae

PREPARING FOR SUNDAY church services was something that Alla Mae became accustomed to when growing up as a child. Though she presently lived a sinful lifestyle, she decided to visit the same church that her father founded. Bethel AME Church sat at the corner of Eighteenth Street and Spruce Avenue on Kansas City's east side.

A native of Little Rock, Arkansas, Reverend Pompeii Briggs became the founder and pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church during the early 1940s.

Pompeii felt that God had put a calling on his life as a little boy. Family and friends told him that he'd be called into ministry by the time he reached his teen years.

They proved to be correct.

Pompeii studied under other respected ministers around Little Rock. They tutored him on how to eloquently speak to a congregation and how to overall pastor a church. He learned quickly and established a small church there in Little Rock before moving to Kansas City.

Pompeii and his wife, Idella Johnson-Briggs, emigrated to Kansas City, Missouri during the late 1920s when the deep-seated racism and horrendous poverty became overwhelming for him and Idella.

Upon their arrival, they settled at the deep north end of the city and worked hard to earn a living. The couple quickly learned to cohabitate with other coloreds as well as the Italians and some Irish and Jews.

Their first child, Alla Mae, was born in 1931, just two years after they settled into Kansas City. A year and several months later, a second daughter was born, Jacqueline Carilee Briggs-Wylie. Two and a half years after the birth of Jacqueline, a son named Pompeii Briggs, Jr. was born to the couple.

Pompeii and Idella were now blessed with two daughters and one son. Pompeii worked hard as a railroad porter day and night to provide for his wife and three children. Sometimes he worked his fingers raw to make sure that food stayed on the table. The rent was paid on time, and the utilities were always kept on. Oftentimes, the Briggs family enjoyed entertainment at a theatre in the colored neighborhood.

Today, more people were pouring into the sanctuary at Bethel A.M.E. Church. Men, women, and children were escorted to their seats by one of the ushers. The elders of the church passed around small white cards for the visitors to fill out.

Before long, the church became packed. People sat shoulder to shoulder. Light clouds of incense filled up almost every square inch of the church. A tall, dark-complexioned musician fired up the organ to begin playing. The elders and assistant pastor started singing the first lines of the hymn.

Alla Mae sat there in church looking as innocent as a saint. She wore a black dress that cut off just below the knees. A pair of black, shiny low heels complemented the dress quite well. She had a smile on her face that spoke of a woman with a priceless peace of mind.

Alla Mae looked over toward the aisle and saw her sister, Jacqueline Carilee Briggs-Wylie. Jacqueline wore a light blue dress with a blue pearl necklace and matching bracelets.

Like her sister, Jacqueline was a woman who men quickly became fond of. In her own way, she was an extremely attractive woman. She

had a smooth, clear complexion and curves which melted a man's heart. Squeezing her way through the space between the benches, she forced a man sitting next to Alla Mae to provide some space.

The two sisters were jubilant upon seeing one another. It'd only been about seven months, but that seemed like a lifetime to them.

The sisters exchanged smiles, leaning over to talk over the loud hymn being sung.

"Hey, Jackie," Alla Mae said to Jacqueline, her mouth positioned close to her ear.

"Hey, Mae," Jacqueline greeted her beloved sister. "Whatcha been doing with yourself?"

"Guess what, girl?"

"Your sister can't wait to hear what you've got to say."

"I met this man."

"What man?"

"His name's Gordon McCoyd Reynolds."

"A colored man."

"Hell naw!" Alla Mae exclaimed. "He's one of them Irish white men. Girl, he's so, so handsome. He looks like one of them fine Italian men."

"Where'd you meet this Gordon?"

"Where else, Jackie? Out on the streets."

There was some serious gossiping going on between the two sisters. They tuned out those sitting the closest to them.

"He's a hustler?"

"To his core. He owns two houses, and he's got me running one of them."

"Good-time houses?"

"Yeah, women, liquor, dope and cigarettes."

"Where're these houses?"

"The one that he's got me working in is at fourteen fourteen East Twelfth Street."

"Twelfth Street? That area is rough, tough, and mean."

"Yes it is. People get robbed and killed around there all the time."

"The Twelfth Street Strip ain't no place to be messing around. Has this Gordon friend of yours bumped head with them Italians yet?"

"No, he hasn't. In fact, he works real close with the dagos. I believe that he's got big ties with the Cammisano brothers."

"Oh my God!" Jacqueline fretted, slightly pulling back from her sister. "I saw Willie Cammisano once when I was downtown. I believe that he owns a lot of those strip clubs and bars there on Twelfth Street. That Cammisano man has to be one of the scariest dudes that I've ever seen in my entire life. His eyes, I mean they look like they'd scare someone right out of their skin."

"Gordon has some type of ties to him."

"Mae, if he's running women, dope, cigarettes and liquor, then I know that he's paying off those men. If he's smart and wants to stay alive, then I know that he definitely is."

"How's Bill, Jackie?" Mae asked, changing the subject.

"Bill's fine. He's still doing his barber thing."

"How's Angela and Mark doing?"

"They're fine, too. How's Francine and William doing?"

"My babies are doing good. Right now, they're staying with Annabelle, who's been like a sister to me."

"As long as they're in a safe place, you can sleep peacefully at night."

"Jackie, Gordon treats me so good," Alla Mae felt the need to mention, trying her best to drive her point home to her cherished sister. "He treats me better than the girls who've been working for him for a long time. He lives dangerously, but I've been used to that for most of my life. Crazy stuff going on out on the streets is nothing new to me."

"Let's just listen to the hymn," Jacqueline suggested, leaning the opposite way to sit up straight. "We'll talk later, Mae."

Alla Mae and Jacqueline began clapping their hands. Their faces showed gleaming smiles. The hymn being sung by the entire church congregation was *Jesus On The Main Line*. It happened to be one of Alla Mae and Jacqueline's favorite gospel songs.

The close-knit sisters related to the message in the song. They were known as PKs. The very short acronym was for Preacher's Kids. Alla Mae didn't live the most moral existence, but she still held on to her religious beliefs. To her, no soul on earth was perfect.

She always remembered the profound verse in the Bible, when Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ told the people about to stone a woman caught in the act of adultery, that him that was without sin cast the first stone. Throughout most of her life, many people had thrown stones at Alla Mae.

She wasn't perfect by no stretch, and she acknowledged it. The gospel tune, *Jesus On The Main Line*, brought about a soothing effect on her soul. The words sunk deep into her troubled heart.

The song simply told the true believers that Jesus was on the mainline, that you could call him up and tell him what you wanted. By now, Bethel AME Church was on fire. Several people in the congregation stood up with tambourines.

Many people clapped, sung, stomped, hummed, danced, jumped and shouted, all for the praise of The One Most High. Several women began shouting from between the benches. All the anger and frustration and heartbreak and fear that they'd experienced during the week, they released it to face another week of the exact same thing.

Members of the choir rocked their bodies back and forth. The organ player felt the power of the Holy Spirit. Two church elders were in the pulpit joining in on the jubilant celebration.

The mother of Alla Mae and Jacqueline, the ultra-religious Idella Briggs, turned around from her front-row seat to glance at her daughters.

Idella had the appearance of a highly respectable woman. She was wearing a nice dress and polished matching shoes. At fifty-seven years old, she had a smooth, dark complexion and neatly pressed salt-and-pepper hair. She carried herself as a woman with much pride. Strong religious beliefs had been handed down in her family from one generation to the next.

Though she looked back at both of her daughters, it was Alla Mae who she made strong eye contact with. Her eyes told the story of a woman who wasn't pleased with that particular daughter.

Jacqueline had made something significant out of her life. She finished nursing school and became a registered nurse at one of the local hospitals. She'd finished high school with honors and vowed to set a positive example for the Briggs family.

The church congregation concluded singing. One of the elders announced that it was time to take up a collection. Everyone began digging into their pockets and purses and coin pouches. They stood up and went down the consecrated aisle to place money in the woven baskets on the tables.

The coins and bills piled up. Two of the male elders lifted the table and took it to the back of the sanctuary. The choir sang a selection and the entire church became quiet.

One of the male elders came to the podium in the pulpit and announced, "Let the church say amen."

The people throughout the benches said, "Amen," though not quite in unison.

"If God's been good to you, then let me hear you say amen."

"Amen!"

"Let the church receive our beloved pastor, the honorable, the Right Reverend Pompeii Briggs."

Up from a set of stairs, Reverend Pompeii Briggs stepped into the pulpit. There he was. A proud colored man who distinguished himself as a true man of God. Reverend Briggs had a shiny black

complexion and strong, striking features that caused people to stop and notice him. His face told a different story every time someone met up with him.

Reverend Briggs walked up to the podium and looked out at the church congregation. Somehow, his eyes landed on his older daughter, Alla Mae Briggs. Like his wife, Idella, his eyes indicated that he wasn't too pleased with her.

He glanced around the entire church congregation, which included the choir, the organ player, and the two elders sitting in the pulpit. His eyes, once again, zoomed in on Alla Mae. Looking up toward the ceiling, a feeling of hurt and disgust sent a sharp pain into his stomach.

"Let the church say amen," Reverend Briggs said to all those present.

"Amen," the church responded in their many different voices.

Reverend Briggs shuffled some papers around on the podium. He opened his Bible and told the church members, "At this time, I'd like for you to turn to the book of Revelation, the twenty-first chapter, the eighth verse."

Reverend Briggs gave the people time to thumb through their Bibles. Naturally, some took a little longer than others.

"In this verse," said Reverend Briggs, staring down at the pages of his rather large Bible, "Revelation twenty-one-eight reads: *'But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.'*"

He placed his hand over his mouth and glanced across both sides of the congregation. In a powerful voice showing conviction, he shouted to the church, "Children of God, what are you fearful of? Don't you know that fear is not of God? Could you be fearful of not having a job? Not able to pay your rent? Not having a car? Not keeping your gas, lights, and water on? Not having clean clothes to put on your back? Not getting over your sickness?"

“Come on now, Reverend!” shouted a group of women on the front rows of the left side.

“Listen to me, children,” Reverend Briggs spoke to the entire church. “What has God done for you before? Didn’t he help you find a job when you didn’t have one?”

“Yeah!” yelled out many people on both sides of the congregation and even some in the choir section.

“Didn’t he give you the money to help pay your rent and for you to get a car so you could get back and forth to the grocery store and to the hospital?”

“He sure did, Reverend!” hollered other members toward the back.

“Didn’t he keep your gas, lights, and water on when you thought they were gonna get cut off?”

“Sure nuff he did, Reverend!”

“Didn’t he give you clean clothes and new shoes to put on your body?”

“He did, Reverend!”

“Let’s talk about you unbelievers,” Reverend Briggs continued the sermon. “Let me take a moment to test your faith. Do you believe that God can come through for you every time trouble arises? Who do you think put water and food in your stomach? Who do you think wakes you up in the morning? Who do you think softens the heart of the boss man at your job when he’s ready to fire you? Who do you think keeps that police man from taking you to jail?”

“Ain’t nobody but God!” loudly crooned a group of men and women from both sides of the congregation.

“You all need to stop your complaining. When God’s been good to you, you need to praise him morning, noon, and night. You gone complain until you make the wrath of God come down on you.”

“Say it, Reverend, say it!”

“You murderers, you,” Reverend Briggs shouted during his heated sermon. “You didn’t give life, why would you wanna take life? God is

the creator of all of mankind, and nobody has the right to kill another human being. Only God can make that call.”

“Only him, Reverend, only him.”

“Listen to me, children. It tells you in the book of Exodus, the twentieth chapter, the thirteenth verse, that thou shalt not kill. You have hatred in your heart for your brother and what do you do, you kill him? You have hatred in your heart for your sister and what do you do, you kill her? God is a God of love.”

“Say that much, Reverend!” shouted a woman from the middle benches on the right side, someone who jumped out of her seat and pointed right up at Reverend Briggs.

“You sorcerers,” Reverend Briggs called out, wiping his forehead of excessive sweat. “There ain’t nobody more powerful than God. You sorcerers work with evil spells and magic to switch around God’s natural order of things. But let me tell you something. You keep messing around with that witchcraft and voodoo crap, it’s gonna backfire on you one day, and the doors gonna open to let them demonic spirits in. Leave that sorcery junk alone, I say.”

“Evil, Reverend, just outright evil!”

“You idolaters,” Reverend Briggs went on to say, pointing his finger in every direction around the sanctuary. “You better get rid of your idols while you still have breath in your body. God said, ‘There will be no other gods before me.’ He told us that he was a jealous God. Stop worshipping your money. Stop worshipping your cars and houses and furniture in your house. Stop worshipping your jobs and your college degrees and your big-time positions. Stop worshipping your children as though you’ve put them above God.”

“Gone and tell the truth, Reverend!” yelled out a man on the left side of the congregation who’d jumped out of his seat with both arms stretched to the sky.

“Stop worshipping that wife and that husband of yours. You act like you’re so in love until you can’t turn one another’s hand loose. Turn

that joker's hands loose. Because if you don't, God will let something hurt your heart. You'll be running around here talking about 'I didn't think he would do something like that to me' or 'I didn't think she would do something like that to me.'"

"Have mercy!" cried out an older woman on the very front row of the right side, both eyes shut with sweat rolling down her face. "Reverend, you just gone ahead and preach today. Preach, Reverend, preach!"

The members of the congregation were all fired up as they felt the Holy Spirit of God Almighty sink deep into their souls. Their hearts, minds, and spirits were fed with the powerful word of God. The sermon was like none they'd ever heard before. The people were pumped. The adrenaline gave them a rush that could've kept them on full for weeks or months to come.

"And last," said Reverend Briggs, his eyes fixed on his eldest daughter, Alla Mae. She felt her father's eyes watching her like a war pilot watching an enemy below. "You whoremongers, you wanna be involved with all types of filth and abominations. You can't wait till you're married to have sex. Everything that looks good to you, everything that excites you, you've gotta take it to bed with you. These lowdown men out here, they just gotta make womenfolk their whores."

"It's a sure nuff shame, Reverend!" blurted a person.

"These womenfolk," Reverend Briggs continued, his eyes burning straight through Alla Mae's pair of embarrassed eyes, "you don't think enough of yourself to not sell your body to every Tom, Joe, Larry, and Billy. Don't you know that your body is a sacred vessel from God? If you don't know the truth, then let me spell the truth out for you. Every time you lay with strange men, you're bringing those evil spirits from those men straight into you. So, if they've got demonic spirits, then guess what? You're gonna have demonic spirits. Too many demonic spirits in your life will make you lose your mind and drive you right off a cliff."

“Yes it will, Reverend!” shouted members from both sides of the church.

Reverend Briggs kept his disappointed eyes on Alla Mae. He’d always known that she was heavily involved with all facets of prostitution. It broke his heart when she had quit high school and quickly opted to live a life of vice with prostitution becoming the only means for her to support herself.

“Women, your body is precious,” Reverend Briggs spoke in a soft, sentimental tone. “For big amounts of money or for small amounts of money, don’t sell your bodies to these whoremongers.”

Reverend Briggs could’ve easily been speaking about another of the church members. Nobody was perfect, and he took that into consideration. “For all have fallen short of the glory of God.” That’s what most religious people came to terms with.

“Children,” Reverend Briggs chanted as he scanned both sides of the church. “Don’t play with sin. God is a just, loving, and forgiving god. No matter what you’ve done wrong in the past, he’ll forgive you. Do what you can do to strengthen your relationship with him.

“In closing, I’d like to say that if anyone doesn’t have a church home, then the doors of Bethel AME are always open. If you haven’t dedicated your life to serving the Lord, then I’d like for you to please come up here to the altar. Because you know that tomorrow is not promised.”

Several people left their seats and began walking toward the altar. As many as twenty people formed a circle with Reverend Briggs in the middle. In a caring voice, he spoke to them about attending his church as a regular place of worship. One by one, he asked them their names. After learning who they were, he looked out at the congregation and said, “Children, we have this flock up here who want to dedicate their lives to serving Jesus Christ.”

Many amens came from around the sanctuary. Should Alla Mae have gone up there to rededicate her life to Jesus Christ? Not quite.

You see, she wasn't fully ready to leave the hardcore street life alone. There was so much more for her to do out there.

The two lead elders left the pulpit to come out and hug the newest members. Those sitting on the benches left their seats to come up and greet them. Reverend Briggs felt a special celebration going on inside of his heart every time somebody new joined his church. This meant that they were willing to give God some of their time.

The service concluded, people began to pour out of the church. For the many who didn't stay inside the building, they congregated out on the sidewalk. Besides a handful of people still hanging around inside the sanctuary, Reverend Briggs, his wife Idella, and their two daughters were the only ones left inside the building.

Reverend Briggs and Idella approached their daughters at the benches on the right side. As loving parents, they hugged Alla Mae and Jacqueline. Their hugs were genuine, lasting more than just a few seconds.

"Hello, Mama and Daddy," Alla Mae said to her parents, noticing the disapproving glare in their eyes. Something told her deep within her spirit that her mother and father weren't pleased with her.

"How're you, Mae?" Reverend Briggs greeted his daughter, the sternest look possible showing across his face.

"I'm fine, Daddy."

"Are you really fine?" asked Idella, hurt ringing in her voice.

"Yes, Mama, I'm fine."

Reverend Briggs turned to his daughter Jacqueline and said, "Jackie, can me and your mother have a word with your sister in private?"

"Sure, Daddy," Jacqueline said, turning around to leave the sanctuary.

By now, the others had cleared the building, even the deacons and elders.

Reverend Briggs escorted his wife and daughter to the front bench. He and his wife had Alla Mae sit between them.

Alla Mae felt that the worst was coming. She sat between her parents frozen like a polar icecap. For at least ten seconds, there was a crippling silence surrounding them.

“Mae,” Reverend Briggs softly called out his daughter’s name. “I’m gonna cut straight to the chase. Your mother and I know what you’re doing out there. We’ve known what you’ve been doing for a long time. Honey, it’s time for you to come in and stop what you’re doing.”

“Come in?” Alla Mae said, throwing her head back. “Daddy, I do what I do, and that’s not about to change no time soon. Right now, the streets are where I belong.”

“Is hell where you belong, too?” Reverend Briggs berated his eldest daughter, looking straight into her eyes. “Baby, them streets out there are nothing but the devil’s playground. Tell me this, sweetheart. Do you want to send your soul to hell all because you wanna live for the streets instead of for God?”

“Well, to answer your question, right now, I prefer to live for the streets.”

Idella swiftly interjected by telling her daughter, “Mae, whoring around in them streets is gonna cause you to burn in hell for all of eternity. You don’t want that, sweetheart.”

“Mama, I’m a grown woman, and I can take care of myself. If I wanna burn in hell forever, then that’s my business.”

Alla Mae had become rebellious during the brief talk with her parents. She took much offense to the spiritual lecture that they’d given her in a short period of time.

“What if you end up dead out there?” Idella questioned Alla Mae, her blood pressure rising to an unhealthy level. “What if one of them crazy folks kill you out there? Did you even listen to your daddy’s sermon when he was talking about whoremongers? Selling your body and shooting dope in your arms and staying drunk all the time ain’t the way to go, Mae.”

Reverend Briggs held out his hand toward Idella's chest. "Idella, now try and not be so hard on Mae. She's still our daughter, and that should account for something." Turning to his daughter, he said, "Mae, people been coming back to me and telling me that you out there messing around with them white menfolks."

"I sure have," Alla Mae proudly admitted to her father. "White menfolks is the only type of men that I fool around with. They spend lots of money on you, and they treat you way better than the colored menfolks."

Reverend Briggs looked up toward the pulpit at a small statue of Jesus Christ. He shook his head and told Alla Mae, "Mae, we all God's children in the end. White folks, colored folks, Jewish folks, Mexican folks, Chinese folks, and all other folks around this world. God don't care about what color any of us are. The Bible tells us to love another as Christ has also loved us."

"The Good Book does say that," Alla Mae agreed, sitting there squeezed between her parents, her gaze switching back and forth between Reverend Briggs and Idella. "But I done found me a white man who's been real good to me. I really, really like this white man. His name's Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, but everybody who knows him calls him Mack."

"Watch yourself, Mae," Reverend Briggs warned her, turning up the heat on their conversation. "They still got laws against whites and coloreds being together. The Klan see y'all together, they gone do something terrible to the both of you."

"I don't care, Daddy. This man is the best thing that ever happened to me. Him being white and me being colored, it really don't matter to me. I just hope and pray that we don't run up on any of those evil white Klan folks."

Reverend Briggs and Idella felt that they weren't getting through to their daughter. To them, their daughter had a head harder than

cast iron. When she made her mind up to do something, there wasn't nobody around who could stop her.

Her many prior arrests for prostitution, theft, larceny, resisting arrest, drunkenness in public, and vagrancy were proof that she played by her own rules. It'd been said by many people over the generations that preacher's kids were the worst.

Why did preacher's kids sometimes become the kids who turned to a life of crime? Why were the offspring of law-abiding Christians the ones who ended up dead or in jail? There must've been no logical explanation for their lives turning upside down.

Alla Mae leaned over and kissed her father on the cheek. "Daddy, I love you very much. But I'm gonna do in life what makes me happy. And for me, right now, being in the streets and doing what I do is what makes me feel good."

Reverend Briggs pulled Alla Mae closer and said, "Mae, I love you, too. Just know this much, sweetheart: While you're out there, I'm praying for you every single day. I'm going to be praying harder than ever for you."

"Thank you, Daddy."

Idella moved closer to Alla Mae and told her daughter, "Mae, your father and I only want you to do what's right. You know that we did raise you and your sister and brother right. We'll be praying for you, baby."

"Thank you, Mama."

Idella mentioned Alla Mae and Jacqueline having a brother. Who was this brother? He was Pompeii Briggs, Jr. Where was this brother? Pompeii was in the Missouri State Penitentiary serving a seven-year sentence for burglary.

Alla Mae removed herself from between her parents. As she walked out the sanctuary and looked back, both Reverend Briggs and Idella had the saddest look in their eyes. The oldest of their three children had disappointed them to no end.

CHAPTER 18

Bids To See Her Kids

ALLA MAE RECEIVED a ride from Jacqueline's husband, Bill Wylie, right after she walked out of Bethel AME. Church. Since it was Sunday, he didn't have any heads to cut at the barbershop. While Bill drove southbound in his dark-blue pickup truck, Alla Mae and Jacqueline sat side by side, discussing the talk that Alla Mae had with their parents.

"Girl, what happened in there?" Jacqueline asked her sister, looking over to make sure that her husband remained attentive to the road ahead. Bill had a tendency to allow his eyes to wander, looking at every woman with a pretty face and shapely figure walking down the street.

"Whaddaya mean what happened?" Alla Mae replied with another question.

"With mama and daddy there inside Bethel."

"Girl, mama and daddy really tore into me," Alla Mae said, shaking her head in disgust. "Instead of whipping me with the strap like we used to get when we were kids, they whipped me with the Bible. When I told Mama and Daddy that I was still out there doing what I was doing, girl, they threw a hissy fit. When I'm ready to stop, then that's when I'll stop."

Jackie, you knew how I was coming up. I was always the real stubborn one of the three. Mama and Daddy could whip my behind until I turned purple, blue and black, but I still did what I wanted.”

“You ain’t never lying, Mae. Mama and daddy took that strap to you all the time. Me and Pompeii didn’t get nowhere near as many ass whippings as you did.”

“Ain’t that the truth. Speaking of Pompeii, when are those white folks gone let Mama and Daddy go down there to Jefferson City to see him?”

“There’s no telling. I sure hope he’s doing all right inside the penitentiary. If he has my address, then he should write me.”

“All right, getting back to what you and Mama and Daddy were talking about.”

“We talked about this and that,” Alla Mae said, not generous with the details.

“This and that? Meaning?”

“Meaning that they had a hissy fit when I told them that I met a white man who I really, really like. Daddy especially tried schooling me on staying away from white men since the Klan might do something bad to the both of us.”

“Ever since I can remember, Mae, you’ve always liked white men. As teenagers, I remember you telling me that your mind and colored men’s minds just didn’t have nothing in common. Isn’t that right, big sister?”

“That’s right, little sister,” Alla Mae admitted with a bursting smile. “And let me tell you this much: every trick that I ever had, the whole time that I’ve been out there on them streets, all of them have been white men. That’s right. White men will spend money, won’t hit you, and might give you a little something extra for your troubles.”

“There’s some colored men who’ll do the same, but there ain’t many of them.”

All the time that Bill Wylie was driving his truck, he had tuned out Alla Mae and his wife Jacqueline. What they were talking about was of no concern to him. He was too busy watching the attractive, shapely women stroll down the street. As long as they never mentioned his name or said anything negative about him, then the conversation continued without his interruption.

"Tell me more about this Gordon McCoy Reynolds," Jacqueline persisted.

"There's not much more to tell."

"Does he have kids?"

"A son and a daughter."

"Been married before?"

"I believe so."

"Here's what I have to ask, Mae," Jacqueline said as she exhaled strongly. "Does he like colored women a whole lot?"

Alla Mae swung her head back to take a moment to brainstorm. "Jackie, that's a good question. Here's what I can tell you, though. He's got several colored girls out there on the streets working for him. At first, he wanted me to come and work for him. But I straight out told him that I didn't sell pussy for nobody but myself. I was surprised when he told me that he respected it, and then asked me if I wanted to help him run one of his good-time houses."

"No stuff!" Jacqueline replied with a jolt. "Girl, you must be special if a handsome white man comes along and asks you to help him run one of his good-time houses, especially when he really don't know you that well."

"And let me tell you, I do feel real special."

"Have you met any of his folks yet?"

"Not yet."

"It's fair to say that Mama and Daddy probably wouldn't wanna meet him. We know that they afraid of those white Klan folks."

"Probably not."

Bill drove south until he came to a stoplight at the intersection of Twenty-seventh Street and Troost Avenue. The light turned green and he proceeded to the block of Thirtieth Street and Flora Avenue. The address that Alla Mae wanted to go to was 3000 Flora Avenue, which was a canary-yellow house there on the edge of Thirty-first Street.

Jacqueline agreed to wait for her sister while she visited with her two children. Alla Mae went up to the front door and just walked in. There to greet her in the front room were her two children. William was now five and Francine three.

“Mama!” William called out his mother’s name, running up to give his mother one of the biggest hugs ever.

“Hi baby,” Alla Mae said, kissing William on his little rosy cheek. “How’s mama’s baby doing?”

“Fine.”

Francine ran up and hugged her mother. “Hi, Mama.”

“Hi Francine. What have Mama’s babies been doing?”

“Coloring in our coloring books,” William told his mother joyfully.

“Boy, that sounds fun, William. Francine, you been coloring, too?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

The doorknob of the front door turned. Jacqueline walked in to see her niece and nephew.

“Hi Aunt Jackie,” Francine said to her only aunt.

“Hi Francine,” Jacqueline greeted back, stretching both of her arms out. “How’s Aunt Jackie’s favorite little niece doing?”

“Fine.”

Jacqueline turned to look at William and said, “William, you better come over here and give your Aunt Jackie a hug.”

Francine and William were wrapped in the loving arms of their Aunt Jacqueline Wylie.

Francine looked at Jacqueline and asked, “Aunt Jackie, when can Angie come over and play with us?”

“I’ll have to ask your uncle Bill to bring Angie over to play with you all.”

The caretaker of the house was a woman named Annabelle Fressineau. Annabelle, a Creole transport from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, happened to be a second cousin of Alla Mae and Jacqueline. Rotund in body, she constantly wore housedresses with different head wraps. Annabelle didn’t mind watching Alla Mae’s children but felt that a misfortune would one day befall her cousin.

Most people were careful not to anger Annabelle since she, like many other natives of Louisiana, practiced witchcraft and voodoo. Annabelle kept roots, herbs, oils, candles, cards, and books of spells around the house. The woman wasn’t kidding around. If someone crossed her, they’d conveniently get sick, become involved in an accident, couldn’t think or see straight or just flat out suffered some type of misfortune.

Alla Mae had admired Annabelle so much that she had asked for permission to use her first name, just not the last name, especially during those times of arrests from the pesky KCPD patrolmen.

The Fressineau Creole family was like many other coloreds who left the Deep South. They, too, wanted to escape the abject poverty and extreme racism that were so entrenched in their daily lives. Annabelle’s mother, Essie, was the first cousin of Alla Mae and Jacqueline’s mother, Idella. The Arkansas and Louisiana families had blood bonds that dated back as far as the early 1800s.

Though the streets weren’t paved with gold in Kansas City, they were paved with resources precious enough for the coloreds to live decently.

On top of the kitchen stove, Annabelle had a pot of chicken and dumplings cooking. In the oven below, a pan of cornbread puffed up from the heat. The aroma circulated around the home like a pleasant-smelling aerosol. Raisin pudding would be on the menu after the main course.

“Annabelle, that smells good,” Alla Mae praised her cousin’s cooking. “Girl, what’s that you’ve got cooking in the kitchen?”

“Nothing much,” Annabelle replied modestly. “It’s just some chicken and dumplings along with some cornbread.”

“Any dessert?”

“Raisin pudding with strong vanilla extract and bourbon sauce.”

“Girl, you gone hurt somebody up in this house.”

“There’ll be plenty for everybody. Jackie, could you please excuse me and Alla Mae?”

Jacqueline smiled at her first cousin and said, “Sure, Annabelle. Alla Mae, we’d better be going pretty soon. Bill is still waiting out there in the truck.”

“All right, Jackie. Me and Annabelle won’t be long.”

Annabelle and Alla Mae were left alone in the front room. Jacqueline went into the other room to play with William and Francine.

Annabelle rested her left hand on Alla Mae’s shoulder. “Mae, I thought you’d like to know. You know that I don’t mind watching William and Francine for you, but those snooty white folks gonna know that I’ve been keeping your children. People talk, and those white folks gone find out what you out there doing.”

“Thanks for looking out for me,” Alla Mae thanked her beloved cousin. “And thanks for watching my son and daughter for me. Annabelle, I’m not out on the streets like I used to be.”

“Then what’re you doing for yourself right now?”

“Right now, I’m running a good-time house for this white man down at the north end.”

“White man, huh? This good-time house, what goes inside there?”

“Women, liquor, dope, and cigarettes.”

“A lot going on in there. Cousin Mae, I just want you to watch yourself. Those crazy street folks might try and kick in on y’all and kill you and that white man.”

“Yeah, I thought about that. You do me a favor and pray for me.”

“Girl, you my cousin and I love you. I’m gone do more than pray you. I made up these holy seals for you to put in the windows in whatever house that you’re living in.”

Annabelle dug deep into the pocket of her housecoat. She produced six square pieces of white paper with biblical seals written in red ink. Geometric figures with Hebrew letters written around them filled most of the papers. Annabelle knew the Bible almost from start to finish. She’d designed and prayed hard over the seals, which had mystical powers sure to work for their possessor.

Alla Mae studied the seals closely. None of them looked familiar to her. “These are seals?” Alla Mae inquired, still looking over the Hebrew writing.

“Sure are,” Annabelle answered with pride. “Mae, you’ve been living dangerously, living right on the edge. Even in the middle of your wrongdoing, God still gone watch over you.”

“I know that he will. Mama and Daddy are always sending out prayers to God for their three children.”

“God’s got his arms of protection around all of us.”

Alla Mae shoved her hand down in between her bra and brought out two twenty-dollar bills. She handed the forty dollars to Annabelle. “Take this money, Annabelle. I do truly appreciate you watching William and Francine for me.”

“Anytime, Mae.”

Before leaving the kitchen, Annabelle went to one of the kitchen cabinets, bringing out a small bottle of blessed protection oil. She anointed Alla Mae’s forehead and both wrists. Annabelle was right. Alla Mae lived dangerously and on the edge.

CHAPTER 19

Bursting the Bubble of Trouble

GORDON SLIPPED INTO a rage after learning that Kim and Lana had been assaulted by Doc Dearborn and some of his Black Mafia soldiers. The assaults insulted his intelligence and challenged his manhood.

Close friends and family members were well aware of his violent temper and thunderous outbursts, which resulted in his opponents getting cursed out or hurt real bad.

He paced back and forth on the floor inside his residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street. His entire face turned dark red while beads of sweat popped from the pores of his forehead. His hands shook as though they were trapped inside a pile of hot coals.

“Mack!” Alla Mae yelled out, following behind the man whom she’d developed strong feelings for within a relatively short period of time. “Honey, why don’t you try to calm down?”

He stomped his feet in the same manner that a child would when they were pouting. “Calm down?” Gordon yelled back, his growls vicious enough to compare to a hungry lion’s. “That goddamned nig—”

“Mack, don’t you say it,” Alla Mae quickly cut him off, preventing him from using the racially offensive word used to describe her people.

