

# Excerpt

## Chapter Twelve Excerpt

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**“That’s about all I can tell you.”**

The metal door clangs shut behind me.

“Counselor, meet your roommate. They call him ‘VD’,” the guard says and chuckles.

I gulp, start to sweat. My bowels churn.

“VD?” I ask.

“Yep, that’s right, VD.”

Having closed and locked the door to the jail cell into which he led me, the corrections officer takes off.

As he walks away, I become aware of inmates in surrounding cells whooping and hollering, having a good time. Apparently, at my expense.

Out of the tumult, I hear, "Tonight's gonna be your honeymoon, white man!"

With me in the cell is a huge, muscular black man.

I could just barely say, "Hello. My name's Al," and nervously extend my hand.

The fellow shakes my hand and says, "Don't listen to that asshole. My name is Vernon Daniels. You call me Vernon. And don't be bothered by all that noise.

Ain't nothing gonna happen between us."

I say, "Thank you very much, Mr. Daniels."

"Listen, it's Vernon. That guard don't know you're Mick Forte's cousin.

Another officer passed on word to me from my man Malcolm and told me Malcolm ain't want nobody to mess with you here."

"Who's Malcolm and what's this about my cousin Mick?"

"Man, ain't you knowin' about your own cousin? He was in this here joint years ago with Malcolm and did Malcolm a solid, even though Mick's I-talian and Malcolm was the leader of the brothers. Malcolm was raised by his grandma and they were gonna put her out. Mick got his people to move her to a place in one of his buildings and they made sure she be took care of good."

"Oh. Mick never told me about that. And I never heard of Malcolm."

"Ain't you got a cousin named Eli?"

"No, no, that's Mick's cousin on his mother's side. Eli Ativa."

"Well, if you seen him, you know he a chubby little guy, but I was shocked at how athletic he be. And he gotta be over fifty."

"I did hear that he's a phenomenal basketball player. Also heard it almost got him into some trouble."

"You right about that. I know, 'cause I was there and got him outa what cudda been a hellava mess."

"Yeah. I heard. Mick told me that he and some fellow got to the basketball court just before a riot broke out."

"I was that fellow. This Eli really frustrated this other brother he played

against. I hear he shut him down completely, really made the brother look real bad. Then Eli scores the winning basket by knocking it in with a soccer-like header. I seen it. Mick too. The man Eli was covering then called him out and Eli did this dumb-lookin' boxin' move and knocked the man to his ass with one punch."

"Yeah. Mick said Eli developed some move at a boxing gym. Said it was the 'Eli Shuffle'."

"Real funny shit. But he embarrassed this brother so in front of all these other brothers that the embarrassed brother hadda save face, and all 'em brothers brought out their weapons and wudda done Eli in but good, except Mick and me then stepped in and stopped it. You see, brothers don't like to be showed up. It makes 'em real mad. And if it's by a middle-aged, short, pudgy white man with glasses, no telling what they do. He sure damn lucky me and Mick was there."

"How did you two manage to prevent something bad from happening?"

"Well, 'em all knows Malcolm and knows that I be one of Malcolm's main men. So, I tells 'em all that Mick and Eli are friends of Malcolm and me and that now that they knows that, they also knows that to mess with a friend of Malcolm and me is to mess with Malcolm and me, and they knows what happens to those who mess with Malcolm and me."

"Wow."

"With that, everyone chilled, forgot about the negative shit, and peace ruled."

"Amazing."

"That's true. Anyways, now that you know how tight Malcolm and Mick be, they both got each other's back. So, they's got you covered too. Now, you just got here so I ain't got the full story about you, could only guess that somehow word got to Malcolm and through connections Malcolm has here, word got to me."

“And, they tells me you be a lawyer. That right?”

“Yes.”

“Then what the fuck brings you here?”

“Excellent question. I am in my office working away this afternoon. The next thing I know court officers come barging in with an arrest warrant and whisk me over here. My assistant must have gotten word to Mick, and from what you say, he must have contacted Malcolm. But that’s about all I can tell you now, except it must relate to a particular case I’m handling. I suppose Mick will be getting to the bottom of it and I’ll know more tomorrow.”