

# **FATHER BORN TO A TREE FROM HELL**

**R. F. Hodge**

**"FATHER BORN TO A TREE FROM  
HELL"**

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*"I dedicate this to my wife.  
Thank you for believing in my crazy dream."*



# Contents

Chapter 1 June 6, 1915 – Savana Georgia.....	1
Chapter 2 July 2, 1917 – Garden City Georgia.....	13
Chapter 3 May 31, 1926 – Atlanta Georgia.....	19
Chapter 4 April 11, 1938 – Atlanta Georgia.....	33
Chapter 5 May 1, 1945 – Germany.....	4
Chapter 6 April 24, 1948 – Garden City Georgia .....	
Chapter 7 April 5, 1953 – 3rd Infantry Division, 15th Infantry Regiment outpost Harry (Iron Triangle) Korea.....	
Chapter 8 September 8, 1955 – Newnan, Georgia .....	
Chapter 9 March 26, 1956 – Macon, Georgia.....	95
Chapter 10 December 25, 1958 – Atlanta, Georgia.....	
Chapter 11 February 26, 1965 – Hamer, Georgia .....	
Chapter 12 January 1, 1969 – Vietnam, 5th Special Forces Forward Operating Post.....	131

Chapter 13 July 22, 1969 – Embassy Suites Hotel, Saigon, Vietnam.....	
Chapter 14 September 3, 1969 – 5th Special Forces Forward Operating Post.....	14
Chapter 15 April 1, 1970 – Atlanta, Georgia.....	152
Chapter 16 October 13, 1970 – Augusta, Georgia .....	
Chapter 17 July 21, 1979 – Georgia.....	165

# **Chapter 1**

## **June 6, 1915 – Savana Georgia**

It was early Sunday morning, a perfect time for husbands to send their wives and families to church while they sneaked off to enjoy the championship bare-knuckle fights. Every fighter paid a five-dollar entry fee to compete. The winner would have to win ten fights over ten weeks. The fights were held in twenty states and started with 1,024 fighters. Each fight was three rounds of three minutes.

If a fighter was knocked down, he lost. If neither was knocked down, three judges would

score the fight: a half-point for body blows and one point for head blows. It had come down to the final two fighters, each with 9 wins and 0 losses. The winner would take home a five-thousand-dollar prize pot.

The judges were actual judges from the local town. Everyone suspected the fix was in, as one of the final two fighters was the son of Judge Harold Jones. Homer "The Hammer" Jones had benefited when fights went the full three rounds and the judges had to score by points. Three of Homer's nine wins had been decided by half a point, easy for a judge to shave a point or two.

Archie sat in the office of a storage facility, rubbing his taped hands and shadowboxing in the mirror. He couldn't help but feel nervous. He had put his car up as collateral just to pay the five-dollar entry fee. This, he felt, was the most important day of his life. If he could win, it would change everything for him and his family. He could buy a home, a new car, and have enough money to live on for a year.

Archie and his family had been living in their old Ford, taking odd jobs and picking fruit during



harvest season. Archie was born in New York and grew up fighting, but his father, Gavin McConnell, had migrated from Ireland only forty years earlier. In Ireland, the McConnells had been royalty, until the king found out about Gavin's affair with the queen. Archie's father was lucky to escape with his head still on his shoulders. The queen wasn't so fortunate.

The referee stepped in and yelled, "It's time! Let's go!" Archie turned and jogged to the door, repeating his strategy quietly: "Body, body, face, body." His goal was to strike the body enough to knock the wind out of his opponent, forcing him to lower his guard, and then go for a clean shot to the face.

He arrived at a makeshift ring. The warehouse had been emptied to allow room for thousands of spectators from every state in the lower forty-eight. It was loud, everyone was yelling. Archie wished his wife, Edna, and his kids, five-year-old Jane and seven-year-old John, could see him fight.

Archie hopped over the ropes into the ring, running nervous laps in his corner. He looked across at his opponent, Homer "The Hammer"

Jones. Homer stood over six feet tall and had forty pounds of muscle on him. Archie wasn't worried, though; he knew that big-muscle guys often had slower reactions.

Judge Harold Jones was talking into Homer's ear. Judge Jones was the Grand Master of the local Ku Klux Klan, and the other two judges were members of his order. Homer was big but a little slow in the head. Judge Jones had bet a hundred dollars on his son and was convinced that if Homer could just stay on his feet, he could sway the match in his favor. He had plans for the prize money.

The referee grabbed Homer's arm, holding it up as he yelled into the microphone, "In this corner, undefeated at 9 and 0, Homer 'The Hammer' Jones!" The audience erupted in cheers. Releasing Homer's arm, the referee ran over and grabbed Archie's arm. "And in this corner, undefeated with 9 KOs, Archie 'The Archer' McConnell!"

The referee released Archie's arm, and both fighters went to their corners. Archie felt his heart

pounding harder than in any of his previous matches. He hoped it wasn't a bad sign.

The bell rang, and both fighters walked to the center of the ring with their fists raised. Archie stayed light on his toes, shifting left and right. Homer stood flat-footed. Right out of the gate, Homer threw a powerful right hook. Archie saw it coming, ducked under, and countered with a punch to Homer's solar plexus, knocking the wind out of him. Homer instinctively lowered his arms to guard his body. Archie was surprised to see the opening and threw a left hook, connecting with Homer's mouth, splitting both lips and knocking him flat on his back.

The referee rushed over and raised Archie's right arm. "At 10 and 0, with 10 KOs, the new champ, Archie 'The Archer' McConnell!" Judge Jones slammed the table in frustration, watching his son wipe blood from his face as he was helped up. Then Homer walked over and shook Archie's hand.

Archie could hardly believe it. The crowd was cheering and yelling. He ducked under the ropes

and ran back to the office to change clothes. To his surprise, Judge Jones was waiting for him.

Archie paused while removing the tape from his hands. "Hello. Can I help you?"

The judge lit a cigar and replied, "Hello. I'm Harold Jones, Judge Harold Jones. I'm the father of the man you just embarrassed out there. I'm having a victory party at my estate this afternoon, and I thought it would only be proper that the actual victor attend."

Archie replied, "Thank you, Judge, but I have to pick up my family from church this afternoon."

The judge handed Archie a card with an address on it. "Please bring them. We'll have kids of all ages, and we're planning a grilled lunch. I'm expecting about a hundred people, and I'd very much like to talk to you about a business opportunity."

Archie watched the judge leave the office. He looked down at the card, which read:

**One Jones Way – Noon – Bring your family.**

Just before noon, Archie pulled into the gravel driveway at One Jones Way, parking next to a line

of cars. He and Edna stepped out of the car, followed by their kids, John and Jane.

Judge Jones owned a working farm with chickens, pigs, cattle, and horses. The family walked past a garden, a barn, and what looked like a guest house, making their way to the main house. Several guests saw Archie and began pointing and shouting, "Hey champ! Glad you could make it!"

Judge Jones was sitting at a table with several men when he heard praise for Archie being present. He stood and walked over to greet Archie and his family. As the judge approached, Archie stopped and waited to shake the judge's extended hand.

Shaking Archie's hand, he said, "Glad you and your family could make it today."

After releasing Archie's hand, he extended his hand to Edna. She reached out, and the judge kissed it. Then, getting down on one knee, he addressed seven-year-old John.

"Did your dad just pick you and your mother up from church?"

John looked up at his father. "Yes, sir. We just came from church."

The judge smiled and asked, "So what religion are you?"

John's eyes rolled back in his head as he tried to remember. "I'm a prostitute."

The judge laughed, and Edna quickly corrected him, saying, "He means Protestant."

The judge chuckled. "That's alright. I have trouble telling the difference as well."

The judge stood and said, "I have a table over here, and I'd like you and your wife to join me. I have a business proposition I'd like to talk to you about."

Archie and his family followed the judge toward the table when a young boy wearing a white tuxedo with a bow tie ran up and jumped into the judge's arms. Holding the boy, the judge turned to Archie.

"This is my grandson, Craig. He looks to be about your boy's age. Maybe they could play with one another?"

John looked up. "Can I play with Craig, Dad?"

Archie looked down at John. "Yeah, but stay where I can see you!"

Everyone took a seat at a table set up on a large, well-manicured grassy area, an area that doubled as a baseball field when the Klan gathered. Jane sat on Edna's lap, playing with the hem of her dress.

The judge began, "Archie, do you know who I am?"

Archie replied, "Yes, you're a local Supreme Court judge."

Lighting a cigar, the judge said, "*I am* a Supreme Court judge, but I'm also the Grand Master of the local Ku Klux Klan chapter. I had plans for that prize money you won. I was going to use it as a down payment on a bank in town."

Archie looked confused. "I don't see how that concerns me."

The judge leaned in. "Well, that prize money was the twenty percent cash I needed to swing the transaction. I was wondering if you'd like to go into business with me."

Archie was surprised and a bit honored. "I promised my wife we'd buy a home if I won. We're living out of our car right now and working when

we can. Besides, I've got no collateral for the other eighty percent."

"That's where I come in," the judge said. "I'm willing to put my farm up as collateral for the remaining eighty percent if you agree to run the bank and launder money for the Klan. You'd earn ten percent of all the money you can clean. Here's how it works: hire painters, plumbers, carpenters, yard keepers, whatever you can think of. Run them all through our Klan chapter, charge us ten times the normal cost, pocket ten percent, and the rest becomes clean. Between that and regular bank fees, you'll cover the bank note and still have money to buy a home."

He paused, then added, "In the meantime, you and your family can stay here in the main house. We've got two spare rooms and extra bathrooms."

The judge then shouted, "Henry! Bring us three teas and fix us some lunch!"

Henry, a ten-year-old Black boy in a white suit with an apron and a serving tray, heard the call and ran over to where his parents, Cyrus and Daisy, were grilling and preparing food for the eighty-five



guests. Cyrus sliced meat while Daisy filled plates and poured tea.

Archie couldn't help but notice. "Do you still own slaves? It seems strange to have Black help at a Klan gathering."

The judge chuckled. "Cyrus, Daisy, and Henry live rent-free in the guest house. In return, they help keep the farm running. They're free to leave anytime, but they know they won't find a better place. And as far as the Klan goes, they know who they work for."

Archie extended his hand. "You have a deal. Can we move in today?"

The judge cleared room on the table and replied, "Of course. Get Cyrus and Henry to help if you need."

Just then, Henry appeared with their lunch and the teas. Everyone began to eat when a baseball-sized rock crashed down onto their table, knocking over the judge's tea and landing in Archie's plate.

They all turned to see John holding a stick, one he had used to hit the rock, pitched by Craig.

Archie picked up the rock. The judge wiped his shirt, and Archie said, "Excuse me, Judge."

He stood, rock in hand, and walked toward John. Without warning, he threw the rock at his son, hitting him in the head. Blood began flowing from the side of John's head. As John cried and clutched the wound, Archie removed his belt and began whipping him.

Henry stopped in his tracks, watching in horror.

Soon, everyone was staring. Archie realized it and paused. He turned and walked back to the table, sitting down.

The judge, stunned, said, "Come now... the boys were just playing."

## **Chapter 2**

### **July 2, 1917 – Garden City Georgia**

The sun was just setting in the west, blinding Archie and Edna McConnell as they drove their 1915 Model T truck down the dirt road, hitting what seemed like every pothole. In the back of the truck sat their two children, John and Jane, John pointing his new .22 rifle at every tree. He had received it just a week earlier for his birthday.

Archie, holding one hand up to block the sun from his eyes, said to Edna, "I bought the building, a ten-thousand-square-foot building, the

inventory, and a square parcel, forty acres from the main road and forty acres wide. So, what do you think about buying the mortuary?"

Edna turned her head and replied, "I don't know what to think. You sure we're not leveraging ourselves too much? We still have a note and a payment on the bank."

Archie, jolted by a large pothole, grabbed the steering wheel with both hands, corrected the truck, and replied, "Don't worry. I used the money from the Klan's account to buy the mortuary. If they want it back before I can replace it, I'll just use the investors' money."

Edna, concerned, asked, "What if they request their funds all at once?"

Archie turned the wheel to avoid another pothole. "That's the beauty of this scheme. We'd have to go into a recession for that to happen. With the war in Europe, it'll be a gold mine of new bodies, and we can make fifty to a hundred dollars off every funeral. At that rate, I see us turning a profit in about three years."

He slowed the truck and turned right off the main road onto a gravel path. After just a quarter

mile, Archie turned again and came to a stop in front of a large building with glass storefront windows, displaying coffins shining brightly in the setting sun. Above the glass, a wrought iron sign read: **Mortuary**.

Archie and Edna opened their car doors and stepped out. John and Jane climbed over the sides of the truck, John clutching his .22 rifle. He ran toward the end of the building, where the gravel road curved right. He was amazed by the large loading zone doors on the warehouse side of the building.

Archie turned to Edna, pointed up at the wrought iron sign, and said, "Just above that sign, I want to have another one, also in iron, 'McConnell's.'"

Archie went inside, followed by Edna. He was impressed by the quality of the caskets on display. He ran his hand over the velvet lining of one.

Jane was dancing nearby when she noticed a feral kitten dart out from under a bush. Just as she pointed and yelled, John raised his rifle and shot the kitten.

Jane let out a piercing scream.

Archie heard it, turned, and ran outside. "What's wrong?" he shouted.

"Johnny shot the kitten!" Jane yelled back.

Archie stormed over to John, ripped the rifle from his hands, and, raising it above his head, smashed the butt into John's face, knocking him down and breaking his nose.

He then broke the rifle over a large boulder and tossed the remains into the bushes. John lay on the ground, crying as blood poured from his face.

Archie screamed, "What did I tell you about killing animals?!"

John didn't answer, he was too busy trying to stop the bleeding and his sobs.

Archie turned, grabbed Edna by the arm, and pulled her into the mortuary.

She tried to break free, struggling to run back to John. "God dammit, Archie, I need to check on John!"

But Archie ignored her and began inspecting the display coffins. Edna turned to leave, but he grabbed her again, tearing her new dress.

She turned and slapped him across the face. "Damn you, Archie! You ripped my new dress!"

Archie responded with a right hook, catching her in the cheek and knocking her out. She fell into one of the displays, smashing a vase filled with flowers.

Archie turned back to the coffins, admiring their craftsmanship. He walked into the warehouse, pleased by the stacks of boxed inventory. He was proud to have purchased not only the building, but the goods inside as well.

Finished admiring the warehouse, Archie continued his tour. Just beyond the display area was a hallway. On the left was a door labeled "OFFICE," and at the end of the hall was another marked "RESTROOM."

He opened the office door and peered inside: a 20-by-20 space with a desk and couch. Satisfied, he closed the door and headed down the hall to relieve himself.

Meanwhile, John got to his feet with Jane's help, still holding his nose and trying to stop the bleeding. They entered the mortuary, searching for their mother.

They found her lying unconscious in a mess of broken glass and flowers. Shocked, John stood frozen. Archie was nowhere to be seen.

Archie stood at the urinal, impressed by the restroom's size, it even had a shower and changing area. He zipped up and walked out.

As he emerged, he saw John and Jane standing over Edna. Blood still ran down John's face.

"Dad, something's wrong with Mom!" John cried.

Archie wiped his hands on his pants. "Don't worry about the bitch, she's fine."

To the children's relief, Edna slowly opened her eyes and sat up. John knelt beside her.

And in that moment, John silently made a promise to himself:

One day, I'm going to kill my father.



## **Chapter 3**

### **May 31, 1926 – Atlanta Georgia**

It was nearly 7 a.m., and everything was quiet and uneventful. John had just turned eighteen and enlisted in the Army. He was scheduled to report tomorrow at 1 p.m. for in-processing.

John was celebrating his eighteenth birthday with Craig, sitting in a speakeasy run by the Klan. He was excited about joining the Army and finally leaving home. He had long dreamed of escaping his father, but he feared that, in his absence, his father might turn his violence toward Jane or their mother.

Craig and Jane had been seeing each other for about a year now. Craig had sworn to John that he'd take care of Jane while John was away in the Army.

The drinks were starting to catch up to John. He slurred his words as he talked. Picking up his glass and swallowing the last drops, he muttered to Craig in a broken sentence, "You know... when I get back, I'm gonna kill him."

Craig, feeling the effects of the alcohol too, asked, "Kill who?"

John laid his head down on the table. "My dad. That son of a bitch is always hitting me."

John got up and stumbled over to the bar to order another drink. The bartender glanced at him and said, "Don't you think you and your friend have had enough?"

John slammed his fist on the bar. "Hell no! We hardly drank anything!"

The bartender replied calmly, "Look, kid, I don't know you, but I do know the other kid with you. He's Judge Jones's grandson. If anything happened to him, I'd be a dead man."

Craig stood and said, "I'd better get going. I start my new job at the bank tomorrow, with your mom, actually. I'm going to be a bank teller. Or at least that's what my grandfather says."

John's expression changed. "Goddamn bank," he said bitterly. "Dad won't let me work there. Says it's a woman's job. Wants me working in the mortuary for the rest of my life. Fuckin' dead people are boring. You only got the job because of your grandfather, great Judge Jones."

Craig smirked and put a hand on John's shoulder. "I think you've had enough. Be happy for me. This means I'll see Jane more often, she's always at the bank with your mom."

He stood up and added, "If I don't see you before you leave tomorrow, I'll catch you after basic. I'll tell your mom and sister you're thinking of them."

Craig turned and walked out, leaving John at the bar.

John watched him go, then turned to the bartender. "Hey... earlier, you said if anything happened to Craig, you'd be a dead man. What if I

wanted someone dead? Could you make that happen?"

The bartender, still wiping down where Craig had been sitting, paused. "Money is the root of all evil."

John leaned in, serious now. "So for the right price, anything's possible?"

The bartender took off his apron and called to the other man behind the bar, "Hey Al, I'm clocking off now!"

He walked around and motioned for John to follow him to a more private booth.

They sat down across from each other. The bartender asked, "What are we talking here, five hundred dollars?"

John was surprised by the amount. "I don't have that kind of money. But my dad does. Could you make it look like a robbery gone bad?"

The bartender raised an eyebrow. "Even if your dad has that kind of money, it's in a bank."

John sat silently, thinking. Then he said, "If he were killed, I'd inherit the businesses. I could sell or borrow against the businesses to pay you off."

The bartender tilted his head. "Wouldn't your mother get control of the businesses if your dad dies?"

John sighed. "Yeah... that's right."

The bartender leaned in. "Only way I see this working is if your mother's out of the way too. But now we're talking a grand."

John sat back, conflicted. Could he really go through with this?

At that moment, a man sitting two tables over with another man stood to use the restroom. As he passed John's booth, he overheard him say, "Okay... one thousand dollars."

He continued walking, but the words stuck in his mind. *Did that kid just say a thousand dollars? He must have money.* He couldn't wait to get back to the table and tell Tom.

The bartender interrupted John's thoughts. "If you want to go through with this, do you have a particular day in mind?"

John replied, "Can you do it tomorrow? I leave for basic at 1 p.m. That gives me the perfect alibi. Only thing is, you'll have to wait until I can

sell or get a loan on one of the properties or the house."

The bartender nodded. "I need an address, a time I can find them together and alone, and a name and description so we don't hit the wrong people."

John started scribbling on a piece of paper. "My mom works at the bank. It's open till five. My dad's at the mortuary until seven. My mom usually goes over to the mortuary after work and waits for him to get off. The mortuary is quiet, most days there's no one there. I think that would be perfect. Oh, and make it look like a robbery."

The bartender took the piece of paper and stuffed it into his shirt. "Okay. Tomorrow night, after you leave for basic. But if you double-cross me, I'll kill you too."

John stood. "What do I call you if I change my mind?"

The bartender replied, "Bob. You can call me Bob. And remember what I said about double-crossing me."

John extended his hand. "I won't double-cross you. Just... be quick. I don't want them to suffer."