“This Doc Dearborn, do you know what he did to Kim and Lana?”

“No, what’d he do?”

“The bastard, he had somebody snatch them off the streets and took them to Wayne Miner Projects and then he had his way with them. Wanna know what he did?”

“Not really, but tell me anyway.”

“Doc Dearborn, this punk who calls himself The Godfather of the Black Mafia, he tied Kim and Lana up and stuck pistols and knives in their faces. After that, he had two mean ass dogs growl viciously at them. Then he had some of his boys hang them upside down by their feet and stick them out a window. And worst of all, he had some of his girls beat them up real bad.”

“Oh no!” Alla Mae shouted in disbelief. “Why’d he do something like that?”

“He’s got his girls out on the streets. I’ve got my girls out on the streets. Can you believe that that son of a bitch wants Kim and Lana to come and work for him?”

“Sounds like Kim and Lana are lucky to be alive. Now I see why they haven’t been around for a few days.”

“Something’s gotta be done about this Doc Dearborn. He’s taking me for some softie ass white man who’ll take shit from a colored man. Well, the motherfucker is in for the surprise of his life.”

“How’re you gonna handle this situation?”

Gordon slid his .45 Colt revolver out of the back of his pants. He held it high toward the ceiling and said in a hissing voice, “Match him bullet for bullet. He fires at me; I fire right back at him. He wants me dead; I want him more dead. Doc Dearborn will have to learn that this Irish white man ain’t taking no shit from somebody who thinks he’s the only pimp in town. Anybody hurts my girls, they’ll have to answer to me. In the end, this cocksucker will have to answer to me.”

Rufus walked through the back door with a Smith and Wesson .38 wedged between his skin and pants. Judging by the look on his face, he might've been prepared to do battle. His huge size alone was enough to scare most opponents.

"Mack, came as soon as you called," said Rufus as though he'd reported straight to his superior.

"Good, Rufus," Gordon said, pleased. "This shithead nig—"

Alla Mae ran up to Gordon and pinched him on the arm. "Gordon, don't you say that word! I don't care if it's in front of my face or behind my back. Never, I mean never, don't say that word. If you call one of us that word, you're calling all of us that word."

"Mae, I'm sorry," Gordon apologized, a sympathetic look on his face.

"Now, give me a kiss," she demanded.

Gordon bent down to the tiny woman to plant a kiss on her moist lips. Alla Mae left the back room to let the two men talk in private.

"This Doc Dearborn, Rufus," Gordon picked up where he'd left off, careful not use that slur to describe the colored race, "this piece of street trash, he hurt two of my girls in the worst kinda way."

"Let's put this punk in the bottom of the Missouri River," Rufus suggested, grabbing the handle of his .38 revolver.

"Wish we could."

"What's stopping us?"

"Doc Dearborn is connected to someone who's connected to Willie The Rat. We dispose of this punk, we'll have to answer to Willie The Rat and some of his people."

"Which could prove deadly to us?"

"No doubt. You see, I understand that he makes big money for the Kansas City outfit. In turn, the Kansas City outfit makes big money for the Chicago outfit."

"So the Kansas City syndicate really does answer to the Chicago syndicate."

“Absolutely. Most people know that those Chicago syndicate boys ain’t the type of fellas that you want to mess around with. Speaking of Willie The Rat, I’ve got a meeting with him in about another hour.”

“Another hijacking mission?”

“He didn’t say. Right now, my supply of liquor and cigarettes are looking pretty good.”

Concluding their conversation, Gordon and Rufus helped themselves to a pot of spaghetti and garlic bread that Alla Mae had cooked earlier that day.

Photos

Picture & Document Gallery

A young Alla Mae Briggs during happier and more prosperous times.



A very dapper Gordon Reynolds at twenty-one years of age.





A KCPD police mugshot of Alla Mae after one of her many arrests for prostitution, vagrancy, and petty theft.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)

STATE BUREAU OF
CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION

MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL

JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

Oct. 18, 1965

86-156

The following is transcript of the record, including the most recently reported data, as shown in the files of this Bureau concerning on number 115620 FBI#807189A

FPC 11 O 21 W IOI 13
I 19 W IOI 13

Negro - Female

mlv

Kans.

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	DATE SENT OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Jacqueline Carlise Briggs, #71008	5-2-51	inv	5-2-51 rel on chg of inv vice
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Louise Simpson, #71008	11-20-51	inv vice	11-20-51 rel by vice bureau chg. of inv. vice check
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Louise Briggs, #71008	8-25-52	inv check recent activities	9-2-52 disch Ind Act. #10 CCW disch vag
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Annabelle Jenkins #71008	8-29-53	inv inmate Lewdy House	see notation
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Annabelle Jenkins, #71008	3-12-53	inv check recent activities	
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Annabel Jenkins, #71008	1-14-53	inv freq. Rwdy House	see notation
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Frances Simpson, #71008	6-20-54	inv prostitution	6-2-54 \$50. no liq liq dis prost vag #2
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Anabelle Jenkins, #71008	7-24-54	inv. check recent activities	7-26-54 prost. vag. disch. #1
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Annabelle Jenkins, #71008	7-27-54	inv. soliciting on street	
PD, St. Joseph, Mo.	Alla Mae Briggs, #14149	8-19-54	inv	rel.
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Louise Baker, #71008	9-9-54	inv vice - V check	11-13-54 vag. DWP #1
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Ellis Mae Briggs, #71008	7-12-55	inv. prostitution V check	7-14-55 30 days sol. on st. disch. prost. vag #3

*Represents notations unsupported by fingerprints.

For completion of our records, please advise dispositions to this Bureau in any of the foregoing cases where they do not appear.

SEP FORM NO. 112

MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL

JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

Oct. 18, 1965

The following is a transcript of the record, including the most recently reported data, as shown in the files of this Bureau concerning case number 115620 FBI#807189A

page 2

mlf

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
PD, Salina, Kans.	Alla Mae Briggs, #6410	6-29-56	vagrancy	180 days
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Ella Mae Briggs #86456	7-20-56	inv. prostitution	disch. sol. on st. \$25 CCW, 60 days
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Jacqueline Carlee Briggs, #86456	7-9-59	inv. prostitution, hold vice	
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Jacqueline Carlee Briggs, #86456	7-9-59	prostitution, hold vice	
Kansas City, Mo.	Jacqueline Carlee Briggs, #86456	8-20-59	inv. prostitution activities	disch. sol. for inv. purp.
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Ella Mae Briggs #86456	7-11-63	inv. prostitution activities	disch.
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Alla Mae Briggs #86456	4-3-63	inv. prostitution activities	
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Alla Mae Reynolds #86456	4-1-64	inv. prostitution activities	
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Alla Mae Reynolds #86456	12-2-64	inv. prostitution activities	
PD, Kansas City, Mo.	Alla Mae Reynolds #86456	10-12-65	prostitution	

*Represents notations unsupported by fingerprints.

For completion of our records, please supply dispositions to this Bureau in any of the foregoing cases where they do not appear.

STATE BUREAU OF
CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION

MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL

JEFFERSON CITY, MO.

Oct. 18, 1965

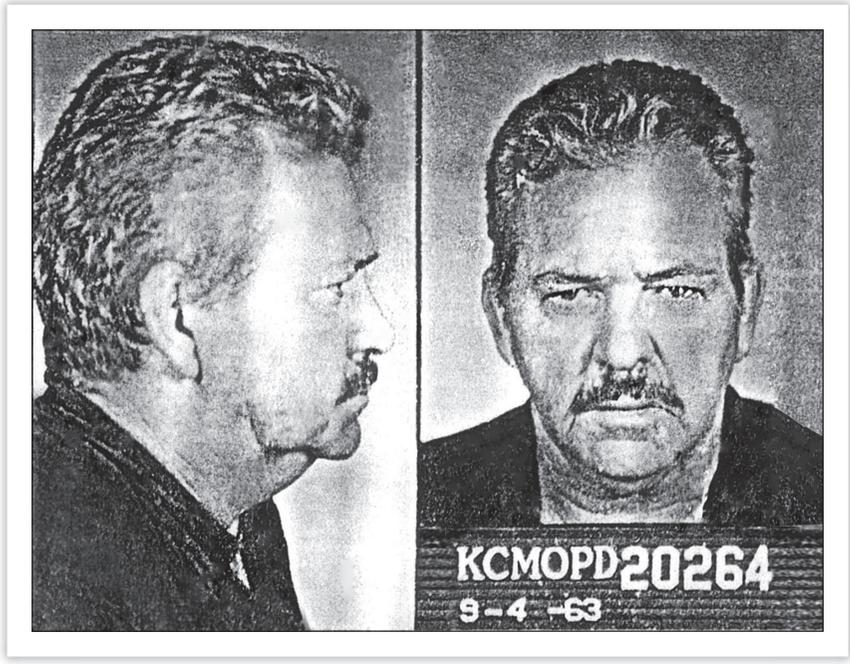
The following is a transcript of the record, including the most recently reported data, as shown in the files of this Bureau concerning our number 115620 FBI#807189A

Jrw

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
	As Annabelle Jenkins #71008, 2-25-53 inv vice; 3-18-53 disch inmate bady house \$25. freq bady hse disch freq disorderly hse. As Annabelle Jenkins #71008 PD Kansas City Mo 3-12-53 inv vice; 3-18-53 \$10. CCM disch vag As Annabel Jenkins #71008, 3-14-53 inv vice; 3-18-53 disch inmate bady house \$25. freq bady hse, disch occ room for imm purp prost; disch freq disorderly house.			

*Represents notations unsupported by fingerprints.

For completion of our records, please supply positions to this Bureau in any of the foregoing where they do not appear.



A KCPD police mugshot of Gordon after one of his many arrests for solicitation, petty larceny, and resisting arrest.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
 IDENTIFICATION DIVISION
 WASHINGTON, D. O. 20537

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 99DF 4-18-80

572 194

Use of the following FBI record, NUMBER 572 194, IS REGULATED BY LAW. It is furnished FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY and should ONLY BE USED FOR PURPOSE REQUESTED. When further explanation of arrest charge or disposition is needed, communicate directly with the agency that contributed the fingerprints.

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
City & Co B of J Bakersfield CA	Harvey Albert Moore #3034-A	10-20-24	susp fel inv	10-20-24 rel
SO Santa Ana CA	Gordon M Reynolds #4224	5-14-25	V of Dyer Act	11 mos Co J1
MD Kansas City KS	Jim Moore #5326	5-6-32	burg & larc	
SP Jefferson City MO	James Moore #41239	6-14-32	robb	10 yrs disch 11-20-40 rel under Cond Comm comm another crime & was ret to pr as #51801 upon exp of this sent subj held to complete term under #41239
St Hwy Pat Lees Summit MO	Gordon McCoy Reynolds #4648	6-30-38	GL	
SP Jefferson City MO	McCoyd Reynolds #51801	12-28-38	burg & L PG	3 yrs disch as #51801 7-26-40 declared a Cond Comm vio as #41239 & held to complete sent as of 7-27-40

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
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117nsw 4-17-80

Use of the following FBI record, NUMBER 572 194, is REGULATED BY LAW. It is furnished FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY and should ONLY BE USED FOR PURPOSE REQUESTED. When further explanation of arrest charge or disposition is needed, communicate directly with the agency that contributed the fingerprints.

		ARRESTED OR	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
PD Kansas City MO	Gordon McCoyd Reynolds #20264	7-10-44	drk & resist arrest	7-11-disch for drk & \$15 for resisting arrest PC#2
PD Dallas TX	Gordon McCoyd Reynolds #23592	11-23-44	V OPA Reg	filed & trans to Fed Auth
SO Dallas TX	Gordon McCoye Reynolds #2222	11-28-44	OPA V	
USM Dallas TX	Gordon McCody Reynolds #5138	11-28-44	V gas ration reg	
Fed Corr Inst Texarkana TX	Gordon McCody Reynolds #2778-TT	2-14-45	War (illegal poss gas ration coupons)	18 mos
SO Phoenix AZ	Gordon McCoya Reynolds #63783	3-24-55	bogus checks	6-10-55 1-2 yrs on chg of bogus checks 2 cts
St Bd of Pardons & Paroles Phoenix AZ	Gordon M Reynolds #18378	6-14-55	obt money & mdse by means of Bogus check 2 cts	3½ to 5 yrs concurrent 12-18-57 rel by exp
PD Kansas City MO	James Moore #20264	5-20-32	inv (burg)	
PD Kansas City MO	Gordon McCoyd Reynolds #20264	9-3-63	inv prost actv	\$25 res arr dsch sol F/immor purp
PD Kansas City MO	Gordon McCord Reynolds #20264	6-16-64	inv Vice Actv	see suppl

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20537

117ns: 4-17-80

IDENTIFICATION DIVISION

3

The following FBI record, NUMBER 572 194 is furnished FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY.

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
PD Kansas City Mo	Gordon McCoyd Reynolds #20264	11-18-64	inv vice actv	rel by Vice
PD Kansas City Mo	Gordon McCoyd Reynolds #20264	6-18-65	vice	disc vag on chg of prost
PD Kansas City MO	Gordon McCoye Reynolds 20264 SID 30847	5-30-74	St Wrnt mistreatment of a child	Mistreatment of Child-Red to C mon Assault- 167889--PG-imp sentence susp 1 yr & 1 yrs Pro 6-18-74

Information shown on this Identification Record represents data furnished FBI by fingerprint contributors. Where final disposition is not shown or further explanation of charge is desired, communicate with agency contributing those fingerprints.
Notations indicated by * are NOT based on fingerprints in FBI files but are listed only as investigative leads as being possibly identical with subject of this record.



Gordon and Alla Mae arrested and booked together after their major involvement in vice activities.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



The patriarch and matriarch of the Reynolds family join their eleven children for Dad Reynolds' birthday. Back row (left to right): Gordon, Jim, Leota, Chloe, Kenneth, Lloyd and Marie. Front row (left to right): Stella, Doris, Dad Samuel Elmer, Mom Myrtle Margaret, Essie and Shirley.



A seventieth birthday celebration for the patriarch of the Reynolds family, Samuel Reynolds. Gordon is in the middle row, second from the right.



A 1941 photo of Gordon and his love interest Margie.



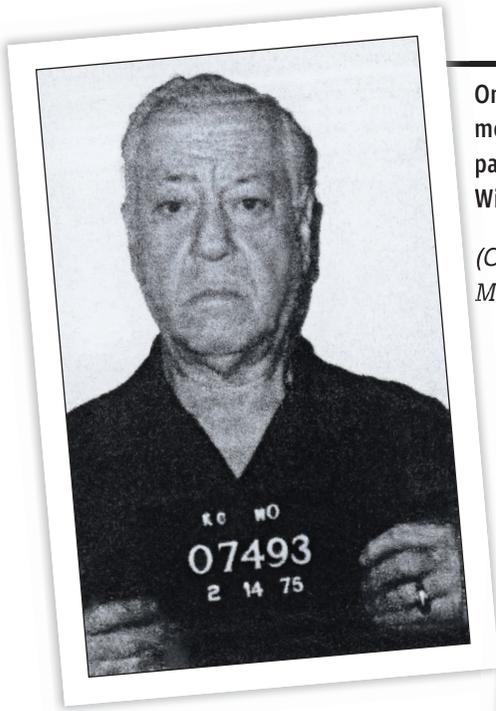
A native Kansas Citian, Clarence M. Kelley was the chief of police from 1961 to 1973. Chief Kelley made a strong commitment to clean up vice activities in the city.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



One of several graduating police academies who investigated Gordon and many other hardened Kansas City criminals.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



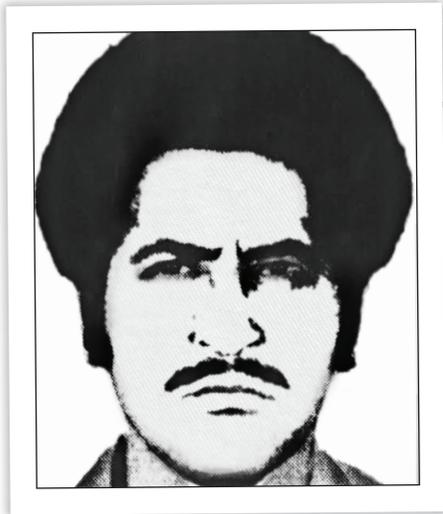
One of the most feared Kansas City mobsters of his day, Gordon kicked back part of his vice activity proceeds to William "Willie The Rat" Cammisano.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



Known as the "King of the Kansas City Mafia Outfit", for anyone who operated vice in the city, they were well advised to give the Nick Civella family a piece of their action.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



Considered the "Godfather of the Black Mafia" in Kansas City, Gordon eventually clashed with James "Doc" Dearborn to see who would control prostitution in the 12th Street Red Light District.

(Courtesy of the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department)



The 12th Street Strip became a downtown haven for strip clubs, seedy bars and lounges, and drugs and prostitution. Gordon and his girls often competed with other procurers and their girls for business in the popular red light district.

(Courtesy of the Missouri Valley Special Collections Division)



Wayne Miner Public Housing Projects proved to be violent territory between Gordon and his competitors in vice.

(Courtesy of the Missouri Valley Special Collections)



Alla Mae during her final years at the Summit Nursing Home.

CHAPTER 20

Don't Take Willie for Being Silly

WILLIAM “WILLIE THE Rat” Cammisano remained clever when it came to staying one step ahead of the law. Detectives with the KCPD suspected that he held secret Mafia meetings inside some of his strip bars, but they just didn't know which ones. To them, it could've been one of them or all of them.

Due to the lack of sufficient evidence, they couldn't obtain a judge's order to place wiretaps inside any of his joints. This left them scratching their heads and wondering if they'd ever catch him having incriminating conversations about criminal activities. They badly wanted to put Cammisano away for the rest of his life.

In the meantime, he continued to hold court inside his clubs. This time, he decided to switch up and have a meeting in one of his most profitable clubs, the Kansas City Shake House. This seedy establishment sure did a lot of shaking. Cammisano hired every nationality of women imaginable for this place—white, colored, Hispanic, Oriental, African, Middle Eastern, and others from around the world.

Women wanted money. Some wanted it real bad. Waiting on a payroll check every two weeks just didn't cut it for them. The quick

hustle of strip teasing suited them just fine. There were college students and even some college graduates who worked at The Kansas City Shake House.

Fast money meant fast material possessions. The cars, jewelry, houses, and latest fashions were some of the luxuries that they sought after. Cammisano knew this and capitalized on it. But in the very end, he was the true winner.

The majority of the proceeds from all his clubs went straight into his pocket. Who'd dare challenge the supremacy of a Mafioso who ranked just below the top boss? Furthermore, if anyone felt brave enough to rob one of his joints, they'd suffer a fate that took them straight to the grave.

Right outside The Kansas City Shake House there on Twelfth Street, Gordon drove up in his Bel Air and parked parallel to the curb. Rufus sat on the passenger's side with his .38 concealed at the very back of his pants.

The lunch hour crowd was pouring into the popular strip bar like a herd of civilized cattle.

Gordon exited his car and allowed Rufus to come around on the driver's side.

"Look'a here, Rufus," Gordon told his confidant of many years. "This meeting should take no more than an hour or so."

"Should I come back in around an hour?" Rufus asked.

"An hour and a few minutes should be okay."

"All right, partner, I'll see you then."

Gordon looked up and down Twelfth Street before entering the club. He'd become paranoid since patrolmen had decided to keep their watchful eyes on him. Anyone hanging around on Twelfth Street was sure to catch heat; this proved to be truer among the vagrants and hustlers.

Upon arriving inside the Kansas City Shake House, Gordon looked around and saw a crowd of men cheering on the strip

tease dancers. The men held bills of almost every denomination in their hands.

The music thumped louder than ever through the jukebox. Cheers and applause sent jubilant vibes all around the club. Gordon weaved his way through the dense crowd. As he strolled down the path towards Cammisano's office, he got hit by arms slinging in every direction.

He came to the doorway of the office and knocked. Peeking through the crack of the door was Anthony "The Lion" Catalano. Those eyes of his met with the agitated eyes of Gordon. Catalano grudgingly opened the door and allowed him entry.

Inside the office were Catalano, Edward "Eddie Bones" Cusumano, Vito "Hardknuckle" Blando, and a gentleman Gordon had never seen before. He and Gordon gave one another those stares that meant "I haven't made your acquaintance yet, but it probably wouldn't hurt."

Cammisano wasn't present. Where was he? After all, he had summoned everyone to the meeting.

The squeaking sounds of some rusty door hinges got everyone's attention inside the office. Cammisano and one of his strip tease girls came out of an adjoining room. He didn't show too much decency as he pulled up his pants and zipped them. Neither did she, since she was wiping her mouth and pulling up her bra. Who'd dare make a big issue out of it? Being the top boss afforded him the privilege of having one of his girls give him an award-winning blowjob whenever he desired.

The stripper left the office so they could conduct their business. Cammisano sucked in a deep breath and released an even deeper one. The men who he wanted at the meeting were all present and accounted for.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect. Gordon certainly wanted to release some steam. The episode of Doc Dearborn humiliating and assaulting two of his hookers had bothered him to no end. To even the score would've made him feel so much better.

Cammisano went behind his desk and took a seat. Before saying one word, he stared into the eyes of the five men as though he could read their minds.

Those scary, baggy eyes of his never failed to produce fear on everyone. Cammisano's physical appearance was that of someone who knew how to keep some of the toughest men in line. Having the eyes of a killer sure got him a lot of perks with most people.

"Mack," Cammisano said, opening the meeting by naming off one of his closest associates. "You told me over the phone that you had something very important to talk to me and my men about. After that, I've got something extremely important to talk to you about. What's on your mind, Mack?"

Gordon felt a little nervous. If Willie really wanted to cause him harm, he would've done so before the meeting got underway.

"It's like this, Willie," Gordon said meekly, finding it hard to maintain eye contact with Cammisano. But who could? "I'm having problems with some coon they call Doc Dearborn, some nigger punk who calls himself The Godfather of the Black Mafia here in Kansas City."

Cammisano fired up a cigar and leaned back in his leather recliner. "What type of problems are you having?"

"Two of my girls, Kim and Lana, they work Twelfth Street for me most of the time. This Doc Dearborn, he had two of his men grab them and swoop them over to Wayne Miner Projects. He took both of my girls to some apartment in one of those buildings and just beat them up like a couple'a pieces of trash."

"Just how bad were they treated after he got done with them?"

"Let's just put it this way, Willie: in the end, some of his girls beat my girls to a bloody pulp. Hell, their eyes were almost completely closed shut."

Cammisano took a couple of long puffs off his cigar and asked, "Do you know why Doc Dearborn had your girls brought to Wayne Miner and beat up?"

“Because they wouldn’t come and work for him. Now, I could go after this guy, but I know it wouldn’t be worth it in the end. Willie, this guy has overstepped his bounds.”

“Tell me this, Mack,” Cammisano said, pulling out a half pint of whiskey from a bottom drawer. He swung his head back and guzzled down a long swallow. “You think Doc Dearborn should be dealt with by my people?”

“Yes, I think so, Willie.”

“Why?”

“This punk, this billy badass son of a bitch, he thinks I’m some softie. My girls make money for me, and his girls make money for him. In the end, we all have to kick back to you. None of my girls have ever bothered any of his girls.”

“There’s enough out there for everybody. Whether they’ve got girls out there hooking for them, guys pushing dope on the street corners or someone holding up banks or jewelry stores, there’s enough dough in vice to keep everybody happy. The only way that we’re going to keep the peace is for everyone to respect each other’s territory. You get my point, Mack?”

“I get it and then some,” Gordon answered the feared Kansas City gangster respectfully. “Tell me, Willie, what’s it gonna take to make that coon Doc Dearborn leave my girls alone? Out of respect for you and the Civellas, I didn’t go looking for him so I could put a slug in his brains. This bastard thinks that he owns the city.”

Cammisano smiled at the man who Gordon had never seen before. He pointed to this man from across the room and said, “Mack, I’d like to introduce to you one of my closest associates, Joe Centimano. Joe knows Doc Dearborn better than he probably knows himself.”

Gordon arose from his seat and stretched his arm out to Centimano. Both men exchanged firm handshakes. Centimano was a handsome man who kept himself well dressed and well groomed. Using a light pomade, he styled his coal-black hair into waves.

A sure winner with the women, he had a wife and several girlfriends on the side. He was a father of five and owned a liquor store in the heart of the historical Eighteenth and Vine District.

Centimano took his own time while sizing up Gordon. Likewise, Gordon sized him up.

“Good to meet you, Mack,” Centimano greeted Gordon, someone with a face as though he could be trusted by anyone.

“Same here, Joe,” Gordon politely addressed Centimano.

Centimano began to speak to all those present. “Let’s use some logic here. Order must be maintained. The coloreds must be kept in their place, and, other than business transactions, the Italians and the coloreds must be kept separate. Do you honestly think that I’d ever invite one of them niggers over to my house for dinner?”

Gordon listened to the comment just made by Centimano. Could he take offense to it? He didn’t quite grow up being a racist himself, but those bigots always encouraged him to treat the coloreds as less than human.

“Doc Dearborn’s a cold-blooded killer,” Centimano explained further, slipping out his pack of Viceroy cigarettes to take a smoke. “He’s good for at least twenty-something murders. Sorta reminds me of an Italian or a Sicilian inside a colored man’s body. If you want, Mack, I can have Doc Dearborn lay off your girls.”

“If he doesn’t,” Gordon threatened, shooting Cammisano and Centimano a look, “either myself or someone else is going to stick him in the ground. If he puts his hands on any of my girls again, it probably won’t be worth it, Willie or Joe, but he’s going to meet his maker. However, Willie, I’d never go over your head and go off to do things on my own.”

“I respect that, Mack,” Cammisano said.

“Tell ya what, Mack,” Centimano said, puffing hard on his Viceroy cigarette. “I’ll arrange for Doc Dearborn to come to my liquor store there in the Vine District. We’ll have a sit-down, and we’ll talk about

him leaving your girls alone and sticking with the plans that we've laid out together. Does that sound fair?"

"Sounds fair to me. Joe, you need to tame that wild fucking animal, that loose cannon son of a bitch who thinks that, since he's the godfather of the Black Mafia here in Kansas City, he can just push anybody around."

"When it comes to us Italians, he knows to stay in his place. Believe me, he hasn't seen crazy until one of us Italians blow a fuse. Speaking of Italian, Mack, are you one?"

"Naw." Gordon shook his head, grinning hard at Centimano. "I'm just one of those Irish Micks born right here in Kansas City."

Centimano knew there was always a rivalry between the Italians and the Irish. Both ethnic groups were constantly told by the elitist WASPs that they could never become doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, astronauts, politicians, writers or professors. Deep within their psyches, they heard the voices of the WASPs tell them they'd make great garbage collectors, auto mechanics, toilet cleaners, janitors, carpenters and ditch diggers. This certainly shattered their self-esteem.

Cammisano finished half of his cigar and started a fresh one. He poured himself another full glass of whiskey. After a strong puff and even stronger sip, he looked around at all the men present and said, "Seems like when one problem goes away, another problem's there to take its place. My latest problem is two punks who think they can steal from me and get away with it. Here's what I say, guys. Somebody steals from me, they won't live long enough to enjoy the stolen fruits of their labor."

"Who're we talking about, Willie?" asked Catalano, trying to position the black wig to look straight on his blocky head.

"Gerry Bruster and Lenny Shanahan."

"The two guys that you hired to grab the stolen goods?"

"That's them."

"What'd they do, Willie?"

“You know my garage over there on Fifth and Monroe?”

“Been there many times.”

“Bruster and Shanahan stole about twenty grand in jewelry for me. As part of our agreement, they’d get about five grand’s worth for the legwork, and I would take the rest. These two dumb-dumbs had the iron-cast balls to break into my garage and steal all twenty grand’s worth of jewels.”

“Do you know for sure it was them?” Blando asked his boss.

“A million percent sure. Remember, I’ve got eyes watching my garage twenty-four-seven. My watchdogs described Bruster and Shanahan from head to toe.”

The blood inside Cammisano began to boil like liquid over a strong fire. He’d suffered the ultimate act of betrayal. “Thieves!” Cammisano thundered, the redness in his frightening eyes matching the redness which spread across his face. “Nobody fucking steals from me! I want both Bruster and Shanahan dead. I want them dead, dead, dead, dead. Ya hear me? After you kill them, I want you to kill them again. And then I want you to kill them some more. Yes, I want this to be overkill. Then, after you kill them a few more times, I want you to put them in the bottom of the fucking river.”

Everyone inside of Cammisano’s office knew that he was angry. Gordon looked at him. The Italian vice lord’s temper was a reflection of his. Whenever Gordon really blew his top, people ended up hurt or wished they were dead. Cammisano proved to be a lot worse.

“I’ve got a better idea, Willie,” Catalano said, reaching inside his shirt pocket for his pack of cigarettes. “Why don’t we go back to the old days, you know the days when the good old boys sent their enemies away with cement shoes.”

Cammisano snapped his fingers and pounded his hard fist on the desk. “Great idea, Tony. I know just the place I can get some ready-to-mix bags of cement. The old-timers like Tony Gizzo and

Johnny Lazia and Tony Broncato, legend has it that they had a lotta guys dumped off in the Missouri River with cement shoes.”

“Let me ask you this, Willie,” Cusumano said, joining the others in a smoke break. “Are you going to have to clear it with the Civella brothers?”

“Nick and Cork?”

“Yes.”

“Nick won’t hesitate to give his blessing. Besides, these aren’t made guys. They’re civilians in every sense of the word. They stole from the outfit, and now they have to pay the price.”

“Let’s not move so fast,” Catalano advised Cammisano, being careful to prevent interference from law enforcement. “The mayor of KC, this Harold Bartle, he’s looking to come down hard on the outfit’s operations. Bartle keeps talking about doing away with the go-go bars and the women who work the streets for us. Him coming down hard will make the police chief, Clarence Kelley, come down even harder. People coming up missing will cause them to take a closer look at us.”

Cammisano shook his head and said to Catalano, “Tony, Bruster and Shanahan are as good as dead. As far as this mayor, Bartle, he can do us the honor of leaving us the fuck alone. This police chief, Clarence Kelley, he can do the exact same. If we want to run go-go bars, then we’ll do exactly as we wish. If we want to run whores, dope, liquor and fenced goods, then we’ll do so with impunity. Understand? Ya see, if any of those cocksuckers get in my way, they, too, will be as good as dead.”

There was a reason those in the law enforcement community still dubbed him “a hoodlum’s hoodlum.” Cammisano stood his ground and meant every word that he’d ever spoken.

“Mack,” Cammisano said, blowing a long stream of cigar smoke in Gordon’s direction. “You’ve got experience in breaking a few arms

and legs and heads. I'm gonna need you to help out when we go after Bruster and Shanahan."

"Willie, whaddaya need for me to do?" Gordon asked, forever willing to partake in any brutal assignment handed down by Cammisano.

"To go along with Tony, Vito, and Frankie when they snatch up Bruster and Shanahan."

"Once we've snatched them up, any location in mind where you'll take them?"

"Oh yeah," Cammisano snickered, his criminal mind working on all cylinders.

"I'm in, Willie. Just keep me informed when you're ready to make your move."

"It'll be in the next couple'a days. My watchdogs need to stake out their schedules before we make our move. I have your number. When we're ready, I'll give you a call."

"I'll be waiting on your call."

Centimano rose from his chair and stepped over to Gordon. He placed his hand over his shoulder and said, "In the meantime, Mack, I'll summon Doc Dearborn to come to my liquor store so we can have a talk."

"Can you deliver a message for me?"

"Sure."

"Tell this Doc Dearborn that if he lays another finger on one of my girls, he and I are gonna go toe to toe inside of a boxing ring. Once we're in that ring, I'm gonna close both of his eyes and leave not one tooth in his mouth. This is not a tough guy talking, but a guy who's angry enough to beat him into the dead zone. I hope I've made myself clear."

"You've made yourself perfectly clear, Mack."

"Good."

The meeting had come to an end. By now, the entire office was filled with smoke. Cammisano sent the men on their ways and summoned another girl to come inside and have another rendezvous.

CHAPTER 21

Hardcore in This Store

THE KCPD PATROLMEN hadn't let up on either Gordon or Alla Mae. They cruised constantly along the east end of Twelfth Street, hoping to find incriminating evidence to bring them in for booking. Gordon had figured out their moves now. He'd come up with his own strategy to throw off their scent. They sniffed and sniffed until the trail went cold and led them somewhere else.