John turned and walked out.

Tom and Ed followed.

John turned right as he stepped out of the speakeasy, followed closely by Tom and Ed. He cut down an alley to reach the next street when two men suddenly jumped him from behind, striking him with billy clubs. The blows landed on his head, knocking him down.

A police officer on foot patrol spotted the attack and shouted. The two men saw the officer running toward them and bolted. The officer knelt over John, who lay unconscious and bleeding from the head. The officer patrolled this area specifically to monitor the speakeasy, well-known as a Klan establishment.

Meanwhile, the bartender, Bob, exited the speakeasy, eager to get home and tell his brother Tony about the job he had just accepted, for the both of them. As he walked, he was surprised to see an ambulance speeding down the street. He picked up his pace, curious. When he reached the alley, he saw the young man he had just conspired with being loaded into the back of the ambulance.

He spotted the officer and asked, "Is he dead?"

"No," the officer replied. "Just minor injuries. We're taking him to the hospital, just to be safe."

Bob saw opportunity. With John in the hospital, he had a rock-solid alibi. He hurried home to get Tony and carry out the plan that night, the very one John had just approved.

Bob entered the apartment and shouted, "Tony, where are you?"

Tony appeared from around the corner. "Hey, brother. What's up?"

Bob sat down. "I just got a job for us. Pays a grand."

Tony raised an eyebrow and sat across from him. "A grand? Who we got to kill, the president?"

Bob chuckled. "Nope. Just some old man and his wife. It's the perfect setup. We hit them both at a secluded location."

Tony looked skeptical. "What kind of secluded location?"

Bob grinned. "That's the irony, it's a mortuary at a graveyard. We go in tonight, shoot them both,



toss some stuff around to make it look like a robbery, and we're done."

They checked themselves in the mirror, making sure their new suits projected the professional image they wanted. Satisfied, they headed down and climbed into their Lincoln, excited. A thousand-dollar job meant they could live easy for a while.

On the way, they discussed the plan: a distraction-and-ambush tactic. Bob would get the victim's attention, while Tony would come in from behind and take the shot.

Archie was sweeping, preparing to close, when he saw a car pull up through the display window. He checked the front doors, they were still unlocked. As he put the broom away, two men in suits walked in.

Archie approached them. "Good evening, gentlemen. Can I help you?"

Bob spoke first. "Yes. Our mother just passed away. We need to arrange for a funeral."

"Sorry for your loss," Archie replied. "I can help you through these trying times. Are you

looking for a top-of-the-line casket for her eternal rest?"

Bob nodded and walked over to a display casket, hoping Archie would follow. Tony stayed behind, placing each man on opposite sides of Archie.

Archie grew suspicious. Raised in New York, he knew every trick in the book. He refused to take the bait and kept his back to the wall. Turning slowly, he searched for a reflection, anything that would give him a view of Tony behind him. He finally spotted a reflective silver vase in the flower display.

Bob tried to hold his attention. "This is a nice casket. Could we get some velvet sewn around this part here?"

Just then, Archie saw in the vase's reflection that Tony was raising a gun to the back of his head. He ducked just as the shot rang out. The bullet grazed his scalp.

Archie turned and threw a right hook, catching Tony in the jaw, breaking it and knocking him unconscious.

He spun to face Bob, who was reaching into his waistband for a .45 automatic. Archie charged him, knocking the gun from his hand. It flew into the air and landed, ironically, in an open display coffin.

Archie landed a powerful left hook to Bob's temple, sending him crashing into a display of flower vases.

Edna, hearing the gunshot, ran out of the office. She saw Archie bleeding from the side of his head, retrieving a gun from the open display coffin. Without hesitation, he shot each man lying on the floor, clean shots, both between the eyes.

Edna, stunned, ran to Archie. "We need to get you to a doctor!"

They both rushed to the truck. Edna jumped in the driver's seat, spinning the tires as they peeled away. Archie was quietly impressed by her driving skills.

Edna sat in the waiting room for nearly an hour before approaching the receptionist.

"Could you tell me how Mr. McConnell is doing?"

The receptionist checked her records. "Do you mean John McConnell or Archibald McConnell?"

John opened his eyes slowly, confused. His head ached, and he realized it was bandaged. The door opened, and a beautiful woman with long black hair walked in. She grabbed the chart at the end of the bed and approached.

Seeing him awake, she smiled. "Hello. How do you feel?"

John, still dazed but captivated by her beauty, smiled. "Much better... since you walked in."

She chuckled. "My name is Suzan. I'll be your nurse for the next four weeks."

"I'm supposed to report to the Army tomorrow at 1 p.m.," John replied.

Suzan, a 20-year-old volunteer from the Georgia State University nursing program, was in her first hospital internship. She had recently broken off her engagement after catching her fiancé with her best friend.

She smiled. "Don't worry. The doctor saw your orders and contacted your recruiter. You'll be delayed at least a week for recovery and

observation. The next basic training class doesn't start until September 28, so it looks like you've got a few months to heal."

John smiled again. "You mean a few months to get to know you."

She grinned. "We'll see. Now get some rest."

As she exited the room, she passed an older woman entering.

John's eyes widened. "Mom?"

Edna rushed to his side, hugging him tightly. "Are you okay? What happened?"

John, still foggy, said, "I think I was mugged. I'm not really sure. How did you find out so fast?"

Edna took his hand. "It's your father. He was shot tonight."

John's eyes lit up, unable to contain his reaction. "Shot?! Is he okay? What happened?"

Edna looked down. "He's alright. Just a graze on his scalp. Needed stitches. Two men tried to rob the mortuary."

John's face fell. "Were they arrested?"

Edna shook her head. "He killed them. Shot them both dead."

Relief washed over John's face, not because his father survived, but because his secret was safe.

Just then, the door opened. A state trooper stepped inside.

"Mrs. McConnell? They said I could find you here. I'd like to get a statement."

Edna nodded. "Sure, I can give it now."

She followed the trooper out of the room, the door closing behind her.

## **Chapter 4**

### **April 11, 1938 – Atlanta Georgia**

It was almost noon on a beautiful spring day when Sergeant John McConnell walked out of the gate of Fort Benning, meeting his wife Suzan, his son John Junior, and the twins Jack and James. Today was the twins' 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, so his sister Jane, her husband Craig, and their son, 10-year-old-Conner, were also there. As he walked out, his memories went to the day when he met Suzan at the hospital. He was mesmerized by her beauty, and she was so nice to him. He never regretted marrying Suzan and wondered how she had put up with him for so

long. He knew being married to a career soldier was no walk in the park.

Today was going to be a big day for everyone. Their plan was to have cake and ice cream at home, open presents, and then go into town, where a traveling circus was visiting for the first time. Everyone felt the excitement of the spectacular day ahead of them. After several hours of cake, ice cream, and opening gifts, they all piled into Jane and Craig's 32 Cadillac. John got behind the wheel, his sister and her husband Craig sat next to him. Suzan got in the back seat with all the boys.

It was just after five when the car sped off, throwing gravel as the tires spun. James punched Jack, yelling, "You are sitting on my shirt!" John slammed on the brakes, skidding to a stop, turned and slapped James saying, "I don't want to hear any shit from either of you, or we will turn this car around, and you can watch the Circus as they pull out of town, you hear me!" Jack and James both nodded their heads, saying in a low tone, "Yes, sir."

The Cadillac stopped, finally arriving at an abandoned airfield, still housing some old biplanes



that the kids loved walking past and looking at. When they arrived at the gate, the gate attendant yelled, "75 cents for adults and 25 cents for children under 12!" John reached into his pocket, retrieved four silver dollars, and handed them to the attendant. He then entered after the gate had been opened.

On their way to the Big Top Tent, they stopped at some of the vendors on both sides of the old runway, which ended at the opening of the large yellow, blue, green, and white tent. They all took their turn throwing darts at balloons, hoping to pop enough to win a stuffed animal prize. They tossed rings onto rows of bottles and spent some time petting the animals in the petting zoo. After about two hours of enjoying the vendor services, they entered and sat down on the bleachers with great anticipation.

The clowns ran in first, making balloon animals for all the kids watching. Followed by the elephants, ridden by midget and dwarf men who wore colorful costumes. It wasn't long after the lions and tigers came through, the event of the evening, the high wire act. John and all his family

watched the precision acrobatics taking place right before their eyes.

The roughly three-hour show ended with all the animals and people involved taking a final bow to the audience. Jane and Suzan stood first as the kids followed. John and Craig stood and clapped at the performance, then climbed down the bleachers, closely behind their wives and kids.

As they reached the Cadillac, Suzan noticed a Camping Trailor parked just outside the Circus grounds. She was curious as she watched a very attractive young red-headed woman packing signs displaying "Madam Yoyo's Palm Reading, Fortune Telling's, Tarot Cards and Séances." Suzan got John's attention, pointing over to the camping Trailor, saying, "Look over there, palm reading. That looks fun. Why don't we check it out? It looks like she's cleaning up for the evening. Maybe if we hurry, we can catch her before she closes!"

John and Craig both stopped just short of opening the Cadillac doors and looked in the direction Suzan was pointing, John responding, "Oh, just some gipsy woman leaching off the Circus." Suzan, with a puzzled look, asked, "What

do you mean?" Jane and Craig looked puzzled as well when John replied, "Well, Gipsys follow the Circus and pawn off all their con schemes just outside the gates of legitimate Circuses, Carnivals, or Fairs." Jane looked back at John and said, "I think Suzan is on to something. Sounds fun to have our palms read and our fortunes told."

John looked at his watch, turned to Craig, and asked, "It's after 9 pm what do you think." Craig looked at the woman picking up her signs and replied, "What the hell, if the girls think it will be fun, I'm all for it." Suzan ran over to meet the woman removing the signs and asked, "Excuse me mam, are you still open long enough, for four palm readings and fortune tellings?" The woman stopped and addressed Suzan "I was cleaning up for the evening, but in my line of work, we don't keep hours, so sure I can perform a few palm readings and fortune tellings"

Everyone entered into the Trailor, barely fitting. Madam Yoyo, first looking at everyone in the eyes, said, "My name is Madam Yoyo. Before we begin, I must warn you the future can be a hard thing to accept. We are all pawns in the chess game

of life, a game played between light and dark. Your futures are already written, just as in a game of chess, all moves must be planned in advance before they are made. I am called Madam Yoyo because, like a yoyo, I can jump into your future and return. Until I see your future, I do not know if you are being moved by the light side or the dark side. So, if you believe you can deal with whatever I may say, then it will be 50 cents for each person I read."

Suzan rose first, saying, "I can handle it, do me first." Madam Yoyo extended her hand, directing Suzan into a room with a table and two seats. The room reeked of incense.

Madam Yoyo sat across from Suzan, holding her hands out and indicating to Suzan to give her hands for inspection.

Madam Yoyo grabbed Suzan's hands, gently caressing her palms, saying, "Your palms indicate your life is cold. You are not happy. Your lifeline stops abruptly, an illness will plague your last days, and you will not see your golden years. Do not fear. I see you are moved by the light side. I am

sorry, but I must be true to what I see. That is all I can see."

Suzan opened the door with a dreadful look on her face, saying, "She says she will take whoever is next." Jane stood and excitedly ran to the door, saying, "Me, I'm next." Jane passed Suzan on her way in, noticing the sad look Suzan had as she passed. Madam Yoyo motioned for Jane to have a seat and place her hands out. Madam Yoyo took hold of Jane's hands, saying, "You have a long lifeline. You will see your golden years. Your Palms indicate you will work with a soft touch. Your hands will bring you great wealth. I see much darkness and pain in your future. All that you love will end quickly, leaving you a lonely and frail old woman. You will live a long life of sadness and regret. I see you are a pawn for the Dark side. I do not see anymore."

Jane stood and walked out, angry about what she just heard, and stormed out, mumbling to herself, "God damn quack, what the fuck does she know." Craig stood next and passed Jane on the way in. He shut the door and took a seat across from Madam Yoyo. She took his hands and started

rubbing them, saying, "Your hands show a professional life. You work with your hands, but not labor work. Your lifeline is cut short. I see your life ending at the hands of a ghost. I see much hate being used in you by the dark. You are a pawn for the dark side. I don't have anymore I can tell you."

Craig opened the door and said, "Come on, let's get out of here. This woman is a fucken nut job!" John stood saying, "What did she say?, she said, get ready because I am going to scare the fuck out of you. Just hold on. I want to see what this bitch is going to tell me!" John walked in and sat down, extending his hands. Madam Yoyo grabbed John's hands, and suddenly, she started to convulse, squeezing John's hands until her nails started cutting and blood started to show.

Suddenly, she got a memory from the past. She was a young girl in Ireland. Her grandfather was telling her, "Life is like a game of chess. Most people are pawns, but hundreds are Rooks, knights, and Bishops, and few are queens, but only one is king. A day will come when you will meet a Bishop from the dark side. Be very careful; do not let him know what you see."

She relaxed and loosened her grip on John's hands. John yelled, "What the fuck was that?" Madam Yoyo apologized, saying, "I'm sorry, we can end this if you want." John replied, "No, I'm curious what you are going to say." Madam Yoyo continued, "I see your lifeline is long, although you will not see your golden years. Your future has much pain and suffering. You live on a lifeboat in a sea of death. One day, you will be pushed into that sea of death." John pulled his hands away and stood, saying, "What the fuck, is this supposed to be some kind of a horror show? If you think I am going to pay for a load of bullshit, think again!"

Madam Yoyo watched, as John walked out with his family; her memory went back to her grandfather telling her to be ready for the day when a dark Bishop would enter her life.

She ran to the bedroom and started digging through the closet. Opening every box and tossing it aside. All she could think of was the day when her grandfather told her, "My love, we are direct descendants of Hugues De Payens. The first knight of the Templar order, he was a prophet and

a seer. Who handed this order down in the 11th century?"

"I have been given this mission to ensure a profit several hundred years in the future, is given this: "Madam Yoyo finally found what she was tearing up her closet for, a 2-in solid gold cross with a black onyx inlay and gold chain. Looking at the cross in her hand, she remembered her grandfather telling her, "On the day that the black Bishop enters your life, you are to take this gold cross. Look for a young man wearing a soldier's uniform and standing in line, waiting to board a landship. The young man will be called Peter. Find this man and give him the gold cross. He will be surprised but will accept the cross. Tell him he has been chosen to be a soldier."

John and Craig hopped into the front seat, Suzan sitting between them. Everyone was upset at what they had just experienced. Suzan yelled, "She said I was going to die! What kind of salesperson says you're gonna die. I thought she was going to say we would hang out with the rich and famous or something like that!"



Jane said angrily, "At least you are going to die. I am going shrivel up, a sad and lonely woman!"

Craig interjected, "Get this, I am supposed to be killed by a ghost. Now that's a hmmm-dinger of a story."

John just sat quietly until Jane asked, "What did she say to you, John?" John quietly answered, "She said I was going to be pushed into a sea of death and some other crazy shit!" John started the Cadillac and pulled out, driving by a boy scout troop waiting to get onto a bus.

The Boy Scouts were all between 9 and 18. They were waiting for their troop leader, 17-year-old Vernon Campbell. A skinny kid who looked too young to drive a bus full of kids. He suffered from IBS and quietly excused himself before everyone could board. He didn't mind so much, always having to find an excuse to use the restroom, because it gave him time to read his bible scriptures and study for his entrance exam into the College ROTC program.

Madam Yoyo ran out of the trailer, holding the gold cross in both hands. She looked everywhere for a Young man in a soldier's uniform, waiting to

board a landship. That's when she saw a group of Boy Scouts waiting to get on the bus to go home. Madam Yoyo wondered if this could be the soldiers her grandfather mentioned, the boys in scout uniforms waiting to board a landship?

She ran over and asked loudly, "Is there a Peter here?"

An 11-year-old stepped forward, saying, "My name is Peter!" She ran up to the boy and said, "Hello, Peter, I am glad to finally meet you. You have been chosen to be a soldier and to receive this gift." Holding out the gold cross, Peter slowly took it in amazement. He thought wow, this is the most awesome thing I ever saw. Peter took the cross.

Madam Yoyo felt strangely relieved to be rid of the cross as she walked back to her Trailer. Peter put on the cross, proudly displaying it to all the other boys. Most concluded it was just a piece of iron, painted gold and black. As everyone admired Peter's new cross, Scout Master Campbell returned and opened the doors to the bus. Madam Yoyo watched as they all loaded onto the bus. Her relief turned to sadness as she watched the bus

driveway. She felt a moment that she was waiting for her entire life had just passed. She wondered what God needed that boy for. She turned and entered her trailer.

## **Chapter 5**

### **May 1, 1945 – Germany**

Master Sergeant John McConnell moved slowly along the wall of a burned and bombed-out building. Master Sergeant McConnell looked carefully at every exposed upper-story window, aware of the potential for a German sniper.

It was about noon when the Captain, who was across the road, turned and gave the hand signal to stop for 20 minutes. Master Sergeant McConnell looked carefully for a place to sit and eat a can of C-rations. He sat on a pile of rubble behind a burned-out car and began to open one of his C-

ration boxes. As Master Sergeant McConnell sat and nibbled on his can of cold spaghetti, he noticed the young 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Campbell approaching his position.

Butter-bar babyface is what everyone called him. It pissed off Master Sergeant McConnell that he had to take orders from someone who looked like he weighed 90 pounds wet, and had just got out of diapers.

Gingerly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Campbell approached and took a seat next to the Master Sergeant. "Good morning, sir," replied Master Sergeant McConnell.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Campbell had arrived straight from ROTC, just 6 weeks earlier, replacing the previous LT, killed in action.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Campbell, short of breath, looked at Master Sergeant McConnell and said, "I have been hoping for a chance to talk to you."

The Master Sergeant, looking into his eyes, replied, "About what, sir?"

"I wanted to know more about you. Where are you from? Do you have a wife? Do you have any

kids? What did you do before the ARMY?" replied the 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant.

The Master Sergeant, with a puzzled look, answered, "Well, Sir, my family comes from Georgia. My dad is looking into a state-sponsored orphanage. He owns a bank that my sister and her husband run and a mortuary that I worked at before I joined, and now he is building a church in front of the mortuary. The mortuary is probably where I am going to work when the war is over."

The Master Sergeant went silent, staring at the ground. "What about a wife and kids?" asked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

Well, I am married and have three boys, John Junior, who is 16, we call him JJ, and my twin boys, 13, Jack and Jim."

The 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant sat quietly, staring at the rifle in his hand. Then said, "Well, that is what I wanted to talk to you about. I have been concerned about a new private, Private Hedge. He got here about two weeks ago, and with this war almost over, I would hate to see him get killed at the end of this war."

"I was thinking, you have been in this war since Africa, and you know the ropes. I was trying to find someone who is married, with kids, who was experienced, who could drop back with Private Hedge, and look out for him, you know, show him the ropes."

The Master Sergeant looked at the Lieutenant, hiding his anger over being asked to babysit some stupid kid. Replying, "Sure, Sir, I'd be happy to keep an eye on him. Besides, all Germany has left to throw at us is old men and young boys."

"God bless you, and may god watch over you and Private Hedge," replied 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Campbell.

The Captain stood to his feet, motioning everyone to their feet and move forward. The 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant hopped to his feet, running forward to meet the Captain.

Master Sergeant McConnell remained seated as everyone in his platoon walked past him, waiting for Private Hedge, who was the last one. Master Sergeant McConnell stood as Private Hedge ran up to him and asked, "You wanted to see me, sarge?"

Master Sergeant McConnell replied, "Just keep behind me, watch all the windows for snipers." They both moved around the destroyed car, moving closely to the walls.

It didn't take long before they no longer could see anyone from their platoon. Suddenly, a machine gun opened up on them, and they both dove for cover. Bullets sent little clouds of dirt in the air as they hit the rubble on the ground.

Staying as low as possible, The Sergeant yelled at Private Hedge, "Wait for them to reload, then empty your BAR on their position. When you need to reload, duck down, and I will start firing. When I start firing, move over next to the window and lob a grenade in the window with the machine gun." Private Hedge nodded in understanding.

The Machine gun fire stopped. Private Hedge stood and unloaded his rifle, then ducked back down for cover. Sergeant McConnell stood and fired while Private Hedge moved over close to the window where the machine gun fire came from. He pulled the pin on the grenade in his hand and threw it in. He went to the ground as the grenade



went off, sending small pieces of metal everywhere.

Private Hedge stood and looked into the window he had just thrown a grenade into, seeing, to his horror, one old man and four dead boys; not one looked older than ten. "Sarge over there!" yelled Private Hedge as Master Sergeant McConnell went to one knee, looking at the direction Private Hedge's rifle was pointing.

It was a 12-year-old boy in a loosely fitting German uniform, waving a rifle with a white flag tied to it. Both men kept their weapons pointed at the young boy as Master Sergeant McConnell yelled, "Hands up, drop the weapon and move forward!" Luckily, the young German boy understood most of what was said. He dropped the weapon and placed both hands up. Slowly, the shaking young boy moved forward.

It was then that Sergeant McConnell saw the young German boy had a luger tucked into his pants, a prize of war that Master Sergeant McConnell coveted.

Sergeant McConnell lowered his rifle, shooting the boy in the head. The young boy fell

to his back as his brains poured out onto the concrete.

Private Hedge yelled, "You killed him!" as the Master Sergeant ran to the dead boy, retrieving his prize, a German luger. As tears ran down his face, Private Hedge yelled, "You killed him. He was surrendering!"

Master Sergeant McConnell kneeled over the boy just as Private Hedge ran up behind him. Master Sergeant McConnell, holding the luger in his left hand, said to the private, standing just behind and right, "I had to kill him." The Private, wiping away tears, responded, "Why?"

"Because he killed you." The Master Sergeant then raised the luger up under his right arm and fired two shots, striking Private Hedge in the chest.

Private Hedge fell back as his head made a thump, hitting the street. Master Sergeant McConnell started going through the Private's pockets, looking for any valuables. It was then he noticed a 2-inch solid gold cross with a black onyx inlay and a gold chain around the dead Private's neck.

Master Sergeant McConnell thought it must be worth one or two hundred dollars. Placing the cross in his pocket, he noticed blood dripping from his nose. He grabbed the white flag used by the young German boy, trying to stop the blood, which now flowed profusely.

He thought his nose hadn't bled like this since his dad hit him with the butt of his rifle when he was a boy.

## **Chapter 6**

### **April 24, 1948 – Garden City Georgia**

Father John McConnell pulled into the parking lot next to McConnell's Christian Church. Driving past the front, turning right onto the gravel road along the side of the Church. The Church was built 10 feet in front of the Mortuary, facing south, with 10 rooms for homeless women with children.

Father McConnell stepped out of a red 1948 Ford truck, parked at the newly installed 10x16 ornate rod iron gate, with McConnell's Mortuary in black rod iron.

He wore his black garments, white collar, and a 2 in gold cross with a black onyx inlay, hanging from a gold chain.

The Church had just been completed, as well as the rod iron gate. Built with money from drug sales and prostitution, generated by the Ku Klux Klan, and written off as Church contributions.

Every contractor used in the construction of the Church had ties to the Ku Klux Klan. A job that would cost 100 dollars was paid 10 times that amount, making all the profits legal transactions. The McConnells benefitted by not having to pay for any of the construction.

Father McConnell's dad, Archie McConnell, had passed just a year before, leaving JJ to run the state-sponsored orphanage while leaving the bank to Jane and the Mortuary Church to John and his twin boys.

Father John's oldest boy, JJ, helped his grandfather run the orphanage, always on the lookout to traffic orphaned children to black-market buyers all over the world.

The picnic grounds that lay behind the Mortuary and the Church were today the site for Jack and James, 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

JJ noticed his father inspecting the new rod iron gate. He excused himself from the Church members, attending Jack and James' birthday party.

Walking up to his dad, JJ yelled, "Hey, Dad, did they do a good job?" Father John replied, "Hey, JJ, you've seen your brothers." JJ, out of breath after jogging to meet his dad, replied, "They are at the cake table, over by the Church living quarters."

A State Trooper patrol car drove up the gravel driveway, parking next to the 1948 red truck.

Father John McConnell's brother-in-law, Craig Jones and his son, Lieutenant Conner Jones, who was wearing a State Trooper uniform, stepped out of the patrol car.

Craig Jones, who managed the bank with Father John's sister Jane Jones, grabbed a gunny sack out of the cab of the red 1948 truck. Lieutenant Conner Jones opened the trunk of the

Patrol Car as Craig Jones placed the gunny sack in it.

Father John stepped up to Craig, saying, "There is 40 thousand in that sack that I need washed for the Klan." Craig grabbed the top of the trunk, shutting it with a loud bang.

Craig walked up to the gate, admiring it, and asked Father John, "Looks good. You are going to build a 10-foot brick wall around the cemetery acreage, as well?"

JJ stepped up, replying, "Yeah, Dad just signed a deal with the Klan to have a brick wall, 10 feet tall and about 20 miles long."

Craig looked around the property, then turned to look at Father John, saying, "But won't the gate and wall block the view, interrupting the business to the Mortuary."

JJ interrupted his father, saying, "The wall won't be a problem, I mean, People are dying to get in here!" they all let out a chuckle.

Father John then suggested, "Let's go into the Mortuary office, sit and talk." Everyone walked around the new gate into the double glass doors of the Mortuary.

Everyone filed into the office. Father McConnell sat behind his desk while Craig and his son sat on the sofa. JJ, still standing, said, "The reason I wanted to have this meeting is I got contacted by an adoption agent in New York. He is looking for a blonde, blue-eyed baby Who looks like Marilyn Monroe for a customer in Australia. They are willing to pay 30 thousand if we can do it outside of legal channels."

Craig spoke up, saying, "What's the problem?" JJ responded, "Well, the money will need to be washed through the bank. We'll also need Conner to make sure no legal investigations are going on."

Conner, listening intently, spoke up, saying, "I could watch for any FBI or local investigations that are related to baby trafficking."

JJ replied, "Good, I will give the green light and watch for a Marilyn Monroe to show up."

Father McConnell stood and said, "So we are in agreement about this. Why don't we go and enjoy the birthday party."

Everyone stood and filed out of the office, exiting through the back door of the Mortuary onto the parade grounds.



Smoke rose from the candles that James and Jack had blown out. Jack launched himself onto the back of James, both tumbling to the ground.

Father McConnell, seeing the commotion, yelled at his sons, "Knock it off if you think you guys are going to get a gift for your birthdays."

Father McConnell climbed onto the stage behind the Church, speaking into a microphone, saying, "Thank you, brothers and sisters, for coming to my son's most important birthday party of their lives. They just don't know that yet! As many of you know, my wife had just passed after years of battling cancer. I want to thank everyone for their love and support. Any donations can be made in a donation box set up in the front of the Church."

Everyone clapped as Father McConnell continued saying, "I do hope to see everyone here next Sunday for our congregation. God bless everyone, and drive home safely."

Father McConnell stepped down from the stage, walking towards his Mortuary office, followed by his three sons. The three boys fought over seating while Father McConnell reached into

his desk, removing a set of car keys and throwing them at James.

Jack's reflexes were quicker, and with his left hand, he snatched the car keys from the air. James elbowed Jack, knocking the breath out of him.

Jack, holding his side, handed the keys to James as he yelled, "The Ford truck, thanks, Dad. Can me and Jack take it for a drive now?"

Father McConnell, smiling, replied, "It's your birthday today. Go have a good time, and enjoy the Ford."

James and Jack jumped to their feet, running out of the office. They climbed into the truck. James drove, placed his foot firmly on the gas pedal, spun the tires, and threw gravel everywhere.

Five miles down the road, the Atlanta Primitive Baptist Colored Church was just ending its services. Minister Brown closed his bible and addressed the Church, saying, "We are living in hard times. We must try to love one another and end this hatred in this world. Please enjoy this beautiful day, and I will see you at evening prayers."

Joseph and Ellen Simms put on light jackets and stepped down the stairs of the Baptist Church, enjoying the sunshine on a beautiful April day.

Walking toward the street, they heard Minister Brown call to them, "Brother Joseph and sister Ellen, what happened to your mother, Rose, and your baby Joseph Junior?"

Joseph replied to Minister Brown, "We had to leave Joseph Junior with our mom at home because he wasn't feeling very well, I think he's teething."

Minister Brown, looking saddened by the news, replied, "We will pray to the Lord to look out for little Joseph, and we pray that little Joseph gets well so Rose and Joseph will be able to attend the services together next week."

Joseph and Ellen both thanked the Minister for his concern, then turned toward the street to continue walking back to their home to be with their sick son.

As they stepped onto the main road, a red Ford truck, traveling at twice the speed limit, swerved to avoid hitting them.

Jack and James, sitting in the red Ford truck, watched in their rearview mirrors as Joseph and Ellen gathered themselves after just nearly being struck by the speeding truck.

Jack turned to James with an evil grin, saying, "Hey, James, want to have some fun." "Oh, hell yeah, what do you have in mind?" Yelled James.

Jack, staring in the mirror at Joseph and Ellen, asked, "How about a good poke?" James turned his head from the direction of the road and replied, "Hell, I live for a good poke!"

A mile down the road from Joseph and Ellen, James pulled the truck over, coming to a stop. Jack turned to James with a slight giggle, saying, "Grab the lift from the back of the truck, pick up the rear end, and remove the rear tire."

James got out, grabbed the lift, and placed it under the bumper, lifting the rear right tire off the ground and removing the tire.

Jack, now out of the truck and standing behind James, pointed to the oncoming couple walking toward them, saying, "When those two guys walk past, I will take the guy. You take the girl and follow my lead."

James looked up from the kneeling position near the tire and replied, "Ok."

Joseph and Ellen walked along the road, holding each other, excited to get home to their newborn baby, Joseph Junior. They watched as they neared the red truck, cautiously moving to the right of the truck being repaired as far from it as possible.

Jack turned to look at Joseph and Ellen as they passed, saying, "How are you two doing on this beautiful day?"

Joseph turned his eyes from the ground to Jack and replied, "We're fine, thank you for asking, sir!" avoiding eye contact.

Joseph and Ellen kept their eyes down as they passed the truck on the right.

Jack grabbed the tire iron with a firm grip, and he gave James the signal to indicate "now."

Holding the tire iron in his right hand, Jack swung the tire iron with all his might, striking Joseph on the back of his head. Ellen was surprised when James grabbed her in a chokehold, dragging her into the bushes. Jack continued to

strike Joseph with the tire iron until his skull cracked open, exposing his brain.

James, a 6-foot 210 pound, easily overpowered 5'9, 110- pound Ellen. Suddenly, as Jack was admiring his work, he heard James let out a deafening guttural cry. Startled by the sound, Jack ran into the bushes, where James was assaulting Ellen, only to see James throw a right hook, striking Ellen in the face and knocking four teeth out. Jack yelled to James, "Why did you hit her?"

Ellen lay on the ground, choking from the teeth and blood flow, as James held his right arm to stop his arm from bleeding.

James yelled back, "Because the bitch bit me," as he held the two bleeding pieces of skin with his left hand closed. He removed his left hand from the bite, and two pieces of skin flapped loosely in the shape of a football.

Jack, dismayed, returned to remove Joseph's body and replace the tire on the truck. James let out a loud scream, then jumped onto Ellen. With his left hand, he grabbed Ellen by the throat. Using

his right hand, he lifted up her dress and ripped away her panties.

James pulled down the zipper of his pants, feeling relief as his erection was removed. He inserted himself into Ellen as his grip on her throat got stronger. With each thrust, James squeezed a little harder on Ellen's throat. With a loud howl, James' body stiffened, as now he had both hands squeezing Ellen by the throat.

He finished just as Jack walked up, yelling, "It's my turn." As Jack looked closer, he realized the woman was dead. Annoyed with his brother, he said, "You killed her." James replied with an evil smile, "Well, you better hurry up and fuck her before she gets cold." Jack smirked and told James, "You are one sick fuck."

Jack was pissed as he got back into the truck behind the wheel. James followed, hopping into the passenger seat saying, "Shit, Jack, you really beat the shit out of that guy." Jack responded, "Yea, I should be beating the shit out of you, asshole!"

**Chapter 7**  
**April 5, 1953 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry**  
**Division,**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment outpost**  
**Harry (Iron Triangle) Korea**

Frank felt tired from a long night of guard duty. The Chinese and North Koreans would probe the lines mostly at night and fall back during the day. It was Easter Sunday, and Frank worried that the enemy might think the U.S. military would relax their forces and attack during the day. Corporal Lance Williams stood beside Frank, manning the



M-60, taking his turn at guard duty. It was a clear, cool morning. Peacefully quiet.

Lance looked down at Frank and asked, "Hey Frank, you should try and get some rest." Frank replied, "I've been trying, but something is giving me the heebie-jeebies." Lance replied, "You're just thinking of home, enjoying some of your mom's delicious apple pie." Frank replied, "Yeah, you're probably right, and when we get back to Fort Benning, I am going to tell mom you love her apple pie and not her cherry pie."

Lance replied, "You just down right have a mean streak in you, don't you!" Frank replied, "Look, you know I don't like the cherry, and if I tell my mom your favorite is apple, she will only make apple pie instead of cherry."

Lance replied, "not only mean, but devious." Frank replied, "You know mom, she could never be mad at you. She thinks you are the nicest friend I've ever had. But me, she is still mad at me for driving her car when I was twelve, almost seven years ago." Lance replied, "I'm sure she's thinking of you right now, buddy. Get some rest."

From east of Frank and Lance's position, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Vernon Campbell, the company Chaplain, was making his way through the trench line. Frank started to get to his feet as Lt. Campbell approached.

Lt. Campbell remarked, "Please stay seated. I just wanted to wish you men a happy Easter and see if you care to join me for words to thank our Lord." Before Frank or Lance could respond, a whistling sound followed by a thud. Lt. Campbell fell back into the trench wall as if someone had pushed him really hard. Lt. Campbell's hands rose up to his chest on the right side, where a Chinese bullet had entered.

Lance left his position at the M-60 and jumped down to help. Lt. Campbell lay on his back and looked around, confused.

Frank saw Lance bandaging Lt. Campbell and jumped to take up his spot at the empty M-60, releasing a three-second burst down field. Frank looked down range to see if the burst was effective; he noticed that he knocked some of the Chinese soldiers back into the trenches. Frank

continued firing at three- second bursts, hoping he could keep the enemy back.

Lance saw that the bullet that entered Lt. Campbell's chest had exited through his back. He grabbed the Lt. and threw him over his shoulder, then yelled out for Frank.

A mortar round landed just 30 yards north of their position. Frank lowered his head for cover and looked back towards Lance. He saw him carrying the Lt. and pointing towards a makeshift ladder used to retreat into a secondary trench, where everyone would resume a defensive position.

Frank knew Lance's intentions. To get the Lt. to safety, back to where he could be evacuated to a military hospital unit. Frank gave Lance a nod and watched in amazement as he flew up the ladder, never touching it with his hands.

He brought his attention back in front of him, resuming the three-second bursts across the range. A second mortar round landed 20 feet from him. A piece of shrapnel tore open his forehead, tearing across his right eyebrow.

The blood ran down into his eyes, blinding him. He lowered himself onto one knee and shakily pulled a bandage out from his pocket. He wiped away the blood as best as he could and pulled the bandage tightly around his head.

Frank knew the next motor volley would hit his position. He had to act quickly. He grabbed his rifle and ran for the makeshift ladder to get into the secondary defensive position.

As Frank reached the top of the ladder, at the final rung, his left leg refused to hold his weight any longer. He felt his body drop back into the trench with a heavy thud. As he fell, his rifle flew from his hands and landed two feet away from him.

He attempted to grab for the rifle, but his body wouldn't respond, no matter how hard he tried. Something pulled at the back of Frank's jacket; he turned and saw Lance's angry face. Lance yanked Frank out of the trench by the back of his field jacket. Frank felt Lance toss him over his shoulder, and he tried to hold on to Lance tightly, but he was covered in blood, and he kept losing his grip.

Lance held Frank with a vice grip. Ten yards from the secondary position, two soldiers started towards Lance and Frank to get them into the trench as fast as possible.

As they pulled them forward, the two soldiers lost their grip, and everyone fell into the trench. Frank landed on his back at the bottom of the trench.

The fall had knocked the air out of him, and he was having trouble catching his breath. As he lay in the trench, he looked up at the clear blue sky and heard someone yell out, "medic!"

He felt an overwhelming sense of relief that they had done it, and they made it into the secondary trench and into safety.

He couldn't sit up, so he turned his head, looking for his friend, to celebrate their safety and to thank him for saving his life. He saw Lance laying to his left with his back towards him.

He yelled out Lance's name, and then he saw the blood on the back of his field jacket. "Lance! Lance!" Frank called out. A body appeared out of the corner of his eye; he saw a helmet with a red cross on a white background.

Frank grabbed for the medics' arm to get his attention. As their eyes locked, he pointed to Lance, "Please, help him! Help him!"

The medic turned his attention towards Lance, rolled him from his side to his back, and placed two fingers on his neck. The medic's face frowned, and Frank could read the disappointment immediately.

Two more medics appeared with a stretcher, looking towards the first medic on the scene. Frank saw the first medic shake his head and then pointed to Frank. One medic grabbed Frank's ankles, while the second grabbed his shoulders. The first medic left Lance to help move Frank onto the stretcher.

Frank felt the stretcher rising. He looked up at the sky again and noticed how beautiful the day was before everything went black.

## **Chapter 8**

### **September 8, 1955 – Newnan, Georgia**

Alice Miller wiped her mouth with a towel and entered her kitchen. She saw her daughter, Kathy, finishing off a bowl of cereal before she left for high school. Alice kissed Kathy's forehead and said, "Straight home after school." Kathy replied, "Okay, mom." Alice grabbed her car keys, purse, and her steak barn apron. She jumped into her car, backed out, and headed north to her job in the next town over, Palmetto.

Alice's journey to work took her a short way up Highway 95 north.

As Alice turned right to merge onto 95, she noticed a young girl walking along the freeway, but what really surprised her was that she was carrying a young infant wrapped in a pink blanket.

Alice was a few minutes behind her normal schedule and knew she would be late for her shift, but she pulled over anyways. Alice turned off her car, put it in the park, and opened the door to step out. She walked to the vehicle's rear and saw a girl carrying a baby wrapped in a pink blanket. She saw the look of concern as she approached the young girl. Alice elevated her voice into a comforting tone and asked, "Hey, sweetie, can I give you a ride? I'm heading north up 95 if you are going that way."

Anna Carson, a young 21-year-old, with her 6-month-old daughter, Lisa, had fled an abusive relationship in Killeen, Texas, just two days earlier. She and her daughter were returning to her parents' home, where she was raised, in Wilmington, North Carolina. Anna's husband and the father of her baby had threatened to kill her



and their young daughter if she ever tried to leave him.

Anna reluctantly approached Alice's car, worried that this could be a trap and that this woman could be helping her husband. As she walked closer to the car, she saw the woman's Steak Barn apron and laughed a little at her own paranoia, realizing that her husband would never be smart enough to pull a rouse like this. Anna called out, "North? Yeah, I'm heading north if you're sure you don't mind." Alice replied, "Of course not, sweetie! Hop in!"

Alice turned back while Anna and Lisa went around to the passenger door. Once Alice saw the girls in the car, she put the keys in the ignition, started the car, and placed it into drive. She checked over her shoulder, slowly accelerated, and merged onto Highway 95 north to finish her drive to work.