Were they going to give up, though? Hardly. Patrol officers Charles Galanis and Lewis Anderson kept the residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street under persistent surveillance. Somehow, the white men who frequented the house were snuck in and out without being detected. The hookers who worked for Gordon posed as presentable women. Still, Galanis, Lewis, and other patrolmen weren't fooled.

Gordon now kept a steady stable of ten hookers. For those interested, the tricks were still able to purchase liquor and cigarettes and sometimes dope.

A special report had been written up by Patrolman Charles Galanis. He'd been looking to try and get a promotion from his KCPD superiors, so much that he nearly wet his pants. Going beyond the call of duty didn't hurt matters.

The following report was written for the special attention of Lieutenant Forrest Garrison:

Date of Report: August 16, 1962

Period Covered: 3:00 a.m.

Bureau or Station: Crime Prevention

Character of Case: Investigation of Arrest

Title of Case (Including aliases): Mary Cooper, Velma Robinson

“Arrested the colored girls Mary Cooper and Velma Robinson at Twelfth Street and Lydia Avenue after we observed them loitering on the street trying to contact white men in cars. We stopped them and questioned them about soliciting on the streets. Both women were taken to headquarters for booking, in which Velma Robinson refused to get off the elevator. She resisted, at which time force was used to make the arrest. Mary Cooper had a knife in her pocket at the time of the arrest.

Cpl. Charles Galanis 096

Approved by: Captain D. L. Denison

Crime Prevention Bureau

Copies furnished to:

Bureau of Records – Operations – No. 1 District – Files

Unfortunately for Galanis, neither Mary nor Velma worked for Gordon. He had fumed with anger after learning that the hookers worked for some pimp on another part of town.

Fridays were usually the days when local grocery stores had sales on most goods. Gordon and Alla Mae were still holding on tightly to the Gold Bond, Top Value, and Treasure Stamps. They were ready to put them to use.

Before making the trip to the grocery stores, Alla Mae went all through the house, placing the holy seals given to her by Annabelle in the windowsills. Gordon happened to see her putting the seals at the edge of the windows on the first floor.

“Mae,” Gordon said, his mouth gaping wide open. “What on Earth’s name are you doing?”

“Putting seals in the windows around the house,” Alla Mae explained, crossing herself every time a seal was placed on a window.

“Seals? For what?”

“Protection, Mack.”

“Protection from what?”

“Let me make it plain and simple,” Alla Mae said, pointing straight at one of the white papers with red writing. “In the Bible, these seals were created to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. This house needs all the protection that it can get.”

Gordon moved closer to the window to examine the geometric figures surrounded by Hebrew writing. “Are you sure that you’re not working none of that voodoo hoodoo, hocus pocus crap on this house, Mae? I know that your folks are all into this religious thing, but I don’t want no spooks or devils running me out of here.”

“Don’t worry, Mack. The Good Lord will protect us, even in the midst of us doing wrong.”

“Everybody does wrong. My folks are devout Catholics since their background is Irish.”

Alla Mae went upstairs. She returned downstairs with a giant rat caught dead in one of the traps. How the rats had gotten that big, neither Gordon nor Alla Mae had a clue. Somehow, they were eating healthy meals.

“Look at that thing,” Gordon commented, frowning from ear to ear after viewing the deceased rodent. “Those critters get any bigger, they’re gonna force us to move out of here.”

“Ain’t that the truth,” Alla Mae agreed, holding the trap at a distance.

“Mae, get rid of that thing before it starts stinking up the whole house. In fact, dump the rat somewhere outside and keep the trap.”

“With all of this blood and hair and guts all over it? Mack, you can’t be serious.”

“Baby, just dump the rat in the bushes somewhere, and just pour some ammonia and scalding-hot water on the trap.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a good idea.”

“Did you check the other traps?”

“I did. The rest of them were empty.”

“We need cats as big as lions to come in here and do away with every single rat.”

Alla Mae went out the back door and crossed the lawn. She dumped the rat into the bushes to be finished off by nature’s janitors. Moving through the tall grass, she noticed a colored man standing at the back door. He seemed legitimate to her even though he looked nervous.

“Can I help you, sir?” Alla Mae asked.

“Heard y’all was the bootleg house,” the man replied, acting like he was itching for dope or alcohol.

“And you are?”

“Fred, ma’am. I live right up there on Thirteenth and Garfield.”

“Fred who?”

“Fred Willoughby.”

“Wait just a second.”

“All right.”

Alla Mae entered the house and made straight for Gordon. “Mack, there’s some colored man at the back door who says that he heard that we were the bootleg house.”

"I'll check him out," Gordon said, sliding his .45 Colt revolver closer to the left side of his pants. He opened the back door and sized the man up rather good. For extra protection, Alla Mae slipped the .22 revolver given to her by Gordon into her dress pocket.

Gordon stared down at the man and asked, "Who told you that we were the bootleg house?"

"Some folks over there by Garfield and Highland."

"Who're these folks?"

"Colored folks just like myself, sir."

"You looking to buy beer or whiskey or both?"

"Both, sir," the man answered with both fear and respect for Gordon. He reached into his pocket and flashed a twenty-dollar bill.

Gordon turned around to look at Alla Mae and said, "Honey, won't you get this gentleman a couple'a pints of whiskey and a six-pack of beer."

Alla Mae wasted no time going to the basement to search for the goods. Gordon had installed a refrigerator to keep most of the liquor chilled. She returned upstairs with frosty bottles of whiskey and six beers inside of a container. Gordon and Alla Mae were hardly used to colored men visiting the home to only buy liquor, though.

The strange man received his goods and disappeared. The way Gordon saw it, money was green, no matter who was spending it.

"C'mon, Mae, let's hit the grocery store before they close today. Grab the stamps so we can put some food in this house."

Alla Mae grabbed the three books of stamps for three separate grocery stores. They planned on stocking the house with groceries for several weeks to come. Gordon lifted his car keys off the table and they went out to his car.

He started up the Bel Air and drove westbound out Twelfth Street. A group of colored teenage girls and boys noticed the interracial couple cruising up the street. Their facial expressions expressed utter disapproval.

If either Gordon or Alla Mae could pick away at their brains, they'd probably learn that the teenagers were thinking that whites and coloreds didn't belong together. "Stick with your own race," was what most of mainstream America lived by.

The stares became more pronounced the farther they drove out Twelfth Street. The second that Gordon and Alla Mae arrived into downtown, the whites became the ones who went into deep stare mode. They'd be the ones who expressed their dissent more openly.

The white men and white women jerked their heads the other way, rolled their eyes, twisted their noses sideways, and clenched their teeth together. The year was still 1962. Whites and coloreds remained segregated throughout America.

A white man and a colored woman. How disgusting! Didn't the separate races know that coming together as a couple was abominable? How dare a mixed-race couple rub their affair in society's face? Those were the precise thoughts of mostly whites and a few coloreds. Many believed that interracial couples were putting their lives on the line by coming together.

"Jesus, Mack!" Alla Mae strongly said, watching the crowds of whites watch her and Gordon. The negative energy coming from the whites made them feel quite unwelcome. "Those white folks are staring right down our throats. Guess we both know what that's about."

"Don't we ever," Gordon said, trying to keep his eye on the road and far away from the all-white crowd. "People are only used to seeing what they've seen all their lives. Most of those whites walking here around downtown, they've only been used to seeing whites with whites and coloreds with coloreds. Damn near all of them have tunnel vision."

"That's the gospel truth. Isn't love just love, no matter what the race?"

"Not in the USRA."

"USRA?"

"The United States Racists of America."

“Eloquently put, Gordon.”

“Why thank you, Mae.”

Gordon drove southbound on Broadway Street. Pulling into the parking lot of Safeway, he and Alla Mae noticed the crowds of white shoppers entering the grocery store. The staring didn't stop there. Men, women, and even children looked at them as though they were from another planet. It'd gotten to the point where it started to irritate Alla Mae.

Gordon parked and they went inside the store. Upon arriving inside, ninety-eight percent of the white crowd found their entertainment for the afternoon. They'd come up with a tactic to make Gordon and Alla Mae feel excruciatingly uncomfortable.

Alla Mae pushed her cart down the aisle. She worked hard to avoid hitting the obnoxious whites who refused to get out of her way. Gordon walked right behind her every step of the way. The interracial couple caused many of them to turn dark red in the face. Some grunted and twisted their mouths sideways.

Why couldn't people just stick with their own kind? Why couldn't the coloreds and whites stay separated in every way possible? Those were only a small amount of the questions that the diehard racist whites had in their minds.

Alla Mae pushed the cart over to the meat section. Having an almost unlimited supply of Gold Bond stamps, ones that were honored at all Safeway grocery stores, she dumped ground beef, ground chuck, corned beef, sausages, hotdogs, ribs and cooked hams into the cart.

A smorgasbord of meats had filled up half of the cart. Alla Mae knew how much of a meat lover Gordon was. He had a voracious appetite for beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, and sometimes duck. A meal wasn't complete to him unless one of the main dishes was meat.

A white woman came over to the meat section and scooped up a large ham. She purposely rammed into the side of Alla Mae's cart and rushed away rolling her eyes. This infuriated Alla Mae.

“Bitch!” Alla Mae scolded in her lowest voice possible, gripping the front of the cart as though it was the white woman’s neck. “Somebody needs to teach that white heifer some manners. Mack, did you see what she just did?”

“I sure did, Mae,” Gordon said, himself having a hard time tolerating the rude bastards of his own white race. Make no mistake about it, whites got tired of other whites’ bullshit at different intervals. “She needs to go back in time and let her mama and daddy raise her all over again.”

“That’s what I’m saying. Didn’t anybody ever teach her how to say excuse me?”

“Apparently not.”

Alla Mae rolled the cart over to the canned-goods section. Cans of corn, green beans, pork and beans, mixed vegetables, tomatoes, and fruit cocktail were dumped on top of the meat. After a quick visit over to the dairy section, she placed milk, butter and ice cream on top of the canned goods.

Once she went over to the produce section, she gathered up bunches of collard, mustard and turnip greens. Heads of lettuce, a bag of red potatoes, bananas, apples, oranges, and pears began to fill the grocery cart.

A few non-perishable items were stuffed to the side of the other goods. Alla Mae had reached the limit. The food items inside her cart looked like a mountain of grocery goods. It dawned on her that quick waffles would be perfect for her and Gordon to eat for breakfast.

She guided the cart over to the frozen section where the waffles were. As she reached over for the wide flat carton, she got sideswiped by another customer’s cart. This particular customer presented himself as a very angry white man.

“Ouch!” Alla Mae grumbled, keeping her voice low enough to not catch the attention of the white shoppers. “Dammit, the steel on his basket scraped me on the side.”

Gordon didn't like his colored girlfriend being disrespected so openly. White or colored, it didn't matter. Even as a veteran procurer of women, he refused to sit back and watch women be hurt, whether they were family members or distant strangers.

Since no one else was present in the aisle with him and Alla Mae, he pursued the man with vengeance in his mind. Using brute strength, Gordon wrapped both hands around his neck and picked him up off the ground. He squeezed his neck tighter and tighter until he nearly turned purplish-red in the face. Foam oozed from the side of his mouth and thick mucus dripped from both nostrils.

Gordon released his death grip from around the man's neck and told him, "Look, you redneck hick white boy. You ever hit her or any woman with a grocery basket, especially when I'm present, I'll cut your balls off and feed them to you. Then I'll stick your motherfucking ass in the bottom of the goddamned Missouri River. Have I made myself clear, you son of a bitch?"

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!" he choked, trying to breathe.

"Run and tell the cops what I just did. I've got something for them, too."

"Sorry about that, sir," the man apologized, leaving his basket there in the aisle, then rushing out of the Safeway.

Gordon's violent temper had no tolerance for silly-acting people. He felt that the white man was racist and couldn't wait to unleash his bigotry on any colored person. Their shopping trip at Safeway wasn't quite over, though.

Gordon and Alla Mae had come to the checkout line. Four lines were full with customers who were waiting to have their groceries rung up and bagged. The stares from the white patrons got more intense. One could almost cut the tension with a serrated knife. This could've been their way of expressing to Gordon and Alla Mae that they weren't welcome in their part of town.

When it came time for their items to be rang up, the cashier's attitude shifted. She threw their items around as though they were pieces of junk, acting as though she hated her job. Gordon and Alla Mae simply didn't care. Their only concern was to fill their house up with groceries.

All the grocery items were totaled up.

"How're you paying for this?" asked the cashier with a snippy attitude.

Alla Mae reached down into her purse and brought out the thick book of stamps. "I'll be paying for our groceries with Gold Bond stamps."

The cashier had the nerve to ask Alla Mae, "Ma'am, where'd you get all of those stamps from? My two years of working here at Safeway, I've never seen anyone with that many Gold Bond stamps."

"You let us worry about that," Gordon stepped in to answer quickly. "You just do your job by standing on the other side of this conveyor belt and ringing up people's groceries. Let me tell you, honey, you've overstepped your bounds."

"Well... I..."

"Need to contact the cops? The sheriffs? The IRS? The FBI?"

"No, that's not it at all."

"How much is our total?"

The cashier looked at the register and said, "Two hundred forty-four dollars and sixty-one cents."

"Mae," Gordon said in a calm tone. "Count out two hundred and forty-four dollars and sixty-one cents for this young lady."

Alla Mae tore off Gold Bond stamps worth two hundred and forty-five dollars. "There you are, ma'am. That should cover the total."

The cashier grudgingly stuffed the stamps under the cash register drawer.

While leaving the store, Gordon looked back at the cashier and said, "You have a nice day, young lady."

The whites were relieved to see the interracial couple leave. Those walking behind and in front of them rushed to leave their immediate presence.

Had Gordon known what he'd gotten himself into after choosing Alla Mae as his mate? Did Alla Mae herself know any better? Again, it was the late summer of 1962. The seeds of racism were planted deeper than ever. Lynchings were still going on in the Deep South with some occurring in the north.

Discrimination was still at an all-time high for the coloreds. Having lived, breathed, sweated and eaten white supremacy, the whites' hatred was much stronger for the whites and coloreds who engaged themselves in interracial relationships.

The groceries were placed in the trunk and the backseat. Gordon and Alla Mae breathed a sigh of relief. No longer were they in the presence of whites who seethed with racist hatred.

But the couple's problems were only beginning. They couldn't hide who they were and what they represented. Gordon felt that he might've lost much of his identity by showing compassion for the coloreds. Living in a rundown colored neighborhood and pimping mainly colored women by no means helped his reputation .

"Know what, Mae?" Gordon said, daydreaming while staring right into the rearview mirror.

"Can't wait to hear it, Mack."

"When I was married to Thelma, we could go into any grocery store, into any restaurant, into any surplus store, or to any amusement park without the white people harassing us or staring real crazy at us. The white kids would walk up to Butch and Monica and start playing with them. Thelma and I would get friendly hellos from nearly all the white people whenever we'd go out in public. Sometimes, I felt like we were treated like royalty."

"Are you saying that those are some of the benefits of being white in the United States?"

“In a roundabout way, that’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“Here’s what we both have to face up and realize, Mack. Whites don’t respect the coloreds. To them, coloreds are nothing but monkeys, apes, animals, coons, jigs, and pieces of trash. Did you learn about history when you were in school?”

“Yeah, a little bit.”

“Well, if you were taught real history, then you would’ve learned that my ancestors weren’t even considered full human beings. We were sold like pieces of property. We were beaten like beasts of burden as though our lives meant nothing. We were raped all the time and nothing was never done about it. The children were taken away from their mammas and daddies and sold to other slave owners. The slave men were beaten badly right there in front of their wives and children. The families were split up and sold across America. If we ran away, the slave masters would castrate us, tar and feather us, cut our hands and feet off, burn us with branding irons, and beat us with whips until we were only inches away from death. Mack, those are just some of the bad, bad things that whites have done to us.”

“Makes you wanna crack some heads, don’t it?” Gordon sympathized, himself knowing the evil, conniving nature of white men. Of course, he was an evil white man himself. But he never considered himself evil to the point where he almost pushed mankind over the edge.

“But in spite of all that, I’m still not going to let my African colored brothers off the hook.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because they helped sell us into slavery. They sold us for stuff like rum and ivory and trinkets.”

“A small price for enslaving another human being.”

“Human trafficking. God didn’t make men to be slaves. Men made other men to be slaves.”

Gordon leaned over to press his lips up to Alla Mae's mouth. After a short, heated kiss, he told her, "Mae, you just might be the true love of my life."

Alla Mae smiled and said to Gordon, "Mack, I feel the same way about you."

"Well, we better get going. We've got a little more grocery shopping to do."

Gordon reminded Alla Mae that they had in their possession stamps for other grocery stores like Kroger and Milgram and A&P. It felt good knowing that they were sitting on a goldmine of groceries.

CHAPTER 22

The Mister of Liquor

JOSEPH "SHOTGUN JOE" Centimano became known as the negotiator between the Italian mob and the Black Mafia. Moving in their own circles, Italians preyed on fellow Italians. The coloreds preyed on other coloreds.

Nearly every culture that existed on earth preyed on members of the same culture. However, what any other ethnic group knew as a fact was that no one preyed on their people more than the coloreds.

They sold one another out for less than pennies of pocket change. Their hatred for one another grew like a raging forest fire. The idea of respecting one another was far-fetched. Many coloreds tried to unite at the behest of civil-rights promoters, but their collaborative efforts were useless.

Italians like Joe Centimano knew this. He knew it very well. That's exactly why he operated his liquor store, Joe's Liquor, in the heart of the colored ghetto.

He'd set up shop right there at the corner of Nineteenth Street and Vine. Most liquor stores operated in poor neighborhoods where the coloreds resided. Centimano once joked to his mob colleagues that nobody could drink the way those moolinyans could.

Centimano noticed that it was the coloreds who'd drown all their sorrows away in a whiskey bottle. They frequented his liquor store every single day, sometimes several times a day. The winos panhandled out in front of Joe's Liquors.

At least ninety percent of the liquor stores in Kansas City, if not more, were owned and operated by the Italians. Under every counter and beside every cash register in these liquor stores was either a shotgun, a pistol, a blackjack, a wooden club or a knife large enough to slaughter a bear.

Centimano had all of those weapons to protect his business. He never cared for the colored men. Now, the colored women were a different story. Italian men lusted for them like they were a sweet treat. Their dark complexions and curvy bodies and striking features sent their hearts into overdrive.

Whenever colored women visited his liquor store, Centimano gave them preferential treatment over the colored men. Sometimes, he'd give them items for free. He greeted them with smiles.

There could've been a hidden agenda, but most never knew about it. But there was one colored man who Centimano came to confide in. Who was he? He was none other than James "Doc" Dearborn. The man who still crowned himself as the Godfather of the Black Mafia.

Centimano had aligned himself with Italian mobsters, men who were his pals in the north end Democratic political clubs. Because of this, Doc Dearborn warily respected him and his fellow Italians. Could it have been more fear than respect which kept the colored man in line, though? No matter how crazy he thought he was, the savagery of some Italians proved crazier.

The Democratic clubs that Centimano and his wife frequented were remnants of the old Pendergast political machine. These clubs built a legendary political patronage system that included controlling black votes in designated neighborhoods.

Doc Dearborn worked with Centimano in helping to settle the bickering factions of the clubs. The duo had brazenly and courageously stole the last ounces of breath from the tough, Anglo-Saxton ward bosses.

The coloreds replaced them in what had always been white-owned jobs. No one dared challenge the supremacy of the Mafia-connected north end Democratic groups that were strong among inner-city colored voters.

Centimano lived under the code that order must always be maintained. The coloreds must be taught to stay in their place. Never, ever trust them farther than you could see them.

Doc Dearborn, the brazen killer, the cunning thief, the cold-blooded woman beater and expert liar walked into Joe's Liquor with two men from his Black Mafia Family. As usual, he had the meanest look on his face. He wore a shiny, black leather jacket with black slacks.

His shoes with thick heels were polished to perfection. A barber must've performed a miracle on his afro, because it was cut to perfection. The kinky strands throughout his afro had a shine to them, a special oil having been used.

Centimano and Doc Dearborn greeted one another with a firm handshake. Both men exchanged genuine smiles.

"Let's go in the back and talk," Centimano suggested to Doc Dearborn as the liquor store's patrons poured inside to get their daily fix of alcohol.

Doc Dearborn followed Centimano into an office at the very back of the store. Once inside, both of them fired up their favorite cigarettes. Before long, clouds of smoke filled the office.

"Doc, how in the hell ya been?" Centimano inquired, throwing both of his feet on top of his desk. This was his way of letting people know that his liquor store was his domain.

"Fine, Joe, real fine," Doc Dearborn said, blowing long streams of smoke from both of his nostrils.

"I called you here because there's a slight problem."

"Problem?" Doc Dearborn asked. "What kinda problem?"

"You familiar with Gordon Reynolds?"

"That dirty honky that everybody calls Mack?"

"Yep, everybody calls him Mack out on the streets. This Gordon, you know he does some legwork for Willie Cammisano from time to time."

"Cammisano, who owns most of the strip joints up and down Twelfth Street?"

"You guessed right. Willie The Rat owns practically every tit-tie joint on Twelfth Street, between Central and Wyandotte near downtown."

"Joe, that dude's eyes are scary enough to make you shit on yourself."

"Couldn't agree more," Centimano agreed. "Mack complained to Willie that you had two of his girls snatched off the street and then swooped over to Wayne Miner Projects. He told Willie and some of us that your people did a big, big number on his girls. Said that your people stuck pistols and knives in their faces, had two of your dogs try and bite chunks out of them, hung them out of some windows, and worst of all, two of your girls beat them uglier than the ugliest monster. I've gotta ask, was all that necessary? We've gotta do everything we can to keep the cops off our asses. The police chief and the mayor, they're already looking to lock us up for a long time."

"Check this out, Joe," Doc Dearborn said respectfully. "My girls work Twelfth Street just like his girls does. We got there long before he did. You understand? That white dude Mack needs to know his place. It makes me sick to my stomach that he's cutting into my money. Turn me loose on him, and I'll beat him so ugly, his own mama won't know who he is."

"You make it sound like a kid on a schoolyard who goes crying to the teacher about another kid who's picking on him. C'mon, Doc, we're all grown men here. Besides, Mack kicks back a lot of the dough he makes from his girls and other operations to Willie."

“Don’t I kick back too?”

“Sure you do. But please, don’t go ruining it for all of us. Look, hookers are free to work any corner of this city that they want to. There’s enough tricks to go around for all the women out there soliciting.”

“You’ve got that right. My girls pull in big bucks, especially during the weekends.”

“Are all your girls colored women?”

“Every last one of them.”

“Why no white girls?”

“Haven’t been lucky enough to get no white girl to work the streets for me.”

“We both know, Doc, that white men can’t wait to sample some brown sugar. It’s like that forbidden fruit to them. Those rich white boys from the suburban neighborhoods come down here in the ghetto to go hunting for the colored women.”

“Certainly they do,” Doc Dearborn agreed with the hardcore Italian would-be gangster. “White boys love their berries dark, and the juices inside the berry even sweeter.”

“Colored women must make one helluva meal ticket for you, Doc.”

“That and dope and maybe some stickup jobs. Joe, did you also know that that peckerwood Gordon Reynolds runs a good-time house up on the east end of Twelfth Street?”

“I knew that.”

“Man, he’s got whores and tricks coming out of that house like some convention at a big-time hotel. A couple of my boys who police the streets for me tell me that he’s selling dope and whiskey and cigarettes out of that same house. Are you Italians boys getting a piece of his action?”

“Doc, that’s more of a personal matter. If the time comes for Mack to be dealt with, then the higher-ups will deal with him.”

“I can respect that, Joe.”

Centimano pointed to the door of his office. “C’mon, Doc, let’s go back out into the store.”

Doc Dearborn followed Centimano into the liquor store section of the building at the corner of Nineteenth Street and Vine.

Centimano's eyes were like a hawk's, able to spot their prey below from a thousand feet in the air. He zoomed in on a customer who tried camouflaging a six-pack of beer under his jacket. No one wore a jacket towards the end of August. The summertime temperatures were far too scorching for extra clothing.

The son of Centimano, David, had no clue that someone was about to walk out of his liquor store without paying for some beer. That someone was a colored man who appeared to be in his early forties, with extra-kinky hair covered up by a baseball cap. Who was this strange man whom most neighborhood residents knew quite well? Roy Heard was his name. He stood only five-foot-four, with a medium-brown complexion. He never allowed prior convictions for robbery and car theft stop him from being a devoted husband and father.

Centimano rushed up to the double glass doors and threw both arms outward. He allowed the paying customers and others to leave the store before locking the front entrance. Looking at the man who tried to steal the six-pack of beer, he shifted into rage mode. Like a dragon releasing fire, Centimano breathed heavily through his nostrils.

"You wanna steal from me!" Centimano fumed, his breathing heavy to the point of his shoulders humping up and down. "You jiggy, you coon, you moolinyan, you nigger, you. For that, I'm going to put you in the fucking river. The Missouri River, you yard ape."

Doc Dearborn recognized the thief right away. He'd been in Joe's Liquors many times. Centimano had caught him trying to steal before but kindly let him off with a warning. A warning from someone so brutal was so out of character as to be unheard of.

"Didn't you learn your lesson the first time?" Doc Dearborn questioned the frightened man, who stood over by the counter shaking.

Centimano snatched the beer off the counter and placed it back inside the cooler. He approached the colored man and shouted

into his face in Italian, "*Hai rubato da me e ora si deve pagare con la propria vita.*"

"Huh?" the man who'd gotten caught trying to steal from Joe's Liquors asked.

Centimano's exact words had been: "You have stolen from me, and now you must pay with your own life."

Doc Dearborn hadn't known that Centimano spoke fluent Italian. The man whose life hung in the balance certainly didn't know it.

David was standing several feet away. He was afraid for the man's life.

Centimano dashed behind the counter and yanked two Winchester pump-action shotguns from the floor. The liquor store descended into a terrifying silence.

Centimano handed Doc Dearborn one of the shotguns. Roy had made a wrong move when he decided to come inside Joe's Liquors and tried to steal something for a second time.

"We're going bye-bye," Centimano told Roy, holding the shotgun up to his chest.

"Joe, won't you give me one more chance?" Roy pleaded, his whole body trembling.

"Nobody steals from me and lives. And to steal from me a second time, it's worse than shitting on top of my head."

"Man, I got an old lady and six children."

"You should've thought about that when you tried to steal that beer."

"Please, Joe, please!" Roy begged, nearly falling to his hands and knees.

"Let's go!" Centimano peeked out the glass doors. Customers wanted to come inside the store, but he signaled to them that business was closed for the day. He'd been careful to make sure they didn't see the shotgun behind Roy.

When the time was perfect, Centimano and Doc Dearborn escorted him out of the store with the shotguns held to his chest and

his back. Doc Dearborn shoved him into the back seat of Centimano's car and sat right next to him. Centimano tossed his shotgun in the front seat and sped off up Paseo Boulevard.

While they were cautiously cruising up Paseo, Doc Dearborn kept his shotgun pressed into Roy's chest. Centimano drove through different streets until they reached the Armour-Swift Burlington Bridge, better known as the ASB Bridge, and parked just below. With many loud cars and trucks driving over the bridge, it was the perfect spot to commit a murder.

Doc Dearborn pushed Roy out of the back seat. Centimano cocked his rifle and aimed it straight at Roy's head as Doc Dearborn cocked his and positioned it down toward his chest.

Roy didn't know what to say. He was completely lost for words. How soon would he meet up with death? Had the wrath of Centimano finally caught up with him?

Centimano moved the shotgun closer to Roy's head and shouted, "*Si muore, figlio di puttana!*" He pulled the trigger and blasted a shell into the front of Roy's head. A quick pump of the shotgun, and another shell went crashing into the side of his head. Blood splattered all over his hands, his shirt, and the shotgun. What a mess he'd created.

Doc Dearborn had no clue what his colleague had said. Centimano had shouted, "You die, you son of a bitch!"

Two more shots were pumped into Roy's chest by Doc Dearborn before they felt that they had done enough damage.

"C'mon, Doc, let's get the hell outta here."

The pair of killers left the murder scene, feeling no remorse for their senseless crime.

CHAPTER 23

What Size Shoe?

POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS were still baffled concerning the bizarre murder of Cecil Ray Young. The case went cold, but Chief Clarence Kelley couldn't fathom who'd want to commit such a heinous crime.

Who'd want to spread peanut butter, strawberry jelly, and chocolate syrup all over someone and then feed them to lots of rats inside a dark tunnel down in Brush Creek? Only Gordon McCoy Reynolds and Rufus Doyle Eady knew the answer to that question.

With no witnesses, detectives didn't have much to go on, and now the KCPD had a fresh homicide to solve. The body of Roy Heard was discovered by a group of railroad workers in Burlington and Quincy. Animals had gone to work on the corpse before it was found. Now well into the early stages of decomposition, the body was rushed to the morgue by two medical examiners for further examination.

Centimano felt good knowing that he could follow through with a murder without the consent of high-ranking Kansas City mobsters. Not being a made man for a specific Mafia family also had its advantages.

Cammisano had waited for Gerry Bruster and Lenny Shanahan to settle into their familiar routine. Bruster and Shanahan remained the two main targets on his hit list. Little did they know that they were being stalked by Gordon, Catalano, Cusumano, and Blando.

The trips they made to the local bars, the grocery store, the doctor's office or the hardware store were being monitored. Their homes were kept under constant watch.

Saturday evening arrived, and Gerry Bruster had just dropped off his wife and kids at his in-laws' home. Darkness crept upon Kansas City within less than half an hour.

As Gerry drove around the Country Club Plaza and onto Wornall Road, Gordon trailed him by at least four car lengths. Inside Gordon's immaculately polished Bel Air were Blando, Cusumano, and Catalano.

Catalano sat in the front, while Blando and Cusumano sat quietly in the back. Gerry continued his drive on Wornall Road until he reached a section of town known as the Waldo Area, which began at Seventy-fifth Street. He parked his car and went inside a huge wine and liquor store where high-quality liquor was sold.

Gordon parked at the far end of the lot, and he and his men disguised their faces. Gerry came out of the store with a paper sack cradled under his armpit. He continued his journey farther south.

In an upscale area known as Grandview, Gerry made a sharp right turn onto 119th Street and Bennington Drive. Slowly driving up the block, he turned into the driveway of a green house with siding. Gordon and the others didn't know it, but this was the residence of Gerry's mistress.

"So that's why he dropped off his old lady and kids," Gordon deduced, watching Gerry's every move.

"Doing what most of us men do best," Catalano said. "He won't be having a drink with his side piece for long."

"If we're gonna make our move, we'd better make it now." Gordon quietly pulled the handle on the door and was about to step out of the car.

Catalano saw a woman come to the front door. He gripped Gordon's arm and whispered, "Wait! That must be his side piece of ass."

The four men waited to see what would happen next.

The woman living in the green house opened the door and greeted Gerry with a kiss. He went to the back of his car and unlocked the trunk. The opportunity to abduct him presented itself.

With the woman no longer at the door, Gordon and the others quickly emerged from the car. Gordon ran up on Gerry and hit him in the back of the head with a blackjack. This leveled him to the ground. Catalano and Cusumano wrapped duct tape around his mouth, hands, and legs.

The four of them lifted him up and dumped him inside the trunk. Cusumano would be the one to follow behind Gordon in Gerry's car. By the time Gerry's mistress came back to the front door, he'd been abducted and the men were long gone.

Cammisano had informed Gordon and his dedicated goons about the places Lenny Shanahan frequented on the weekends. Although he too was a married man, he went hunting for women on the side.

Carollo's Italian Ristorante was an Italian restaurant located in the heart of the River Quay district. Lenny often went to Carollo's for his giant turkey sandwiches with caciocavallo cheese.

Gordon cruised down East Third Street through the burgeoning River Quay District with the other three men after they had ditched Gerry's car several miles away. Gordon, being the shrewd man that he was, was posing as a guy driving through River Quay with his buddies.

Patrons in the area were flooding into well-known bars over on Fourth and Fifth Streets. Surprisingly, Lenny came out of Carollo's carrying two large white sacks. The four men drove past Lenny as he

got inside his car. Once he began to drive, he made a left turn onto Main Street and through downtown.

Gordon remained at least four car lengths behind him, at least two extra car lengths than he was accustomed to. He displayed extreme caution, avoiding getting into an accident.

The foursome felt vibrations coming from the trunk. Gerry was trying everything to free himself, but his efforts were useless. His frightened moans could be heard inside the car. Lenny had now driven into the Westport District and parked behind a popular drinking establishment.

There was poor lighting and no one who'd serve as witnesses behind the building.