As soon as Alice was safely back onto the highway, she said, "My name is Alice, Alice Miller. What's yours and your beautiful baby's name?" Anna replied with a small smile and nod, "I'm Anna, and this little girl is Lisa." Alice asked,

"Where are you two heading?" Anna responded, "Wilmington, that's where I grew up." Alice wanted to know more about this girl but was nervous about prodding too much, so she said, "I don't want to get into your business, but I noticed you don't have any luggage or even a purse. It's man trouble, isn't it?" Anna explained, "I really appreciate you stopping and helping me and Lisa, but I don't want to burden you with my problems." Alice saw that pushing wasn't a good idea, so she asked, "What do you say about coming to work with me? We can get you and Lisa something to eat and some clean diapers for your baby girl."

Anna was so hungry; she hadn't eaten anything in two days. Luckily, Lisa was breastfed, but she still needed to eat to produce milk. She asked, "Are you sure you won't get into trouble? I also don't have any money to pay you." Alice explained, "No way sweetie! I've been at the Steak Barn for twenty years now; I'm the boss. I won't be mad at myself for helping a young girl and a little baby." "If you are sure. I can help wash dishes or clean tables!" Anna explained.

Alice took a breath and told Anna, "Just relax, honey, we'll get you squared away." Alice exited the highway in Palmetto and pulled into the Steak Barn parking lot. Alice turned to Anna and said, "Here we are. Come on in, and we will get you some breakfast."

Alice helped Anna and Lisa out of the car and into the diner. As they entered the building, Alice yelled to the cook, who was busy starting up the equipment, "Carl! Steak, eggs, and some coffee and orange juice for this young lady and her baby." Carl looked up from behind the counter. Alice could see the shock and confusion on his face.

His eyes lingered on the beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl standing next to Alice. Carl yelled out, "Got it! It will be a few minutes!" Anna felt dirty; she hadn't washed or changed her clothes for two days, and then the baby started to cry. Anna rocked Lisa back and forth slowly, humming a little song to her.

She knew she needed to feed and change Lisa. Alice noticed Anna fidgeting with the baby and offered, "Go to the office, back on the left over there, and you can take care of Lisa." As Alice

went into the kitchen, she grabbed a clean towel and handed it to Anna. "You can rip this up and use it for a diaper for Lisa." Anna looked at Alice, with tears forming in her eyes, "I don't know how I can ever thank you." Alice smirked, "Don't worry, we girls need to stick together."

Anna took the towel and went back into the office. Anna fed Lisa and changed her dirty diaper, using half of the towel Alice provided. Anna finished attending to Lisa, grabbed the other half of the towel, and walked out of the office to the women's bathroom to see if she could give herself a sponge bath.

Anna finished and walked out of the ladies' room to the table Alice had set up with her steak and eggs breakfast. Alice brought over two cups and a coffee pot. She filled the cups and then set the pot down on the table. She slid into the booth across from Anna.

"Let me hold Lisa so you can enjoy your breakfast," Asked Alice. Anna had held Lisa for two days already and, with hesitation, handed Lisa to Alice. "Thank you, I really did need this," replied Anna. Devouring the eggs, followed by the

thick- cut porterhouse steak. Alice sat across the table drinking her coffee, wondering about her situation, hoping she could somehow help her.

“Wilmington is only a half-day drive. I could take you and Lisa in my car if you can’t call someone to come and get you and Lisa?” asked Alice. Anna swallowed the piece of steak she was chewing and looked at Alice, considering her offer.

Anna knew her Mom and Dad were vacationing in Italy, celebrating their anniversary, knowing they would be gone for a few weeks. Anna knew her husband would be looking for her. She thought going home before her mom and dad returned was not a good idea. Anna responded, “You have already done more than anyone could expect. Thank you, but I will be alright.”

Alice smiled, saying, “I have a 17-year-old daughter at home. You and Lisa are welcome to stay with us.” Anna wanted so much to accept the offer of a warm bed, if just for one night or until her parents returned.

Anna knew if her husband did find her and Lisa at Alice’s home, he would hurt them. Anna

thought carefully before saying, "I can't get you and your daughter involved in this mess I've gotten into." Alice realized then she was running scared.

Alice asked carefully, "Should we get the police involved?" Anna swallowed her last piece of steak, saying, "It's bad, alright, but the police can't do anything." Alice began to fear for Anna's safety, responding, "I know of a woman's shelter not far in Garden City. I think it's run by a church. After I get off work, we can drive by and check into it. I'm sure you and Lisa could stay, even if just for a night!" Anna thought of a shelter in a church; even if her husband was to find her, he would not be crazy enough to do anything to her or Lisa. Anna agreed, saying, "Ok, maybe just for one night!"

Alice smiled, saying, "I've never been there. Let me make some calls, get an address, and we can see if they have room for you and Lisa tonight." Anna felt hopeful, saying, "Thank you!" Alice handed Lisa back, stood up, smiled, and walked back to her office.

Alice sat down behind her desk, picked up the phone receiver to her ear, and dialed "O" for operator. The phone chirped back, "Operator!" Alice questioningly asked, "Can you help me? I was trying to get a hold of a woman's shelter in Garden City?" "Let me take a look!" Came back from the operator. It was about a minute before the operator returned saying, "I have a McConnell's women's shelter and church in Garden City!" Alice smiled and said, "Yes, that's it. Could you connect me please?" Alice sat back in her chair, waiting to be connected.

Over the phone, Alice heard, "Hello, McConnell's church and mortuary, John McConnell speaking!" Alice quickly responded, "I'm sorry, I was trying to reach a women's shelter." "We do have a women's shelter in the rear of our church. Do you have a woman in need?" John McConnell fired back. Alice felt relief, saying, "A woman and her daughter need a place for tonight!" "Your friend and her daughter are more than welcome. We have a bed available!" John responded.

Alice, happy to find a room for Anna, replied, "Great news, could I get your address?" John McConnell, looking forward to seeing the woman and her baby, responded, "We are on Highway 25 Northside, just watch for McConnell's church and mortuary. We have a women's shelter behind the church, across from our mortuary!" Alice responded, "Thank you. We will be by in a few hours!" "Looking forward to meeting you and your friend, god bless," replied John McConnell. Alice placed the phone back on the base, walking out of the office.

Alice walked up to the table where Anna and Lisa were sitting and said, "Got you a room, at least for tonight." Anna smiled and said, "Thank you for all your help." Alice stood saying, "You can go back into the office and wait for me to get off, then we can go to the shelter!" Anna was grateful, saying, "That would actually be nice, I will take you up on that." Anna grabbed Lisa and headed for the back office.

The sun was just beginning to set, blinding Alice and Anna as the right turn into McConnell's church and the mortuary offered relief from the



setting sun. Alice, along with Anna and her daughter, entered the church. At the rear of the church, Anna noticed two men talking. The older man, dressed as a priest and wearing a gold cross with a black onyx inlay, noticed Alice and Anna. Then turned, walking up to Alice and Anna, saying, "Welcome, ladies, I am Father McConnell. What can I do for you?" Alice said, "Father, I called earlier about my friend and her daughter." Father McConnell smiled and replied, "Yes, I was just getting a room ready."

Father McConnell held up a clipboard to Anna, saying, "I just need some information. Could you please fill this out for me? Then we will get you into a room with a crib." Anna turned to Alice, handed her Lisa, and began filling out Father McConnell's clipboard.

Anna was worried that her husband would be able to find her, so she answered the questions that could identify her incorrectly. Anna completed the form under the name Anna Pearson.

Father McConnell took Anna's form and yelled at the man in the rear of the church, "James, get out here!" James ran up, nodding to Anna and

Alice. "This is my son, James, he will set you up in a room," explained Father McConnell

Father McConnell reached up, pulling the blanket that partially covered Lisa's face, saying, "What a beautiful blonde, blue-eyed baby she is. "Father McConnell then turned and exited from the rear of the church into his office in the Mortuary. Anna turned to Alice, saying, "I wish there was some way I could repay you!" Alice smiled, saying, "Just remember where I work. Call if you need anything." Alice turned to exit through the front of the church.

James, holding up his right hand, waved for Anna to follow. Anna couldn't help but notice the strange football-shaped scar just above his wrist, on James's right arm. Tightening her grip on Lisa, Anna followed James to the room he had prepared.

Walking from the church to the mortuary, Father McConnell reviewed Anna's admission form, checking off all the points he was looking for. Not married, no family, home address, emergency contact, or job. Father McConnell could not erase the smile on his face as he entered

the Mortuary office, picked up the phone, dialing the operator.

"Operator," sounded from the phone. "Please connect me to the Georgia State Troopers," asked Father McConnell.

"One moment please" replied the operator. After a few moments, the phone sounded, "State Troopers office... Can I help you?"

Father McConnell answered back, "This is Father McConnell. Could you please radio Captain Conner Jones and ask him to contact his uncle? It is an emergency."

"Yes sir, I will do," said the state trooper on the phone. Father McConnell returned the phone to its base and sat back behind the desk, smiling.

James opened the door for Anna and Lisa. Anna was surprised to see the room had a shower with clean towels. James said, "If you need anything tonight, my brother Jack is here all night on duty, where the podium is down the hall." Yearning to shower, Anna responded, "Thank you, good night." James exited and closed the door.

Sitting back in his chair, Father McConnell grabbed the receiver from its base before it seemed to ring, excitedly saying, "McConnell's mortuary and church, this is Father McConnell. Can I help you?"

"Uncle John, this is Conner. I got a message that you said there was some kind of emergency," replied Captain Jones.

Father McConnell yelled, "Conner, how are you? I'm sorry to bother you so late, but I think we may have found the holy grail!"

Confused, Captain Jones asked, "Did you say there was some kind of emergency?" Father McConnell spoke excitedly, "The grail, I might have found the holy grail of babies, available for tonight only!"

Sitting at his desk, Captain Jones looked down, saying, "I don't know, this is too fast, less than two hours, I will just barely be able to do a background check!"

Father McConnell spoke loudly, "Well, run her anyway, name Anna Pearson, 22, blonde hair, blue eyes, no emergency contacts, no family contacts, no job, baby 6 months old."

Captain Jones acknowledged, "I can only check Georgia in that time!" Father McConnell responded, "Good! If everything is a go, get JJ at the orphanage after work, stop by and meet us at 0200 in my office!" "I will check. JJ and I will meet you at 0200 if it's a go," acknowledged Captain Jones.

Just after 2 am, Father McConnell sat in his office chair, sipping a cold cup of coffee. Jack and James sat on the couch across from the desk. The office door opened, and JJ entered, followed by Conner, dressed in his State Trooper uniform.

Father McConnell stood, saying, "Everyone, please have a seat, pointing to the two chairs in front of his desk. JJ and Conner stepped forward, each moving a chair and taking a seat. Father McConnell looked directly at Conner Jones, saying, "Conner, are we good to go?" Conner looked at the papers he was holding, responding, "Everything clear, not even a complaint filed."

Father McConnell turned his attention to his oldest son, JJ, saying, "JJ, is your contact in New York still interested?" JJ looked up, responding,

"Oh yeah! They have had an order in for a Marylyn for almost three months now!"

James McConnell, listening intently, spoke out, "What is a Marylyn?" Sitting next to his brother, Jack balled up his fist, hitting James in the left shoulder as hard as he could, yelling, "A Marylyn Monroe, you idiot, blonde hair, blue eyes, an Elizabeth is a brunette, and a Lucy is a redhead!"

Father McConnell slammed fist onto his desk, yelling, "Knock that shit off!" The room went quiet as James sat beside Jack, holding his left shoulder. Father McConnell's eyes scanned everyone in the room, saying, "Looks like we are a go for tonight! James put her in room 8. Everyone stick to the same plan."

Father McConnell opened his desk drawer, removing a World War Two German Luger he had brought over from the war. Slamming the Luger directly onto his desk, speaking directly to James, "Be sure you this gets back in my desk!" Everyone stood and began to exit the office. James was the last to leave. He grabbed the Luger off the desk

and shoved it just under his shirt on his lower back.

After getting Lisa asleep in the crib next to the bed, Anna lay in bed feeling anxious. She was pleasantly surprised to find out how prepared the shelter was. Their room not only had a restroom, it had a stocked kitchen, diapers, baby food, and clean clothes for her and Lisa.

She could only think of where her husband Donald was right now. She feared that Donald would find her even here. Anna was just starting to fall asleep when a light tap on her door woke her up. Her adrenaline spiked, and all she could think was her husband, Donald, had found her.

Anna jumped out of bed, wearing the pajamas she found in the room. Quickly, she moved to block the door with her body, softly saying, "Yes, who is it?" Standing next to James, Father McConnell stood in front of room 8.

JJ and Conner stood at the end of the hall next to each other. Father McConnell spoke up. "Miss Pearson, we have a State Trooper who would like to speak to you." Anna stared at the door in

wonder. Did her husband, Donald, find her and call the police? Anna unlocked the door.

Anna opened the door slowly and saw Father McConnell and James at her door. Anna looked down the hallway to see a State Trooper standing next to a man in a suit. Captain Jones, seeing Anna, spoke, "Miss Pearson, may we speak with you?"

Anna looked at Father McConnell and James, then stepped out to speak with the State Trooper. Anna looked at Father McConnell and James as she passed to talk to the State Trooper. With his hands behind him, James held a rag in his right hand and a bottle of ether in his left.

Putting the rag into the mouth of the bottle, he tipped it, soaking it. Anna was surprised to see a towel out of nowhere, covering her mouth and nose. Anna tried to reach her arms up and remove the towel, But James was holding both arms tightly to her body with his left arm. Anna stared at the Trooper, amazed that he did not move. The Trooper faded into darkness.

Dragging Anna, James passed Jack, heading to room 8 carrying a black plastic garbage bag. Jack stepped to his right, allowing JJ to exit the room,



carrying Lisa wrapped in a pink blanket. Father McConnell opened the rear church door where a red 48 Ford truck sat with its tailgate down.

Father McConnell stepped outside with James, helping him put Anna in the truck's bed. Jack ran out of the rear door, tossing the black garbage bag into the bed with Anna. James closed the truck's tailgate and hopped into the driver's seat.

Jack entered back into the rear door of the church. Father McConnell headed back to his cold cup of coffee in his office while JJ and Conner left, out of the front with Lisa. Seeing a State Trooper vehicle parked out front, JJ hopped in the passenger side with Lisa while Conner climbed into the driver's seat. Conner started the State Trooper vehicle and put his foot on the accelerator.

Seeing the hole he had dug earlier, James pulled up next to it and stopped. The Lugar dug into James's back, so he tossed it on the passenger seat. James opened the driver's door, stepped out, and dropped the tailgate.

Grabbing the black plastic bag, he tossed it into the six- foot hole. James pulled Anna out of bed and onto the ground with both hands. Her head bounced as James dragged Anna next to his dug hole.

Pulling the pajama bottoms and panties off Anna, James tossed them on top of the black plastic bag. James unbuckled his belt and then began unzipping his jeans. Seeing Anna starting to move, James went down to his knees, pulling out his erect penis, relieving the discomfort caused by his jeans.

Moving forward, James grabbed Anna's throat with his left hand, and his right guided himself into Anna. James began to thrust, holding Anna's throat with both hands. Squeezing tighter with each thrust.

Anna started to regain consciousness and fought to remove James's hands from her throat. This only made James more excited. Squeezing with all his might, Anna's body went limp. James let out a horrid scream as his body stiffened.

James fell forward and then rolled off Anna onto his back. James rose to his feet and, using his

right foot, kicked Anna into the six-foot hole. James buckled and zipped his jeans, hopped into the backhoe, and began to fill the hole.

## **Chapter 9**

### **March 26, 1956 – Macon, Georgia**

Shirley Brooks stood at the kitchen sink washing the dishes, Dirtied during her lunch with her son Frank. Looking out the kitchen window, Shirley could see the gravel driveway leading to the paved highway, almost half a mile away.

Noticing a black sedan driving up to the house. Shirley yelled, "Frank, someone is driving up to the house!" Frank pushed his chair away from the dining room table, standing and grabbing

his hip, rubbing it intensely, hoping to relieve some of the pain in his left hip.

Slightly limping, Frank walked to the front door. Frank opened the door and saw a black sedan parked in front of the house. Two State Troopers stepped out of the sedan, climbing the stairs to greet Frank.

A Captain extended his right hand to Frank, saying, "Hello, I'm Captain Campbell. This is Major Walker. I am looking for Corporal Brooks?" Still shaking the Captain's hand, Frank said, "I'm Frank Brooks, but I haven't been a corporal for some years, sir." Frank took a few steps back, saying, "Please, sirs, come in, and I will see if my mom could whip us up a cup of coffee."

Captain Campbell and Major Walters stepped in, following Frank to the dining table. Everyone sat at the table while Frank's mom started a pot of coffee without being asked. Frank looked across the table at the officers, asking, "What can I do for you, sirs?" Captain Campbell replied, "I have been looking for you for almost two years, and I'm glad I could finally find you well.

Almost three years ago, I was a young lieutenant in the 3rd Infantry Division Chaplain services." Frank's memory instantly placed Captain Campbell's face to that day in early April 1953. Frank's emotions felt as if they were poured out. Frank started to tear up.

Captain Campbell noticed Frank feeling uncomfortable, saying, "I'm sorry, Frank, I really didn't want to bring back bad memories. I wouldn't be here if what I wanted to discuss with you wasn't important. Let me get to the point of my visit. On that day in April, Corporal Williams, after patching a hole in my chest, threw me over his shoulder and carried me to safety, saving my life." Frank interjected, "I remember, Sir." The Captain continued, "After a year in the hospital and rehab, I started looking for the young soldier who carried me to safety, saving my life."

It took me some time to learn that the soldier was Corporal Lance Williams. I learned he did not survive that day. I located Lance's mother in North Carolina. I wanted to be sure she knew what a hero he was that day. I want to put him in for the Medal of Honor." Frank responded, "He

saved my life that day as well. What can I do to help?"

The Captain continued, "I would like you to tell what happened at the Medal of Honor hearing; you have a lot to say!" Frank looked at Captain Campbell and said, "Yes, Sir, I would do anything for Lance." The Captain smiled and said, "Thank you, Frank!"

Frank looked at Major Walters and wondered why was he there. Captain Campbell noticed Frank's interest in the Major, saying, "The Major is a good friend of mine. He would also like to speak with you!"

Major Walters spoke up, "Hello, Frank. I'm honored to meet you. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me." Frank's mom stepped up, placing a cup of coffee in front of everyone at the table. The officers thanked her, and then Major Walters continued, "I am in charge of the State Troopers Academy in Atlanta. We have a new class starting in April, and I would like to enroll you if you are interested in it."

Frank's eyes perked open a little wider, looking at Major Walters, saying, "You do know,

sir, I was wounded that day as well. I have 26 pins in my hip. Wouldn't that disqualify me?" Major Walters smiled with assurance, saying, "Being a veteran, you have a lot of policy adjustments, not to mention I am the one who makes the final decision for acceptance, so what do you say?" Frank replied, "I do want to enroll if you feel I would be able to complete it."

Major Walters smiled at Frank, explaining, "Captain Campbell and I reviewed all your records, including your medical records. There's nothing that would disqualify you. In fact, purple heart recipients have lower physical requirements for graduation."

Frank looked at his mother sitting in a chair near the coffee maker. Shirley nodded in approval to Frank. Feeling quite excited, Frank responded, "Thank you, sir. I would be honored to accept your offer to enter the Troopers Academy in April."

Reaching into his jacket pocket, Major Walters retrieved a notebook, handed it to Frank, and said, "I had a feeling you would accept my offer. I took the liberty of getting you enrolled. Everything you



would need to know should be in that notebook. My personal number is in there just in case there are any questions or issues.” Frank responded while scrolling through the notebook, “I guess I will see you in April then, sir!” Everyone rose to their feet. Frank shook both of their hands with a grin from ear to ear.