Gordon swerved into the parking lot and jerked the car into park. He kept the engine running while Catalano, Cusumano, and Blando rushed over to Lenny's car. Cusumano punched him in the dead center of his face, causing an instant nosebleed. Duct tape was wrapped around his mouth, hands, and legs.

The trio lifted him and brought him over to the car, where Gordon was waiting with the trunk open. Like Gerry, they dumped Lenny inside and slammed the trunk shut. Gordon sped off without a single person witnessing the abduction of Lenny Shanahan.

Less than fifteen minutes after leaving the Westport District, Gordon and the three Cammisano henchmen arrived at a nondescript warehouse in the West Bottoms. Gordon parked and came around to pop the trunk. Inside were the wiggling bodies of Gerry and Lenny.

Gordon and Cusumano lifted Gerry out of the trunk while Catalano and Blando grabbed Lenny. Both men were carried into the warehouse and down a long set of stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, Cammisano waited expectantly. His frightening eyes promised that danger was approaching.

How sweet it was to see that his plans had succeeded. The two punks who'd robbed the jewels from him were dropped on the hard

warehouse floor like sacks of rotten potatoes. Cammisano stepped up to them and pressed his hard-soled shoe into Gerry's face, then did the same to Lenny with his other shoe. Fear filled their eyes.

Cammisano pulled a fat cigar out of his shirt pocket and fired it up. He puffed on it a few times. As an act of total disrespect, he bent down and burned the faces of Gerry and Lenny with the cigar. Dark-red circles formed on their cheeks.

Those circles puffed up into red blisters. Gordon and the others were ordered to lift them off the floor and place them in hard wooden chairs. Sitting them up, they wrapped at least two rolls of duct tape around the bodies of each man.

Cammisano walked up and snatched the tape off the mouths of Gerry and Lenny. "What cha say there, fellas?"

"Willie, what the hell's going on?" asked Gerry, his heart pumped into overdrive from violent fear.

"Haven't you a clue, Gerry?" Cammisano said, playing mind games.

"No, Willie, I don't."

"You stole from me. And when someone steals from me, that's worse than taking my manhood away from me. Do I look like some retarded faggot to you?"

"No, you don't."

"Do I look like I'm softer than the cotton that they use in the hospitals? Softer than tissue that you wipe your ass or your nose with?"

"I'd never think that about you, Willie."

"Then why did you steal the jewels out of my garage?"

"Jewels?"

"The jewels that I had stashed in my garage on Fifth and Monroe, just right off Independence Avenue."

"Lenny and I would never steal from you, Willie. Would we, Lenny?"

Lenny turned his head sideways and told Gerry, "That's right, Gerry. We'd never steal from Willie."

Cammisano moved closer and bent forward to spit in both of their faces. "Lying bastards! I gave you five grand from that score, and that's how you show your appreciation? See, what you didn't realize is that my garage is being looked at by my watchdogs every hour of every day. And my watchdogs described you two from head to toe."

"That's a lie," Lenny said, tied so tight to the chair that he could barely move any muscle in his entire body. "Your men have mistaken us for someone else."

Cammisano cocked his leg back and kicked Lenny right where *his* precious jewels were. Lenny yelled from the top of his lungs. It did no good in attracting help since they were inside a completely soundproof place.

"Shithead liar!" Cammisano accused. "You and Gerry were the only two who knew those jewels were in there. Even my younger brother, Joey, didn't. My old lady and my kids definitely didn't know, either. So why don't you and Gerry just fess up and take your punishment like men?"

"Listen to me, Willie," Lenny tried reasoning as he stared death right in the face. "You'd be the last person on Earth who we'd steal from. Look, I also have an old lady and several kids. Please let me live to see them grow up and finish high school, go to college, get married, and have kids of their own."

"You maggot motherfucker!" Cammisano shouted, his anger causing the hairs to stand up on the back of his neck. "Were you thinking about all of that when you stole my jewels out of the garage? Huh? Didn't you and your thieving buddy over there stop to think for one second that Willie Cammisano ain't the type of wop to fool around with? We Italians have this thing about people who steal from us. We'd rather take an iron pole up the shithole than have somebody steal from us."

"Look, we've got enough to cover whatever they were worth. Please, Willie, just give us one more chance. Let us make it right by settling any debts we have with you."

“See, you’ve just confessed,” Cammisano said. “Sorry, but your fate has just been sealed. With Willie Cammisano, there are no second chances. You fuck up the first time, you have to pay with your life.”

Cammisano snapped his finger. He pointed to Gordon, Catalano, Cusumano, and Blando. All four men made their way farther into a darker area of the warehouse’s basement. They returned with two wooden bats and brass knuckles.

Gordon and Catalano wasted no time swinging the bats at the men’s chests and stomachs. The impact of the solid wood quickly bruised their internal organs. One hard swing after another had both victims coughing up blood. Their shirts were quickly stained with large blood rings.

Gordon and Catalano kept swinging with brute force. Two ribs on Gerry’s lower abdomen cracked audibly.

Cusumano and Blando came behind the men swinging the bats and pounded the faces of Gerry and Lenny with the brass knuckles. After several blows, the men’s skin was broken with much blood streaming down their faces and necks and onto their shirts and pants. Their eyes were almost completely swollen shut by that point.

A few of Lenny’s teeth had fallen out after being shattered by the hard steel of the brass knuckles. Their punishment was harsh, brutal in every sense of the word. Cammisano wanted them beaten within inches of their lives but not totally left for dead.

Once again, Cammisano had proved that he was a hoodlum’s hoodlum, a vicious criminal intent on destroying anyone who got in his way.

From looking at Gerry and Lenny, they’d received the beating of a lifetime. Cammisano’s propensity for violence was endless. His hunger to torture others could never be satisfied. But now came the real fun for the group of sadistic torturers and killers.

Gordon and Catalano went inside of a storage room and returned with two thirty-gallon buckets. Inside the buckets were small scraps

of iron and steel, which would provide extra weight to make them sink. Gerry and Lenny's feet were lifted and placed inside the buckets.

Cusumano and Blando went back to the same storage room. They came back with two buckets filled with freshly mixed concrete, water, and a yellow pasty substance. The adulterated concrete mixture was poured into the buckets under Gerry and Lenny's feet.

"Look'a here," Cammisano chirped happily, blowing smoke rings around the heads of Gerry and Lenny. "The two birds who couldn't fly straight. The two songsters who couldn't carry a tune to make the song sound pleasing to the ears. Once these cement shoes dry, you'll be keeping the others company in the bottom of the Missouri River."

"Da Muhזורhee Rivva?" Gerry replied, his words badly slurred but clear enough for Cammisano and the others to understand.

"That's right, Gerry," Cammisano said, mocking his beaten-up enemy. "Aw, how lovely it'll be. You and Lenny at the bottom of the Missouri River with the river critters nibbling off you until they leave you all as nothing but bones."

Stories ran rampant about how gangsters from the early 1900s, gangsters such as Tom Pendergast, Anthony Gizzo, Gaetano Lococo, Charles Binaggio, and Joseph DiGiovanni would have their enemies disposed of by dumping them into the Missouri River with cement shoes. Men like those loved seeing people tormented; they were those who made their enemies pay dearly.

"Peez, Willay, let auss go," Gerry pleaded for a final time, his words broken due to his shattered jaw.

"Like I said, you cross me, you have to pay with your life. Worst of all, you won't even tell me what you did with the jewels. I don't know if you kept them for yourself. Hell, you might've given them to your wives or girlfriends. Either way, you and Lenny are on a course straight to hell."

Cammisano stepped closer to Gerry and Lenny and studied their brutalized faces for a few seconds. He nodded and told both of them,

“So long, Gerry and Lenny. We’ll be back in a few days to dump you in the river.”

Cammisano led the others out of the basement of the warehouse. Gerry and Lenny had no clue as to when they’d return to deliver on their promise.

CHAPTER 24

Vice Explains the Price

LIFE FOR GORDON and Alla Mae seemed sweeter than ever. For Gordon, it might've seemed sweeter. Both of his houses were full with money, groceries, and a steady flow of whores and tricks.

More customers requested liquor and cigarettes, sometimes requesting some very small quantities of dope. He wasn't a dummy by any means. He frequently moved his business between both of his bawdy houses to avoid being caught by the police.

For a job well done after abducting and beating Gerry Bruster and Lenny Shanahan, Cammisano provided Gordon with an extra supply of liquor and cigarettes. For the next month or so, he didn't have to kick back none of his vice proceeds to the feared Kansas City gangster.

Alla Mae convinced Gordon into letting her spend some of the grocery store stamps on her two children. When Annabelle received the news that a huge supply of groceries was coming into her home, she celebrated by cooking big meals for Gordon and Alla Mae.

To satisfy Gordon's ferocious appetite, Alla Mae often cooked steak and potato meals fit for a king. To her, he was a king. She was his queen, someone who challenged him to run his vice activities smarter, not harder. Gordon felt like he was the king of two vice castles that law enforcement labeled as nothing but bawdy houses.

The action at his bawdy house at 1414 East Twelfth Street only got hotter. More white men requested the colored women who could satisfy their hidden sexual fantasies. Unfortunately, their white wives and girlfriends were conservative when it came to their sexual fulfillment.

Gordon told Kim, Lana, Louise, and several of his other girls to take a few days off. Was he going to be missing out on some money? Sure he was. But he'd come out ahead, since Cammisano wouldn't be requesting his vice tithes for the next month.

Alla Mae had gone to Gordon and explained how the police were watching them closer than ever. Having a strong spiritual intuition, she told him about dreams she'd had, dreams about the cops busting them and putting them in jail for a long time. She'd envisioned the cops slapping handcuffs on her and Gordon. That was all Gordon needed to hear.

The address of his other bawdy house was 1325 Lydia Avenue. This location wasn't too far from his Twelfth Street house, being less than half a mile away. Inside the residence at Thirteenth and Lydia, there were three floors, four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a large kitchen, a full basement, a living room, and a dining room with much space.

With the money Gordon made from vice, he had treated Alla Mae and himself to a Motorola TV for the house. The features on this model were absolutely breathtaking. This TV came equipped with a twenty-three-inch screen, an AM-FM-MPX stereo radio, and a Voice of Music record changer.

Gordon and Alla Mae were presently sitting comfortably on a sofa that he'd recently purchased for what he called "the second residence." The couple happened to be watching an episode of *The Untouchables* which focused on gangsters in Kansas City.

The storyline hit so close to home because the gangsters in this particular episode were sneaking ingredients into Kansas City for the purpose of bootlegging. Gunfire raced across the black-and-white screen.

Alla Mae watched the American crime drama closely. “Mack, what makes the gangsters from Prohibition different from the gangsters here in the early sixties?”

“Here’s how I see it, Mae,” Gordon said, firing up a cigarette after finishing a frosty bottle of beer. “The gangsters back then were bolder, smarter, crazier, and some of them were even outright insane. The gangsters of today, whether they’re Italians, Irish, Jewish or the coloreds, they make their moves without thinking first. That’s why so many of them end up in jail, doing time for what I call shameless stupidity. Believe me, I speak from experience.”

“You sound like someone with a lotta regrets.”

“Regrets and much more. You see, Mae, had I planned and plotted out the shit that I did way back when, I probably wouldn’t have done a day in jail. I was guilty of jumping right into things. Like a college guy who makes plans on how he’s going to study and pass one of his tests, I should’ve made plans on how I was going to do things before making my moves. That’s what being impatient will do to you.”

“Give me an example of what you’re talking about,” Alla Mae requested. Gordon’s stories from his earlier years were starting to pique her interest.

The episode of *The Untouchables* came to a close. Alla Mae rose from the sofa to turn down the volume on the television.

“Where do I start?” Gordon said, releasing a strong sigh. “Like the time when Rufus and I were caught with that cash and those OPA gasoline coupons down in Dallas. A lot of the Italian mob guys up there in New York were making a fortune off those gasoline coupons. The government issued the coupons during the war since there was a big demand for gasoline. I got excited after hearing stories about gangsters getting practically filthy rich selling the coupons.”

“On the black market?” Alla Mae asked, mesmerized as Gordon walked her through his story, which had happened almost twenty years ago.

“One of the blackest markets at the time,” Gordon answered, mentally placing himself right there at the faraway scene. “Anyway, Rufus and I met up with two women down in Dallas, Jennie Dupree and Betty Joe Sigler. Boy, we’d never met two women who had such hustling in their blood. Rufus and I both had forty-five-gauge Colt revolvers, ready to make the biggest score of our lives. Then it all came crumbling down around us.”

Gordon got quiet all of a sudden. Alla Mae stared right into his eyes, which had a faraway look, and said, “So getting hold of the coupons was a game of who could get there first.”

“Oh yeah,” Gordon said. “Like I said, the Italians up there in New York and New Jersey, they were the first ones to get in on it. That’s because the big banks and financial companies were the places where they held the gas coupons. The Italians talked the big boys working in the banks into giving up the gas stamps for a big chunk of cash. One of the guys who got super rich from rationing was some big-time New York gangster named Carlo Gambino, who was the biggest of them all up there in New York.”

Gordon turned away from looking at Alla Mae to stare out the window near the television. Memories of the distant past had come to haunt him. Throughout the years, he never could erase from his memory the details of the federal crime that he’d committed back in 1944.

In an almost supernatural way, he clearly visualized the case report from the Dallas Police Department:

Defendant: Gordon McCoy Reynolds

Date: 11-23-44

Age: 38:

Investigating Officers: Oliver & Preston

Sex: Male:

Arresting Officers: Oliver & Preston

Residence: Missouri

Complainant: U. S. Government

Arrest Number: 5209-K

Identification Number: 23592

Evidence and Seizures: OPA stamps initialed and turned over to OPA Investigator, Alfred H. Payne.

Summary of case: At about five thirty p.m. on the afternoon of November 23, 1944, Officer J. L. Hulse called Lieutenant Dietz and told him that he had located a 1941 Packard Sedan bearing Missouri license plate number 373-994, which was parked on Meyers Street, north of Grand Avenue. Lieutenant Dietz instructed us to assist Officer Hulse with the investigation of this matter.

We had a pickup issue by Lieutenant Stevenson stating that the occupants of this car were wanted for burglary. Officer Hulse turned the investigation over to us and was sent back to his district. We later talked to a child who showed us the house in which the occupants of this car lived. We obtained a search warrant for the premises from Justice Sterrett's court. It was the south-side apartment at 2602 Meyers Street. We went to the front and rear doors and saw two ladies, Jenny Dupree and Betty Joe Sigler, in the kitchen. Gordon M. Reynolds lay across the bed in the front bedroom.

After we had gained admission to the apartment, we asked who owned the automobile, and Gordon claimed to be the owner. We took Reynolds out to the police car, leaving the two girls inside the house. Officer Oliver stayed at the car with Reynolds while Officer Preston made a second round of the apartment.

I heard water running in the bathroom and upon demanding admission, Rufus Doyle Eady opened the door. He had continuously been flushing the toilet and had an auxiliary shower hose that was connected to the bathtub's water outlet. With this

hose, he had been pouring additional water into the commode to accelerate its flushing.

We arrested all the occupants of the home, which consisted of the two men and the two women named above. We brought them to the city jail where they were thoroughly searched. We took thirty-two dollars and a heavy-bladed spring pocketknife from Rufus Doyle Eady. From Gordon M. Reynolds, we took a single-blade wooden-handled pocketknife and 295 dollars in cash. We took from Jennie Dupree's purse 240 dollars in cash. These people were then placed in the city jail.

During our conversation with Reynolds, he confessed that he had a .45 Colt revolver between two mattresses under the head of his bed. We returned to 2602 Meyers Street and searched the apartment and found the .45 revolver under his bed.

In a closet between the bedroom occupied by Reynolds and Dupree and the room occupied by Eady and Sigler, a trunk was discovered bearing an American Express Company label. The label was addressed to a Mack Reynolds in Paris, Texas. We found a special built duckin sack with a small wrecking bar and blackjack inside. On the floor next to the blackjack, we found two handsaws and a heavy claw hammer.

In the bedroom occupied by Reynolds and Dupree, we found an envelope containing 97 US postage stamps under a rug. In a second envelope, 395 OPA R stamps, 148 R coupons, and twenty-four assorted obsolete OPA gas coupons were also discovered. In a third envelope, also under the rug, several books of TOPA gas coupons were discovered. Inside of a vanity dresser drawer, we found 88 A OPA gasoline coupons.

Also inside this dresser drawer, we secured several pieces of mail addressed to Reynolds and Dupree. In a high chest of drawers containing Jennie Dupree's belongings, we found nine books valued at \$10 per book of Magnolia Oil Company

coupons, and eighteen \$10 books of coupons issued by Texaco Oil Company.

On searching the 1941 Packard Sedan, bearing license plate number 373-994 and registration number D9904, two-cell special flashlights, with a peep hole for a small beam of light, were found in the backseat. Inside a wire conducting pipe in the heater system, five sheets of fuel oil coupons were found. In the glove compartment, we found one OPA form R 334, which had been used for a book application at Lubbock, Texas with the name of R. R. Shelby, and issued to this Packard automobile under its correct Missouri license number.

Oliver and Preston

Gordon regretted that he hadn't made a clean getaway with the cash and the OPA gasoline coupons. Constantly, he thought to himself, *If only I could've made it out of Dallas with the goods.* His initial plan had been to bring the cash and coupons back to Kansas City, then resell the coupons on the black market, just like Carlo Gambino and a handful of other New York gangsters had done around World War II.

During his time in Dallas, he'd fallen hard for Jennie Dupree, a gorgeous brunette with soft brown bedroom eyes and a knockout figure. She'd been his accomplice during their entire crime spree. He'd wanted to bring her back to Kansas City and officially make her his woman.

Too bad things didn't work out as planned. They'd been arrested, and Gordon ended up doing time in the Federal Penitentiary in Texarkana, Texas along with his true partner in crime, Rufus Doyle Eady.

Not being successful in the score down in Dallas was something that would haunt Gordon for the rest of his life. Sure, some of his other criminal plans hadn't worked out. The robbery that sent him to the

Missouri State Penitentiary back in 1932 had poked big holes in his ego. Like any other criminal, Gordon always hoped for a clean getaway.

How sweet it would've been if he'd gotten away with the hundreds of dollars he'd acquired from that robbery. Sometimes, his mind traveled far out west to Phoenix, Arizona. Not getting off scot-free after cashing over four thousand dollars in bogus checks had made him feel that he didn't have a future in crime.

Being convicted of vice activities under the Dyer Act in Santa Ana, California caused him to question the choices he had made. What did one have to do to keep from getting caught? Was there ever a solid answer to such a question?

Since returning to Kansas City with Rufus and trying his luck at operating bawdy houses, Gordon felt that he wasn't ready to give up his life of crime. The amount of money he made had become more significant over time. Though he faced enemies on the streets and in law enforcement, he never stopped taking risks.

Gordon continued to stare at the beam of sunlight coming through the windows over by the television. After allowing his mind to travel back to 1944 Dallas, Texas, he hadn't quite come back from his past.

"Mack!" Alla Mae called out to get his attention. "Earth calling Mack Reynolds. Alla Mae calling Mack Reynolds."

Gordon snapped out of his daydream state and locked his restless eyes on Alla Mae. "Mae, I'm sorry, but did you want something, sweetheart?"

"You seem like you've been put under hypnosis, like in one of those science fiction books that I've read."

"No, honey, I was just thinking about something."

"Thinking about what?"

"Funny how your past just sneaks up on you and takes you way back."

Alla Mae was the type of woman who could look into someone's eyes and find a story. She looked into Gordon's eyes, and many stories

were being told by them. She knew from the first time that she'd met him that he was a restless soul, a troubled man who searched for everlasting peace, wishing that he could go back and change many of his wrongs to rights.

"Mack," Alla Mae said, taking Gordon by the hand to interlock her fingers with his. "Can I ask you a very serious question?"

"Sure."

"Don't yell at me for asking you this."

"I won't, I promise."

"Have you ever killed anybody?"

Gordon couldn't answer her question right away. "Why would you ask me something like that?"

"Just answer the question."

Gordon thought back to the night when he and Rufus assaulted Cecil Ray Young. The thought of them smearing their victim with the sweet treats and then dumping him into the Brush Creek tunnel, stirred up his conscience with the quickness. The thought of his recent participation in the abduction and beating of Gerry Bruster and Lenny Shanahan pushed him to tell one of the biggest lies that he'd ever told.

"No, Mae, I've never killed anybody," Gordon lied outright, keeping a straight face while looking her in the eye.

"Have you ever come close to killing anybody?"

"Maybe."

"What's maybe?"

"I've shot at some guys before, and I may have stabbed a couple'a guys in my lifetime."

"Have you yourself ever been shot at or stabbed?"

"I've been shot at many times. When my enemies saw my Colt forty-five, they decided to end the gun battle. Why'd you wanna know if I ever killed anybody?"

"Irish men have tempers hotter than the sun itself. Once upon a time it was said that even those nutty Italians were scared of the Irish."

“That may or may not be true.”

Alla Mae pushed herself up from the sofa to turn the channels on the television. Shows like *Gunsmoke*, *My Three Sons*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Lucy Show*, *Bonanza*, and *Hazel* were either ending or just coming on.

Alla Mae turned off the television. She smiled at Gordon and said, “Mack, since we’ve got this stereo console, let’s listen to some music.”

“Music sounds good to me, Mae.”

“All right, I’ll find something that you and I can dance to.” Alla Mae shuffled through an assortment of vinyl records. She came across a forty-five of Ray Charles. The song was titled, “I Can’t Stop Loving You.” She placed the needle on the record and moved over to Gordon in the most seductive way.

The couple pressed their bodies together. Gordon planted his right hand at the middle of her back. Though he towered over her, they still slow-danced with an almost perfect rhythm. The melody of the song sent soothing vibes all through them.

They closed their eyes and drifted into a dreamworld.

Boldly, someone knocked rather hard on the front door. Gordon peeked around the corner from the living room and saw two KCPD patrolmen standing at the door. “What the hell do they want?” Gordon wondered, backing away from Alla Mae while moving into the next room.

“Who is it, Mack?”

“It’s the goddamned cops! Those bastards just don’t let up.”

“We better see what they want.”

“Yeah, let’s see what they’re trying to accuse us of now.”

Alla Mae glanced into the front room and immediately recognized both men. They were Patrol Officers Charles Galanis and Lewis Anderson, the exact same cops who’d tried busting her while setting up a date with Edward Mark Chop.

Patrolman Galanis tapped on the glass of the door with his billy club. This was his way of showing off his authority. He came off as cocky and arrogant.

Gordon cracked the screen door halfway open and asked both patrolmen, "Can I help you, gentlemen?"

"In fact, you can," Galanis spoke up, sticking his shoe through the door. "Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, we'd like to know what you and that colored woman are doing at this residence at thirteen twenty-five Lydia Avenue."

"That's none of your business," Gordon said boldly, displaying bravery that neither one of them expected.

"Look, buddy, Officer Anderson and myself are making it our business."

Gordon released a furious shout. "All right, what the fuck do you two redneck cops want with me and Mae!"

Before responding, Galanis and Anderson shoved their way into the residence. Both patrolmen placed firm grips around the handles of their service pistols, trying to inspire fear in Gordon and Alla Mae.

"Nice place," said Patrolman Galanis, looking around at the new furniture and the new television and stereo console in the next room. "All of this stuff in here must've cost a fortune. Where'd you get the money, buddy?"

"Selling chocolate-chip cookies door to door," Gordon said sarcastically, their presence annoying him more with every passing second.

Galanis noticed how Alla Mae came into the room and stood next to Gordon. "Good day to you, Miss Alla Mae Briggs."

"That's Mrs. Alla Mae Reynolds to you," Alla Mae arrogantly said to Galanis, already claiming the last name of her accomplice in crime.

"Oh, you two are married, huh?"

"That's right, and we're very happy together."

“A nigger woman and a poor white trash man?” Galanis blurted out disrespectfully. “The both of you are criminals, poor, lowlifes, uneducated, and downright lowdown scoundrels.”

Gordon stepped up and pointed his finger at Galanis’s face. “Look, you scumbag redneck son of a bitch! I’ve got more smarts than you and your partner, both in the streets and in the books, than you’ll have in a lifetime. If you think I care about you having a badge and carrying a gun, then you’re ultimately mistaken, you Ku Klux Klan of a lowlife bastard!”

Galanis was left speechless and he quickly fired back, “The two of yous are married, so you say? Well, here’s what the law says. The United States Supreme Court enacted anti-miscegenation laws a long time ago.”

“Miscegenation laws?” Alla Mae asked Galanis.

“In case you didn’t know, these are laws which forbid and disapprove of the mixing of the white and the colored races through marriage, cohabitation, sexual relations or procreation in many states throughout this country.”

“Thanks for that lesson in American constitutional laws,” Alla Mae returned wittily. “Patrolman Galanis, I’d like to ask you some very serious questions.”

“Go right ahead.”

“Did the laws back in slavery times forbid white men from raping colored women? Did the laws back then forbid the same white men from impregnating the colored women with mulatto children? From allowing white men the luxury of having sex with their wives and the colored slave girls they owned?”

“That was back then. This is nineteen sixty-two, and things have changed drastically.”

“They must have not changed too much. You’ve got me started, and now I’m gonna continue. You see, we colored people have learned some things about you white people over the years.”

“Which is?”

“Whenever something doesn’t suit the white man’s agenda, then he’s totally, absolutely against it. Whenever someone disrupts the white power structure, he either throws them in jail or just outright kills them. To the white man, losing power is like losing his livelihood. How well do you know your history, Patrolman Galanis?”

“I took courses in history in high school and in college.”

“Did you know that George Washington owned over three hundred slaves?”

“I knew that.”

“Did you also know that Thomas Jefferson’s mistress was a colored woman whom he had several children with?”

“I knew that, too.”

“Then please tell me, why are white people so against the coloreds and the whites coming together?”

“It’s illegal and it’s immoral,” Galanis answered straightforwardly.

“For who? The ones who do it or the ones who can’t benefit from it? Look, I didn’t make it out of high school, but I still consider myself a very educated woman.”

The whole time Alla Mae stood there giving Galanis her own personal lecture, he nodded every time as though he’d agreed with everything she said. Galanis looked over at a set of shelves in the front room. There were rows of books on each shelf. Could this have proven her point when it came to explaining the controversy surrounding interracial dating and marriage?

“There’s something else that I want you to tell me,” she continued.

“Go ahead.”

“You two men patrol this area all the time. Of course, I had an encounter with you all several months back. Why is it that the colored women who work the streets seem to always have white men as their tricks?”

“That I cannot answer.”

"I'll answer it for you," Alla Mae volunteered. "There's a certain mystique that colored women carry about themselves that just drives white men insane. It's not just their succulent brown or black skin, or their luscious curvy bodies, or the fact that their sex appeal is second to none. It's their intellect and their mannerism that lots of white men can't find in their white wives and girlfriends. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that white women aren't desirable and intelligent, but the contrast in skin color and way of thinking is what draws white men to colored women."

"I disagree with everything you just said," Galanis said, speaking on his behalf and that of his people. "When the white men are done having sex with the colored women, they return home to their white wives and their children. Colored women are only objects of desire for them. Most of them know that their families will disown them and throw them to the wolves if they are to be found having sex with colored women. Little do you know that you and your white pimp here are living dangerously by being together. The state of Missouri definitely acknowledges the anti-miscegenation laws. Your freedom and your lives are at stake here."

"You listen up, punk," Gordon said, confronting Galanis in the only manner that he knew—aggressively—despite him being a servant of the law. "And I want you to listen up good. First of all, I'm not her pimp. Second of all, I don't know why you're here, since we haven't committed any crime."

"You can fool some of these people in this neighborhood. You might be able to fool some of my colleagues who patrol this north-end area. But believe me, you can't fool Patrolman Anderson and myself. We know that you and Alla Mae are still criminals who're tied up in lots of vice. It's just a matter of time before we make the big bust on you all and your accomplices."

"Until the day comes that you can prove it, you won't be able to arrest us. I know that Chief Clarence Kelley and lots of those captains

and lieutenants at the headquarters live for the day when they can put me away for good.”

“You and Willie Cammisano and some of his mob goons. I’ll bet that if we raided one of your houses real good, we’d find enough liquor and whores and dope to lock you up for several lifetimes.”

“I’d beg to differ. Look who’s talking. A lot of you guys are nothing but gangsters with badges.”

Glaring at Gordon angrily, Patrolmen Galanis and Anderson made their way toward the front door. Galanis looked back at Alla Mae and said, “Alla Mae, don’t go trying to rip off any more men who you’re soliciting.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t.”

“In fact, I haven’t seen you on the streets lately. What, you’ve gone on to greener pastures?”

“Maybe.”

“I believe that Edward Mark Chop has.”

“Good for him.”

Galanis and Anderson saw themselves out the front door. Gordon grabbed the knob on the door and violently pushed it closed. Vibrations were felt all the way out to the sidewalk by the patrolmen. The violent outburst frightened them enough that they vowed never to return and bother the couple again.

CHAPTER 25

The River Makes You Shiver

A FEW DAYS LATER, Cammisano requested his henchmen and Gordon to meet him at the warehouse in the West Bottoms. Gordon never refused any request from Cammisano since the Italian was a man who frowned upon being told no.

Gordon drove down one of the bridges that led into the West Bottoms. He parked his car and was greeted at the front entrance of the warehouse by Cammisano and his three henchmen. Cammisano led the four men down the stairs to the basement. He switched on the light to check on the status of his latest victims.

Gerry and Lenny were still very much alive. Their eyes had puffed up. The bruises covering their faces appeared as discolored patches of red and purple. They could barely talk after their lips had been busted and some of their teeth knocked out.

Cammisano's first order of business was to check and see if the cement had dried. He used the tips of his fingers to pat the inside and outside of the buckets. Sure enough, the concrete had hardened to a rock-solid state.

"I'm a nice guy," Cammisano told the foursome who stood to the side. "You know why I'm a nice guy?"

“Why, Willie?” asked Catalano.

“Yeah, why?” Cusumano couldn’t wait to find out.

“Now, if I was really a mean guy, I’d get rid of these two guys the slow, agonizing way.”

Gordon tilted his head downward to make eye contact with Cammisano. “What slow, agonizing way, Willie?”

Cammisano belted out a maniacal giggle and said, “I could easily stick these two thieving cocksuckers in the sewer for the rats to finish them off. But I’m not gonna be that cruel to these two rotten turds. Ain’t I a nice guy, fellas?”

Gordon and the three henchmen nodded their heads, indicating they agreed with the big-time Kansas City mobster.

Some mumbling was coming from Lenny. He tried speaking, but his words were barely understandable.

Cammisano moved closer and put his ear close to Lenny’s mouth. “You got something you wanna say, Lenny?”

In a low, barely audible voice, Lenny said to Cammisano, “Willie, please don’t kill us. Let us...let us...make it up to you.”

“Lenny, Lenny, Lenny,” Cammisano said with a tsk tsk. “We’re way past that time, my friend. You still haven’t told me what you did with the money.”

“Would you let us live if...if...I told you?” Lenny tried bargaining, still slurring his words.

“Normally, I’m not the bargaining type. But maybe, just maybe, I might cop a deal with you.”

“Gerry and I pawned most of the jewels.”

“Whatcha do with the money?”

“Spent it on our wives and children.”

“What else?”

“I gave some of the money to my lady on the side.”

“The jewels you didn’t pawn, what did you do with them?”

“Gave them as presents to our wives.”

“Pawning some of the jewels and keeping some of them put you jerks in a win-win situation. Not having any of the jewels or any of the money put me in a lose-lose situation. Lenny, that makes me look like a softie. If word ever got out on the streets that I was some softie, I’d lose my tough guy reputation and go way down for the count.”

Gerry parted his lips to try and speak. “Willie, can you...can you give us...just one more chance? I swear on the soul of my mother and my children that Lenny and I will make it up to you.”

Cammisano looked down at their feet and laughed. “Gerry, you and Lenny have already been fitted for cement shoes. How would it look if I had my men bust open the concrete with the iron and steel scraps dried up inside?”

“You can still crack open the hardened cement and let us walk out of here.”

“But that’s not going to happen. You see, I don’t renege on anything that I’ve planned far ahead of time. You and your thieving buddy are going inside of the fucking river. That’s all there is to it.”

Cammisano turned to shoot a look at Gordon, Catalano, Cusumano, and Blando. The message in his eyes was clear.

Gordon and Catalano untied Gerry from the chair and lifted him. Cusumano and Blando loosened the rope from around the chair Lenny was tied to and lifted him too. The foursome strained like never before.

“Dammit!” Gordon griped, using muscles that he hadn’t used in years. “The concrete and the metal scraps are heavy as hell. Holding these guys up, I feel like I’m lifting five-hundred-pounds iron weights.”