Both officers turned and thanked Mrs. Brooks for the coffee. They exited the front door and went onto the porch. Captain Campbell turned on his way out, saying to Frank, “You’ll be contacted by the review board for Corporal Williams Medal of Honor Case.”

Frank shook their hands again, saying, “Thank you, sirs. It’s been an honor to speak to both of you.” Major Walters and Captain Campbell turned, stepping down the steps and getting into their black sedan. As it backed out, it turned and headed down the gravel road, past the guest house, onto the main road.

## **Chapter 10**

### **December 25, 1958 – Atlanta, Georgia**

Feeling tired, Officer Frank Brooks tipped a cup of coffee to his lips in the parking lot of a local supermarket. Being the newest rookie, Frank knew he would work on Christmas day. He looked forward to getting home for a home-cooked meal with all the fixings.

Officer Brooks was 20 minutes from completing his graveyard shift on the first Christmas since he graduated from the academy.

The night had been unusually quiet as the sun was just starting to rise.

The radio in his patrol car broke the silence as it chirped with a loud dispatch, "Unit 12, unit 12, do you copy, over?" Frank removed the microphone from the dashboard, responding, "This is unit 12. I have a good copy, over!" The dispatch came back, "Unit 12, I have a welfare check in your sector, over!" Speaking to his microphone, Frank says, "Go for a welfare check, over!" Dispatch came back, "A miss Pearl Rolland called about a neighbor. She says she hasn't been able to contact her for several days, over!"

As Frank wrote the contact information down in his report log, he spoke into the microphone, "Ready for 20, over!" Dispatch responded, "818 Oakdale Road, over!"

After completing his log, he responded, "That's a good copy, unit 12 over and out." Frank started his patrol car, shifted into drive, and pulled out of the store parking lot and onto the freeway.

Arriving a little past 7 am, Frank noticed an elderly woman sitting in a chair. Pulling over to the curb, Frank parked and got out. The woman

seeing Frank approached waving, yelling, "Hello, I'm Pearl, I called!" Frank, concerned, replied, "Hello, mam, you have a neighbor that you are concerned about?"

Pearl stepped up to Frank, still yelling, "Yes, my neighbor Rose Simms hasn't spoken to me for a couple of days now. We were going to take her 10-year-old grandson to church today. After we had breakfast, I knocked, but no one answered!" Frank turned, saying, "Wait here, mam, I will have a look."

Frank walked up to the house Pearl pointed to. Making his way up the porch to the front door, he pounded 3 loud knocks, yelling, "State Trooper." Getting no response, Frank started to look for any signs of foul play.

Noticing a window curtain slightly cracked enough to see inside the front room, he looked through the curtain. He immediately noticed two feet sticking over a couch. Immediately, his adrenaline spiked. Turning from the window, Frank drew his weapon and opened the door.

As the door swung open, Frank slowly stepped through. Rounding the couch, he saw the

young boy, with bloodshot eyes, on his knees, praying over his dead grandmother, lying on the couch.

Using his radio on his side, he called into dispatch, "Unit 12 to dispatch. I have a coroner request at 816 Oakdale Road, over!" The dispatch came back, "Copy unit 12, coroner rolling to 816 Oakdale, over!" Frank knelt beside the young boy, putting his hand on his shoulder and saying, "Hello, my name is Frank. What's your name?" The young boy looked up with streaks on his face from crying and replied, "Joseph Simms, sir."

Frank offered his hand to Joseph, saying, "It's time to go now, Joseph, you ready?" Frank and Joseph stood up, holding Joseph's hand. They walked out of the front door to his patrol car. Frank opened the door, and Joseph climbed in, taking a seat. Frank leaned in, saying, "I'll be right back. I just need to talk to Pearl."

As Frank shut the passenger door, A black van came to a stop behind his patrol car. Printed on the side was "Atlanta County Coroner." Hearing a loud whaling, Frank turned to see Pearl balling into her dress.

Walking hurriedly to Pearl, Frank reached out to give Pearl a hug. After Pearl regained herself, Frank asked, "I was wondering, do you feel like you could answer some questions for me?" Pearl, wiping tears, replied, "Of course." Frank asked, "Does Joseph have any family nearby that can take care of him?" Pearl looked down, saying, "No, Rose, his grandmother is all he had. Poor boy, his parents were murdered when he was just a baby."

Frank finished the notes in his logbook as the coroner loaded Rose's body into the van. Frank opened his driver's door and hopped in. He noticed Joseph was quietly looking down into his lap. Frank placed the shifter into the drive and began to drive.

As the patrol car rolled down the road, Frank felt heartbroken for Joseph. He knew that, as an officer, his duty was to bring Joseph to the State Sponsored Orphanage. Frank knew the orphanage was always open, but he decided to keep Joseph for Christmas and deliver him to the orphanage the following day.

Gazing from the road to Joseph, who sat quietly, Frank realized Joseph didn't have a gift for

Christmas. Pulling into the nearest shopping center, he looked for a shop still open. Frank noticed a manager of a store locking up for the day. Pressing the accelerator, the car chirped, catching the manager's attention, who stopped to see a patrol car speeding through the parking lot and skidding.

Frank rolled down his window and asked, "Excuse me, would it be alright if we take a minute to buy a Christmas gift for this boy?" The manager replied, "Of course, and Merry Christmas!" Frank parked the car, then, looking down at Joseph, said, "Just sit here for a few minutes. I'll be right back!" Joseph looked up and replied, "Yes, sir."

Frank stepped out of the patrol car and walked into the store. He quickly found a toy police car with flashing lights and a siren. Frank carried the toy to the counter, asking the manager to throw in the 4 d cell batteries it required.

The manager stuffed them both into a brown paper bag. Shaking the manager's hand and saying, "Merry Christmas," Frank left the store and threw the bag in the rear seat of the patrol car.

Driving away, Frank asked Joseph, "Would you like to have Christmas dinner with me and my mother?" Joseph mumbled, "Yes, sir." Turning right into his driveway, Frank passed the guest house and parked in front of the main house.

Frank asked, "Would you like to meet my mother? She has a great Christmas dinner waiting?" Joseph replied, "Yes, sir!" Frank smiled at Joseph, saying, "Frank, call me Frank!" Joseph responded, "Yes, sir." Frank put his hand on Joseph's shoulder, saying, "Well, we'll work on that."

Shirley was at the sink when she noticed Frank had brought someone home. She quickly opened the front door. Surprised to see a young boy with him, she asked, "Who do we have here?"

Frank looked down at Joseph, saying, "This is our special guest, Joseph." Shirley grabbed Joseph, saying, "Nice to meet you. Come in. We have dinner ready, you hungry?" "Yes, mam," replied Joseph.

Shirley closed the door and rushed everyone to the kitchen. Frank was sitting at the table,



reaching for the mashed potatoes, when Joseph reached out and intercepted his hand.

Lifting his right hand for Shirley, Joseph began to say grace, "Dear lord, please make sure my grandmother takes her medicine. She gets tired and forgets, Amen." Everyone quietly began to eat.

After dinner, Frank ran over to his living quarters and quickly wrapped the Christmas gift for Joseph. After a bath and clean clothes, Joseph opened his present from Santa. Joseph spent most of the night playing with the toy police car. Shirley commented, "Such a nice boy. Reminds me of Lance." Frank then told his mother about Joseph's situation.

The morning of December 26 came quickly. In Macon, Georgia, Frank didn't sleep too well, worried about Joseph. What would happen to him? Frank's mom packed a suitcase full of Frank's old clothes for Joseph. "Thank you, mam," replied Joseph as he walked out of the house and got into the patrol car.

Shirley and Frank locked eyes; a deep sorrow showed in their eyes. Frank hopped into the

driver's side of his patrol car, picked up the microphone to his radio, calling in to dispatch, "Dispatch, unit 12 on route to State Orphanage, to deliver grandson of Rose Simms, over!"

A pause, then a response from the radio, "Unit 12, copy got you en route to State orphanage, over." The entire trip, neither spoke a word to the other. Frank was feeling nervous about what would happen to Joseph.

When arriving at the orphanage and parking, Joseph, carrying his new suitcase, exited the patrol car and walked into the orphanage. As Frank walked in behind Joseph, a woman behind a desk asked, "Hello, Officer. Can I help you?"

Hearing the woman, Frank turned to her, responding, "Yes, I have police admission." The woman looked at Joseph, replying, "Those are handled by our superintended Mr. McConnell. I will let him know you are here. He is the last office on the left!" Frank walked down to the last office on the left when a man in his late 20s stepped out holding his hand out and said, "Officer, I am JJ McConnell. I run things around here. How can I

help you?" Frank replied, "I have a police admission for you."

JJ McConnell looked down at Joseph standing stoically, holding a suitcase, and asked, "Hello, what is your name, and how old are you, son?" Joseph replied, "Joseph, Joseph Simms, I am 10 years old, sir." JJ leaned forward, saying, "Welcome Joseph, we'll get you situated here. Do you have any questions?"

Just as Joseph was about to say no, the receptionist grabbed Joseph by the arm, saying, "Come, sweetie, let's go and see the other children!" Then she walked away, holding Joseph by the arm. Frank barely heard JJ McConnell say, "Officer, if you just step into my office, we'll get him admitted." Two hours of paperwork left Frank with a broken heart.

Frank wondered what would happen to Joseph as he pulled out of the driveway of the orphanage, radioing to the dispatch operator, "Dispatch, unit 12 cleared for duty, over!"

A week had passed since Frank had dropped Joseph off at the orphanage. Shirley, vacuuming Frank's old bedroom, pushed the 4-foot tube and

vacuumed head under the bed, hearing what sounded like the vacuum hitting metal.

Shirley bent over to look under the bed and was shocked to see a toy police car. She knew immediately Joseph had left the gift behind. She picked up the toy, ran to Frank's guest house, and pounded on the door.

Frank was half asleep when he heard a pounding on his door. He jumped to his feet and answered the door. Frank's mom forced her way in, holding the toy police car up, saying, "He forgot it. The poor boy forgot his Christmas gift!" Quickly, he grabbed the toy and the keys to his patrol car.

Climbing into his patrol car and setting the toy on the passenger seat. He started his patrol car and pulled out of the gravel driveway onto the road. Frank pulled into a parking spot just in front of the orphanage.

After he came to a complete stop, he got out of his patrol car and walked up to the secretary holding a brown paper bag, asking, "Can I Speak with Mr. JJ McConnell? It's about the boy I brought here last week, he seems to have forgotten

something." The woman behind the desk smiled and said, "I will let Mr. McConnell know you are here."

JJ McConnell walked up behind Frank and placed one hand on his shoulder, saying, "Officer Brooks, nice to see you again. What do I owe the honor?" Frank held up the brown paper bag, saying, "Joseph forgot this, and I would like to make sure he gets it."

JJ McConnell appeared irritated, saying, "Joseph is no longer with us. I found him to be such a nice boy, I recommended him to my uncle for adoption, and he fell in love and adopted him." Frank was shocked to hear a boy, 10 years old, was adopted so fast.

He asked, "Do you think your uncle would mind if I stopped by to give this to Joseph?" JJ McConnell hesitantly said, "I will call my uncle Craig and check if it would be alright."

It took about 15 minutes for JJ to return with a sheet of paper saying, "My uncle is not busy right now and is waiting for you." Frank took the paper from JJ with his uncle's name and address, saying, "Thank you, I'm sure Joseph will appreciate this."

Frank slowly pulled up to the address given to him by JJ. He could tell this was an old plantation mansion. An older, thin man stepped out onto the porch and waved. Frank stepped out of his patrol car, holding a brown paper bag and yelling to the man at the top of the stairs, "Are you Mr. Craig Jones?"

The man stepped forward, saying, "Yes, I'm Mr. Jones, Mr. Craig Jones, I just got off the phone with my nephew, and he mentioned you would stop by." Frank shook the man's hand as they headed to what was originally slave housing quarters.

On the way, the man asked, "Do you know my son? He's a Captain with the State Troopers, Captain Jones?" Frank looked at the man with a puzzled look and responded, "No, I've only been a trooper for about 8 months, but I'll be sure to let him know we met when I do meet him."

Reaching the home, Craig opened the door without knocking. An old black man looked up from a book he was enjoying, saying, "Mr. Jones, is everything alright?" Craig, wondering why the old man wasn't working, said, "Henry, This is

Officer Brooks. He would like to speak with Joseph." Henry, not knowing what this was about, showed a look of concern and said, "He's working in the field with Mary."

As soon as Henry finished speaking, a young boy and girl walked up to the door. Joseph, seeing Frank, got excited, saying, "Hello, sir, what are you doing here?" Frank was happy to see that Joseph was cared for by a family, and had a little friend to grow up with. He got down to one knee and said, "You forgot Santa's gift. You don't want Santa mad at you, do you?"

Craig Jones watched their interaction and thought to himself, he must be a nigger lover! Joseph pulled the toy police car out of the bag and thanked him for bringing the gift. Frank turned to Henry and asked, "Would you three like to have dinner with me and my mom this weekend? I'm sure she would be happy to see Joseph doing so well here."

Henry could see the concern for Joseph and, with a smile, said, "Thank you, sir. Myself, my granddaughter, Mary, and Joseph would be honored to have dinner with you and your

mother.” Frank shook Henry’s hand and walked out. Frank picked up everyone that weekend and enjoyed one of many weekend dinners.



## **Chapter 11**

### **February 26, 1965 – Hamer, Georgia**

Joseph sat tall as the tractor turned the old tomatoes into the earth. He was anxious to finish plowing the back half of the tomato fields and get back to the house where Henry and Mary were fixing a birthday dinner for Joseph.

Mary had purchased a new yellow dress that Joseph could not stop thinking about. Suddenly, the tractor stopped as if it had hit a brick wall. Joseph turned the tractor off and jumped off to inspect what had made the tractor stop. He

noticed the blade was hanging free on one side and started toward the barn to get the pieces to repair the broken part.

Mary stood in her room staring at the new yellow dress she had purchased just for Joseph's 17<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Mary put on the dress and walked into the kitchen, where Henry was cooking a birthday cake for Joseph.

Henry turned when he saw Mary enter the kitchen, and a feeling of pride ran through his body. "You look beautiful!" replied Henry. "Do you think Joseph will like the dress?" asked Mary. "Yeah, he will like it just fine," Henry replied.

Mary suddenly remembered the watch that she had purchased for Joseph's birthday, which was hidden in the barn.

"I will be right back, Grandpa. I just remembered the gift for Joseph I left in the barn," yelled Mary, and then she turned and ran out to the barn.

Craig Jones was tipping a shot glass of whiskey, sitting at the workbench in the barn. Craig often told his wife that he would work in the barn and then spend the afternoon drinking.

The barn door opened as Craig looked up from his drink, thinking his wife had caught him. Instead, a beautiful young woman entered. Craig wondered for a moment, "Who is she?" and then realized it was Mary, the girl who lived in the guest quarters.

Mary stopped saying, "Sorry, sir, I didn't mean to interrupt what you were doing!" Craig mumbled, "No, you are not bothering me." Mary explained, "I just need to get a birthday gift. I hid out here for Joseph," as she moved closer to the workbench and Craig.

Mary reached around Craig and retrieved a watch from behind the lamp. Craig yelled to Mary, "Let me see what you got!" as he closed the distance, standing now directly behind her. Fear sent a cold feeling down Mary's body as Craig put his hand on her shoulder, saying, "You have really turned into a beautiful woman." Mary turned to try and break free from his grip, saying, "Sir, I have to go." Craig spun her and grabbed her by the waist, picking her up onto the workbench. "No, no" yelled Mary as Craig moved his left hand to cover her mouth and his right to pull up her dress.

Joseph was just walking behind the barn when he heard Mary's muffled scream. He ran to kick open the barn door, seeing Craig forcing himself onto Mary. Joseph ran and grabbed Craig from behind, pulling him away as his pants dropped around his ankles, and he tripped over a pile of chopped firewood.

Joseph turned to look Mary in the eyes, making sure she was not hurt. Mary stared into Joseph's eyes, and they widened when a look of fear appeared on her face. Mary, with her left arm, moved Joseph's head to the right one-half second before an axe came down, striking Mary in the face. Joseph could not believe what he was seeing. From deep within him, Joseph let out a horrendous scream. He jumped onto Craig, placing both hands around his neck. They both fell to the ground.

Henry was just pulling a glass cake pan out of the oven when he heard a scream of pain coming from the barn. Dropping the glass cake pan, Henry ran to the door, thinking Joseph must have hurt himself.

As Henry opened the barn door, he saw Mary slumped over the workbench. Running over to Mary, he could see she was dead. Tears began flowing down his face. Henry grabbed Joseph, who was screaming and choking Craig Jones, crushing his windpipe.

As Henry helped Joseph to his feet, he noticed Craig was dead. Still crying, Henry grabbed Joseph's cheeks with both hands, saying through his own tears, "Listen, listen, Joseph, this is very important; go west 15 miles to a colored graveyard, look for a grave of a man born two years before you in 1946. Memorize the name and birthdate on that grave marker, go to the Army recruiters another 3 miles west, and join the Army using that name from the gravesite. Do you understand me?"

Sitting at the kitchen table reading a newspaper, Jane Jones also heard Joseph scream. She sat and listened for any other noise out of place. Not hearing any noise, she went to the front door and walked out of the house onto the porch.

Looking around and not seeing anything, she was about to walk back into the house when she

saw Joseph run out of the barn out of the corner of her eye. Wondering what was happening, she walked down the steps, headed to the barn, and opened the door.

Jane screamed, seeing Mary, turned and ran back. Reaching the house, Jane picked up the phone and asked the operator, "Get me the State Patrol!"

"All units a possible 187 in progress, 1 Jones Road, in Hamer County!" Frank recognized the address immediately, activating his lights and sirens.

When he arrived, he noticed two units had arrived before him, one speaking to Jane Jones by the house and the other by the barn, holding Henry in handcuffs.

Frank pulled up next to Henry and parked, noticing Henry's tear-stained cheeks and swollen eyes. Getting out of his car, he looked Henry in the eyes and asked, "Where is Joseph?" Henry stood quietly, motioning with his eyes so the other officer could not see "West."

The officer standing near Henry looked at Frank, saying, "Look in the barn at what that son

of a bitch did. The Captain is going to be pissed!" Frank ran to the barn door, stopping at the awful site. Mary lay dead, an axe stuck in her face, and Craig Jones lying dead near a pile of split firewood, his pants down around his ankles.

Frank turned to exit when a Captain almost ran into him. Stepping to the side, Frank said, "Excuse me, sir," as he exited the barn.

Captain Jones, seeing his father lying with his pants down, bent down and pulled them up, fastening the belt and zipping the pants. Running out of the barn, Captain Jones got the attention of the officer holding Henry and said, "Put him in my car!"

The officer obeyed, placing Henry in the Captain's car, as the Captain drove away, he couldn't stop thinking, how am I going to get him to tell me where that son of a bitch is going.

Frank went into the guest house to look around for any evidence. He stepped into the kitchen to see a broken pan with a chocolate cake lying on the floor. Frank knew Joseph had shared a room with Henry and went in to look around.

He saw Joseph's wallet on the nightstand by the bed, picked it up, and placed it in his pocket. He then looked in the dirty clothes bin, pulled out a pair of Joseph's jeans and shirt, and placed them both into a plastic bag.

The Captain stopped in front of McConnell's Mortuary, pulled Henry out, and went into the Mortuary office. Sitting on the couch, James asked, "Who is he?" Angrily the Captain said, "His black ass son killed my dad."

James reached into his belt, retrieving a German Lugar, and shot Henry in the head. The Captain punched James in the face, knocking him down and saying, "God dammit James, I brought him here so he could tell us where that son of a bitch went to!" James, rubbing his jaw, said, "Sorry, Conner, how was I supposed to know that." The Captain turned, got into his car, and left.