“You kidding me?” Catalano said, also straining like he’d never done. “This punk feels like I’m holding up a hippopotamus or an elephant.”

“Let’s get them to where they’re going before I get a hernia,” said Cusumano.

“You’ve got that right, buddy,” said Gordon.

Cammisano led the men up the basement stairs and out to a pickup truck. It took all their strength to get Gerry and Lenny, along with the extra weight of the cement buckets, to the flatbed of the truck.

Once the victims were stretched out on the flatbed, Cammisano ordered the men to cover them up with a thick plastic tarp while looking around to make sure that none of the travelers through the West Bottoms were watching.

Gordon started up his car as Blando started up the truck. Catalano and Cusumano were in the car with Gordon. Cammisano decided to come along for the thrill of seeing his two victims experience further suffering.

Gordon followed behind Blando as they journeyed up one of the bridges leading away from the West Bottoms. The time on Gordon’s watch read 10:48 p.m. Within minutes, they arrived at an end section of the ASB Bridge.

Cammisano, being the cautious gangster that he was, looked around to make sure that no potential witnesses weren’t looking. Both vehicles were parked off to the side of one of the lanes on the bridge.

Gordon and Catalano pulled Gerry out of the truck’s flatbed. With no one looking, and with no cars coming from either direction on the bridge, they were prepared to make their move.

Gordon signaled to Catalano and said, “On the count of three, let’s dump him in the river.”

“All right,” Catalano agreed, his hands cupped under Gerry’s armpits.

“One, two, three.”

Both Gordon and Catalano swung the body of Gerry like a human jump rope and released him. Upon hitting the surface of the Missouri River, a huge splash was made. Now came the time for Cusumano and Blando to do the same to Lenny.

Cusumano counted to three and both men released Lenny after a couple of swings. Like Gerry, his body, along with the heavy weight of the cement buckets around his feet, made one big splash.

Gerry and Lenny slowly but surely floated to the bottom of the Missouri River. Bubbles from their nostrils and mouths floated to the surface. Their deaths were inevitable. The second that the buckets hit the river bottom, significant amounts of mud sediment and silt floated around the men's bodies.

Fish, river otters, beavers, and muskrats would nibble away at the bodies, although the fish would have the first pick. Catfish especially, being they're bottom dwellers, would be the first to scavenge the human remains.

Gerry and Lenny's deaths were slow and painful. They'd completely drowned within three minutes flat. As fewer and fewer bubbles surfaced, it was evident that they were gone.

Cammisano scanned the exact section of the river where they'd been thrown. "Fellas, it's a hundred-percent guarantee that they'll never be heard from again."

"Got that right, Willie," Catalano agreed. "If they do find them, which I don't believe they will, they'll be nothing but skeletons."

"Like I've heard so many say over the years, if they drained the whole Missouri River, it'd look like a cemetery that stretches for a hundred miles," Cammisano said.

"And a bunch of cinder blocks spread out all over the place," Cusumano added.

"Oh, hell yeah," Gordon laughed. "There'd be enough concrete from those cinder blocks to build a hundred-story building. C'mon, fellas, let's get the hell out of here."

Gordon got into his car and followed the truck in the opposite direction of where they'd parked. Yet another brutal murder assignment had been satisfactorily completed.

CHAPTER 26

His Majesty: The King of Kansas City

ONE WHOLE WEEK after dumping Gerry and Lenny into the Missouri River, Willie Cammisano decided to pay a visit to the reigning vice lord of Kansas City organized crime. Born Guisepppe Nicoli Civella, the Mafia kingpin was the son of Italian immigrants who'd migrated to the United States from Sicily.

He had the distinct features of a full-blooded Sicilian, possessing a medium olive complexion and a slender hooked nose, giving him an appearance that stood out from those of fellow Italians.

By the age of twenty, Civella had been arrested for robbery, vagrancy, illegal gambling, and auto theft.

The feds and local police knew that he'd been a bodyguard and chauffeur for the one-time vice lord of Kansas City, Anthony "Fat Tony" Gizzo, a feared mobster who didn't hesitate to kill. You looked at Gizzo wrong, your life might come to an abrupt end.

In the 1950s, shortly after Gizzo's death, Civella totally dominated all criminal activity that took place in Kansas City. Local residents, which were the ones most terrified of him, labeled him "The King of Kansas City." And feared he was.

The mention of the name “Civella” caused goosebumps to go up and down people’s flesh. His name was a synonym of fear. Word spread fast that if anyone crossed Nick Civella, their fate was sealed. His brutal nature was the stuff of legends.

He spared no expense or effort on causing torment to his enemies. Civella even earned a measure of respect from law enforcement. It’d be fair to say that some of them were even scared of him.

The 1950s was also the time when the feds and local police set their eyes on Civella. To prove his status as a high-ranking gangster, he attended the 1957 meeting of mobsters in Apalachin, New York, which ended disastrously. Other higher-ranking gangsters came to know Civella after he’d been mentioned in Senator Kefauver’s hearings. He forged profitable relationships with the La Cosa Nostra families in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Denver, and California.

Cammisano received his orders from Civella. But whom did Civella receive his orders from? The answer to such a question was easy: Civella and other Kansas City mobsters humbled themselves before the Midwestern city of Chicago.

The true heavyweights of the syndicate were located there in the windy city, calling the shots in all the territories west of the Mississippi River. Kansas City, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Denver, San Diego, Los Angeles, and even Chicago itself had to answer to the big bosses like Anthony Accardo, Sam Giancana, and Joey Aiuppa.

At one of the white buildings in the River Quay section of the city, right there at Fifth Street and Troost Avenue, Cammisano had come to pay Civella a visit. He knocked on the front door and discreetly announced his presence.

Civella looked through a peephole and allowed him entry with great caution. He led Cammisano down a hallway and into an office

at the first left turn. Inside the office, there was a desk, two chairs, a window covered with a dark-red curtain and papers spread out on top of the desk.

A heavy smoker, Civella fired up a cigarette, which encouraged Cammisano to do the same. The office became cloudy within seconds from all the smoke. Their lungs were probably blacker than the blackest piece of coal. Cammisano easily went through two packs of cigarettes a day. Civella wasn't quite as bad. He knocked out about a pack and a half.

Smoking wasn't the only bad habit that they indulged in. Civella opened one of the desk drawers and brought out a tall bottle of whiskey and two glasses. He poured himself and Cammisano several fingers of liquor.

The ruthless gangsters remained silent as they puffed on their cigarettes and sipped on their whiskey.

"How's Gerry and Lenny?" Civella asked, leaning back in the recliner, giving Cammisano a fierce look.

"Oh, Gerry and Lenny," Cammisano snickered, taking an extra-long drag of his cigarette. "They're in the bottom of the Missouri River keeping the catfish company. You definitely won't be hearing from them anymore."

"Thieving motherfuckers!" Civella snarled, his olive complexion turning a shade of red. Whenever he became mad, it was like a ticking time bomb ready to explode. "Those jewels would've given us some real deep pockets. The way I feel, I'd like to go around to every pawn shop in town looking for them."

"That's to say the least. Those jewels were worth at least twenty grand or more."

"Tell me something, Willie."

"Sure, Nick."

"How'd those two disgusting turds know the jewels were in your garage?"

Cammisano couldn't answer his boss right away. Even a feared man like himself feared those like Civella. He had to think of a quick lie to save his own skin. "To tell ya the truth, Nick, Gerry and Lenny had been going around asking questions about the jewels, even after they fenced them and brought them to me."

"Did somebody open their mouth a bit way too wide?"

"They had to," Cammisano fabricated, keeping the straightest face possible. "Somebody leaked out the info, and that's when those two scums broke into my garage and ripped me off."

"Any names as to who might've spilled the info to them?"

"No names thus far."

"Well, it doesn't matter at this point. Gerry and Lenny got what was coming to them. Maybe this'll be a lesson to any other *cazzu* who want to steal from our outfit."

"Yes, I'm thinking it'll be a good lesson to anyone who thinks about stiffing us."

Civella finished his first cigarette and fired up a second one with no hesitation. He poured himself and Cammisano another finger of whiskey. "There's something else that I'd like to talk to you about, Willie."

"Yeah, sure, Nick."

"It's about this Gordon Reynolds. Our people tell us that they call him Mack out on the streets."

"That's right. He does go by the street name of Mack."

"Why haven't I met this guy yet?"

"Since he's not Italian like us, I figured that he'd only be an associate who helps do some legwork for the outfit."

"You should've checked with me first before he started doing any legwork for our group. Do you really trust this guy, Willie?"

"With no doubt whatsoever. Look, Nick, he kicks back to me at least three to five hundred bucks every three weeks to a month. The money that he kicks back to me, I turn around and pay tribute to you with the same cash."

“This Mack, what exactly is he into?”

“You name it, he’s done it. From what I understand, he been in the joint for robbery, burglary, larceny, cashing bogus checks, possession of gas-ration coupons, assault and battery, hijacking, attempted murder, and only God knows what else.”

“Sounds like my kinda guy.”

“Exactly. He did a hijacking job with us a while back, and as you already know, we scored big time on that same job. We ended up with enough whiskey and cigarettes and grocery store coupons to last for quite some time.”

“Does that account for the extra dough that you brought in on that one occasion?”

“Yes it does. The good thing about this guy, Nick, is that he knows how to keep his mouth shut. Like us, he’s very, very particular about the people he keeps company with.”

“Where’d you meet this Mack guy at?”

“Through a mutual friend.”

“What friend?”

“Bennie Indelicato.”

“Indelicato from the Northeast Independence Avenue crew?”

“That’s him.”

“I’ve been told that Indelicato is a solid guy. My watchdogs have told me that he has never taken a dime from the top nor sold anyone out to the feds or the coppers.”

“But Mack is one of those insane Irishmen who flat out don’t give a fuck.”

“The type of blood that the outfit could use. Word on the street is that he’s getting serious trouble from the moolinyan Doc Dearborn.”

“That’s solid info from what I’ve been told.”

“What’s the problem between them two?”

“Hookers,” Cammisano answered straightforwardly. “You see, Mack has several girls working the Twelfth Street Strip, and Doc Dearborn doesn’t like it.”

“Why not?” Civella asked his underling.

“Because Doc Dearborn also has hookers out there working the Twelfth Street Strip. Both of those guys have their wires crossed and are competing with each other.”

“Twelfth Street is the territory that you’ve got hemmed up from east to west. I would think they’d get your permission to post their women along there in the first place.”

“Nick, both of those guys kick back to me. And who do I kick back to?”

Civella pointed to himself with the brightest smile on his face.

“You, of course, Nick,” Cammisano continued. “It’d be hard to refuse the both of them, since they make quite a bit of dough off their hookers. Personally, I think Doc Dearborn has a shitty vendetta against Mack.”

“Why’s that?”

“He’s commented that Mack is nothing but a white honky who’s done moved in on his territory, interrupting his business along the downtown end of Twelfth Street. Of course, he has no other choice than to respect us Italians.”

“That he does,” Civella agreed in full. “Understand this, Willie. Doc Dearborn, who’s nothing but some nigger gangster who thinks he owns the streets of Kansas City, needs to stay in his place. All I have to do is snap my fucking finger, and that moolinyan and his coon goons won’t be heard from again. Without my permission, he wouldn’t see any action going on the streets. I say the word and all his operations will be shut down. Remember, I own this goddamned city, and refuse to give up my position without a fight.”

“As you know, Doc Dearborn’s in good with Joe Centimano,” Willie commented casually.

“Please don’t tell me that he’s kicking back to Centimano.”

“Not at all. They’re just associates in passing. Mack complained to me and Joe that Doc Dearborn had two of his girls snatched off the streets and taken to Wayne Miner Projects.”

“That nigger hellhole!” Civella blasted, thrusting his fist into the air. “Wayne Miner is a pound for vicious animals. So, what happened after they got his girls there?”

“He says the women were beaten up pretty bad and treated like animals.”

“But how is that you and Joe Centimano’s problem?”

“Mack felt that, since Joe had dealings with Doc Dearborn, he could be the one who tamed the savage beast.”

“Looka here, Willie. This Doc Dearborn gets too far out of line, we’ve gotta put him back in his place. You’ve got your watchdogs, and I’ve got my watchdogs. My watchdogs tell me that he’s into more than just hookers. This porch monkey is into dope and liquor and possibly sticking up a bank here and there. It doesn’t stop there. He’s also into sharking and burglary and gambling. Ask yourself this question: is he kicking back his fair share to us and the whole outfit?”

“I’d have to say, Nick, that I asked myself that very same question. My people have told me that he’s pulling in about fifty to sixty grand every month.”

“Where’s our piece of his fucking action, for Chrissake?”

“Dearborn’s making a killing off smack and marijuana from those coons in Wayne Miner. His sharking business brings in about five grand every two weeks.”

“No way am I, Nick Civella, going to sit back and let some nigger take over the streets of this city. I own Kansas City. I’m the king, and every corner in this town is my throne. It belongs to me. Nobody is going to get rich off vice in this town without first giving me a big cut of their profits.”

"I'm with you on that, Nick," Cammisano agreed wholeheartedly. "Him cutting us out is like spitting in our faces. We Italians stick together, through thick and thin, in the good times and the bad times, like Julius Caesar and the soldiers of the Roman Empire. Either Dearborn will play ball with us or he's gonna end up in the river along with Gerry and Lenny."

"Remember this, too, Willie," Nick warned. "Centimano's not a made guy in the outfit. If he wants to go off and kill somebody or do a big score without our permission, then so be it. As long as they're not closely connected with either you or me or the outfit, then he's free to do whatever the hell he pleases."

"I figure that the next time we hijack one of the beer or whiskey or cigarette trucks, we ought to cut Centimano in on it. Those fence monkeys come into his liquor store in droves to buy whiskey and cigarettes. I'm sure that he'd cut us in on some of the profits."

"Hold on a second there," Civella said, throwing up a cryptic hand signal. "That last hijacking job, we were damn lucky to make a clean getaway. The coppers, they went knocking on every door for miles around after those trucks were hijacked. I think we should wait a while before we hit any more trucks rolling into Kansas City. Who's to say, but the next time, the feds or the coppers might have undercover guys waiting there in the back or in front of those trucks. I'd say let the smoke clear first and then we can make some more moves."

"Smart thinking, Nick," Cammisano agreed with his top Mafia boss. "But I'll say it again, this Mack Reynolds, he's one helluva standup guy."

"You really think much of this guy, don't you?"

"Sure do. You ought to see his face. He looks so much like an Italian that it's scary. If he was full-blooded Italian like us, I'd go to work on you, Nick, into turning him into a made guy."

"Right now, this Mack is just an associate, which is probably for the best. Everyone's happy in our organization. We're getting our

fair share and he's getting his fair share. But Willie, I want you to tell me something."

"Sure, anything, Nick."

"My ears, my eyes, my watchdogs out on the streets, they've told me that Mack runs a house or two with all kinda shit going on. They tell me that he's got hookers and tricks running through there all times of night and day. They also tell me that he's selling whiskey and cigarettes and possibly dope out of these houses. My question to you is, do you think he's making a killing off those operations going through those houses?"

"I wouldn't say a killing," Cammisano theorized. "What I would say is that Mack and some colored woman make their fair share off the hookers and the goods that they sell out of those houses."

"Colored woman?" Civella shrugged, firing up his third cigarette in less than twenty minutes. He poured himself another round of whiskey. "You mean to tell me than some peckerwood named Mack trusts some colored broad to help him run a good-time house?"

"He sure does."

"C'mon, Willie, we both know that you can't trust those moolinyans. They should work close together and we should work close together. Though we might work with them, we still have to keep our eyes on them."

"That goes without saying."

"Have you ever met this colored woman?"

"Don't have a clue as to what she looks like."

"That's strange. Never in my life have I ever heard of a white man and a colored woman teaming up to run vice. Is there anything else that you could tell me about this woman?"

"Sources have told me that she spent time out on the streets hooking. They tell me that she's got a rap sheet from Kansas City to New York for hooking. My belief is that Mack and this woman met out on the streets."

“Again, you do believe that he’s kicking back everything that he should?”

“Certainly, I do. Let me remind you again, Nick, that Mack helped us out when we nabbed Gerry and Lenny off the streets. He helped us get them to the warehouse in the West Bottoms. Once we got them there, he helped us fit those *stronzos* with cement shoes. Then we got his help when we dumped those *fanculos* in the Missouri River. Most impressive of all, he used his own car when we snatched them off the streets.”

Nick fired up his fourth cigarette and hissed through clenched teeth, “*Noi siamo una forza inarrestabile. La Cosa Nostra regna qui in Kansas City e altrove per un period molto lung.*”

What exactly did Civella say to Cammisano? His exact words to him were, “We are an unstoppable force. La Cosa Nostra will reign here in Kansas City and elsewhere for a very long, long time.”

Cammisano replied by saying, “Forever and ever; La Cosa Nostra will thrive for all of eternity.”

Civella and Cammisano lifted their glasses to one another and said in perfect union, “Salut!”

The inseparable gangsters concluded their meeting with more business talk along with several more puffs from cigarettes and sips from whiskey.

REPORT

KANSAS CITY MISSOURI POLICE DEPARTMENT

COMPLAINT # 86456

DATE OF REPORT

12-2-64

OFFICERS

Ptl. John Wilson
Det. Earl King
Det. Willard Maxwell

UNIT OR STATION

Vice

CHARACTER OF CASE

(Prostitution)
Investigation Arrest

TITLE OF CASE (INCLUDE ALIASES)

REYNOLDS, Alla Mae CFe, 6-28-35 of 3005 Flora
JOHNSON, Linda N N CFe, 3-12-32 of 2609 Prospect

DETAILS (REPORT ALL FACTS IN LOGICAL SEQUENCE)

At 11 PM on 12-2-64 Ptl. Hohn Wilson conducted an investigation on the residence 3005 Flora, after receiving complaints on possible prostitution activities.

The above subject REYNOLDS was contacted by telephone at the above location. Subject stated she had just the girl for me. On responding to the above address I was met at the front door by a Colored female who asked me to come in, and introduced herself as Mae. Subject then stated that for a straight lay act of prostitution the price would be \$15.00, and \$2.00 for a room. Subject then made a telephone call, and a few minutes later a Colored female responded to the residence. (Subject later identified as Linda Johnson) The price was agreed upon as \$15.00. I then identified myself as a Police Officer, and placed the above subjects under arrest.

Subjects were taken to Headquarters and booked for investigation to be checked in connection of recent prostitution activities in this city.

Mug, Print, and Show. VD check requested.

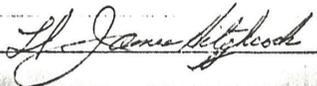
Hold for Vice Unit;

Court date 12-22-64 9:00AM

Ptl. John Wilson

REPORT APPROVED BY:

FORM 100 (REV. 8-63)



CHAPTER 27

The Trick Gets Trapped

GORDON RECEIVED WORD out on the streets that some rich suburbanite named Robert Thomas Collins frequented Twelfth Street in search of colored prostitutes. This was music to Gordon's ears. He wanted to know everything about this man.

Sources told Gordon that Robert happened to be the son of a multimillionaire, that his father made his fortune in car dealerships and printing supplies. Though he had been told that Robert frequented the west end of Twelfth Street, he also journeyed down toward the east end of the strip.

Gordon was given a detailed description of the man, who was known to carry around as much as two thousand dollars in cash in his pocket.

The ones who had brought him to Gordon's attention informed him that he drove a brand-new 1962 Chevrolet Corvette.

Rufus was told by Gordon to keep a close eye out for the man, who lived in a mansion several miles north of the Missouri River. Shrewdly, Gordon wanted to get to him before the other vultures along Twelfth Street and beyond moved in on the prey. He had just the woman to help him set up this Robert Thomas Collins; Linda Johnson would be the woman who helped Gordon and Alla Mae do so.

After coming to work for Gordon, Linda finally thought she had a bright future. She lived a healthy lifestyle despite engaging in vice, which required her to sell her precious body. She ate right, drank plenty of water, got her rest, and even exercised from time to time. If ever there was a such thing as a perfect female figure, Linda certainly had it.

The features on her face were alluring. Possessing flawless cocoa-brown skin, she highlighted it with very light makeup. And her curves. Those delectable curves. Surely, she could either stop traffic or cause a wreck. Men who laid eyes on her mouthwatering rear end and hips were known to run into light poles or stumble on cracks in the concrete.

Back at 1414 East Twelfth Street, Gordon and Alla Mae were hatching out a plan. This wouldn't be the house where they'd lure their victim to, however. Gordon had the perfect location picked out. As a master manipulator, he played out the role of set designer, just like in the movies.

Linda was sitting in the front room listening to the details that Gordon had planned out.

"Hear me on this one, Linda," Gordon spoke in his role as a tutor. "I want you posted up right there on Twelfth Street, between Garfield and Paseo. The guy we're looking for, he's one of those rich, spoiled kids who live at the far north of town, somewhere several miles across the river. Now, here's what I want you to do: I want you to try and flag this guy down before any of the other girls do."

"How will I know who he is?" Linda asked, wanting the details ironed out well in advance.

"He drives a spanking new Corvette," Gordon said, his eyes looking fixedly into Linda's. "The corvette is a shiny black color with a white leather interior, from what my people have told me."

"How does this guy look?"

“From what I’ve been told, he’s got dark-brown hair, he’s clean-shaven, has a light-to-medium build and always dresses real fancy.”

“That’s enough to go on, Mack.”

“You need to be told way beforehand that the other girls along Twelfth Street are gonna rush this guy. Most of them know that he’s a big spender. The girls who he picks up usually take him over to the Capri Motel over there by Independence Avenue.”

“If I’m lucky enough to get to him first, what address will I tell him to go to?”

“Ten twenty-eight Garfield. Rufus and I have already made it look like somebody lives there.”

“The house is usually vacant?”

“Yes it is.”

“Okay, I’ve also been told that he hits Twelfth Street between seven o’clock and nine o’clock. I suspect that he wants to be gone before the cops start putting the heat on the girls. You’ll have ta be there on Twelfth Street between those hours.”

“No problem, Mack.”

Gordon looked down at his watch, displaying some nervousness. “Will ya look what time it is. It’s already a quarter after six. As far as I know, this Robert Thomas Collins could shoot into this area before seven o’clock.”

“Let’s hope not,” Linda said. “Mack, I’ve got a question for you.”

“Go ahead, Linda.”

“Do you know whether this guy’s packing a pistol or a knife?”

“That I don’t know. Were I a betting man, I’d say that he doesn’t carry anything.”

“You sure about that? Who in their right mind would hang around Twelfth Street without some protection? Remember, Wayne Miner is just a few blocks down the street. It’s fools in those projects who kill and rob and steal for fun.”

“As long as they leave me and my girls alone, they don’t have to worry about me.”

Alla Mae reached down into her housecoat pocket and brought out a shiny, silver-colored switchblade. She handed it to Linda and said, “Girl, listen to me good. If this Robert dude wants to try and hurt you, then you take that razor and slice him up like a pig in a slaughterhouse.”

“Thanks, Mae.” Linda grinned at Alla Mae. “Girl, you know that I won’t hesitate to chop him up or any of those other tricks out there.”

“You know the streets just like I do. Everything will work out just like we’re planning.”

Gordon continued with his plot to rob someone of a substantial amount of money. “Linda, I repeat myself once more. You’ve got to be extra aggressive with this guy. As you already know, you’ve got some competition out there. I wouldn’t doubt that some of Doc Dearborn’s girls are out there trying to catch this trick before every other girl does. I also wouldn’t doubt it if Doc Dearborn knew that this guy is rich and put several of his girls on him.”

“Doc Dearborn?” Linda shuddered, the mention of his name causing her stomach to turn. “Who in this city doesn’t know Doc Dearborn? The Godfather of the Black Mafia. The man who thinks he’s big-time because he’s so-called in good with the Italian Mafia here in Kansas City. The one who brags around town that he’ll kill anybody who gets in his way.”

“That sewage filth is mostly talk,” said Gordon, who also got sick to his stomach at the mention of Doc Dearborn’s name. “He thinks he’s the baddest motherfucker who ever walked the planet Earth. But here’s what Gordon McCoyd Reynolds says. If he ever, and I do mean if he ever in his life lays another finger on one of my girls, I’m gonna hunt that punk down and put a hot steel slug in the center of his fucking forehead. That’s not making a threat, that’s making a promise.”

“And you usually do what you say you’re going to do, Mack.”

“All right, let’s finish up with our plans,” Gordon changed the topic. “Mae is gonna be there in the house acting as a sort of madam. She’s gonna help you get Robert Thomas Collins comfortable. And once he gets comfortable, that’s when we’ll make our move.”

“Is there anything that I can do to prevent him from becoming suspicious?”

“Just be yourself, Linda. Fill his head with words that’ll make him feel like he’s the greatest man ever born on this planet. You should already know that from dealing with tricks over the years.”

“From what Mae tells me, this is going to be a big score.”

“A big one, indeed.”

Gordon knew just how big of a score it was going to be, but never would he discuss an exact dollar amount with the hookers who worked for him.

He looked down at his watch, and the time read 6:47 p.m. “Man, it’s closer to seven than I realized. You might as well get there as early as possible. Look, Linda, Rufus will be taking you over to Twelfth Street to make sure that everything goes smooth.”

“The smart, early woman always gets the dumb trick first.”

“I like the way you think.”

Linda and Rufus left the Twelfth Street residence to go out to Gordon’s car. “Mighty sexy” and “extremely desirable” best described how she felt and looked.

Rufus started the Bel Air up and the journey over to Twelfth Street began. By the time they arrived over by Twelfth Street and Troost Avenue, the street corners were already posted up with several hookers.

One of the hottest red-light districts in Kansas City, that particular spot brought out some of the most gorgeous colored hookers, who waited patiently on corners in a three-block radius. They felt that big dollars had their names written all over them.

Friday and Saturday evenings were usually the busiest and most profitable because most of the tricks received their paychecks then and were itching to dive right into the action.

Only a very small number of white hookers mingled among the colored ones. Rumor had spread among the colored pimps that the white girls operated more sophisticatedly. Most worked either out of residences or through exclusive call-girl services.

Rufus parked a block and a half from where all the action took place. He shut the engine off to observe the scene up the street. Fortunately for he and Linda, not a single patrolman was in sight.

“Remember this, Linda,” Rufus said. “You’re looking for a 1962 black Chevy Corvette with a white leather interior. It’ll be the only car of its kind in this neighborhood. Be aggressive, but not too wild. Do what you have to do to make this guy pick you. The competition’s tough tonight, but I think you’ll make those other girls look like rag dolls. Show them scraggly bitches what you’re made of.”

“I’ve gotta hand it to you, Rufus. From just listening to everything that you just told me, it sounds like you know exactly what other men want, being a man yourself.”

“They do, sweetheart. What you women have between your legs is priceless. In case no one ever told you, pussy rules the world. Wars have been started over pussy. Inventions have been created over pussy. Men have left their wives and children behind for some pussy. Reverends, priests, bishops, archbishops and cardinals have left the church for pussy. Guys have spent their last thin dime for some pussy. Therefore, if a woman plays her hand right in this crazy card game called life, she can get a man to swim the deepest ocean, climb the highest mountain, cross the steepest valley, run through the hottest fire, walk the tightest rope, and come crawling on his hands and knees, begging for that crown jewel in between her legs.”

“Wow!” Linda huffed, having just been given a valuable life lesson. “Someone schooled you real well, Rufus, when you were coming up.”

“That they certainly did. Having five sisters, many aunts, and hosts of girlfriends growing up, I learned a whole lot about the human female species. Like Jezebel and Delilah in the Bible, women can be as treacherous as a snake, but as gentle as a dove.”

“In other words, they can be doing a man in and he doesn’t even have a clue.”

“Right you are, sister.”

Cars began cruising along Twelfth Street, right between the vicinity of Paseo Boulevard and Troost Avenue. Rufus and Linda watched a 1955 Pontiac pull over to the curb. Two hookers, one tall and the other of medium height, stepped over to the car to try and arrange a date. Within two minutes tops, both women were invited to slide into the Pontiac. An older white man drove off to an unknown destination.

Five minutes later, a dark-gray Chevrolet 150 drove along Twelfth Street at about ten miles per hour. Behind the wheel was a fat, bald white man. A hooker who could’ve easily been on the wrong side of one hundred eighty pounds rushed the car and got right in his face.

Her actions conveyed over-eagerness, and her spit hit his face every time she opened her mouth. She must’ve spoken the right words, though. He opened the passenger’s side, and she got inside. They drove off toward the north end of town.

More cars drove up the Twelfth Street strip, the tricks seeing what was available on the corners. Then the moment finally came. A 1962 Chevrolet Corvette came rolling up toward the east end of Twelfth Street. There he was. The rich white man Gordon had described in detail.

“That’s him!” Rufus alerted Linda, patting her softly on the leg. “Okay, do you remember what you should do?”

“Like the hairs around my coochie,” Linda joked, her eyes fixed on the high-rolling trick.

“You better make your move now. The girls are starting to swarm around his car like bees around a hive. Do exactly as Mack schooled you, and you should be all right. Right now, I have to get back to the house on Tenth and Garfield.”

Linda emerged from the car and made her way down the street. At least five women surrounded the Corvette, doing their best to entice the wealthy white man, someone who was a big spender when it came to sampling colored women.

Linda walked up the street until she came within several feet of the Corvette. Just as Gordon had encouraged her to, she executed some of her best enticing tactics. She moved closer to the car and pulled her black polyester skirt up to the round, fleshy part of her buttocks.

Robert Thomas Collins, who had his hands resting casually on the steering wheel, instantly stopped paying attention to the other women. Those firm, muscular legs of Linda had placed him into a hypnotic trance. Linda licked her lips and gyrated her hips. Having tight muscles in her rear, she flexed her buttocks just like a bodybuilder flexed their biceps and triceps.

Robert Thomas Collins started to get turned on.

The other hookers didn't have what Linda had.

She took it a step further. Using the three middle fingers of her right hand, she went under her skirt and began circling her hairy crotch area. This method of foreplay teased Robert to no end.

The other women of the evening couldn't understand why he ignored them. Politely, he asked the five of them to leave. They weren't too happy to do so, but they acceded to his wishes.

“Come here a second,” Robert requested of Linda, leaning over to open the passenger's door.

“All right, honey, what can I do you for?” Linda asked as she climbed in, sending seductive glances at him.

“A date is what you can do me for.”

“A date?”

“Most certainly, honey. Man, oh man, you’ve got my pecker standing at attention and ready to salute you.”

“I guess I must be doing something right. You looking to spend some time with me?”

“Time with you would be like finding a best friend for life.”

“How much you looking to spend?”

“How much is your going rate?”

“Depends, darling. If you want a blowjob, that’s a price by itself. If you want to just fuck, then that’s also a price by itself. Now, if you want a blowjob, a good fuck, and maybe some shit hole, then that’ll be triple the price.”

“Honey, I’m just looking for a straight fuck. No more, no less.”

“Then let’s go ahead and get it done.”

“Where are we going?”

“Where do you usually go? Or is this your first time coming to this part of town looking for a colored woman to fuck?”

“I’ve been here on Twelfth Street many times before. By the way, what’s your name?”

Linda’s brain immediately went to work. She knew better than to tell the trick her real name. She and her accomplices were looking to rob the unsuspecting fool.

“My name’s Charlene.”

“Charlene who?”

“Charlene Travis.”

“Don’t sound like the real name of a colored woman.” Robert became suspicious of her, trying his best to size Linda up before he finalized the deal for the date.

“Well, Charlene Travis is my real name. Again, where do you usually take the girls that you pick up?”

“Most of the time, right over there to the Capri Motel.”

“That stinking piece of a rat hole?” Linda said, frowning from earlobe to earlobe. “That place is crawling with junkies and crazy pimps and drunken thieves and murderers and rapists. Hell, even the police are afraid to go to the Capri most of the time.”

“I’ve never experienced any trouble over there.”

“Don’t press your luck, buddy,” Linda warned him, looking down at Robert’s left pants pockets, noticing a very thick bulge on the center of his leg.

“Where would you suggest we go?”

“To my house.”

“Where’s that?”

“On Tenth and Garfield.”

“Is that where you usually take your customers?”

“Every single time.”

Robert looked Linda in the eyes and hoped to see the truth. But like any other woman who solicited on the streets, she had an uncanny ability to play out the role of someone innocent.

“Is this place safe?”

“Safer than money held in a bank’s vault.”

“All right, my spending limit is a hundred dollars. For that much, I hope that you’ll send me up in the clouds after we’re done.”

“Not only will you be in the clouds, you’ll be in outer space, and you’ll be zooming toward another universe.”

“Now that’s confidence talking.”

Linda pulled her skirt up and showed Robert her luscious legs. She pulled it up even farther and gave him a glance of her bushy crotch. Her index finger went halfway into her moist vagina. To entice and to tease him further, she licked the tip of the same index finger.

At this point, the well-to-do white man couldn’t resist. Some brown sugar for the evening would really make his night, maybe the following week and months to come.

"I've got a question for you," Linda said, using her urban smarts to play a psychological game.

"Go ahead."

"Are you rich or something?"

"My family has money. Why'd you ask?"

"This car, your clothes, the jewelry, the smell of your cologne. These are the things that a rich man would have in his possession."

"Sounds like you might be a good judge of character."

"Very good."

Robert started up the Corvette and began driving east out of Twelfth Street. When he arrived at Paseo Boulevard, he made a sharp left turn. Linda instructed him to make a right turn onto Tenth Street. He followed Tenth Street until he arrived at Garfield Avenue. By this point, everyone in on the nefarious plot was ready.

Robert parked in front of the residence at 1028 Garfield Avenue. From an upstairs bedroom window, Rufus alerted Gordon, who was at the top of the stairs on the second floor. Gordon then signaled down the stairs to Alla Mae. She was dressed impeccably. She wore a black wig with wide streaks of gray.

On the curb right outside the home on Garfield, Robert and Linda stepped onto the front sidewalk. Robert looked up and down the block to get an idea of what the neighborhood might be like. He turned to Linda and asked, "Are you sure this neighborhood is safe?"

"Don't worry, honey," Linda told him as calmly as possible. "We're going to be all right around here."

"At least when I went to the Capri Motel, I'd pay those colored kids to watch my car."

"Your car's going to be safe. Besides, we're not going to be here all that long."

"Okay, if you say so."

Robert followed Linda up to the house. The pair walked in and there stood Alla Mae in the front room. She put on the most innocent face possible.

Robert glanced up at the ceiling, at the surrounding walls, and down at the floor. He wasn't shy about letting them know that he didn't feel comfortable.

Alla Mae approached him with her hand extended. "Sir, how might you be doing this evening?"

"Fine," Robert replied, checking out every square inch of his surroundings. "And you are, ma'am?"

"Annabelle Simpson, sir. I'm the madam of this residence." She spoke with a Southern accent.

"Madam? So that means that you keep the girls in line the same way that a pimp does?"

"I wouldn't say I keep them in line. My exact job is to make sure that both the girls and their customers are satisfied. Pimps like to beat on their women and confuse their minds."

"This house, it seems like nobody hardly lives here."

"Trust me, it's a very habitable residence," Alla Mae said confidently. This sort of impressed Robert. "I see that you want to spend some time with Charlene," she continued.

"As much time as possible. Maybe it wasn't such a bad idea coming here. That Capri Motel has some of the dirtiest rooms out of all the motels that I've ever gone to."

"No, sir, you won't regret coming here. How much will you be spending today?"

"Like I told Charlene when I first met her, a hundred bucks is my limit."

"A hundred dollars don't sound bad. Well, we've got the perfect room upstairs waiting for you. If you'll just follow me and Charlene up these stairs."

Alla Mae and Linda led Robert straight up the set of stairs. The hallway off to the left was pitch-dark. The opposite end was partly lit.

The very second that Robert stepped onto the upper level, Gordon emerged from the darkest end of the hallway. Using his Herculean strength, he grabbed Robert in the tightest bear hug. Rufus threw a black burlap sack over his head. A thick rope was wrapped several times around the lower part of the sack.

Rufus placed the .22 caliber used by Alla Mae up to his temple. “Do what the fuck you’re told so you won’t get popped in your head. Understand?”

“Mhmmm,” Robert mumbled through the thick sack.

Gordon reached down into the pants pocket that was bulging. Once his hand came sliding out, there was a thick wad of ten, twenty, and hundred-dollar bills in his palm.

Rufus guided Robert into one of the dark rooms and slammed him down on the bed. The door was shut behind him. As quickly as possible, Gordon, Rufus, Alla Mae, and Linda all ran out of the house. They got inside Gordon’s car and then sped northbound up Garfield, leaving Robert in the room to remove the rope and sack from his head himself.

As he did, he was thinking of only one word: *sucker*. He felt like the sucker of the century. Once the rope and sack came off, he walked down the stairs with extreme caution. The vacant home was only furnished with an old sofa and a recliner.

Robert walked out of the Garfield Avenue residence and was met with complete darkness. A band of neighborhood thugs were gathered on the sidewalk. When they saw Robert, they moved in like a lion in the African Serengeti on its prey.

The leader of the colored thugs advanced toward Robert and said, “Sir Whiteness has come to the ghetto to see how us poor colored folks are doing. Look, honky, whatchu doing over here on Garfield?”

“Hey, man, I don’t want no trouble,” Robert nervously responded.

"Then why are you in our neighborhood?"

"I should've never been around here in the first place."

"Yeah, we know that. If you were smart, you'd get out of here before you end up dead."

Robert ran to his Corvette and jumped inside. In record time he started up the car and sped off. Meanwhile, several blocks from the 1028 Garfield Avenue residence, Gordon and the others had returned to the residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street.

Sitting on the sofa in the front room, Gordon counted the money. He made three separate stacks for the ten, twenty, and one-hundred-dollar bills on top of the hard oak table. Mathematics, particularly arithmetic, was one area that Gordon excelled in.

He mumbled to himself and then told everyone present, "Everybody, we got that rich punk for two thousand, one hundred eighty dollars."

"Whew!" Alla Mae exhaled heavily. "Mack, that's some serious money, baby."

"Serious as somebody drowning in dollar signs. He wants to go around being flashy, then he's gotta pay the price."

"You're right, Mack," Linda added. "He seems like the type who comes down in the ghetto to remind us poor people that he's got everything and we've got nothing."

"As of now, he's twenty-one hundred and eighty dollars less richer."

"That won't hurt a spoiled, rich brat like him."

Gordon, being the mastermind behind the robbery, took fifteen hundred right off the top for himself. He counted out a hundred eighty dollars for Linda. Two hundred was counted out for Alla Mae, while the remaining three hundred fifty went to Rufus.

"Is that fair?" Gordon turned to ask the other three who participated in the robbery.

"It's fair to me," Linda said, stuffing the money down into her purse.

"No complaints here, Mack." Alla Mae nodded, taking her two hundred dollars and dropping the small roll into the dress pocket.

"I'm happy, Mack," Rufus said as he held the money up to his eyes. "Not bad for short work."

Alla Mae signaled to Gordon with a low-pitched grunt. "Mack, do you think that trick is gonna send the cops around here looking for us?"

"Not a chance, Mae," Gordon assured Alla Mae. "Considering why he came down into this part of town, the cops won't hesitate to ask him what he was doing to get robbed in the first place. The KCPD already knows that white men frequent this area in search of colored women. The vice squad knows that the law-abiding, church-going white men or the rich white men who are lawyers, doctors and businessmen, wouldn't be caught dead in this neighborhood. They use other people to find whores for them, then bring them to safer and cleaner locations."

"Think we should lay low for a while?"

"It wouldn't hurt to not let your face be seen around here for a few days."

"That Galanis bastard, he wants the both of us real bad, Mack."

"The scum patrolman can try and get us all he wants. Unless he gets hard proof against us, he can't haul none of our asses in."

Patrolman Galanis wasn't the only person that Gordon had to worry about, though. As much as he respected Willie Cammisano, he only hoped that the ruthless gangster wouldn't find out about the huge robbery score.

No matter how Gordon made his money, Cammisano always wanted his cut. He felt entitled to Gordon's earnings, whether it was legal or illegal. Not volunteering to inform Cammisano about the score didn't necessarily put him at risk, but it could create a wedge between the two.

Gordon recounted the fifteen hundred dollars to make sure the amount remained accurate. Being that he was good with dollar figures, he put the ten-dollar bills at the very front of the stack. The

twenty-dollar bills were placed behind the tens and in front of the hundreds. The smallest bills were always at the very front.

“Mack,” Alla Mae said his name sensually, her fingers running along his chest. “You’ve got any certain plans with that fifteen hundred bucks?”

“It’s funny you asked that,” Gordon said, flipping through the thin stack as though he had millions. “The whiskey and cigarette supplies, they’re starting to get low. Maybe I can take some of this money and fill up again.”

“Where are we gonna go to get your supplies?”

“Good question, Mae. Willie hasn’t been tipped off about any whiskey or cigarette trucks coming into Kansas City.”

“After you all did that last hijacking job, the trucks probably take different routes into the city.”

“That’s a strong possibility. I’d go as far as saying that the goods are brought into the city in different vehicles. There has to be a black market for whiskey and cigarettes somewhere around town. What I’ll do is put my ears to the street and then see if somebody will cut me in on the underground market.”

“The whiskey and cigarettes have been a damn good side hustle for you.”

“They certainly have brought in a nice income for me.”

“What about the dope?”

“What about it?”

“Are you still looking to push a little dope here and there? You know, people go here and there looking for smack or blow to get their fixes.”

“The dagos suggested that I try and expand into dope. But trust me, Mae, when someone gets too heavy off into dope, they’re looking for serious trouble. The cops, they’re already riding my ass about my girls and other stuff. By now, I know that they’re looking to shut me

down for good. If they had their way, I'd get sent up the river and do time all over again."

"Yes, that's something to think about."

Gordon glanced at the heavy wad of cash that he held at eye level. He smiled at Alla Mae and said, "You know what, Mae? We should take a quick trip out of town somewhere."

"But where, Mack?"

"I don't know. Somewhere, honey."

"Any place you had in mind?"

"Somewhere not too far. I'd love to spend some of this money on a trip for you and I."

"Let's put our heads together. I'm sure we'll think of something."

"Wherever we go, it won't be no time soon. It'll have to be some-time early next year."

Gordon threw the money down on the table. He pulled Alla Mae closer to him and planted a big smack of a kiss on her. The two love-birds suddenly engaged in a long kiss, slamming their tongues into one another's mouth. They couldn't keep their hands off each other.

He picked her up and carried her upstairs. Before long, they were in one of the bedrooms, making hot, passionate love to one another.

CHAPTER 28

A Reynolds She is Not!

AFTER DOING SOME careful thinking and months of planning, Gordon decided to pay his parents a visit at their farm in Lexington, Missouri. The spring of 1963 had arrived.

Alla Mae packed a small suitcase for her and Gordon. She was actually excited about meeting his parents for the first time. Deep down, Gordon wasn't sure how the visit was going to go. He wanted to take his chances anyway.

Their traveling luggage was placed into the trunk of Gordon's car, and they headed toward Lexington, Missouri. Gordon backed out of the driveway and connected with the highway closest to Twelfth Street. Their destination, which was about forty-five miles outside of the Kansas City limits, was about an hour's drive.

Gordon drove at a comfortable speed on US Route 24 to keep the law off his trail. Cars drove alongside them on the two-lane highway, most of them carrying white couples with their children who sent intimidating glares at Gordon and Alla Mae. The little white children had almost adopted the same beliefs as their parents: whites should stick with whites, and coloreds should stick with coloreds.

Gordon and Alla Mae had gotten used to it. Not that they'd fully accepted it, but the interracial couple had realized that racism was

an accepted way of life. Racism in America became an institution, similar but not equal in nature to Harvard University, Ford Motor Company, and Coca-Cola.

Sitting comfortably in the passenger's seat, Alla Mae looked over and noticed a white man driving alone inside of a 1961 Chevy Impala. The meanest expression known to humankind was plastered all over his face. His lips moved at a fast, steady pace.

Although she was not quite an expert, Alla Mae read lips better than the average person. She recognized the word *nigger* rolling off his tongue and out of his mouth repeatedly.

The seething, hot flames of racial hatred directed at colored people were nothing new to her. She'd heard her parents, Pompeii and Idella, speak about the lynching's, the discrimination, the torment, and the utter disrespect toward the colored people in Little Rock, Arkansas and throughout most of the Deep South.

The Briggs couple explained to their daughters and son how the legacy of white supremacy endured and had vowed to exterminate the colored race altogether. The Briggs children were told to stay on busy roads and not to be out walking late at night. They'd been schooled to not look whites straight in the face and to tip their hats to them whenever they crossed paths. These were lessons they wanted them to learn to survive. Alla Mae especially took those very lessons to heart.

Gordon and Alla Mae were the center of attention as they cruised at a steady speed of forty-five miles per hour. A highway patrolman pulled up right beside them and shot them the most disapproving look. Gordon fretted that he might get pulled over. The patrolman pressed harder on his gas and passed them. What a relief that was.

They'd traveled at least fifteen miles outside of the Kansas City limits when all of a sudden a white man and a white woman pulled up within inches of the Bel Air. Gordon pressed harder on the gas to separate the two cars.

This didn't discourage the other driver from pulling up alongside him again. The look on the man's face was that of total resentment. His face turned dark red and he jerked his head. A nasty snarl came over his face.

What happened next took Gordon completely by surprise. The other driver rolled his window down and stuck his head out. Gordon rolled his window down to listen to what he had to say. Other motorists couldn't pass them up since they were totally side by side.

"Do yourself a favor," the driver said to Gordon, having pulled within about three inches from his car. "Drop that nigger gal off on the side of the road so the Deputy Sheriff won't haul your ass off to jail."

Blood rushed to Gordon's face. His heart pumped in dangerously fast beats. Large beads of sweat popped through his pores like sap coming through tree bark. His anger had been pushed to full throttle.

Gordon, being the precision driver that he was, jerked the steering wheel to his right. He forced the rude driver off the road and into a ditch of dirt and grass. Swiftly, he jumped out of his car and snatched the man right out of the seat. Using his size to his advantage, he picked him up off the ground and held him in midair. A growl similar to that of a savage beast's erupted from his throat.

Gordon wasn't kidding around. He brought the man back down to the ground and then held his neck in a tight grip. Not wanting to completely choke him to death, he released the grip and shoved him against his car.

"Let me tell you something," Gordon said scornfully, his violent temper kicked into high gear. He pointed over to Alla Mae and said, "That colored woman over there, the one that you called a nigger gal, she's my lady. As long as we're both living and breathing on this earth, if you ever disrespect her by calling her a nigger gal again, I'm going to slice your balls off and then season and barbecue the two little things, and then feed the motherfuckers to you. You've got that, you poor piece of shithead white trash?"

The timid white man didn't respond. He kept a dignified silence.

"Did you hear what I said?" Gordon asked, moving up closer to the man.

After seeing Gordon ball his fist up, the man quickly replied, "Yes, yes, I heard what you said."

"You Missouri rednecks think you can disrespect anybody any time you feel like it. Well, I'm one Irishman who doesn't take shit from nobody, not even a tobacco-chewing redneck like you."

"You're risking your life, mister," the racist white man informed Gordon, insisting on bringing up the topic of disgust for mixed-race relationships. "Ever since nineteen fifty-eight, Missouri has been one of several states that talks out against interracial marriage and interracial sex. It's called the anti-miscegenation laws. You should know that they also lynch white men for fooling around with colored women."

Gordon moved close enough to press his middle finger into the center of his forehead. "Why don't you and the state of Missouri mind your own goddamned business? Why don't the United States of America also mind their own business? If I want to be with a colored woman, then I'll be with one.

You sound just like one of those KCPD patrolmen who came barging into my house, trying to tell me and my old lady that it's against the law for whites and coloreds to be together. If they don't like a white man going with a colored woman, then that's hard-boiled cow shit." Gordon pushed him and walked back toward his car.

Being told off by some Irishman didn't settle well with the racist man. He reached inside the trunk of his car and brought out a tire iron. As he rushed toward Gordon, Alla Mae stuck her head out of the window and shouted, "Mack, look out!"

Gordon turned around and saw the redneck bolting toward him with the tire iron drawn back over his shoulders. One second before he struck, Gordon ducked and tackled him to the ground. This only

angered the racist man to the point that he wanted to possibly end Gordon's life with a deadly assault.

Gordon punched him repeatedly across his face. Blood covered his knuckles. He took the tire iron and pressed it hard against the man's throat. This immediately cut off his circulation. His face turned redder and redder by the second.

The tire iron was lifted off his throat. Gordon pulled him up off the ground and clutched his shirt collar in a tight grip. The devout racist gasped desperately for breath. His nose and mouth discharged thin mucus.

"Hear me good!" Gordon hollered into the man's face. "You've got one more time to try to whack me with a tire iron. Next time, I'm going to take it and shove it down your fucking throat, right until it reaches your guts. After that, you're going to be shitting turds made of iron for the next month or so. You're lucky, since I'm not one of those criminally insane dago bastards. They'd kill you and throw you off in the river somewhere."

Gordon removed his hands from around the man's shirt collar and walked away, giving the impression that he had eyes in the back of his head.

He started up his car and they continued their journey out US Route 24. Gordon remained quiet for the next several minutes. Alla Mae sat there studying him. He hadn't quite cooled down yet. If someone made him mad, it'd take some time for him to return to normal.

"You're really something, Mack," Alla Mae praised the man whom she felt love for that grew strong with each passing day.

"What makes you say that?" Gordon asked her, trying to keep his eyes off the curious whites, those who still drove by them and stared rather hard into their car.

"You've gone to bat for me more than one time. Like, for instance, that day when we were in Safeway, when that white man hit me with his shopping cart and didn't have the courtesy to say 'excuse

me.' You put him back in his place right there in the grocery store. When a man does that for a woman, that proves that he really does care deeply for her."

"Always remember this, Mae: no matter what type of woman is in my presence, whether she's my wife, my girlfriend, my sister, my aunt, my mother, my lover, my friend or my neighbor, no man is going to disrespect her with salty words or by causing harm to her body. That even goes for the girls who work the streets for me. I won't go into detail, but one guy went too far by beating up one of my girls and he had the nerve to go around bragging about it. I made sure that he got what was coming to him."

"When it comes to women being mistreated by men, I guess you don't care what their race is."

"A woman is a woman to me. Women are the weaker sex. If she means something to me, then I'm not going to let anybody cause harm to her. If she doesn't mean anything to me, then maybe my ungentlemanly side will come out."

"The colored pimps who's got women on the stroll for them, they treat them worse than any man could any woman. All my years of being out there, I saw it all going on. That's why I promised myself that I wasn't gonna work for nobody else but me. If one of them jealous pimps wanted to kill me because I wouldn't work for them, then that was a chance that I was willing to take."

"Sad enough, the colored pimps hardly pay their girls anything. Trash in the sewer gets treated better than their girls."

Alla Mae shook her head sadly. "Mack, my heart is in much pain."

"Why's that, Mae?"

"Through most of my life, I've sat back and watched my colored people destroy one another."

"Destroy one another how?"

"They hate each other so much. Sometimes, I feel like we're the only race of people on earth who can't stand to see one another do

good. It gives us pleasure to see other colored people fall flat on their faces. You ever heard of the story about the crabs in the barrel?"

"Sure, my folks used to talk about that all the time when we were growing up."

"When one crab tries to crawl out of the barrel, the other crabs pull and pull and jerk and jerk until that one crab falls right back into the barrel."

"I've kinda dealt with that several times in my life."

"Not like us colored people have."

"I wouldn't be so sure about that," Gordon argued, shaking his head while trying not to drift too far into the past. He had to keep his eyes and mind on the road. "Whites will stomp on top of each other when they're trying to get to the top. The filthy-rich whites who got to the top, most of them got there by stepping all over a bunch of other whites."

"You've got a point there, Mack. But nobody has sold out their people the way we have. The average colored person doesn't get along with others. What little we do have, some of us take that away."

Gordon picked up the speed to fifty miles per hour. They'd arrived in Lexington, Missouri. Lexington had been a bustling and prosperous city prior to the 1830s and 1840s. The steamboat trade on the river became a hugely profitable investment for the city.

Gordon recognized most of the public buildings with their breathtaking architecture. He pointed out to Alla Mae the Greek Revival Lafayette County Courthouse there on Main Street. The Gothic Revival Christ Episcopal Church sat farther down the street. Over one hundred homes and public buildings were built there in Lexington prior to the Civil War.

The Irishman had a treat in store for Alla Mae. He drove just over a mile to a location where two of the largest battles in the American Civil War, the First Battle of Lexington and the Second Battle of Lexington, were fought.

Gordon told Alla Mae that between six thousand and ten thousand soldiers of the Missouri State Guard, led by Major General Sterling Price, began a siege against a federal military post in the old Masonic College commanded by Colonel James A. Mulligan.

“Guess who got hurt real bad here in Lexington?” Gordon asked Alla Mae.

“Who, Mack?” she wondered.

“Jesse James.”

“Are you fooling around with me?”

“Not at all. Jesse James got shot in the lungs. The James gang robbed the Alexander Mitchell Bank here in Lexington.”

“That’s some exciting history to learn.”

After the detour, Gordon drove just over two miles until they approached a farming area that sat on many acres. Cows, pigs, horses, and chickens grazed near a big house that was connected to a long dirt driveway. A Labrador retriever and a golden retriever barked nonstop after seeing the car pull up the driveway.

An old white couple appearing to be in their middle to late seventies came onto the porch with their cups of coffee. Gordon drove within several feet of the three-story white house and parked.

The elderly couple’s eyes zoomed in on Alla Mae. Right away, she started to feel uncomfortable. The male, he had a set of eyes that could burn through someone.

Gordon looked over at Alla Mae and said, “Mae, this is where I was born and raised.”

“Really?” she said, genuinely surprised. “Why did I think you were born and raised in Kansas City like me?”

“Probably because I know the city so well. Some of my relatives were born and raised right there in Kansas City.”

“Now let me take a guess. Those are your folks standing there on the porch.”

“Those are my folks.”

“Looks like they’ve been married for a long, long time.”

“Over sixty years.”

“No kidding?”

“When they first got married, she was thirteen and he was eighteen.”

“People could get married young back then and stay married. Nowadays, people don’t stay together like they used to.”

“Okay, Mae, let’s get out so you can meet my folks.”

“Oh yeah, let’s go and meet them,” Alla Mae nervously replied, reluctantly exiting the vehicle as though she was going to meet her demise. She and Gordon walked up on the porch and stood between the older white couple.

Gordon leaned forward to plant a big kiss on the woman’s cheek. “Mae, this is my beloved and beautiful mother, Mrs. Margaret Myrtle Reynolds. Mother, this is Miss Alla Mae Briggs. There’s never been no other woman who I cherish more on this Earth.”

Alla Mae extended out her hand to Mrs. Reynolds. “Ma’am, how are you doing?”

Mrs. Reynolds extended out her arms and gave Alla Mae a welcoming hug. “I’m fine, and the pleasure is all mines, Mae. We welcome you to Lexington, Missouri.” Mrs. Reynolds wasn’t a rude woman by any means. She loved her son and accepted his decisions, no matter how much she might’ve disagreed with them.

“Thank you, Mrs. Reynolds.”

The welcoming look on the face of Mr. Reynolds wasn’t so genuine. Where’d my son find this colored woman? Why did he bring her here to our home to meet us? Those were just some of the many questions that he craved answers for.

Gordon stepped over to his father and threw his arm around his shoulder. “Mae, this is my handsome and wonderful father, Mr. Samuel Elmer Reynolds. Virtuous and hardworking is what this man has been all his life. Pop, I’d like for you to meet Mae.”

Mr. Reynolds gave Alla Mae the type of stare that could stop most people right in their tracks. The look was mean, and openly disapproving. He slowly extended his hand out to Alla Mae.

Although he had reached the ripe age of eighty-two, he hadn't had too many interactions with colored people. For the first two decades of his life, he didn't even know that colored people existed. He'd been transplanted from Centerville, Ohio. Upon arriving in Missouri at the age of seventeen, he met and married Myrtle a year later. Months after their marriage, they started a family, having a total of eleven children.

Though his suspicions were never validated, Gordon felt that his father might've come from an extremely racist background. He'd never heard his father call a colored person a nigger, but he did grow up listening to him mention how he'd never had anything in common with them and that whites should stay in their part of town, and the coloreds should stay in their part of town.

"Can I get you all anything?" asked Mrs. Reynolds, displaying her generous hospitality.

"Mother, if you don't mind, could you get Mae and I a couple'a glasses of cold lemonade?"

"No problem, Mack."

Gordon took Alla Mae into the front room of his parent's home. Victorian-style furniture that had been preserved rather well decorated the front room. A large painting of vast prairie fields filled up most of the wall facing north. Bright lamps stood in the four corners of the room. A large rug sat under an oval-shaped oak table.

A twenty-by-thirty-inch poster-sized portrait of the entire Reynolds family covered most of the south wall. The portrait brought a spark to Alla Mae's eyes. The photo was from 1943. She moved closer to the wall and leaned forward. "Mack, is this your whole family?"

"It's us, indeed," Gordon told Alla Mae proudly.

"All your brothers and sisters?"

“The eleven of us, including Mom and Dad, who you just met.”

Alla Mae focused her complete attention on Gordon. “Mack, is that you on the second row, at the far left end?”

“That would be me, Mae.”

“All of your family members are some good-looking sons of guns.”

“We come from good stock,” Gordon said without wanting to sound arrogant.

“So why don’t you name off all your brothers and sisters for me?”

“Where do I start?” Gordon first pointed to his youngest sister on the first row. “Let me start from the left and go all the way to the end. That pretty little princess right there is my baby sister, Stella. Next to her is my sister, Doris. My dad is next to her, and my mom is next to him. Next to my mom is my sister, Essie, and next to her is my other sister, Shirley.”

“You guys look like a close-knit family.”

“On the second row,” Gordon continued, pointing right at himself, “it’s me, of course. Next to me, going on down the row, is my brother Jimmy, my sister Leota, my sister Chloe, my brother Kenneth, my brother Lloyd and my sister Marie.”

“Well, now!” Alla Mae let out a delighted sigh. “What an attractive family. Your brothers are extremely handsome, and your sisters are very beautiful. All of them inherited their good looks from your mother and father.”

“I tend to think so.”

“Your brother, Kenneth.”

“What about him?”

“He looks like the Hollywood actor Paul Newman.”

“Kenneth has had to fight girls off him all his life. To say that my brother is a bona fide ladies’ man would be the biggest understatement.”

Mrs. Reynolds entered the front room holding two tall glasses of cold lemonade. She handed them to Gordon and Alla Mae and took a seat on the sofa.

Mr. Reynolds stuck his head from around one of the doorways and said to Gordon, "Son, can I see you for a second?"

"Sure, pop," Gordon said, signaling to Alla Mae for her to stay there.

Mr. Reynolds led Gordon into a room at the far rear of their farmhouse. The chickens, pigs, and cows sure made a lot of noise.

Mr. Reynolds and Gordon took a seat around a small table that could barely seat three people. Whatever thought was planted deep inside of Mr. Reynolds, it was sure to come out now. "Son, where'd you meet that colored woman at?"

"I met her while driving down the street one day," Gordon explained, not going into much detail.

"What was she doing while walking down the street?"

"That's not important, Dad."

"Are you saying that it's not my business?"

"Not at all," Gordon replied respectfully.

"I'd like to know, what're you doing for yourself these days?" Mr. Reynolds asked his eldest son.

"A little pickup work here and there, Dad. I make a few bucks along the way."

"One of your sisters told me that you've got women out there prostituting themselves. She also told me that you run those houses for whores and whiskey and dope and cigarettes and gambling. Son, is all of that true?"

"None of it's true, Dad," Gordon outright lied, his ferocious anger barely held at bay. "Which one of my seven sisters told you that?"

"Never mind who. Your mother and I raised the eleven of you with pure, wholesome, and Christian values. It'd rip my heart apart if I found out that my oldest son was a man who put women out on street corners to sell their bodies. I'd be torn up if I found out that you, Gordon McCoyd Reynolds, my oldest son, was pushing dope for people to shoot into their veins. My eyes would cry oceans of tears

if I found out that you sold whiskey to people who drank themselves over a cliff.”

“Was it Doris?” Gordon asked, trying to figure out which of his seven sisters had ratted him out. “Doris is the only sister of mines who I keep in regular contact with.”

“At this point, naming names wouldn’t do any good. Anyway, are you involved heavily with that colored woman?”

“Yes I am,” Gordon admitted unabashedly.

“Boy!” Mr. Reynolds snapped, his anger not quite as violent as his son’s. “You’re taking your life into your own hands. You’re jeopardizing the life of that colored girl that you brought here. If the Klan caught you two on some dark road, they’d burn, skin, and hang you two alive.”

“Dad, I’m not worried about the Klan. They mess around with me, then I’ll make them sorry that they were born.”

“Listen to me, Mack. It’s against the law for whites and coloreds to be together. Son, I read the newspaper and watch television and listen to the radio. There’re laws on the books that will lock you up for a long time for stuff like that. If you were smart, you would’ve stayed with Thelma.”

“I wasn’t happy anymore with Thelma.”

“Happy or not, you still should’ve stayed with her. Look, they’ve killed white men, white women, colored men, and colored women for coming together as mixed-race couples. Mack, I don’t want no son of mines found hanging from no tree or with no bullet pumped into his head. You understand me, Son?”

“I understand, Dad,” Gordon said. “But I’ve never felt so good about any woman until I met Mae. Dad, I’m just so happy being with her.”

“You wanting to be happy is going to get you killed. Don’t take this the wrong way, Son, but whites and coloreds don’t belong together.”

“Says who?”

“Says the rich whites and politicians who make the laws. Says the sheriffs and cops who catch them together. You make them people mad and they’ll send you up the river for good.”

“We both know that I’ve been in and out of penitentiaries all over this country. Prison is nothing new to me.”

“For that very reason, you crushed your mother and I into a billion little bitty pieces. You had so much potential, Mack. You could’ve been a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, an architect or maybe even the president of the United States.”

“Is that what you and mom wanted for me?”

“I’d say hell yes. We wanted all eleven of our children to grow up and be something. Your brothers and sisters went on to make something of themselves. You could’ve easily done the same.”

“They chose their path in life, and I chose my own path. But the good thing about my life being turned upside down is that I never once blamed you or mom for it. I took full responsibility for the crappy life that I ended up living.”

Mr. Reynolds stuck his head forward and looked deep into his son’s eyes. “Do you plan on staying with that colored woman for good?”

“I certainly do.”

“Well, Mack, it’s your life. Whatever you decide to do, it’s totally up to you, Son.”

“My definition of happiness might not be the same as others’. Once I learned to live for myself, that’s when I learned what it meant to be happy.”

Right outside the Reynolds residence, driving particularly slow along a dirt-paved road, were two older white men. Laid out across the backseat were the white uniforms of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Neither Gordon, Alla Mae, or Mom and Pop Reynolds had a clue that a pair of white supremacists was cruising past the residence.

They were no doubt on a reconnaissance mission. No one inside the house saw them journey farther up the road.

Mrs. Reynolds and Alla Mae were busy getting well acquainted with each other. They exchanged information about their family backgrounds. Alla Mae was proud to tell the matriarch of the Reynolds family that her father was an ordained minister, but never would she disclose information about her criminal life with Gordon.

Mrs. Reynolds had already heard stories, just like her husband, that the interracial duo were heavily involved with vice activities. Mrs. Reynolds, however, always wanted to see the good side of everyone.

Gordon entered the front room with his father in tow. He looked at his watch and told Alla Mae, “Mae, it’s time that we start heading back to KC.”

“I guess it is getting a little late,” Alla Mae concurred. “Meeting you two, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, I wouldn’t have traded it for the world. You all are some of the nicest people that I ever met in my life.”

“Likewise,” Mrs. Reynolds returned the compliment. “Mae, we appreciate you visiting us. We only ask that you take care of our son, Mack.”

“Will do, Mrs. Reynolds.”

Gordon moved over to the sofa and planted a kiss on his mother’s cheek. “Mom, it puts a smile on my heart when I can visit you and Dad. I’ll try and do better at visiting more often.”

“Please do that, Son.”

He went over to Mr. Reynolds and threw his arms over his shoulders. “Dad, you’re my hero. Since no one ever knows how many more years they have on earth, they should keep in contact with family as much as possible.”

“Family is everything, Son,” Mr. Reynolds reminded Gordon. “It’s like that well-oiled, fine-tuned machine that keeps the sibling motor running from one generation to the next.”

“Mom and Dad, I love you,” Gordon said with genuine warmth. “Mae and I have to be taking off now.”

“We love you, too, Mack,” Mrs. Reynolds said softly to the eldest of her four sons.

“No matter what, you’ll always be our boy,” Mr. Reynolds said.

Alla Mae, being raised as one who displayed good manners, kissed both Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds on their cheeks. “Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, I say once again, it was a true pleasure meeting the both of you.”