On February 27, Joseph woke up dazed and confused, wondering where he was. As he sat up, he realized he was in a covered boat. Memories of the previous day began to flood in like a tsunami of pain. Listening carefully for any noise, he



climbed from the covered boat and continued on his way to find the colored graveyard.

He was cold, hungry, and dirty, wondering what was going to happen to him. After about 45 minutes, Joseph spotted a building and recognized it. It was the church his grandma took him to as a child, Atlanta Baptist Colored Church. As he stepped up, he felt his grandma must be watching out for him.

Out of the side door of the church, Joseph saw a familiar face dumping a mop bucket from the church stairs. It was Minister Brown emptying the bucket. The Minister saw Joseph staring and yelled, "Can I help you?"

Joseph, feeling hopeful, replied, "Yes, Minister Brown, could you tell me where there might be a colored graveyard around here?" The minister looked hard at Joseph, wondering how he knew his name. Then he recognized the boy he had not seen for seven years. Minister Brown yelled down, "Joseph, Joseph Simms, I am very happy to see you. How have you been? Everyone was sad to hear about your grandmother, Rose."

Joseph began to walk up to Minister Brown, saying, "I have been well, but about the colored graveyard?" Minister Brown figured Joseph was looking for his parents' grave sites and replied, "Yes, behind the church is the graveyard where your parents were buried." Joseph was very surprised to hear this, amazed that he could visit his parents while searching for a name to use."

Minister Brown picked up the mop bucket, saying, "Come in. I was just about to fix breakfast. I would be honored if you could join me and catch me up on where you have been." Minister Brown then grabbed Joseph's hand, and they entered the church.

Sensing something was bothering him, Minister Brown asked, "What is wrong, Joseph? You look very saddened?" Joseph could not stop the feeling of pain. Falling to his knees, he began to tell Minister Brown about everything that had happened to him.

Minister Brown hugged Joseph, saying, "It is ok, I will help you. First, you must go back and shower, then I will find you some clean clothes.

We will eat and visit your parents while we search for a name suitable for you!"

Feeling much better after a shower, clean clothes, and breakfast, Joseph and Minister Brown walked out back, visiting the grave sites of his parents. Joseph said a prayer for his parents, and just as he finished, he noticed the grave next to his mother. It read, "William Stone, born December 12, 1946, died April 23, 1963."

That's perfect. He thought it would be easy to remember since it's 12/12, the same number as Frank's patrol car. He thanked Minister Brown for everything, then memorized the name and birthdate from the grave site that would become his from this point on.

Joseph walked another 3 miles, as Henry had said until he could see the sign "Armed Forces Recruitment Center." William Stone entered and asked to speak with a recruiter.

Frank walked into the State Troopers Headquarters for an emergency meeting held by Captain Conner Jones. Walking into the office, Frank found an open spot to stand beside all the troopers from the state.

Captain Jones stepped up to the microphone, saying, "Hello, I am Captain Jones. As most of you already know, my father and a young girl were murdered by Joseph Simms. My father walked in on a lovers' quarrel that got out of control after trying to stop Joseph from killing Mary Jones. He then killed my father, Craig Jones."

Frank thought, "Oh, so this is how they are going to spin this." Captain Jones continued, "We will be pairing up on this, I want everyone to check the board for their sectors to search, and good luck to you all. Be careful; we are dealing with a very dangerous person."

Frank, a Corporal, hoped his partner did not outrank him so he could call the shots. He was happy to see that his partner was new and even happier to see his sector was west. He knew that if any other trooper found Joseph, they would shoot first and ask later.

Frank got into the patrol car, along with the new trooper, and drove heading west. After several hours, the sun began to set, and they both were about to call it a day when the new trooper

said," I think the only place we haven't looked is the bus station."

Frank pulled into the bus station, looking around, they both noticed the sign, "Line up here for new recruits to be bussed to Ft Benning." Frank saw an Army Sergeant picking up and cleaning the area. He walked up to the Sergeant and asked, "Did the new recruits already leave on a bus?" The Sergeant looked up, saying, "Yes, they were picked up about 20 minutes ago. Is there something I can help you with?" "Yes, was there a young black man, about 18, 6-foot, 180 pounds, short afro, one of the new recruits," responded Frank.

The Sergeant looked up, saying, "We only had two blacks with this bus load, and both fit that description." Frank pulled out his notepad, and his partner stood watching. He said, "Could I get the names of the two men who fit the description?" The Army Sergeant grabbed a clipboard from the desk behind him, saying, "That's easy, they were the last two, a Ronald Bennet and William Stone." Frank made a note, turned to his partner, and said, "Let's go!"

Joseph was just starting to sleep when a commotion on the bus woke him up. "It's the State Troopers. They're pulling us over." Someone said. Joseph felt his stomach drop as a tremble started to set in. The bus came to a complete stop; as the driver opened the door, Frank hopped onto the bus, making immediate eye contact with Joseph. As Joseph was about to vomit, going pale, Frank turned and said to his partner standing just below, "He's not here!" Then, he got off the bus, watching it leave.

Just after 10 pm, Frank returned to the State Troopers Head Quarters to drop off his partner. After he parked, he ran in and checked the files. He started with the deceased files for a "Ronald Bennet," no such luck, then "William Stone." There it was, born 12-12-46 and died 4-23-63... Frank pulled the file and placed it into the shredder.

## **Chapter 12**

### **January 1, 1969 – Vietnam, 5th Special Forces Forward Operating Post**

The Huey flew low and fast, occasionally striking the treetops. Private First Class Ian Yokes wore a green beret on his red head of hair like a muffin top. His blue eyes were bloodshot, his heart pounded, and his stomach turned.

The reminders of a night of heavy drinking, celebrating the New Year, at a New Year's party. Ian leaned forward, vomiting out the side of the

aircraft, most of it landing on his uniform and the side of the Huey.

Ian turned to the side gunner sitting beside him, manning the 60 caliber, saying, "Goddamn, is this some kind of new Olympic sport, Chopper skiing?" The gunner, smiling, replied, "Yeah, seems crazy. The Huey flies so low because, believe it or not, it's safer. the gooks can hear us coming. The lower we fly, the faster we fly by them, and they have less time to shoot at us. The higher we fly, the more time!"

A clearing appeared in the jungle, and the Huey sat both skids on the ground. PFC yokes jumped off the Huey, holding his gear with his left hand and his weapon with his right hand.

As fast as the Huey landed, it was airborne again. Ian stood staring at the Huey, getting smaller quickly. Standing alone in the middle of a jungle, Ian thought, "What the hell, is this some kind of green beret test."

Suddenly, a Green Beret Captain, followed by a black Sergeant, appeared from the bushes. The Captain stepped up to Ian, saying, "I'm Captain Smith, and this is Sergeant Stone with me."



Noticing the vomit on Ian's uniform, the Captain asked, "So where are you from PFC?" All Ian could think was definitely not from here and responded, "The United States, Sir!"

The Captain, irritated, replied loudly, "NO SHIT! WHAT ARE YOU, SOME KIND OF SMART ASS?" Ian felt, "Shit, I have been here just five minutes, and already I am probably going to be digging outhouses." Ian thought for a second and said, "Sir, I assure you, my ass has absolutely no intelligence!"

The Captain could not hold back his smile, saying, "That's the most intelligent thing you said so far! Sergeant, stow this idiot," then he walked away.

Sergeant William Stone waved his hand, saying, "Follow me." Ian looked at the Sergeant, saying, "What do you think I am some kind of a follower?" Sergeant Stone Smiled, knowing he and this new private were going to be good friends, and said, "No, you can stay here."

Sergeant Stone turned to walk away, as Ian bent over, picked up all his gear, dropping his beret in the process, picked up the beret and put it

on his head, blocking his left eye, while trying to hold his bag running to catch up, yelling, "HEY DON'T LEAVE ME HERE, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?"

Ian Sweated profusely as he followed William down a narrow trail, hacked out by a machete, the last thirty yards almost at a forty-five-degree angle. Reaching the top, a small tent appeared in a clearing, as if it didn't belong. "Here's where you can stow your stuff. Lieutenant Quinn, our team leader, has a meeting with everyone at fourteen hundred hours," replied Sergeant Stone.

Ian dropped his rifle and pack, head pounding, sick to his stomach. He crawled into the tent and laid down. It was just ten minutes before the meeting when Ian crawled out of the small tent.

Sergeant Stone sat with his back to Ian, eating a box of C- rations. Sergeant Stone tossed a box of c-rations to Ian, asking, "Feeling better, I hope. We will meet the team in ten. You ready?"

Ian sat beside William, saying, "I feel better. I kind of overdid it last night. I'm stupid like that. Thank you for having my back with the Captain,

Sarge." William stuck out his hand and said," William, the name is William."

After shouldering his rifle, Sergeant Stone entered the Command Quarters, followed by PFC Yokes. Three Sergeants and a Lieutenant stood over a table. Studying a map. The lieutenant looked up, asking, "Casper, this must be our new demolition guy, PFC Yokes?"

"Yes, Zeus," replied William.

The Lieutenant then replied, 'I am Lieutenant Quinn, my radio call sign is Zeus, this is first Sergeant Eleazar Diaz, his radio call sign is Doc, this is staff Sergeant Greg Winters, his radio call sign is Apollo, this staff Sergeant George Hoopes, his radio call sign is Atlas, and you already met Casper. You will address everyone here from now on by their call sign. No Sir shit."

Ian thought, "Casper the white ghost, what a bunch of racist shits." The lieutenant continued his speech, saying, "My question to you is, what radio call sign do you want to go by?" Ian thought how racist it is to call a black man "Casper," and they all have cool call signs.

Ian spoke up, "How about White Trash." The Lieutenant gave Ian a dirty look and said, "Everyone knows you are white, so your new call sign, Trash it is. The Captain said you were a smart ass."

Ian quickly responded, "Well, Zeus, I'm really bothered everyone believes my ass has any intelligence. I mean, it's just an ass." The Lieutenant was livid, yelling, "Get this piece of trash out my face!"

William grabbed Ian and rushed him out the door. As they walked away, William asked, "Trash? What the hell were you thinking?" Ian looked at William and explained, "I thought it was pretty racist. They all get these cool Greek God call signs, while you have to be Casper the white ghost when you're not white."

William let out a laugh, saying, "Casper? Casper is the call sign I chose. I feel like a ghost, you know, Casper the ghost, the friendly ghost. I think you are thinking of the cartoon Kimba, Kimba, the white lion."

Ian's mouth was wide open when he responded, "Oh shit, you're right, Casper the

friendly ghost, he was just white in the cartoon.” William smiled and put his hand on Ian’s shoulder as they walked away, saying, “I never seen Zeus so mad. I thought he was going to shoot you!”

Ian smiled at William and said, “Do we really have to use those stupid call signs all the time? Sounds like something my ass would think of.” William let out a loud belly laugh. He remembered that it had been over five years since he had a good laugh like this.

## **Chapter 13**

### **July 22, 1969 – Embassy Suites Hotel, Saigon, Vietnam**

Ian pulled the jeep in front of the hotel, William and Ian grabbed their duffle bags from the back. Heading into the hotel, Ian looked at William, saying, "I've been waiting for this, one week of rest and relaxation, hot saunas, soft beds, and clean sheets."

William turned his attention to the young Vietnamese girl behind the front desk, saying, "Hello, mam, I am William Stone, and this Ian

yokes with me. We have reservations for two rooms."

The Vietnamese girl started to punch on the keyboard behind the desk, saying in broken, barely understandable English, "I'm sorry, sir, but we have diplomats here now. We have only one room we can give you now."

William looked at Ian with a disappointed look, saying, "We can only get one room. Is that alright?"

"As long as we get a sauna and two beds!" replied Ian. The Vietnamese girl, who was listening intently, said, "We have a large tub and two beds!"

Ian looked at William, saying, "What the hell, sounds better than a rock for a pillow!"

William turned back to the receptionist, saying, "Sounds good, we will take it!" The receptionist handed William the key and, with nothing else to say, continued punching on her keyboard.

William unlocked the room, and Ian rushed in. He dropped his duffle bag on the closest bed to the restroom and then jumped and landed on the

bed. Ian started unpacking his duffle bag, saying, "Hey Casper, if you need to use the restroom, better go on now because when I get in that tub, you may not see me for a week."

William pulled a black book out of his duffle bag, tossed it on the bed, and said, "Go ahead. I don't think I want to use the tub after Trash has been in it!" Ian chuckled, removed his tee shirt, and turned to enter the bathroom.

William noticed a large black and blue bruise on Ian's back and yelled to Ian, "Hey Ian, what happened to your back? It looks like someone hit you with a sledgehammer?"

Turning back, Ian replied, "Yeah, it felt like it too. I have that shithead, LT Zeus, to thank for that. You remember about four weeks ago, we went on a mission to destroy a weapons and ammo storage with two Vietnamese Translators in that small village outside of Da Nang."

William sat on the bed and said, "Yeah?" Ian also sat, saying, "Remember when we arrived, Zeus sent you, Apollo and Atlas to recon the perimeter for any NVA, while me and Doc stayed behind with Zeus and the two Translators?"



"Yes," replied William. "Those two Vietnamese fucks come out of a hut, dragging some old man by the arms. He's screaming, they're screaming, and Zeus runs over yelling, 'Ask him where the weapons are.' He's bleedings from the ears, nose, and mouth."

Ian continued, "You've seen that eight-inch bowie knife he always has with him. Zeus takes this knife and starts scalping this poor old man like he is some fucking Apache. Doc seein' I wasn't digging what shithead was doing, he motioned don't get involved. Then that motherfucker sliced the old man's throat, and the three of them ran into the hut. About two minutes later, Zeus runs out and says, 'Trash, it's here, blow it. I run in, pull the primer cord on twenty pounds of c-4, and dropped it into a storage locker. I turned, and my right foot got tangled in a blanket, pulling it off a girl, not more than ten years old, with her throat cut from ear to ear. She was still alive and looked me right in the eyes. I stopped, thinking maybe I could help, but I had about three seconds before the C-4 blew. Nothing I could do but get the fuck out. I managed to get the door closed behind me

before it blew. I landed face down, ears ringing, as Zeus turned me over, I didn't hear, but I'm sure he said, "Fuck he's not dead!"

William sat quietly, remembering his brush with death from a man who wanted him dead, saying, "I know that kind of man. Never turn your back."

Ian shook his head in agreement, then stood and went into the bathroom. Ian finished his long soak, walking out of the restroom wearing only a pair of olive drab sweatpants. Seeing William sitting in bed, reading a book asked, "What are you reading?" William stopped for a second, replying, "The Bible."

Ian, surprised, asked, "Are you religious?" William closed the Bible and responded, "Not really, I like to read the Bible, reminds me of my Grandmother. She was real religious, always said, that every question can be answered if I just paid attention."

Ian climbed into bed after retrieving a bottle of rum from his duffle bag. Ian looked at William, saying, "Sounds like you were close to your grandmother. My grandmother was also a very

special person. She was a gypsy fortune teller called Madam Yoyo." William, interested, replied, "A fortune teller, like someone who tells you your future?"

Ian nodded in agreement, saying, "Yeah, sounds crazy, but I saw her give a lot of fortunes to people, and I'll be damned if she wasn't right 90 percent of the time. She even told me, 'A woman with hair on fire would knock on my door carrying a gift from god. She would become my soulmate for decades to come'. "Wow, a woman with hair on fire knocks at your door carrying a gift from god. And you believe this?" asked William. "Hell, not only do I believe it. I keep a fire extinguisher by my front door." Explained Ian as he drank his rum and crawled into bed.

## **Chapter 14**

### **September 3, 1969 – 5th Special Forces Forward Operating Post**

Ian stepped into the command quarters behind William, seeing the LT and the three Sergeants assigned to his team standing in front of a map posted on a chalkboard. The LT addressed everyone, saying loudly, “Good morning, everyone. We have been assigned a mission tonight to blow this bridge at map location H-29. This comes from the top, so there will be a lot of eyes on this one. The plan is for me, Casper, and our demolitions guy Trash to move in under cover

of darkness along the riverbed while Atlas, Apollo, and Doc take these guard posts as soon as the C-4 goes off." He pointed with his 8-inch bowie knife at the guard posts, drawing it onto the map in sharpie.

Continuing, he said, "Me, Casper, and Trash will move under the bridge at 0100 hours. That should allow us around 3 hours to set the charges. After we set Charges, we will make our way up and into the village here, taking cover where we can. We can expect around 8 to 10 guards at these two towers and about 15 to 20 guards at the entrance to the bridge. We leave at 1800 hours."

Everyone filed out of the command quarters and returned to their tents to try and get some sleep before they went on the mission. Ian sat, cleaning his rifle. He knew he would need it and didn't want it to fail. When he finished, he laid down and fell asleep.

It was a little after five when William woke Ian. He jumped up and dressed quickly, grabbing all his gear. Ian and William walked down the trail, meeting the other members of his team. Ian felt nervous this time; this would be his first mission

in which the enemy outnumbered them 4 to 1. He knew the key to completing the mission was to catch them by surprise, a task that cost many teams all their members. Too many things could go wrong, and he thought it was too simple a plan.

Everyone reached the clearing where the Huey was sitting waiting and piled on. Ian remembered the m-60 gunner sitting next to him. The Huey lifted off the ground, heading toward the bridge. Flying low again and bouncing off the treetops as they flew along. Ian knew because the Huey made so much noise, they would have to walk 23 miles before they even reached the bridge.

The part that Ian dreaded most, humping over twenty miles, carrying sixty pounds. After almost seven hours of walking, the team reached their destination. Everyone huddled to talk about the plan; in a low voice, the LT said, "We're here at rally point 1. Rally point 2 will be two clicks North of the bridge. Atlas, Apollo, and Doc will move North and take out the two guard posts. Trash, Casper, and I have the explosives and will wire the bridge. Now, we can't give an exact detonation time because we don't know how long this will

take, but we are shooting for 4 am at the latest. If you don't hear anything by then, Doc, Apollo, and Atlas will bypass the guard towers and move in to help us escape. Any questions?"

William, Ian, and the LT were lucky; they had only two guards at each end of the bridge, and all four were drinking and yelling at each other. Ian, William, and the LT had no trouble quietly moving under the bridge and placing the charges.

Just after 3 am, they completed wiring the bridge with sixty pounds of C-4. Ian, William, and the LT got together to synchronize their watches and start the detonation timer. Ten minutes later, everyone started the countdown timer on their watch and quietly moved out from under the bridge into the village.

They were moving along the side of a hut, trying to stay in the shadows, when an NVA soldier came around the hut only a few feet away, Ian opened the hut's door, and all three ran in to hide. Ian noticed a Vietnamese woman with a six-year-old daughter had woken up.

Ian could see the fear in the mother's eyes while the child was just waking up. Ian put his

finger to his mouth to indicate quiet. The mother immediately knew what Ian was trying to convey and didn't say anything. The child began to wake up, she looked to see three men in her home and started to scream, but before she could make a sound, the mother placed her hand over her daughter's mouth.

William and the LT looked down to see the mother quieting her daughter. Ian whispered, "We should get them out of here. Once the bridge blows and we start shooting, we're bound to get some bullets passing through this grass hut."

The LT turned to Ian, whispering, "No, we can't let her go. She might warn those VC." William responded, "We should let them go. They may be so scared that they might make some noise."

The LT turned and said, "I'll take care of this," pulling out his 8-inch bowie knife and bending down towards the woman and child. William could see the fear in her eyes. He thought back to the fear on Mary's face that fateful day.

William grabbed The LT on his shoulders to pull him back when the LT turned and buried the



knife about four inches into his left shoulder. Ian was shocked to see this happening. He grabbed the LT and tried to place him in a choke hold, but the LT expected Ian to step in and quickly turned to face Ian. They began to fight over the knife. William, feeling helpless, tried to place The LT in a headlock using his working right hand. But only managed to knock everyone to the ground.