Gordon and Alla Mae went out to his car. They waited just over a minute for the car to warm up. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds waved goodbye to them as they drove down the dirt-paved road.

CHAPTER 29

Man, Oh Man! There Goes the Klan

GORDON DECIDED TO take the US Route 24 on their way back home. He'd learned throughout the years that it was the most convenient stretch of highway between Lexington and Kansas City. The traffic wasn't bad except for a few motorists who drove at exceptionally slow speeds. A quick honking of his horn encouraged them to speed up.

After having driven just over fifteen miles outside of Lexington, they came upon two signs placed almost in the center of the road. One sign cautioned motorists to slow down. The other sign instructed those on the road to detour.

Gordon wasn't too happy about this. All the years of visiting his parents in Lexington, he'd never seen signs that inconvenienced him on such a level.

To avoid any mishaps or trouble from the highway patrol, he slowed down and detoured over to a very dark road connected to US Route 24.

“Just what I needed,” Gordon complained, finding it hard not to slam his foot on the accelerator. “Detouring off on this road is going to make our trip back to KC way too long.”

“Tell me about it, Mack,” Alla Mae agreed, slumped far down in the seat.

“The road up ahead on Twenty-four looked fine to me.”

“Looked like nothing was wrong from what I seen.”

“Cocksuckers! Now it’s going to take us forever to make it back into the city.”

Gordon drove for another mile. Alla Mae started fidgeting in her seat. Something had startled her.

“Mae, what’s the matter with you?”

“Mack, I’m getting this creepy feeling.”

“You don’t know why you started feeling like this all of a sudden?”

Alla Mae’s left eye kept twitching. She placed the tip of her finger on the eyelid. “Mack, my left eye is jumping like crazy. It started jumping out of nowhere, and it won’t stop.”

“Does it mean anything, Mae?”

“It means that I’m being warned. It also means that we’re being warned.”

“Warned about what?”

“There’s danger somewhere nearby.”

“You’re not bringing that witchcraft voodoo stuff up, are you?”

“A jumpy left eye has always run in my family. Whenever my mother’s left eye jumped, something bad usually happened. When my left eye jumps, usually something bad is about to happen.”

“We’d better be extra, extra careful, Mae.”

Both Gordon and Alla Mae felt that they’d ventured off into serious redneck territory. Staying on the main roads was a lot safer than being on the side roads that were pitch-dark.

At a little over two miles along the extremely dark road, Gordon’s eyes met with one of the brightest floodlights that he’d

ever seen. Another beaming floodlight shot from the opposite direction. He and Alla Mae were nearly blinded by the intensity of the lights. Two cars blocked them in from the front and the back. A total of six men, three from each car, emerged from the vehicles.

The six of them wore white hoods on their heads and white sheets covering their bodies. It didn't take a genius to figure out that the ensemble of men were white supremacists. The red seal stitched on their robes marked them as traditionalist Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Gordon and Alla Mae might've been staring an instant death right in the face.

"You got your twenty-two on you, Mae?" Gordon whispered to Alla Mae.

"Yeah," Alla Mae said quietly.

"Give it to me," Gordon requested, sliding his .45 Colt revolver from the right side of his waist.

"Mack, we're outnumbered."

"Do as I say."

"All right." Alla Mae complied, sliding her hand down into her purse for the .22. She handed it to Gordon and he exited his car. He'd taken on the demeanor of the bravest man in the world.

"You tell that nigger gal of yours to get out the car, too," said the lead white supremacist, standing front and center of the other five men.

"She's not a nigger gal." Gordon defended Alla Mae's honor, both pistols gripped firmly in each hand.

Another of the white supremacists went into the back of one of the cars and brought out a hunting rifle.

"Neither one of you are leaving here alive," said the lead supremacist, taking the rifle from the hands of his fellow Ku Klux Klan member.

"Why don't you just leave us the hell alone?" Gordon demanded, keeping an eye on all six Klansmen. "Furthermore, your voice sounds real familiar."

"I don't think we've ever met before."

"What do you want with us, anyway?"

"Look, boy, we ask the questions round here."

"There's no boys here," Gordon confronted the man who insulted his manhood. "Again, I ask, what do you want with us?"

The man who appeared to lead the other five white supremacists ranted, "Any colored man and white woman, or any white man and colored woman who are married to one another, or who habitually live in and occupy in the nighttime the same room, shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding twelve months or by fines not exceeding five hundred dollars. Here in the state of Missouri, the anti-miscegenation laws are still in full effect. I think it'd be easier to just kill all you race-mixing folks."

"It's no secret that you know the law pretty good," Gordon said, his fingers planted firmly on the triggers of the .45 Colt revolver and the .22 caliber. If anyone made any sudden moves, he wanted to be prepared. "You talk like you're a lawyer or a judge or a police patrolmen. It's been said that they're the very people who hide behind the white sheets of the Klan. You redneck white boys must be real proud of your association with the Missouri Klan."

"Listen good, nigger lover!" the man blasted at Gordon, rage brewing under his hood. "Our children, our race, and our nation have no future unless we unite and organize white Christian patriots. Purity of the white blood must be maintained. One of the crying evils of the times is the mixture of white blood with that of colored blood and other mongrel races. The evil has gone on since Colonial days, until perhaps more than half of the coloreds in the United States have some degree of white blood flowing through their veins. The bullshit is not only biologically disastrous, but gives rise to lots of social problems. We whites will do whatever is necessary for the preservation of the white race, who, for a moment of sexual pleasure, have betrayed their own kind and their own blood."

Gordon sarcastically applauded after listening to the brief speech by the Klan member. “Bravo! Oh, how I’m so touched by your racist redneck speech. By getting rid of our mixed couple, you think you can solve the entire issue of race-mixing?”

“It’s a start, goddammit!”

“Nothing you can do can get rid of us.” He lifted the rifle and his index finger curled around the trigger.

Alla Mae took a deep swallow. Frightened like never before, her hands and feet shook. The Klansman first aimed the rifle at Alla Mae. Since she was a colored woman, he wanted to make sure that she’d go first.

Gordon had to think of something quick. Executing lightning-quick moves, Gordon sprung his left arm upward and fired the .45 Colt revolver at his enemy. The bullet nicked a tiny piece of skin from one of his knuckles. An excruciating burning sensation across his other knuckles followed.

It happened so quickly, he barely knew what hit him. He dropped the rifle to the ground to try and nurse his mild injury.

Gordon handed Alla Mae both pistols. He instructed her to keep them aimed at all six Klansmen. Moving quickly, he rushed over and snatched up the rifle the leader had dropped. “All right, I want the six of you to back up.”

They moved back by at least twenty feet.

“Next, I want you to spread yourselves several feet apart from one another.”

Once they were positioned to where he wanted them, Gordon walked up to their supposed leader. With no warning whatsoever, he snatched the hood right off his head.

“Un-fucking-believable!” Gordon gasped, having received the biggest shock of his entire life. “Galanis? Patrolman Galanis? The same patrolman with the KCPD? You have certainly proven me right tonight, buddy.”

“And I’m not ashamed, either,” Galanis confessed boldly. He might’ve been out of police uniform, but his racist tendencies remained strong.

“Boy, wouldn’t the KCPD be real proud of you. One of their finest in a Klan robe and hood. Why am I not surprised? I’m sure there’s several more out there on the force just like you.”

“You think there aren’t?”

“First, you came to my house to harass me and my lady about being a mixed couple. Now, you got your lice-filled, tobacco-chewing redneck buddies to join you. Don’t tell me, Galanis. You followed us all the way from Kansas City.”

“Sure did.”

“You’ve got the blue balls for me. It makes your dick hard to think about the day that you and the department can lock me up for good.”

“In my opinion, being in an interracial relationship is a lot worse than you putting colored women out on the streets to be your whores. Can’t you keep your work and your personal life separate?”

“Maybe I don’t want to keep them separate. Like I told you and your patrolman buddy at my house on Twelfth Street, if I want to have a colored woman as my companion and my lover, then that’s my business. Since I popped you on one of your knuckles, I know that you’d love to go crying to a judge that I assaulted you. But no judge around these parts would stand up for a cop who’s dirty like you and who stands out front for the Ku Klux Klan.”

Galanis was left speechless for a moment. Not a single patrol officer on the KCPD force knew that he was a devout Klansman. Were there others on the force just like him? If there were, they’d cleverly hid it.

As a scare tactic, Gordon pointed the rifle at all six men. He held the weapon as though it was his prized trophy. “You boys wouldn’t be too hard to find after you took your Klan uniforms off. All anyone would have to do is go inside the doctor’s office, the lawyer’s office, the school classroom, the judge’s chambers, or the grocery-store manager’s

office if they wanted to snuff you out. Shame that you have to hide behind white sheets and white hoods to go around scaring people. You know what that makes you? It makes you cowards. None of you bums could ever be real men.”

“You’re committing pure evil against the white race,” Galanis accused Gordon. “If you haven’t already, you and this colored woman are going to end up making those mulatto nigger babies. That’s going to contaminate the purity of the white race.”

“How about the colored race?”

“There’s never been any purity in the colored race. Remember, the law considered them three-fifths human during slavery. The coloreds are mainly animals, and it’s the white race’s responsibility to treat them as such. Since the beginning of creation, they’ve always been inferior to the white Aryan race.”

“When are we going to start making babies that aren’t born necessarily white or colored, but babies that are born human?”

“You’ve been associating with niggers for far too long.”

Gordon’s major concern was to get him and Alla Mae safely out of Klan territory. Acting on impulse, he shot three of the wheels of the first car. The hunting rifle only held three shells.

Gordon rushed over to Alla Mae and took both pistols out of her hands. The other five wheels from both cars were shot out, leaving all eight wheels flat. He wanted to damage the cars further, however. He used the hard surface of the Colt’s handle to smash the front and back windshields.

“Here’s my wish,” Gordon said. “That you guys can find your way home from this pitch-dark road. I’m always on the lookout for your kind. Good evening to you, gentlemen.”

Gordon and Alla Mae got inside his car and he backed up with caution. Never did he take his eyes off the men who wanted to leave them for dead. After doing a sharp U-turn, he returned to the main road that led toward Kansas City.

The six Klansmen were left stranded. This would surely be a deep wound to their pride. They might've underestimated Gordon. He had survival skills like none other. Galanis being a police officer didn't intimidate him.

They'd meet up again, that Gordon was certain of. After returning to the main road, he only hoped that they wouldn't run into more Klansmen before arriving home.

"That was brave what you did back there, Mack," Alla Mae praised her companion.

"Only did what a man had to do. The Klan are nothing but cowards who go around terrorizing people who can't defend themselves. The crap that they preach is nothing more than double standards. This horseshit about race-mixing that they're always blabbing about, it's to cover up the other dirt they're doing. Away from watchful eyes, and away from their true redneck buddies, those same Klansmen will stick their dicks in anything that's got a pulse."

"If they're so into keeping their race pure, they why have they gone around the world and fucked everything they could get their hands on?"

"Good point, Mae. Did you know that Truman used to be in the Klan?"

"President Harry S. Truman?"

"Yep, President S. Truman."

"That's a new one to me."

"He got in and eventually got out. When I did time in the Missouri Penn, I read about how other US Presidents were also members of the Klan."

"You never know who might be one of them. I've gotta admit, Mack, I thought we were going to die back there."

"So did I. Even before I pursued you, Mae, I knew about the problems that we were going to come up against. Yes, I do understand that those white trash Klansmen still hang whites and coloreds from

trees for being together. That's a chance we take for wanting to be together."

"We ever come this way together again, we'd better bring a full armory with us."

"Neither one of us was expecting to run into two cars filled with those hooded bandits."

Gordon looked into the rearview mirror and noticed a cop car driving up from behind. He slowed down by about five miles. "Mae, duck down in the seat."

"Why, Mack?" she asked.

"Do as I tell you. Now."

Alla Mae slumped down in the passenger's seat until she was almost on the floor. The patrol car drove right alongside Gordon. There was a pair of policemen inside the car. Both patrolmen shot Gordon hard stares. For reasons unknown, both patrolmen felt the need to intimidate Gordon. Were they friends of the Klansmen he'd left behind?

Were they undercover white supremacists who just had to flaunt their authority? For nearly half a mile, they rode right next to Gordon. Obviously, they didn't know that Alla Mae had tucked herself down into the seat.

Gordon sweated gun bullets. He'd left trouble behind only to possibly encounter more trouble. However, he wanted to appear calm and collected.

Gordon pressed lightly on the brakes. After riding far too close to him for a long time, the patrolmen finally sped up and disappeared in a matter of minutes. Had they seen Alla Mae in the car with him, there might've been more trouble brewing for them.

"Mae, you can sit up," Gordon told her with a tap on her shoulder.

"Coast clear?" Alla Mae asked, peeking up from below the seat.

"You can sit up now."

"Why did you have me hide in the first place?"

“Two cops pulled up right beside us.”

“We’re like two Hollywood movie stars but in the worst kinda way.”

“Got that right, honey. We have to realize that when we drive to this part of Missouri, we’re way out of our element. The Klan operates real strongly around these parts. My only hope is for us to get back home alive.”

“We will, Mack, we will.”

Gordon drove at a moderate speed until they reached the city limits of Kansas City.

CHAPTER 30

Don't Disturb the King's Castle

PIMPS LIKE DOC Dearborn punished his clients with physical abuse if they failed to pay. He tried enforcing his so-called exclusive rights to the Twelfth Street Strip, which was where his many prostitutes operated, their main competition being the ten or so women who worked the streets for Gordon. It disgusted Doc Dearborn to no end to see how Gordon's girls earned more than three times than his girls.

Doc's ego had gone off in a long journey through the atmosphere. But the Italians of Kansas City would never cower before some hard street punk like Dearborn. If he got too big for his britches, they'd quickly size them up to where he would walk comfortably to their beat.

Gordon had enlisted the help of one of his top hookers, Kim Davenport, to recruit one of her friends to come and work for the same pimp. Doc Dearborn's pimp-prostitute relationship had turned even more abusive. His usual tactics of psychological intimidation, manipulation, starvation, gang rape, beatings, and confinement were put into action to keep his stable of hookers in line. Statistics showed

the colored male accounted for sixty-two percent of the human trafficking going on in the United States.

Lawmakers believed that whereas prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and community.

During his brief visit to Lexington, Gordon had entrusted Rufus to watch over and keep the girls in line. But it wasn't only Rufus who had his eyes on Gordon's girls; Doc Dearborn's street soldiers watched them from afar with the eyes of hungry hawks.

Meanwhile, inside of a three-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor of Wayne Miner Housing Projects, Doc Dearborn was indulging in one of his most pleasurable vices. Sex, and lots of it, was one of his favorite pastimes. Women would never be his downfall, only a minor distraction.

Stretched across a huge king-size bed were Doc Dearborn and five gorgeous women. The man and five women had everything they needed to keep the party interesting. Lines of pure white cocaine were laid out across small square mirrors. The six people were stripped down, totally naked. The fact that he was lying in bed with five beautiful women who were completely nude made him the envy of most men.

He sure had good taste when it came to women. One of the five women possessed the looks of a goddess. Her silky black hair stretched way down to her buttocks.

At least four of the women were puffing on potent marijuana joints. Whiskey, bourbon, and scotch had been poured into glasses with big blocks of ice cubes.

Success, whether legitimately or illegitimately gained, attracted women. Dollars called to them.

Doc Dearborn moved around on the bed to engage in long, passionate kisses with all five women. Everyone allowed their hands to

explore from every inch of the bed. Without even putting in a request, three of the women positioned themselves right at his midsection.

The trio gave him a three-way blowjob that he'd never forget. Their tongues were like serpents in search of unsuspecting prey. The other two women were toward the top, slamming their tongues into his mouth.

The partiers passed around the marijuana joints and mirrors with the cocaine on top. Taking one drink after another, their heads spun around like wild tops. By now, the party of six was stoned out of their minds.

"Ladies," Doc Dearborn said, holding up a sweating glass of scotch. "Here's to a fucking, sucking, sticking, and licking damn good time. This is how you have a good time."

He set the glass down on the bedside table. Having achieved the ultimate erection, he entered the moistness of one of the women. He'd penetrated them all repeatedly and eventually wore himself out. A few puffs off a cigarette relaxed him.

Out in the hallway on the fifth floor, one of Doc Dearborn's top soldiers policed the area right outside the front door. The soldier held a FEG AKM-63 assault rifle as he paced up and down the hallway, keeping his watchful eyes on the lookout for intruders. Coming up a set of stairways from the opposite direction were Gordon, Rufus, and two Irish white men they'd recruited through Cammisano's criminal network.

Gordon carried his usual .45 Colt revolver. Rufus held a M16 assault rifle while the other two men carried Smith and Wesson .38-caliber handguns. Displaying military-style tactics, they waited for the armed soldier to turn with his back toward them.

Rapidly, they snuck up from behind and shoved their weapons into his face. He gulped like he was swallowing a chunk of beef.

Gordon whispered to the soldier, "You do as you're told, and you won't get hurt. If you don't, we'll kill you first and whoever is inside. You understand?"

He nodded as though he fully understood.

“Who’s inside this apartment?” Gordon questioned the loyal soldier.

“Doc’s inside.”

“Doc Dearborn?”

“Yes.”

“With who?”

“Some of his girls.”

“His hookers?”

“No, just some women he picked up so that he could party with them.”

“What, their own little orgy?”

“Something like that.”

Gordon pressed the barrel of his gun into his temple. “Listen up, and hear me good. Is there anybody else inside that apartment other than Doc Dearborn and the women?”

“No, there’s nobody else.”

“If you’re lying, then my men and I will exterminate you and all the others.”

“I ain’t jiving with you, man.”

“I want you to open the door slowly.”

The soldier stuck the key into the lock. He turned the knob cautiously. The door opened and Gordon and the others followed the soldier into the apartment. Their footsteps were quiet, but although he was high as a kite, Doc Dearborn still heard a set of footsteps. “Rondell, that you, man?”

Rufus had the M16 planted at the very back of the soldier’s head. He knew to keep silent.

“Rondell,” Doc Dearborn called out again from inside the bedroom. “You inside the apartment?” He stepped out of the bedroom wearing nothing at all, and was hit with the surprise of his life upon seeing his most trusted bodyguard surrounded by four white men who had weapons shoved up against his body.

“Doc, my man,” Gordon said to the notorious colored gangster. “Looks like you having the time of your life up inside this here ghetto joint. How come I didn’t get an invitation to the party?”

“Mack Reynolds?” Doc Dearborn shrugged casually, though he was surprised by Gordon’s boldness. “How the fuck you and those other white boys get up here inside Wayne Miner?”

“Wasn’t hard, Doc,” Gordon gloated, staring at Doc Dearborn as though the man had incurred a major debt with him. “Tell your girls to get dressed and get the fuck out of here.”

“You’ve got some nerve, Irish white man!” Doc Dearborn blasted, reaching for a pair of blue underwear that was handed to him by one of the women. “You coming up in Wayne Miner trying to tell me what to do? One phone call is all it would take, and you and your white errand boys would never leave here alive.”

“Phone call to who?”

“Never mind who.”

“Willie Cammisano?”

“Doesn’t matter.”

“How about Nick Civella?”

“The people I’m talking about, all they have to do is just snap their fingers, and you and your boys will be dead quicker than you could blow your nose.”

“Hear me on this one,” Gordon said to Doc Dearborn in plain terms. “You don’t have the type of access to the Italians and Jews that I do. The money that we make on the streets, we both have to kick back to Cammisano’s organization. There’s enough money out there for all of us. Never have I bothered your girls, but you want to snatch my girls off the street and threaten them and then beat them up. Seems like you want the hooking business all for yourself.”

“I sho’ nuff do, white man. If you were smart, you’d turn your girls over to me.”

“That’s never gonna happen. I showed up here today to give you fair warning. If you ever bother any of my girls again, there’s gonna be a war between us that you thought could never happen.”

“You threatening me, Mack?”

“I’m usually a man of my word. You probably take me as some redneck hick from the foothills of Missouri. Touch one of my girls again, and I’ll turn this city upside down looking for your rogue ass.”

Doc Dearborn slipped on his slacks and shirt.

The door to the bedroom occupied by the five women was closed. A pungent odor of sex and marijuana lingered in the air. The odor began to irritate Gordon’s sense of smell. Since he had more information to rattle off, he wasn’t ready to leave the apartment of carnal pleasures.

Doc Dearborn began feeling the effects of the liquor and drugs. Barely was he in control of his faculties. He took a seat in one of the recliners.

“You’re one crazy white man,” Doc Dearborn said with a smile. “You showing up here unannounced, you know what that makes you, don’t you?”

“What does it make me?”

“A dead man walking.”

“Gotta die someday, don’t I?”

Doc Dearborn reached around the back of his pants and whipped out a pistol from a pocket. Gordon, using lightning-quick reflexes, kicked the pistol out of his hand. The barrel of his .45 Colt revolver pressed rather hard into Doc’s forehead.

With Doc’s most trusted bodyguard unarmed, Gordon felt that he had complete control over the apartment. He ordered the two hired men to tie up the bodyguard with several extension cords. His hands and feet were bound tightly.

“You wanna kill me?” Gordon asked Doc Dearborn, pressing the barrel harder into his forehead. “I believe that you’ve been wanting to take me out for quite some time now. What, it bothers you that much

that a white man can have his colored girls and white girls hooking around the colored neighborhoods? What, you think you own the fucking streets of Kansas City? Trust me, buddy, I'll match you bullet for bullet. You shoot one of my guys, I'll shoot three of your guys. This is one war that you won't win."

"You're one of the cockiest honkies that I've met. I put a phone call in to Joe Centimano, and you'll be floating around the bottom of the Missouri River."

"Is that right?"

"That's right, you peckerwood-cracker-motherfucker!"

"First of all, Joe Centimano's not a made guy in Civella's family. And second, just because you've got access to Centimano, that doesn't mean that he'll carry out a contract on someone for you. Dearborn, let me say first of all that I'm not a racist and I've never been one. But in the eyes of Centimano and Cammisano and Civella and those other dagos, you're nothing but a nigger, a jigg, a coon, a moolinyan, a yard ape, a fence monkey, and a buncha other racially offensive names. Those wop dagos don't give a fuck about *niggers* like you. They don't trust you, they don't like you, and they only tolerate you long enough to get their business done and make money off you. At the end of the day, you're nothing at all to those people."

Doc Dearborn sat there speechless. His mouth gaped open. His eyes were bulging like extra-large silver dollars. Had he been hit with the shocking truth? The Italian gangsters were ruthless in every sense with lots of them just as prejudiced as the average white American.

The reality check set deep within Doc Dearborn's psyche. Maybe Gordon knew better than him about American racism. The White Anglo-Saxon Protestants placed themselves above all other nationalities and cultures throughout the United States, which included the Irish, Italian, Jewish, Colored, Hawaiian, Hispanic, Oriental and Native America cultures. Maybe Gordon could give him a quick lesson in racial politics.

Doc Dearborn sprung up from his seat and charged toward Gordon. Rufus and the two hired men did nothing to protect their boss since they already knew that he possessed the strength to defend himself. He placed Doc into a chokehold that cut off his breathing, then released the chokehold and Doc desperately gasped for breath. He coughed up some of the liquor and made a nasty mess on the floor.

“Doc, do you know why I really came here?” Gordon asked, pushing him back down into the recliner.

“Nope,” Doc Dearborn replied in a garbled voice.

“You brought two of my girls here to Wayne Miner, and you treated them like two pieces of shit. You beat them up and you sent them back to me like pieces of old garbage.”

“Let bygones be bygones.”

Gordon looked at his trusted confidant and said, “Rufus, you hungry?”

“Yeah, a little bit,” Rufus answered.

“Check the refrigerator for food.”

Rufus went over to the refrigerator and checked both the upper and lower sections.

“Anything in there?”

“Lots of meats and cold cuts and cheese and bread and juice.”

“Check the cabinets.”

Rufus opened the cabinets, and the quantity of food stocked there appeared endless. Doc believed in always keeping a hefty supply of groceries in one of the apartments that he occupied. “There’s spaghetti, cereal, canned goods, spices, noodles, and cookies and donuts.”

“Mmmm,” Gordon said, licking his lips in a gesture that meant he was hungry. “Sounds like somebody is gonna whip us up a good hot meal.”

Gordon ordered the two hired men to tie up Doc Dearborn. Like his bodyguard, his hands and feet were bound as tightly as possible.

To display his own brand of utter disrespect, Gordon kicked in the door of the bedroom the five women were cowering in. The five of them had dressed in some lingerie purchased for them by Doc Dearborn. The hired men forced them out of the room. Their Smith and Wesson .38 pistols were aimed at them as though they faced execution.

“All right, girls,” Gordon said, himself pointing his .45 Colt at them like they faced even greater danger from him. “I want the five of you to strip down butt naked.”

The quintet of women turned to stare at one another in absolute shock. They were nothing more than women who Doc Dearborn had hired exclusively for entertainment purposes. None of them were hookers who worked the streets for him.

“Now!” Gordon shouted, stretching his arm forward menacingly in an attempt to make them comply. Within seconds, the lingerie was spread out over the floor. “Here’s what you’re going to do. You’re going to go into that kitchen and cook me and my guys dinner.”

“But we don’t know what you like,” said one of the women.

“Just cook us something hot and delicious.”

In a matter of minutes, the women had water boiling on top of the stove and heat rising inside the oven below. Spaghetti was boiled inside a large pot while ground beef and sausages were cooked in two separate skillets. Slices of bread were buttered and sprinkled with garlic salt and pepper. Lean tenderloin steaks were dropped into the same skillet after the ground beef had cooked. Jars of spaghetti sauce were dumped into a separate pot and seasoned with different spices.

Gordon and his men watched as the five women cooked in the total nude. Their bodies were very pleasant to look at. Their breasts and buttocks were firm and shapely.

Doc Dearborn was seething inside. He watched this take place, but there was nothing that he could do about it.

Gordon wanted to humiliate the women further. He slipped off his belt and rushed to them with it curled in his hand.

All of a sudden, he gave them several hard lashes along their buttocks and lower legs. "All right, goddammit, you can cook faster than that!"

The women jumped away from the stove and countertops to escape the lashings. Gordon whacked them several more times and yelled, "Me and my men are hungry! Get us our food and get it right now!"

The women rubbed the wounds until the pain went away and wasted no time in finishing the spaghetti and steaks and garlic bread. Gordon and his men took a seat at one of the large sofas in the front room. A long table was slid in front of them. Plates of piping-hot food were placed before them.

The foursome stabbed and poked their forks and knives into the spaghetti and steaks. The women also provided them with steak sauce and the garlic bread on individual saucers. To help wash it all down, tall glasses of lemonade were slid next to their plates.

Gordon slammed the spaghetti and steak down his throat at a rapid pace while Doc Dearborn sat across from him and his men in the recliner, a deathly glare in his eyes. The dope and liquor hadn't quite worn off, but the rage he felt inside had only escalated.

There sure was enough smacking of tongues and licking of lips going on in the front room. A little bit of burping and farting followed afterward. Gordon didn't mind being a little ill-mannered in front of Doc Dearborn and his bodyguard. He wanted to get even with Doc for what he'd done to two of his girls.

The men's bellies were full by now. The meal couldn't have been more satisfying.

Gordon turned to Rufus and asked, "Hey, Rufus, when's the last time that you had a good blowjob?"

"A month or two, I reckon," Rufus said.

"Think you might be up for a blowjob?"

“I guess a good polishing of my pecker wouldn’t hurt.”

Gordon whipped out his .45 Colt revolver and pointed it at two of the five nude women. He’d lost all sense of respect and morality for the women who were connected to Doc Dearborn. “Ladies, I want you two to suck off my buddy Rufus like water running through a hose.” He cocked the pistol to prove to them that he was dead serious. Both women dropped to their knees as Rufus stood and dropped his pants to the ground.

The oral delight provided to Doc Dearborn earlier didn’t compare to what they started doing to Rufus. Their mouths felt like smooth velvet going along his hardness. They’d taken Rufus to a zone of ecstasy. He huffed and huffed until he exploded around their mouths.

“Now go clean your faces up,” Gordon ordered the two women. The humiliation had only begun. He pointed his pistol at the other three women still standing around naked. “I want you three to get down on the floor and crawl around like animals.”

Having a loaded pistol pointed at you made people obey almost any command. Without being told to do so, they barked like dogs, mooed like cows, howled like wolves, purred like kittens, and growled like lions. This gave Gordon the greatest satisfaction.

He went over to Doc Dearborn and pressed the barrel of his gun into his temple. He moved his finger up and down the trigger. His finger movements had Doc Dearborn believing that he was going to blow his brains clean out of his skull.

“The only bad motherfucker inside this apartment right now is me!” Gordon said angrily. “If you want a war, then it’s a war that I’ll give you. Civella is the only somebody in Kansas City who totally rules the streets. He’s the top dog who can snap his finger when he wants somebody sent out to the cemetery. Like the old-timers used to tell us, Doc, there’s always plenty of room left at the cemetery. If you keep fucking with me, you’ll be filling up a plot somewhere out there in Forest Hills. You understand that, boy?”

Though still higher than the moon itself, Doc answered Gordon with a swift nod of his head. Sure, Doc might've been a very feared man among many rogues and gangsters out on the streets, but Gordon made sure that he had displayed his own brand of ruthlessness.

The Irishman pointed at two of the women who stood in a corner near the bedroom. The two hired street thugs rushed at them. Gordon and Rufus opened two windows. Showing no mercy, the thugs gripped the naked women around their ankles and hung them upside down outside the windows.

Residents from nearby floors witnessed the two women wearing no clothing hanging from one of Doc Dearborn's apartments. The plentiful curves of their bodies had men whistling and shouting obscenities.

The fright from being hung from five stories up caused one of the women to vomit. The other woman cried and screamed and pleaded for her life. Gordon gave the signal and the women were brought back inside the apartment.

"I believe that I have made my point," Gordon said in simple terms to Doc Dearborn. "You leave me alone; I'll leave you alone. You bother my girls, then I'm going to bother your girls. Believe it or not, I'm a nonviolent man. I only exercise violence when it's necessary. Today, Doc, you got your chance to see just how much of a pussy this white Irish peckerwood is. It's fair to say that we're even."

Gordon and the other three walked out of the apartment in a peaceful manner.

REPORT

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

POLICE DEPARTMENT

KCPD
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

86456

DATE OF REPORT

6-18-65

OFFICERS

Ptl. Thos. Saunders
Ptl. Maurice Brown

UNIT OR STATION

Vice Unit

CHARACTER OF CASE

PROSTITUTION ARREST

TITLE OF CASE (INCLUDE ALIASES)

REYNOLDS, ALMA, C/Fe, 6-29-33, 1414 E. 12th

REYNOLDS, GORDON, W/M, 8-29-07, 1414 E. 12th, KCPD #86456

DETAILS (REPORT ALL POINTS IN LOGICAL SEQUENCE)

Arrested the above subject, GORDON REYNOLDS, in front of 1414 E. 12th at 2:50 a.m., after subject was recognized as a known and convicted procurer on 6-18-65.

Upon stopping and questioning the subject about loitering in front of 1414 E. 12th, subject stated he resided at this location and his name was "Sam Lee". Subject also stated he was unemployed and was renting the entire second floor for sleeping rooms; all of which were unoccupied with the exception of mussed up beds & towels.

After placing GORDON under arrest, the reporting officers talked to a c/fe, who is a known convicted prostitute, who gave the name of "Alla Lee" and stated she was the wife of REYNOLDS (Alias: "Lee") and is currently unemployed.

Subjects also have the resident phone listed as an Evening Club (VI 2-3848) for men over 40, for unusual entertainment.

Both subjects booked at #1 Station to be checked in connection with recent prostitution activity.

Mug, print and show.

Court date: 6-24-65, 9:00 a.m.

Ptl. Thomas Saunders

TS:jl

6-21-65

REPORT APPROVED BY

Det. Lt. James Hitchcock

FORM 100 (REV. 6-63)

CHAPTER 31

For Nasty Boys Only

LATE NOVEMBER OF 1963 rolled through faster than most Americans realized. The exact date was November 22nd, 1963. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy had arrived in Dallas, Texas during the morning hours. President Kennedy's visit to Dallas was to be aired before television audiences numbering in the millions.

Gordon and Alla Mae had come up with their cleverest idea in recent times. At least, that's how they saw it. The residence at 1414 East Twelfth Street had been listed in the Kansas City directory as an evening club for men over forty which provided unusual forms of raw and unadulterated entertainment.

What did Gordon and Alla Mae consider unusual forms of entertainment? To them, it translated into engaging in raw, uninhibited sex—drinking until your brain fluids went dry or getting high until you couldn't stand up straight.