Everyone went still; William stood, and Ian pushed the body of the LT off of him. The LT's knife was sticking out his neck. They quickly got the woman and child out, hoping they would not say anything, as they passed the VC soldiers.

Passing the group of eleven VC soldiers and one officer, the VC Officer grabbed the woman by the arm, pulling her into the barracks, while one of the soldiers grabbed the child. The bridge was set to blow in two more minutes. Ian took the six soldiers to the right, while William took the five to the left.

The bridge blew on time, knocking most of the VC off their feet. Ian and William ran out, killing 8, until William realized he could not reload because of his shoulder. Suddenly, the VC officer

ran out of the barracks, holding a pistol and wearing what looked like a diaper; he was surprised to see William trying to reload. The officer smiled and slowly raised his pistol.

William thought, "This is it, I am going to die," when suddenly, the officer's head exploded in a red mist. The Officer's body fell, only to reveal a nude woman holding a dead soldier's rifle. She threw the rifle down, grabbed her daughter, and left.

Ian got down to one knee, reloaded, and managed to kill the last three soldiers, but not before one of them tossed a hand grenade five feet from where Ian was kneeling. Ian stood, trying to distance himself from the grenade.

The grenade went off, throwing Ian 15 feet in the air. He landed on a boulder, breaking his right shoulder. William ran over and helped Ian to his feet. As they ran down the dirt road, Doc came out of the bushes, grabbed Ian and William, and helped them to a waiting truck.

## **Chapter 15**

### **April 1, 1970 – Atlanta, Georgia**

Sergeant Frank Brooks sat at his desk, reviewing the incident logs, before he submitted them to records. As Frank stood to leave, he was confronted by Captain Foster. Frank could see the concern in his face as he said, "Sergeant, can we talk in my office?"

Frank followed him into his office, wondering what this could be about. Frank sat as the Captain spoke, "Sergeant, I asked you in here to see if you can do me a favor. I got a call from the Department of Defense a few days ago. They were

calling to let us know a Medal of Honor recipient from here was just discharged and would arrive home in a few days."

The Captain sat down behind his desk and continued, "The reason DOD called to inform us about the Sergeant is that we have a policy to meet all our heroes coming home at the airport." The Captain picked up a note from his desk and said, "I made this note and forgot it. Can you meet him at the airport and take him and his family for steak and lobster? This will cover my ass from the big brass." The Captain handed Frank a note and credit card with all the information needed to meet the Sergeant.

Frank reviewed the note as he got into his patrol car." Sergeant William Stone, 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces, Medal of Honor, Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts. Arriving 0900 at Georgia International, gate 14."

Frank recognized that name and wondered, "Did I know this, Sergeant? Did we go to school together?" Then he remembered where he first heard the name William Stone. Could it be? Why would he return here? Frank checked his watch; it

was 0820. He knew if he was going to make it on time, he would have to use the lights and sirens.

It was 0900 as Frank skidded to a stop in a handicapped parking space. Frank hopped out and began to run to gate 14. He arrived just as the plane was debarking. Frank couldn't see the people debarking because of the people in front of him.

Then he saw it, a green beret in the crowd. Frank moved people to be where he would meet the soldier at the end of the walkway.

William was walking, looking down, when he almost ran into a State Trooper. Shocked, he looked up to see a familiar face. William knew it was Frank and was just doing his job. Sadly, William raised both hands waist high, expecting handcuffs.

Frank reached out and grabbed William's right hand, shaking it, saying, "Welcome home, Sergeant Stone." Stunned by this, William asked, "You mean you are not here." Frank interrupted William mid-sentence, saying, "Here to offer you a job. That's a good guess because that's exactly why I am here!"

Frank released his hand, putting his arm around his shoulder and guiding him to his patrol car, and said, "So what do you say, would you like to work for the Georgia State Troopers?"

When they arrived at the State Trooper car, parked taking two handicapped parking spots, Frank opened the front passenger door, and William climbed in. Frank went around and climbed behind the wheel.

William looked at Frank worriedly, saying, "What about..." and again Frank cut him short, saying, "Joseph Simms? It turns out some of Joseph's clothes and wallet were found all torn and bloodied in Louisiana. They figured he was trying to escape through the swamp and was killed by an alligator. The case was closed. Joseph Simms was killed and eaten by an alligator."

William stared forward, thinking, then spoke up, "I never got the chance to say thank you, I want to say thank you now, but I really think I might bring you down with me if I were ever to be exposed. I could not do that to you."

Frank sat momentarily thinking, then responded, "William, the safest place for you is in

plain sight with the State Troopers. You already have the most qualifications I have ever seen. Medal of Honor, Silver Star, Two Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts."

Frank turned right out of the Airport and onto the highway. Frank continued, "I have this good friend who actually runs the State Troopers Academy in Georgia and likes hiring Purple Heart recipients. I will give him a call and get you an in." William sat quietly, then said, "You maybe right, in plain site. If you can get me in, then sure, I will do it." Frank smiled, saying, "I think their next class starts in just a few weeks."

As Frank pulled onto the gravel driveway past the guest house to the main house, Frank said, "Well, we are home." William looked and knew they were parked in front of his mother's house. He said, "It will be nice to see your mom, Shirley, again."

Frank sadly spoke, "My mom passed a few years ago, I moved into the main house, and no one lives in the guest house. I was thinking you could move into the guest house. The property is

paid for, so I wouldn't need any rent. You can make it up to me by helping with yardwork."

William looked at the guest house, then at Frank, and said, "Sorry to hear about Shirley. If you are sure about the guest house, then yes, I would like to live here, and thank you again."

Frank reached into his pocket and pulled out a credit card, saying, "Oh yeah, I almost forgot. I have orders to buy you a steak and lobster dinner!"



## **Chapter 16**

### **October 13, 1970 – Augusta, Georgia**

Emma Sanchez and her son, 11-year-old Roberto, drove down the highway in their blue 1961 station wagon. Emma and Roberto were seasonal workers from Mexico. They had just finished working a North Carolina blueberry field and were on their way to work the cotton fields in Georgia.

It was just after 1 pm when Emma crossed over into Georgia. Emma, a very attractive 33-year-old Hispanic woman, asked her son in perfect English, “You hungry meho.” Emma was an

English teacher in Mexico when not working in the fields in America.

James McConnell drove at a high rate of speed directly toward an elementary school crosswalk. Taking his eyes off the road to take a swig from the quart bottle of rum. As he lowered it from his face, he realized that 3 kids and their mother were in the crosswalk.

James slammed on brakes, skidding to a stop. The mother and all 3 kids jumped to avoid the red truck. The mother who had fallen stood and yelled, "Slow down, you fucken moron!" James yelled back through the window, "Fuck you bitch!" Then threw the half bottle of rum at the woman and the kids.

The bottle crashed at their feet, scaring the woman, who grabbed her children and hurried out of the crosswalk. James watching the woman get her children to the sidewalk, said under his breath, "Shit, now I need another bottle." James floored the accelerator, spinning the tires as he passed the crosswalk.

Emma saw a convenience store and pulled into the parking lot. Emma noticed the position of

the lights in the Parking lot and felt that when the lights were on, it would be a well-lit place to park for the night.

She asked Roberto, "What do you want to eat?" Roberto looked back and said, "I think I will try a burrito and coke." Emma got out of the station wagon and entered the store. As Emma entered the store, she noticed a very dirty man in his 30s rifling through the alcohol section.

Emma grabbed two burritos from the warming section, then grabbed two cokes and got in line at the checkout. The dirty man, who had been rifling through the alcohol section, stepped in behind her in line.

The woman running the register punched in Emma's food and then asked, "Will that be all?" Emma replied, "Yes, but I was wondering if it would be alright if I could park here overnight? The lighting looks really good?" The dirty man standing behind listened intently to Emma. "No problem," responded the woman as she returned the change from a five- dollar bill.

It was almost midnight as James finished the last drops of his bottle of rum. Holding the empty

bottle up, seeing that he had no more to drink, he yelled, "I need some pussy!" Tossing the empty bottle out of the truck. James started the truck and returned to the convenience store, hoping to find the attractive Mexican woman.

Emma and Roberto were still parked under a light at the store. Emma stretched out in the front seat while Roberto slept in the backseat. Emma woke as the front door of the station wagon started to open.

A man holding a 3-inch pocketknife climbed in on top of Emma, sticking the knife into her throat. Despite being stabbed in the throat, Emma stayed quiet, worried what would happen to her son if he woke up. "Don't make any noise!" Whispered the man as he assaulted Emma. The man began thrusting, holding Emma by the neck.

As he finished, he let out a loud yell, waking Roberto. Hearing the noise, Roberto sat up, seeing the silhouette of a man in the front seat, holding his mother down. Roberto yelled, "Hey, who are you?"

The man, hearing Roberto, jumped over the seat and began to stab Roberto in the chest.

Roberto noticed a small scar on his right wrist in the shape of a football as his right arm entered the shaft of light from the streetlight.

A man walking his dog heard Roberto yelling. The man had to hold his dog as it barked and tried to break free. James heard the dog barking and saw a man standing with a dog on the street.

After stabbing Roberto nine times, the man opened the rear car door and ran off into the woods. The man with the dog saw a State Trooper's car stop at a red light.

On his first day patrolling alone, Officer William Stone slowed for the red light. The sound of someone yelling drew his attention. Across the street was a man pointing to a station wagon parked in a parking lot under a light.

He knew something was wrong; he turned on his flashing patrol car lights and floored his accelerator. He stopped beside the station wagon with the rear door wide open, seeing a woman in the front seat and a child in the back. He saw the boy moving and checked the woman.

Finding the woman dead, he moved to the young boy. He saw that the boy had been stabbed

several times and bleeding badly. William knew this boy did not have time to wait for an ambulance, so he grabbed the boy, placed him in his patrol car, and drove to the nearest hospital as fast as possible. In front of the emergency, William skidded to a stop, lights and sirens blaring, picked up the boy, and ran in.

William woke from a light sleep, sitting in a chair beside the ICU hospital bed. The doctor entered the room as William moved closer to the young boy and the doctor, saying, "How is he doing, Doctor?" The doctor looked up at William and replied, "The next 72 hours will be the most critical. He has 9 stab wounds, one punctured lung, and the blood loss has put him in a coma. All we can do now is wait."

Just as the doctor left, Officer Frank Brooks walked in, holding a brown paper bag. Frank put his arm on William's shoulder, saying, "I just heard. How is he?" William sadly looked at Frank, saying, "The doctor said it will take some time." Frank handed William the brown paper bag and said, "I brought some clean clothes, and as far as time, take as much time as you need."



## **Chapter 17**

### **July 21, 1979 – Georgia**

Roberto awakened to a knock on his bedroom door. William yelled at the door, "Rob, you awake?" Roberto pulled his blanket off, yelling back, "I'm up, Dad!" Sure, that he was awake, William yelled back at the door, "I'm heading off to work now. Don't forget to fill the car with gas; see you when you get home from school!"

Roberto climbed out of bed and opened a black curtain near his bed. He removed the photos he had taken the day before and developed them in his bedroom's makeshift photo lab.



Roberto was in his first year of photography at Georgia State University. He quickly showered and dressed. Photography was Roberto's passion since His uncle Frank had bought him a new high-speed Nikon camera with 10 to 1 zoom lenses. Picking up the keys and backpack on his way out the back door, Roberto climbed into a white 75 Chevy Nova.

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The sun was just breaking over the mountains when Major Jones parked his patrol car, using the handicapped parking space, at McConnell's Christian Church. A State Orphanage van pulled in next to him. Major Jones climbed out of his patrol car, waving at his cousins JJ and Jack McConnell sitting in the van.

Major Jones approached JJ McConnell as he exited the van, saying, "I hope this is important!" JJ responded, "I think so, but I wanted to run it by everyone." JJ opened the front Church door as everyone entered, walking through the Church, out the back, and into the Mortuary office. James and Father McConnell were already waiting for everyone to appear in the office.

JJ McConnell shut the door and then replied to everyone, "I called this meeting because we just got an offer of five million. Can we come up with a Lucy by tonight?" Major Jones stood from the couch, saying, "Tonight? We can't do this without a complete background check, and it's just stupid to risk it on such short notice!"

JJ looked at him, agreeing, "I agree it is a risk. That is why I suggest that if we go forward with this, we use the Decoy method at the airport. We wait for a mark and follow her until we can use the Decoy in private, with no witnesses."

Major Jones looked down and said, "Well, five million, are you sure we can collect if we do this?" JJ walked up, reassuring Major Jones, "Yes, this is a client we have done a lot of business with before!" John McConnell stood from behind his desk, saying, "One night, five million. I think it's worth the risk as long as we are cautious."

Major Jones asked JJ, "What is my role?" JJ explained, "You are going to move all officers to a bomb threat at the bank." James will prep for a mark in the back forty; me and Jack will look for a Lucy and use the Decoy plan." John McConnell

moved from behind the desk, saying, "Good, I am supposed to have a meeting with the Brotherhood today, to pick up some cash for laundry." JJ asked everyone, "Does everyone know their part?"

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Just before 10 am, Private Investigator Sam Evans pulled into the parking lot of the diner in Palmetto, driving in a blue and white 68 Volkswagen bus. A bed and desk in the rear of the VW were doubling as a home and office.

Sam stepped out of the Volkswagen, attempting to wipe wrinkles from his white polyester suit. Grabbing his briefcase, he entered the diner, found a table, and sat down. Sam removed a map from his briefcase, with x's all over it.

"Good morning. What can I get for you?" asked a waitress. Looking at the menu, Sam ordered a cheeseburger and coke. The waitress turned to place the order when Sam said, "Excuse me, mam. Is there anyone that worked here 25 years ago?"

The waitress replied, "I think Carl, our manager was here then." Sam removed a badge

from his wallet, saying, "Can I speak with him?" The waitress quickly got Carl for the detective. Carl, puzzled, walked up and took a seat across from Sam, saying, "You want to talk with me, Officer?"

Sam spoke intently, "My name is Sam Evans. I am a private investigator. I am investigating a missing woman and infant child named Anna Carson and her baby Lisa about 25 years ago. This is a photo of her and her baby."

Sam pulled a photo out of his briefcase to show Carl. The manager studied the photo for almost a minute and, with a surprised look, responded, "I remember her. Alice helped her find a place to stay, something about a husband that she was leaving. I remember because I thought I would try to get to know her better, once she dumped the husband."

Sam, taking notes, asked, "Where can I find Alice?" The manager looked down and said, "Alice passed almost five years ago." Sam noted what he was saying, thinking I had finally found someone who might have met Anna, and she was dead.

Sam asked, "Do you know where she may have taken them to stay?" Carl thought momentarily and responded, "It was something like McDonald's house, I think." Sam finished taking notes, closed his briefcase, and said, "Thank you, Carl, you have been a great help." He handed him a business card and said, "If you think of anything, please call me." After shaking Sam's hand, Carl returned to work. Sam retrieved a map and drew a circle to show where the diner was located.

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JJ McConnell, wearing a business suit, tapped on the microphone taped to his chest and said, "Jack, if you hear me, OK to return to the office." Jack, wearing a Sergeant's uniform in the State Troopers, heard JJ on the microphone attached to his gun belt.

Jack entered the office while James stood, saying, "I better go and get the hole ready." JJ and Jack walked out of the Mortuary, into the church, and out the front, climbing into a Georgia State Trooper patrol car.

James climbed into the cab of a Caterpillar tractor. James started the Caterpillar and, using the bucket, began digging a hole. Halfway through the job, the caterpillar died. James pounded his fist angrily, knowing he had forgotten to get gas and had run out. James hopped off, grabbing two five-gallon gas cans attached to the tractor's rear and throwing them in the back of his 48 Ford Truck.

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Sitting in his photography class, Roberto glanced up to see that it was almost 2:20; five more minutes later, the class would end. The class instructor, placing photos from his desk into a briefcase, yelled as the time was getting short, "Remember today's assignment is photos of inanimate objects, a toaster, a couch. Try to catch the beauty of the purpose in your photos."

Then the bell rang, and everyone stood to leave. It was a short walk to the parking lot. Finding his Nova, he got in and left. Roberto remembered William asked him to get gas on his way home.

Roberto pulled into the first gas station he came to, pulling in behind a Red 1948 Ford Truck

with a man filling two five- gallon cans. Roberto could not keep his eyes off the old truck. He thought the truck would be a perfect photo for his class project.

He got out, walked up to the man filling the five-gallon cans, and asked, "Nice truck. Is that a 49 Ford?"

"No, it's a 48," replied the man. As Roberto watched the man as he filled the two five-gallon cans, he noticed a scar on the man's right wrist. Everything flashed back to that night when he was only 11 years old. He remembered the Arm with the scar, lit from the light of the parking lot. He remembered the scar on the right wrist of the man who stabbed him in the shape of a small football. Roberto felt a cold chill down his spine. Moving quickly, Roberto filled his Nova with gas, then followed the Red 48 Ford Truck onto the road.

\*\*\*

Sam Evans parked his VW bus near the front of the Georgia State Troopers building. Checking his watch, it was 3:45 he hoped someone would meet him, and he would not have to wait until tomorrow.

Sam walked up to the officer sitting behind the reception desk and asked, "Can I speak to the Officer in charge?" Noticing Sam's unshaven face and wrinkled suit, the Officer thought Major Jones would be pissed if he were to bother him for this guy.

The Officer asked, "Can I ask what this is about?"

Sam replied, "I am a Private Investigator looking into the disappearance of a young mother and child." Sam omitted that the case was 25 years old.

The Officer picked up the phone and said, "Sir, there is a Private Detective here to speak with you." Major Jones stood and walked out his door to meet the detective. He reached out to shake Sam's hand, saying, "I am Major Jones. Please come into my office."

Major Jones closed the door, saying, "Please have a seat." Sam sat down and said, "My name is Sam Evans, I am a retired Police Detective from North Carolina. I now do some P.I. work, which is kind of a hobby. I am working on this missing girl case. It was a young girl named Anna Carson



and her infant child. The problem is she went missing in 1955." Major Jones felt relief and said, "That was 25 years ago. How do you expect to find anything?"

Sam replied, "I agree that 25 years is too far back for a legitimate case. But I am on this case as a favor to an old friend. He's the father of the victim and has been diagnosed with a terminal case of cancer.

He asked if I would take one last look into the case before," Sam went quiet, sure his message was received. Major Jones thought, this guy is wasting my time, and I have a lot going on right now.

Sam continued, "Anna was in an abusive relationship. Her husband, a soldier at Ft Hood then, was out of the country." Major Jones interrupted Sam, saying, "I'm sorry, I don't know how I can help you!"

Sam continued, "Well, I started at Ft Hood and followed a path I thought she may have taken if she was trying to get home. I have stopped at every hotel, motel, gas station, and diner for four

months now. I was hoping someone might have seen her."

Major Jones interrupted, saying, "Sounds like a snipe hunt."

Sam nodded in agreement, saying, "Yes, that is what I thought as well, but today I may have gotten a lead. A manager in a local diner actually believes he saw her and her baby."

At this point, Major Jones was getting angry, interrupting again, "Mr. Evans, I am very busy right now. Do you have anything solid?"

Sam continued, "Well, as I was saying, the manager thought Anna and her baby stayed at the diner until the previous manager found her a women's shelter." Major Jones could feel a chill go down his spine.

Major Jones asked, "Did you speak to the previous manager?" Sam replied, "No, she passed a few years back." Major Jones began to sweat, saying, "Unfortunately, the manager passed. She might have been able to tell you where she took her."

Sam reached into his jacket and removed a notebook, saying, "The manager did remember

where." Looking at his notes, he continued, "He thought it was something like McDonald's house." Major Jones felt paralyzed listening. Sam continued, "I just came from city hall. I checked all the records for a women's shelter that sounded like McDonald's. The only thing close was McConnell's Church and Women with Children shelter."