Gordon had taken all eleven of his hookers off the streets for at least three days that week. They were instructed to lounge around the Twelfth Street residence and wait for the tricks to make reservations at the house.

The three bedrooms upstairs were cleaned until not a speck of dust remained. The linen on the beds were washed with good-smelling

laundry detergent and sprayed with disinfectant. Rats hadn't been seen around the house for several weeks. Gordon had found some of the strongest rat poison and acquired the best traps that money could buy.

To create the atmosphere of a true evening club, Alla Mae cooked two large pots of spaghetti and chili. Crackers and garlic bread were spread out over a pan. Beer and whiskey were being chilled inside the freezer. Buckets of ice were placed on the kitchen counter. Cigarettes were stacked inside of a box on another one of the counters. Gordon had towels and washcloths inside all three of the bedrooms.

The phone rang inside the room that Gordon considered to be the television room. He snatched up the phone and said, "Evening Club for men over forty. What can I do for you?"

"Got any nice girls ready?" asked the potential customer through the phone.

"Have we got any nice girls?" Gordon laughed, pulling the phone slightly away from his ear. "We've got girls in all shapes, sizes, and colors. How old are you, sir?"

"Forty-five."

"Do you know where we're located?"

"Doesn't quite give the address in the phone book."

"We're at fourteen fourteen East Twelfth Street."

"Between what streets on Twelfth Street?"

"We're past Paseo and right before you get to Brooklyn."

"I can be there in half an hour."

"See ya then."

Gordon hung up and received another call in less than ten minutes. In the next forty minutes, two customers became the first ones to patronize their evening club.

A knock came from the back door and Gordon cautiously crept to the door with his .45 Colt revolver stuffed on the side of his pants. Rufus served as backup security just in case some brave souls wanted to

join forces and rob the place. The prior altercations with Doc Dearborn and Patrolman Charles Galanis had caused Gordon to increase his security. No one ever knew when old enemies would pop up out of nowhere to seek out their revenge. An extra gun and rifle were stashed inside the house.

A white man with slicked-back salt-and-pepper hair tapped lightly on the door again. He wore a print polyester shirt with matching slacks. He exuded the type of energy that screamed he was looking for the time of his life.

“Can I help you, sir?” Gordon asked the strange man, sizing him up from head to toe.

“I read your ad in the phone book,” he told Gordon, appearing to be totally honest.

“The Evening Club for men over forty?”

“Yes, that’s it.”

“How old are you?”

“Forty-five.”

“Let me see some identification,” Gordon requested.

The man fished around inside his pants pockets until he found his wallet. Gordon reached for his Missouri identification and reviewed it thoroughly.

“You’re Anthony George Miller?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Tell me, George, what exactly are you looking for here at our Evening Club?”

“Fun!” George said cheerfully. “Women, booze, sniff, you name it.”

“We’ve got all that and more. You like partying with one, two, three or maybe more women?”

“You must be able to read my mind. I like having my own private orgy. The more, the merrier. Since we only live once, then I like living life to the fullest extent and partaking in the most extreme indulgences.”

“Tell me, how many girls would you like to go into one of the rooms with?”

“Three’s enough to fulfill my fantasy.”

“Let me cut you a sweet deal,” Gordon offered the hyped-up trick. “For two hundred bucks, I can offer you three of my best girls, a hot bowl of either spaghetti or chili, a half pint of whiskey, a cold beer, and just a little taste of blow.”

“Seriously?”

“You can’t beat that going rate anywhere.”

“I’ll definitely take that offer.”

Gordon called for Lana, Kim, and Louise to come downstairs. The trio of seductive hookers came down the stairs wearing the sexiest eveningwear. All three women had their faces made up, their hair done, and their bodies looking like delectable pieces of candy. Anthony George Miller got excited beyond his craziest expectations. His hormones raced faster than champion horses at the Kentucky Derby. Two colored women and one white woman were more than suited his taste for carnal pleasures.

Gordon pointed at the three women and said, “Anthony, this is Lana, Kim and Louise.”

“Wow!” Anthony exclaimed, licking his lips as his breathing got heavier. “How can a man choose? Brown sugar mixed with a little vanilla swirl. What a sweet treat for a guy to take a taste from.”

“You like what you see?”

“I love what I see!”

“That’ll be two hundred bucks. I’ll have my lady bring up the food and drinks.”

Anthony brought out his black leather wallet. His fingers thumbed through twenty ten-dollar bills. He handed the money over to Gordon and the foursome began their journey upstairs.

Lana opened the door to a bedroom and a fresh smell hit Anthony’s senses. The three women had him sit on the bed. They surrounded

him and then let their fingers go to work. He enjoyed the massaging of his neck, shoulders, chest, and some of his lower extremities.

Five minutes later, Alla Mae knocked on the door. Kim opened the door and she presented them with a steel tray with a bowl of piping-hot chili, an assortment of crackers, a pint of chilled whiskey along with shot glasses, a frosty bottle of beer, and a line of cocaine.

Once Alla Mae placed the tray on the bedside table, she began coughing out of control. She coughed so hard that saliva shot from her mouth.

“Mae, you all right?” asked Louise, trying to help her by patting her across the back.

“Yeah, I’ll be all right,” Alla Mae said, trying desperately to resume breathing normally.

“Are you sure? You might have to go to the hospital.”

“It’s just my asthma acting up for the moment. In a few minutes, I should be all right.”

“Let us know if you need anything.”

“I will, Louise.”

Alla Mae left the room and the games began. Anthony stripped down to absolutely nothing. Kim, Lana, and Louise did the same. The four of them were now in the total nude.

“All right, baby,” said Lana, running her fingers along Anthony’s hairy chest. “What’s your real form of pleasure, your real definition of a nasty good time?”

“Promise you won’t laugh?” Anthony asked in a voice laced with genuine embarrassment.

“We promise we won’t laugh.”

“I like to get whipped with belts and cords and such.”

“Really?”

“You see, when I was a boy, my father used to whip me with straps and electrical cords. He’d whip me with them so much, I began to

like it, even though I'd cry my eyes out from the sting of the straps and cords."

"Whatever you wish, Anthony, we will provide it for you."

Lana, Kim, and Louise had Anthony lie down flat on his stomach. They tied up his hands and feet to the four bedposts. Since Gordon knew that some of his customers were quite kinky, he kept a generous supply of leather straps inside the room.

With Anthony's hands and feet tied up, Louise went into one of the dresser drawers and brought out three separate straps. These straps were black, thick, and long. The three women formed loops with the belts and each took in a deep breath. Once they exhaled, they commenced to whacking away at Anthony.

Lana gave him multiple lashings across his tender buttocks for several minutes. Both of his buttocks turned almost as red as the darkest beet. Kim lashed her strap across his back as hard as she could. Louise pounded him with her strap along his legs.

Stroke for stroke, Anthony enjoyed the beating that he was receiving. Not once did he scream or holler. Not once did he moan or groan in complaint. Pain translated into pleasure for him. After more than fifteen minutes of whipping him, the women decided to take a break. Anthony was untied so he could eat some of his chili and drink some of his whiskey and beer.

Gordon had laid out a line of cocaine on the steel tray. The trick went through the bowl of chili within a matter of minutes. After several sips of whiskey and finishing off the beer, he got a buzz strong enough to have his head spinning.

Anthony sniffed the line of cocaine and experienced a high that took him to the next level of ecstasy. Surprisingly, he wanted Lana, Kim and Louise to beat him some more. Gordon had let it be known that there was a certain time limit as to how long he could be with the hookers.

The ropes were tied around his hands and feet once again. The women whipped him for another twenty minutes or so. Afterward, Anthony got dressed. He felt better than he'd done in quite some time. A good beating with belts, some hard liquor and beer, and a line of some potent cocaine were exactly what he'd needed to fulfill his fantasy in the domain where unusual entertainment took place.

Anthony was escorted down the stairs by all three of the women who had helped him indulge in the time of his life.

Gordon met him at the bottom of the stairs. "How ya feel, buddy?"

"Great!" Anthony exhaled pleurably. "If it takes a beating to experience the pleasures in life, then I need to do this more often."

"Glad you got your money's worth. Can I get you anything on the way out?"

"Like what?"

"Like whiskey, beer or some sniff."

"A pint of whiskey and a six-pack of beer on the go wouldn't hurt, I guess."

Alla Mae went into the refrigerator for the whiskey and beer. As she walked away, he noticed Alla Mae coughing louder. She held a white handkerchief over her mouth.

Gordon handed the man the pint and the six-pack. In exchange, he handed Gordon a fresh ten-dollar bill.

Once the man had left, Gordon asked his lover, "Mae, are you all right?" He was concerned about the health issue that she'd been dealing with almost since birth.

"I'll be all right, Mack," Alla Mae insisted, her coughing more pronounced.

"You sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"Is your asthma acting up again?"

"I'm low on my breathing treatment. My asthma medication is getting low, too."

“You’re just now telling me? Honey, don’t wait until you’re almost dead before you tell me that you’re low on your medication.”

“We’ll go to the doctor soon to fill up my prescription.”

“Mae, let me know later how your asthma’s doing, okay?”

“I will.”

A knock came from the back door. Two white men stood at the door with cheerful smiles. Gordon, being the cautious and shrewd man that he was, came to the door displaying his Colt .45 revolver. He held the door open to allow them entry into the house. “Gentleman, what can I do for you?” Gordon inquired both men.

The first man, who was dressed immaculately in a pair of black slacks with a black-and-white silk shirt, had both of his hands shoved down in his pockets. This man had bright white hair and a glowing complexion as though he’d just gotten a facial. Gordon sized him up before letting him go in any farther.

“Just answering your ad from the phone book,” he told Gordon, displaying a high level of excitement.

“Can I see some identification?”

“Why do you need to see my ID?”

“This residence here, it’s designed for men, particularly white men, over the age of forty.”

“I have no problem with that,” he told Gordon, his fingers wiggling around in his pocket for his wallet. He brought out his Missouri identification and handed it to Gordon.

“Nice to meet you, Frank Lee Williamson.”

“Likewise.”

“Your Missouri identification here says that you’re fifty-three years old.”

“That’s right.”

“Frank, what type of unusual entertainment are you looking for?”

“Would you believe me if I told you?”

“Try me.”

Frank felt a deep shame. He couldn't even look Gordon in the eyes. "Being the weird freak that I am, I like for women to... to..."

"You like for them to do what?" Gordon wanted him to just come out and admit what he wanted.

"To piss all over me," Frank confessed, his head lowered to the ground.

"Golden shower, huh?"

"Yes sir. That's my thing, sir, what can I say?"

"Well, Frank Lee Williamson, that's going to cost you. And when I say cost you, we're talking big bucks."

"Money's no problem, sir. I keep a hefty cash wad on me at all times."

"For two of my girls to do such a downright dirty act, that's going to cost you two hundred and fifty bucks."

"No problem, sir, no problem."

"We also have whiskey and beer and some sniff if you'd like."

"Those will be just the things that I need to loosen me up."

"My lady also cooked large pots of chili and spaghetti. So, if you want two of my girls to do their dirty act on you, along with a pint of whiskey, a cold beer and a line of sniff, then that'll be three hundred fifty bucks."

Frank dug into his pocket for his wallet. He flashed three one-hundred-dollar bills and a fifty-dollar bill. Gordon took the money and summoned two of his girls who would be perfect for Frank.

Walking down the stairs were Kim Davenport and one of his latest recruits, Megan McCreery, a very shapely blonde with an attractive baby face who had grown up with Kim. She showed great promise since her first few days on the job, when she'd brought in over three hundred dollars.

Frank became excited. The sight of the two white women had him acting out his fantasies inside his mind. Already, he visualized himself escaping to a world of freaky pleasures.

“Whaddaya think?” Gordon asked Frank.

“Perfect!” Frank cheered. “A guy couldn’t ask for more when it comes to those two.”

Gordon pulled Kim and Megan to the side. He whispered to both of them, “Girls, drink about four glasses of water before you begin a session with this guy.”

“Why’s that, Mack?” Kim asked, still new to some of the requests made by some of the tricks.

“He likes golden showers.”

“You mean he likes for women to pee on him?”

“That’s right.”

“Boy, did a freak come to visit us today.”

“He’s spending three hundred fifty bucks.”

“Not bad, Mack. Not bad at all. This idea to provide unusual entertainment to men over forty was brilliant.”

“Brilliant and highly profitable. All right, girls, go to work.”

“Sure thing, Mack.”

Kim and Megan escorted Frank up to one of the rooms. The trio was in for quite some entertainment.

Within the next ten minutes, another trick had come for his own brand of unusual entertainment. Gordon looked at his Missouri identification and saw that he was fifty-one years old.

His definition of a wild and freaky time? He wanted for women to tickle him with feathers while being tied up in the nude. Lana and Louise would be the two girls who would fulfill his request.

Forty minutes later, yet another trick paid their residence a visit. This particular customer wanted someone to sodomize him with a piece of fruit or a vegetable. There were some true sickos out there, but it didn’t matter to Gordon. In the end, it all translated into dollars and cents for him. As long as the customers behaved themselves and didn’t disrespect his girls, the king of the castle at 1414 East Twelfth Street did everything to let them live out their wildest fantasies.

By now, all three upstairs bedrooms were occupied. Alla Mae had already carried up the trays with the liquor and drugs and food on them. Inside the room with Kim and Megan and Frank, their session had just gotten underway. They'd bound his hands and feet with black leather straps while he assumed a fetal position on the floor.

"Ready for your punishment?" Kim boldly asked Frank, herself only in her bra and panties.

"Yes, I'm ready. Please give it to me."

"Ready to get wet?"

"Yes, baby, drown me."

Both Kim and Megan lowered their panties. All of a sudden, Frank felt the splashing of warm urine against his skin. He positioned his head so that he felt the splash against his face.

"You've been a bad boy," said Megan as she gave him the golden shower that he'd yearned so much for.

"Dear lord, I've been a bad, bad boy. Give me my punishment that I so rightfully deserve."

Frank became soaked and wet with their bodily fluids. He loved every second of it. How good it felt for him to relish in this perverted entertainment. The drugs and alcohol in his system only heightened his sense of pleasure. The floor became wet with a big puddle of urine.

Once they untied him, he grabbed the bowl of spaghetti and scooped up every mouthful. Frank got dressed and left the residence smelling like raw urine. He didn't mind one least bit. He probably possessed one of the sickest minds in Kansas City.

In the room next door, another customer was enjoying having Lana and Louise ramming a cucumber up his rectum. This sicko had requested that they use cooking oil as lube. He moaned and groaned as they took turns shoving and twisting the large cucumber around the walls of his tender colon.

The customer in the room next to them was enjoying having feathers glided along his private parts and his chest. Three of Gordon's girls provided him with pleasure that he couldn't find elsewhere.

Downstairs, Gordon counted large amounts of cash. After only two hours, he'd made nearly a thousand dollars. Having been in the prostitution racket for several years, he knew what the public wanted. Give the people what they want, and they'll pay almost any price to receive it.

A long, beautiful black Cadillac drove into the driveway in the back yard. William "Willie The Rat" Cammisano was escorted out of the back seat by one of his most trusted bodyguards. Cammisano wore a light-gray two-piece suit with a matching wide-brimmed Fedora hat.

Cammisano approached the residence and Gordon held the door wide open for him and his bodyguard. The Irishman saw Alla Mae and pulled her closer to him to plant a kiss on her cheek. She continued coughing out of control.

Gordon, though not Italian himself, kissed Cammisano on both cheeks. "Willie, how're you feeling, my friend?"

"Never better," Cammisano said, taking a look around at the front section of the home. He noticed the new stereo and television and nice furniture that Gordon put in there. "You've got this place fixed up pretty nice."

"Yeah, I took a few bucks to kinda spruce it up."

"You've got good taste, Mack."

"Thanks, Willie."

"How's business so far?"

"Putting that ad in the phone book did wonders. We just started today and the money's been superb."

Gordon reached into his pocket and counted out three hundred dollars before Cammisano and his bodyguard. "Willie, there's a lot more where that came from."

Cammisano accepted the money and gave Gordon a kiss on his left cheek. "Mack, you're a natural, my friend. You're a proven, fierce, moneymaking machine. It hurts my heart that you're not a full-blooded Italian. If you were, I'd have you made into Nick Civella's family as a full member. Anyway, you've been one helluva earner as just an associate member."

"Thanks a lot, Willie. I'm always looking to expand. If I can open another house like this one for unusual entertainment and not get any interference from the cops, then the money would be crazy."

"My people tell me that you had a run-in with the Klan somewhere outside the city."

"Mae and I went to visit my folks in Lexington, and on the way back, those Klan motherfuckers were waiting for us. They threatened to kill Mae and myself because we were a mixed couple. Luckily, I had my Colt and she had her twenty-two. I shot the rifle out of their hands and then shot out all four tires on both of their cars."

"Those redneck son of a bitches!" Cammisano said harshly. "They hate anybody who isn't an Anglo-Saxon Protestant white. Never will I let them cocksuckers rob me of my Sicilian heritage. Fuck 'em, Mack! They've stolen from your kind, my kind, and everybody else's kind who've ever earned something."

"Get this, Willie. I found out that one of them boys is a patrolman with the KCPD."

"You shitting me?"

"No I'm not. This prick has a hard-on for me. He's upset over the fact that I'm with a colored woman."

"Who's to say that he didn't round up his Klan goons and followed you all the way to Lexington?"

"I sure let him know that I didn't care about him being a patrolman with the KCPD."

"Otherwise, are you doing okay?"

"Sure, everything's fine, other than that."

“Well, we’ve gotta be moving along. Listen, if you need anything at all, just let me know.”

“Will do, Willie.”

Cammisano and his bodyguard drove off westbound on Twelfth Street.

Gordon heard Alla Mae coughing rather loudly from the next room. He entered the room and noticed her slumped forward with a tissue covering her mouth. “Mae, I’m taking you to the hospital,” Gordon insisted, wrapping his arms around her waist and helping her over to the sofa.

“My asthma has gotten worse,” Alla Mae explained to Gordon. She coughed louder and harder.

“We’re going over to Saint Joseph so the doctor can look at you.”

Gordon had summoned Rufus to tell him to meet him in the basement. He peeled off three hundred fifty dollars and told Rufus to pay all of the girls. Being the loyal friend that he was, Rufus would make sure that the girls received their pay before leaving the house. After that, Gordon wasted no time getting Alla Mae to the hospital.

CHAPTER 32

Get Well Soon

A **S HE DROVE** hurriedly to the hospital, the speed limits meant nothing to him since his lady had suffered an asthma attack. He drove over fifty miles per hour out Prospect Avenue. Upon arriving at St. Joseph Hospital at the intersection of Linwood Boulevard and Prospect, Gordon sped right in front of the emergency room.

St. Joseph was a state-supported hospital right in the heart of the inner city. The large white cross at the top of the building caught his attention. Not much of a religious man himself, Gordon said a quick prayer for Alla Mae. Her inability to breathe freely had gotten worse. He came around to the passenger's side and lifted her out of the car.

Once inside the emergency room, Gordon respectfully shouted to one of the nurses, "Nurse, my lady has had an asthma attack! She's having problems breathing right now."

The nurse looked at the interracial couple with a blank face. Did their dire emergency mean anything to her? She stared at them as though they'd just come to Earth from another planet.

"Did you hear what I just said?" Gordon asked the insensitive nurse, trying his best to keep his anger in check. "My lady is real sick, and she needs to see a doctor right now."

“Sir, wait just a moment,” the nurse said, stepping away from her station. The brunette nurse with a slim build stepped into the office of one of the emergency room-doctors. She exchanged the type of eye contact with the doctor that told him she’d just witnessed the worst kind of tragedy.

“Doctor Emery,” the nurse addressed the physician in a disappointed tone. “There’s a white gentleman out there with a colored woman. He says that she’s suffered an asthma attack, and he wants immediate medical attention for her.”

“A mixed couple?” Dr. Emery, a veteran physician who was just as shocked as the nurse, inquired.

“Yes.”

Dr. Emery followed the nurse out into the emergency room sitting area, where many people waited to be seen. There stood Gordon at the desk with the angriest look on his face.

“Sir,” Dr. Emery said to Gordon. “You will have to fill out some forms before we can see your girlfriend.”

“Forms my ass!” Gordon shot back. “My lady is real sick, Doctor. She’s having problems breathing, and she needs medical attention right this second. While you’re seeing her in the emergency room, I can be filling out those forms.”

“But that’s not how it works, sir. We have to follow hospital procedures.”

Gordon picked up one of the ink pens on the nurse’s desk. He crushed it until the ink started dripping on the counter, grinding his teeth together. A look that said he was itching to hurt someone real bad came upon his face.

Out of his right pocket, he flashed a thick wad of cash up in the faces of the doctor and the nurse.

“Do you have medical insurance, sir?” asked Dr. Emery.

“Her medical costs will be paid for in cash, doctor. Now please, help her before she stops breathing altogether.”

Gordon closely studied the faces of the nurse and the doctor. Something told him that they, too, were like so many other whites in America. They'd been raised to be prejudiced and to proudly wear their racist views on their sleeves.

Dr. Emery felt the intimidating vibes coming off Gordon. A look of rage was on the man's face, but the last thing Gordon wanted to do was unleash his violent temper in a hospital with lots of sick people.

Though there were many other people waiting to be seen, with most of them being coloreds, Dr. Emery knew the severity of Alla Mae's condition. He ordered for two nurses and another doctor to escort Alla Mae into one of the awaiting emergency rooms.

Once inside the emergency room, one of the doctors took X-rays of her chest. Dr. Emery and one of the other nurses performed an initial evaluation of her cardiopulmonary status and lung function. An oxygen mask was placed over the face of Alla Mae.

The other physician gave her injections of painkillers and fluids to help open her lungs' passageways. Within a few short minutes, Alla Mae felt much better. She breathed as though she'd been given a new set of lungs.

Hospital staff brought back the X-rays, which told quite a familiar story.

Alla Mae's asthma had worsened over the years. She'd managed to keep it in check with breathing treatments and oral medications but possibly needed stronger doses now to manage her disease.

A veteran physician with twenty-two years of experience in respiratory disorders, named Dr. Richard Wellington, entered the room. He specialized in severe, chronic breathing disorders. One of the nurses was immediately ordered to insert an IV into her right arm by him. The level of oxygen on the machine she was breathing from was increased.

Dr. Wellington ordered the other nurse to take Alla Mae's vital signs. It didn't surprise him that her blood pressure and pulse far

exceeded the normal range. Her temperature had peaked at 101.2. Had she waited any longer, she could've easily suffered an almost fatal asthma attack.

Dr. Wellington had the most unusual set of eyebrows, the kind that were jet black and very much bushy. Alla Mae directed her attention at his somewhat frightening eyebrows.

The doctor tilted his head to look down at Alla Mae's face and asked, "Miss Briggs, how long would you say that you've used anti-inflammatory bronchodilator asthma inhalers?"

"Most of my life," Alla Mae informed the concerned physician.

"Have doctors in the past prescribed to you aggressive asthma treatments?"

"Sure, because I've always had the worst kind of asthma."

"Has the asthma medication worked quickly to stop the coughing and wheezing?"

"I'd have to say most of the time."

"Have the control inhalers also been effective?"

"Yes they have."

"Why do you feel that you suffered such a serious asthma attack?"

"For not taking my pills and using my inhaler every day like I should."

"C'mon, Miss Briggs, you know that not taking your medication is a matter of life and death."

"You're right about that, Doctor."

"Do you suffer from thick mucus and swelling of the airways?"

"Very much so."

"Do your lungs feel tight most of the time, some of the time, or all of the time?"

"Some of the time."

"I'm going to recommend a treatment that will shrink the muscles in your lungs, the same muscles that tighten during asthma attacks and make it hard to breathe."

“Aren’t you a sweetheart, doctor?”

“Also, I’m going to prescribe a strong dose of oral asthma medication and a more powerful breathing inhaler. Remember, this medicine is only going to work if you take it as prescribed.”

“You’re right about that.”

“Miss Briggs, you’re a lucky woman. I’ve known several asthma patients who didn’t make it here to the hospital in time.”

“I’d have to say that I agree with you.”

“In the future, hopefully, there’ll be no more impending asthma attacks. An asthma action plan is the simplest way to manage your asthma. Try and stay away from environments where allergens and irritants can aggravate the condition. How’s the air filtration at your residence?”

“It’s pretty good, come to think of it. There’s little to no dust or dirt in our home.”

“Maybe an alternative treatment may help alleviate some of your symptoms.”

“We’re hoping so.”

Before another word was spoken between Alla Mae and Dr. Wellington, someone in one of the hospital break rooms shouted, “Oh my God!”

“What’s wrong?” Alla Mae asked the doctors and nurses.

Dr. Wellington stuck his head out of the emergency room and inquired of one of the hospital staff, “Hey, what’s the ruckus all about?”

“The president’s been shot!” one of the staff nurses announced to all those within earshot.

“President Kennedy?” asked one of the nurses in the room with Alla Mae.

“Yes, President Kennedy. He’s been shot down in Dallas.”

“Who shot the president?”

“They haven’t found the shooter yet.”

Many of the staff there at St. Joseph Hospital crowded into one of the break rooms to see the latest update on President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination. The top CBS nightly news anchorman, Walter Cronkite, dominated the black-and-white television screen.

The news that he had to deliver was nowhere close to being positive. Kansas City, Missouri received the news around the same time that most of America did. Walter Cronkite looked directly into the television camera and said sadly, "The president of the United States is dead."

Tears flowed from the faces of almost all the nurses. Some of the doctors and other hospital staff were totally saddened by the news. Nearly all of St. Joseph Hospital was left silent by the announcement of the president's killing.

One of the nurses returned to the emergency room where Alla Mae was waiting patiently to be released.

"Is it true?" Alla asked the nurse, her expression having shifted to hurt and disappointment.

"It's true, Miss Briggs. President Kennedy got killed down in Dallas less than an hour ago."

"My God! Everybody loved President Kennedy. Have they caught the person who did it?"

"I don't think so. The news said that someone was shooting from one of the buildings while the motorcade went through the plaza area."

"My man and I saw from home when they were talking about President Kennedy arriving in Dallas this morning. Who, in the name of Christ, would want to kill the president? I mean, it seemed that he didn't have an enemy in the world."

"There's some serious nut jobs out there, Miss Briggs."

Alla Mae visualized the face of President John F. Kennedy in her mind. She pictured the virtuous man who loved his country and cared very much about the people who lived in it. Instantly, a stream

of tears rolled down her face. To her, the president was almost like a distant relative or a real close friend.

Gordon stepped into the emergency room with the expression of someone who was seriously grieving. He'd heard the news from out in the waiting room. He, too, held President Kennedy in high regard. He felt a kinship to the president, who also had Irish roots.

"Shame what happened, Mae," Gordon spoke, grave sympathy in his voice. "Everybody loved Kennedy. I'd like to personally get my hands on the son of a bitch who took out our president. Hell, it just doesn't make any sense. What was the reason behind it? Was it some dumb-dumb trying to make a name for himself?"

"May they get punished a million times for what they did. President Kennedy and his brother really cared about us as colored people. He had a real soft spot for us. I can only hope that some racist white bastard didn't take him out. As soon as he got into office, life became so good for so many people in the United States. I'd like to know where we're headed as a country now."

"You and me both. Kennedy might be the last of the great hope that many of us had. The more that I think about it, it probably was a setup right from the beginning."

"Mack, you might have a real good point there. Somebody, or some people, might've been plotting killing him for the longest of time. My mamma and daddy always told me that the ones who are close are the ones who'll get you the most."

"Ain't that the truth? Let's just hope they find the son of a bitch and make him pay for what he did."

"Yes, let's hope."

Gordon moved closer to Alla Mae and threw his arm over her shoulder. "So, what did the doctor say about your asthma?"

"He's going to prescribe stronger doses of the pills and the inhaler. That definitely should keep my asthma in check."

“I’ve gotta admit, Mae, you sure had me scared there. I just can’t imagine losing my Mae.”

“And I can’t imagine losing my Mack,” said Alla Mae, leaning forward to give Gordon a wet kiss.

Their love for one another grew stronger by the day.

Gordon paid for Alla Mae’s medical expenses right there on the spot. He didn’t care about the price tag as long as she received proper medical care. As they made their way out of the emergency room, the sad looks of patriotic Americans grieving over the death of their beloved president silently followed them.

CHAPTER 33

One On The Way

FEBRUARY OF 1964 had arrived. Gordon and Alla Mae realized time had gotten away from them quickly. Alla Mae had been experiencing morning sickness and vomited throughout most of the days.

Their business, which provided unusual entertainment for men over forty, had been running smoothly thanks to his good friend Rufus and some help from the notorious gangster Cammisano.

One thing that worried Alla Mae to no end were the threatening letters that were coming to her good friend Annabelle Fressineau's house. The state of Missouri had learned that Alla's son and daughter, William and Francine, had been living with Annabelle for over two years. Had the state known that Alla Mae lived a criminal lifestyle, her two children would've easily gotten taken away. Annabelle contacted her constantly to update her about the situation.

Alla Mae had received a certified letter sent to her by the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri explaining what could possibly happen to her two children. No longer could Alla ignore the warnings from the state authorities. She now had to make an urgent decision.

Alla Mae silently read the short letter:

The natural mother and father of the said children, William and Francine Beverly, have for a period of two years immediately prior to the filing of this petition abandoned the said children, and have willfully, substantially, continuously and repeatedly neglected said children. The natural mother, Alla Mae Briggs, has refused to give said children the necessary care and protection. The court is trying to determine whether it is in the best interest of said children that the rights of the natural mother, Alla Mae Briggs, and of the natural father, William Beverly, Sr., be terminated.

I, Bruce R. Watkins, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri, and Juvenile Division of said court, within and for the county and state aforesaid, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and complete copy of the order as the same appears in the juvenile records in my office, in book number 88, page number 117.

In witness whereof, I hereunto set my hand and affix the seal of said court, at office in Kansas City, this 4th day of February 1964.

Bruce R. Watkins, Clerk
Bruce R. Watkins

Gordon noticed Alla Mae standing in the middle of the front room floor finishing reading the letter. “Mae, what are you reading there?”

“A certified letter from the Jackson County Circuit Court,” Alla Mae answered in the saddest tone.

“A letter about what?”

“About William and Francine.”

“What about them?”

“The court found out that they’ve been staying with Annabelle for a couple of years now.”

“How’d that happen?”

“Who knows? But I do know that they want to take my children away from me. Mack, I don’t want to lose my babies.”

“You won’t lose them, Mae. If worse comes to worst, we’ll have to bring them to one of the houses.”

“Around the girls, the tricks, the dope, the liquor, and God only knows what else? They’ll get snatched away from me quicker than I could blink.”

“Not so fast, Mae. I’m sure we can work something out.”

“We’d better make it fast. The court is already trying to set a date to decide if they’ll be turned over to their custody.”

“We’ll do what we have to do.”

Alla Mae slumped forward after feeling a sharp pain in her stomach. Gordon rushed over to her and escorted her over to the sofa. “Mae, you all right?”

“Mack, you better take a deep breath on this one.”

“What?”

“Honey, I think I’m pregnant.”

“Say what!” Gordon reacted rather surprised, but in no way angry or disappointed. “To think you haven’t been with nobody but me since you left the streets and came to work for me.”

“You’re definitely the only one who I’ve been with since I left the streets.”

“You mean to tell me that I’m going to be a father again?”

“Yes, you are.”

“Doesn’t surprise me one least bit. We’ve been playing around in between those sheets for quite some time. Here I am, almost a sixty-year-old-man and still producing children,” he said proudly.

“Men have produced babies up until their eighties. Look at Abraham from the Bible.”

Gordon nodded his head and said earnestly, “I’d be proud to have you as the mother of my child, Mae.”

“Thank you, Mack. Something tells me that it’s going to be a boy.”

“I’ve already got one son, and now I’m about to have another!”

“There’s one question that I have.”

“Which is?”

“Are we going to have to give up the life that has fed us for the last two years?”

“Wish that was a question that I could answer on the spot. But what else do we know how to do?”

“We’re going to have to decide before this baby is born.”

“This caught both of us off guard. My mom and pop always told me that when a man and a woman climb in bed together, there’s always a chance that they’ll make a baby together.”

“My folks basically told me the same thing. Now I’m stuck with trying to keep the two children that I already have. Being pregnant with your child, Mack, it’s gonna add on an extra load. Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place.”

“We’ll figure something out.”

Gordon arose from the sofa and went over to one of the windows facing south. He, too, had to figure out a way to support Alla Mae’s two children, who were threatened with being taken away, and his own child she was pregnant with.