Major Jones's blood pressure rose, causing small veins in his neck to vibrate. Wondering if he had told anyone, Major Jones asked, "Have you told your client or the FBI?" Sam responded, "No, I don't want to cry wolf and look like a fool."

Major Jones felt relieved, saying, "What do you need from me?" Sam replied, "I was hoping I could get one of your Officers to go with me to the shelter. I find people are more likely to go through old records with an Officer. Plus, you never know."

Major Jones thought of all days why now, thinking quickly, he said, "We have had a few bomb threats, I can't spare anyone now, but I'm off now. I'd be happy to go with you."

\*\*\*

Roberto followed the truck, keeping at least 50 yards between them. After almost an hour, the truck turned right into a church. The truck stopped alongside the church in front of a large iron gate.

The driver got out, unlocked the gate, and drove through, locking the gate behind him. Roberto parked on the other side of the Church in front of a 10-foot brick wall. He hopped out of the Nova and grabbed his backpack containing his camera.

Roberto could see the only way to get back to where the truck had gone was to go through the church and hopefully out a back door. Roberto entered the church. Luckily, it was empty. He found the rear door and exited.

Going around the building in the back, he was amazed to see the glass in front of a Mortuary. Quickly, Roberto ran across the gravel road and hid in the bushes. Roberto pulled his camera from his backpack and started taking photos. He walked about 1 mile through the bushes until he saw the red truck. He saw the man operating a caterpillar, digging a grave. He continued taking photos.

\*\*\*

A State Trooper Patrol car followed by a VW bus pulled onto the parking lot of McConnell's Church. The Patrol Car parked in front, while the VW parked next to a white nova on the side of the Church.

Major Jones and Sam Evans entered the Church, looking for someone to talk to. After finding nobody to speak with, they left through the rear to continue their search. They walked to the gravel road to find themselves in front of McConnell's Mortuary.

Sam stared at the display of coffins in the windows. Not seeing anyone, Sam tried to open the door, only to find it locked. Feeling he may have to return, turned for one last look.

That is when he saw a red truck in the distance. Pointing at the truck in the distance, Sam said, "Hey, there is someone. Maybe he can help." The Major cursed under his breath as he followed Sam to the red truck.

\*\*\*

Roberto was snapping photos of the man driving the red truck when he noticed two men,

one a man wearing a white suit, the other a Police Officer. Roberto turned his camera to the men. As soon as they were close enough, Major Jones started to wave and call to get the attention of the man operating the caterpillar.

James, seeing the Major with a man in a white suit, turned off the tractor, wondering why his cousin was there with a strange man. James stepped down from the tractor and said, "Can I help you?"

Major Jones extended his hand and shook James's hand, saying, "Hello, Sir, I am Major Jones, and this is Sam Evans. He is a Private Detective investigating a missing woman and child." James, confused, asked, "What can I do to help?" Roberto wondered what the men were discussing as he snapped photos.

Sam stepped in, saying, "I was wondering if I could review your records. The woman and child may have stayed here." Major Jones interrupted, saying, "It's a 25-year-old case. Did you work here then?"

James gave the Major a confused look and said, "Yeah, my dad owns this place." Feeling

good about hearing the man was here 25 years ago, Sam said, "Maybe you might be able to identify a photo?"

Sam reached into his pocket and retrieved a 25-year-old photo of Anna. James smiled at the photo, saying, "Is this a joke? This is my wife. Do you want to see a picture of her? I have one in my truck?"

Sam smiled in amazement, saying, "Yes, please." James went to his truck and looked in the glove box. Sam turned to Major Jones, saying, "I don't believe it, but if she." Sam quit talking as he was shot in the head by a German Luger.

\*\*\*

Roberto almost fell in horror at what he just witnessed. All he could think was that he had to get home and develop his photos of the terrible scene. Roberto figured his dad needed to see the photos. He would know what to do as he continued to shoot more photos.

Major Jones wiped the brain matter from his face and got down to one knee to retrieve Sam's keys. He threw the keys to James, who was kicking Sam into the hole. Major Jones looked at James

and said, "Quick thinking, I wasn't expecting that. He has a blue and white VW bus in the Church parking. Move it to the back of the property and bury it deep."

James and the Major climbed into the red 48 Ford truck. They drove to the gate, unlocked it, and drove through.

It was only a minute before Roberto saw a blue and white VW bus drive onto the gravel road. He kept snapping photos until the VW was out of site.

Roberto ran back to the Church, quickly entered through the back of the church, and ran to the front door. As Roberto exited the Church, he ran into a priest carrying a large black gym bag. The priest's 2-in gold cross with a black onyx inlay bounced off his head.

The collision almost knocked Roberto over if not for the quick reactions of the priest, grabbing Roberto and saying, "Whoa! What's the hurry?" Roberto looked at the priest and ran past.

John McConnell, wearing a black suit, white collar, and gold cross with a black onyx inlay hanging from a gold chain around his neck,



watched as the young boy hopped into a white Nova and raced out of the parking lot. Father McConnell couldn't help but notice the Georgia State Bulldogs bumper sticker.

Father McConnell threw the black gym over his shoulder and walked to his office in the Mortuary. Father McConnell laid the gym bag on the couch, containing one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. The money he received from a meeting with the Klan, then had his sister, Jane Jones, launder the money to crisp new one-hundred-dollar bills. Father McConnell kept wondering who the kid with the backpack was and why he was running.

Roberto skidded to a stop before the guest house, jumped out, and ran into the makeshift dark room. Roberto knew his dad would know what to do.

\*\*\*

JJ checked his watch, and it was almost 7 pm. JJ thought it was almost dark, with less chance of being seen. Jack stopped the State Trooper Patrol car near the elevators and let JJ out.

As he exited the vehicle, he looked at Jack and said, "Remember, this is one-way communication, I can't hear you, so if you don't hear from me for ten minutes, something is wrong. Come and get me."

JJ turned and pushed the elevator button. When the door opened, he stepped in, and Jack drove away. JJ, alone in the elevator, spoke into his chest, "Jack, just testing my microphone, getting off on the fourth floor."

The elevator opened, and JJ walked out. Jack drove circles around every level, mentally noting possible witnesses. JJ roamed the airport, watching the incoming gates.

He scanned the arrival gates, looking for a mark that would fit all their needs. Sitting and acting like he was reading a newspaper, he noticed a redhead pushing a stroller. He was disappointed to see the woman accompanied by a man at the departure gate.

He didn't have much hope that this would be their "Lucy." JJ spoke just loud enough for Jack to hear, "There is a Lucy in sight, maybe departing, moving closer to see."

JJ moved within hearing range of the man and woman. The man said, "You know Sean loved you. My brother told me many times I'm going to miss him." The woman responded, "Thank you, Gavin. I'm glad you were able to get here for the funeral. Have a safe trip back to Ireland."

JJ realized the woman wasn't going on the flight with the Man. JJ heard over the loudspeaker, "Now boarding flight 223 to Ireland at gate 13."

He watched as the woman hugged the man, turned, and headed to the elevator. JJ followed, saying to his chest, "Possible, Lucy, moving to the east elevator on the fourth floor." Jack quickly started the Patrol Car.

Arriving at the elevator, the woman pressed the down button. JJ wanted to be sure he had a Lucy, so he stepped up to the woman and said loudly, "Going down? Me too." Jack immediately put the Patrol Car in drive, driving to the lower level.

The elevator door opened, and the woman pushed her stroller in, followed by JJ. He quickly turned to the button panel, speaking loudly, "What floor, mam?" The woman responded, "Two

please, thank you!" JJ pushed the number two, saying loudly, "Two, I'm getting off on two also."

The woman smiled and stood quietly. JJ, just to be sure, bent down over the stroller, saying, "What a beautiful little redheaded baby." Sensing something was not right about the man in the suit, the woman just smiled.

The elevator doors opened, and she pushed the stroller out, followed by JJ. Jack drove down to the second floor of the parking garage and quickly began to look for any possible witnesses. JJ turned right while the woman turned left. As the woman reached her car, a Georgia State Trooper Patrol Car turned on its overhead lights. The woman stopped and looked at the Patrol Car, wondering what was happening.

JJ knew that if Jack turned on the overhead lights, he didn't see any possible witnesses. Jack turned off the overhead lights and stepped out. The woman, realizing the Officer wanted to speak to her, said, "Is there something wrong, officer?"

Jack stepped up to the woman and said, "Sorry, mam, but we have a missing child report. Do you mind if I look at your child?"

The woman replied, "Sure." As Jack bent down, the woman's mouth was covered with a rag soaked in chloroform. Jack immediately opened the rear door and stuffed the unconscious woman in; JJ Hopped in as Jack handed him a baby wrapped in a pink blanket.

\*\*\*

When the phone rang, Major Jones had just gotten out of the shower. He moved quickly, answering, "Hello." John McConnell replied, "Hello, Conner, I was just talking to James. He was saying something about helping you, is that true?"

Conner smiled and said, "Yeah, you would be proud of James today, thinking on his feet." John, pissed, yelled, "Fuck, we may have a witness. I bumped into a Mexican boy running out of the church today!"

Conner thought and then said, "If he saw anything, wouldn't you be swarming with law enforcement? And besides, we were a mile outback." John replied, "Nonetheless, we need to deal with any possible witnesses. I think I saw him get into a White Nova, a 75. It had a Georgia State

Bulldog bumper sticker. He was Mexican, about 18. Could you see if you can locate him? Then we will deal with it."

Conner sat down the pen he was using to make notes and said, "Got it. I will make some calls, see if we can't locate this boy!" John slammed the phone down, yelling, "Fuck!"

\*\*\*

Roberto and William stared at the photos hanging on a string in his makeshift dark room. William pulled them down when they were ready and spread them out on the kitchen table.

William was shocked to recognize a Major in the Troopers standing next to the man in a white suit. The photos showed the man working at the grave site, executing the man in the white suit.

William turned to Roberto, asking, "The preacher saw you there?" Roberto replied, "I ran into him when I ran out of the church. He looked me right in the face!"

William sat at the kitchen table and stared at the photos. Thinking for a few minutes, William looked at Roberto and said, "We don't know how

many State Troopers could be involved. The only person we can trust is Frank."

Roberto nodded in agreement. William continued, "They are probably looking for you right now. What I was thinking is, I can go there and arrest the killer, bring him back here until Frank gets home. He will know what to do."

Roberto looked at William and said, "Let's go then." William replied, "No, I need you to make sure to show Frank these photos as soon as he gets home!"

With a look of disappointment, Roberto replied, "OK, Dad, be careful, this guy is a cold-blooded killer!" To look less suspicious, William took the Nova.

William drove slowly past the church. Only the Church lights were on. William drove past about a half mile and pulled over.

William hopped out, ran to a tree, climbed over a branch hanging over a ten-foot brick wall, and dropped down. William started moving cautiously along the brick wall. Arriving in front of the Mortuary, William hid behind a bush.

He could not believe it; the killer had just walked out of the Mortuary and ran over to unlock the gate. William was shocked to see a State Trooper Patrol Car pull into the gravel driveway.

The killer locked the gate as the Patrol Car Parked. William couldn't believe his eyes when he saw that the driver was a Sergeant and not the Major from the photos. William thought about how many officers were involved in this. He was glad they were waiting for Frank.

He turned and started to return home when a flash caught his eye. It reflected off a gold cross worn by a priest who walked out of the Mortuary. The priest greeted the passenger dressed in a suit and grabbed what appeared to be a baby wrapped in a pink blanket from him.

The Sergeant got in the Patrol Car and pulled a red-headed woman from the back seat; the killer ran to help the Sergeant.

Together, they dragged the red-headed woman to a truck and pushed her into the bed.

William feared for the woman when the killer got into the driver's seat and drove away down the gravel road. William knew the woman was in



danger and began to run alongside the gravel road, following the truck.

Father McConnell placed the baby in the pink blanket next to the black gym bag on the couch. JJ gave the baby formula with some sedatives just to make her sleep the next eight hours for the trip.

William was out of breath as he slowly approached the truck's rear. The driver's door was open, and tailgate down. William saw the killer dragging the woman to a grave site.

James stopped and let the woman drop to the ground. As the woman attempted to struggle, James went to his knees and tore the woman's dress. The woman was just coming out of her drugged state.

She saw the shadow of a man come up behind James as he unbuckled his pants and unzipped them. William grabbed James and twisted his neck, breaking it. James's body fell to the side of the woman and into the grave, landing on the body of a man dressed in a white suit.

The woman screamed. William quickly said, "It's ok. I'm here to help." William helped the woman to her feet, and she mumbled, "My baby!"

William helped the woman as they headed back to the mortuary.

Father McConnell turned to Jack and said, "What's taking James so long." Jack jumped up, saying, "I'll take Patrol Car and check."

William and the woman ducked behind a bush as the Patrol Car sped past. William and the woman reached the Mortuary when the lights of the returning Patrol Car skidded to a stop in front of the mortuary.

The officer jumped out and ran into the building. Suddenly, the door slammed open. William watched in amazement as the priest, the man in the suit carrying a shotgun, and the trooper climbed into the Patrol Car and sped away.

William realized they didn't bring the baby with them. He knew he had a small window to find the baby and still get out. Helping the woman, they crossed the gravel road to the door of the Mortuary. Telling the woman to wait by the door, pulling his .38 revolver out, he entered cautiously. Seeing the office, he entered to find the baby wrapped in a pink blanket on a couch next to a large black gym bag.

Thinking quickly, William grabbed the baby, unzipped the black gym bag, and placed the baby, wrapped in the pink blanket, into the gym bag. After zipping it just enough to leave her face exposed. Then, he threw the strap over his shoulder and ran to meet the woman.

Putting his right arm over the woman's shoulder to help her walk. They ran to the church, through the front, and to the Nova parked up the road.

Father McConnell yelled at JJ and Jack, "Everyone back to the office!" Everyone climbed into the Patrol Car, and Jack drove back, skidding to a stop. JJ, Jack, and Father McConnell ran back into the office to find the baby and the money gone.

Father McConnell ran out of the office and through the church onto the main road. Looking east then west, he saw a Nova turn on its lights and pull out onto the main road.

\*\*\*

William drove onto the gravel driveway in front of the guest house and stopped. The woman

was surprised to see a young man run out. William assured her that it was only his son Roberto.

They all entered the guest house through the front door, past the fireplace, and into William's bedroom. Pulling the sheets back, William placed the woman into the bed and the baby on the bed next to her in the gym bag. He pulled the blankets up and grabbed Roberto, saying, "I think she was drugged. Let her sleep." William hung his gun and belt on the hook in the closet.

\*\*\*

Major Jones was just getting into bed when the phone rang. Irritated, he answered, "Major Jones." Father McConnell responded, "The motherfucker killed James, then took the baby and the KKK's money."

The Major replied, "Slow down, what are you talking about?" Father McConnell spoke slower, "The Fucken kid with the white Nova, we have to find him now!" Major Jones answered, "I will make some calls. Give me a few hours, and I will call you if I find anything." Father McConnell sighed, saying, "We are fucked if we can't find the kid ASAP!"

\*\*\*

William turned and walked out of the room, going to look at the photos in the briefcase on the kitchen table. Roberto followed, saying, "Who is the woman and baby?"

William paused, saying, "They got to the church when I got there. I had to kill the guy in the photos, the one who shot the man in the white suit, to save the woman.

I saw them when they arrived. They were with a priest and a Sergeant from the State Troopers. This may involve the FBI and, for sure, more State Troopers. We need to be careful and wait for Frank to get home, I'm sure he would know who to trust."

\*\*\*

The phone rang, startling Jack and JJ, who were sleeping on the couch. Father McConnell answered, "Conner?" Major Jones answered, "Yeah, I got it. Do you have a pen?" Father McConnell impatiently said, "What the fuck Conner, I'm not an idiot. Just tell me already!"

Major Jones picked up a paper and started reading, "His name is Roberto Stone, and he lives

at 423 Brooks in Macon. He is 18 and goes to Georgia State. That's all I got so far." Father McConnell finished writing and said, "That should be good, just keep on top of this. I will call if I have any problems. It's just a boy, so we shouldn't have any problems. Thanks, Conner I will call after we get this problem solved!"

He hung up the phone then turned to JJ and Jack, saying, "Mount up, we got one fucken kid to deal with!" JJ grabbed the shotgun, Jack checked the 38 revolver in his gun belt, and Father McConnell grabbed his German luger. They got into the truck, JJ sat in the bed while Jack drove.

\*\*\*

William and Roberto sat at the kitchen table, waiting for Frank and trying to figure out what to say when he got home. William looked at Roberto and said, "I don't think it's safe for the woman and the baby to be here."

Roberto sat quietly and listened as William continued, "I decided to call Ian, an old buddy from Nam. I can trust him, and I know he will be able to keep them safe."

\*\*\*

The red truck came to a stop on the main road. Jack yelled, "We're here, 423 Brooks." JJ grabbed the shotgun and jumped over the side of the truck while Jack and Father McConnell got out.

They headed towards the address on the sign. Father McConnell reminded Jack and JJ, "If anyone is in with the boy, kill them, but we need the boy to tell us what he did with the money and the baby. After we recover the money and the baby, we'll kill him." JJ and Jack nodded in agreement.

\*\*\*

William stood from the table and walked over to the phone on the wall. Using the Rolodex by the phone, he located Ian's number and began dialing. Dialing Ian's number. William waited while he was connected. Hearing "Hello."

William said, "Trash, it's me, Casper. Sorry to call so late, but I need some help!" Ian replied, half awake, "Anything, brother, what do you need?"

Roberto heard the woman getting out of bed and ran over, knocking gently on the door. He heard, "Yes, it's ok, I'm dressed." Roberto slowly opened the door.

Still talking with Ian, William replied, "I have a situation here, and you and Frank are the only people I can trust right now."

Ian, awake now, responded, "What's going on, William?" William finally found a pen and paper and said, "I can't explain because I don't know what's happening. I had to kill this guy to save this woman and baby. Look, I really don't know what is happening. The reason I am calling is because I need you to protect this woman and her baby until I speak to Frank and figure out what the hell is happening. You can't involve the FBI or law enforcement until you hear from me or Frank."

\*\*\*

JJ and Jack hid behind the bush, with Father McConnell watching the guest house. They decided to enter through the back door, shoot anything that moved, grab the boy, and find out where the money and the baby were. They moved quietly through the brush until they reached the back door of the guest house.

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William finished writing Ian's name, address, and phone number on a pad of paper, saying,



"Thanks, I knew I could depend on you. Remember, don't tell anyone, I don't know how deep this is, Frank will call when we figure out what's going on."

Ian responded, "No problem, William. I will take care of the woman and the baby as if my life depended on it." William, happy to speak with an old friend, said, "Thanks, Ian. I'm sending her now. Thanks, brother." William hung up the phone, tore the sheet of paper off the pad, and grabbed the car keys to the Nova.

\*\*\*

JJ kicked the back door open and ran in. William was surprised and ran towards JJ, just as JJ shot him in the chest, knocking William back into the wall below the phone.

Roberto and the woman were standing by the bedroom closet when Roberto heard a shotgun blast. Immediately, Roberto grabbed the woman and pushed her into the closet, running out of the room and into a priest, who stuck a luger into his throat, pushing him back against the wall.

Father McConnell then stuck the luger in his waistband, grabbing Roberto by the throat with

both hands, saying, "Where's the money and the baby?"

Roberto could not breathe or speak. Father McConnell yelled to Jack, "Look in the bedroom." Jack ran into the bedroom and found the money with the baby on the bed.

The woman watched through a crack in the closet door in horror. She was surprised when she saw the same State Trooper enter that approached her at the airport.

He then checked on her baby, who was still in the gym bag on the bed. The Sergeant turned and headed out of the room.

The woman saw William's 38 service revolver hanging from a hook. Jack reached the doorway and yelled, "It's here, the money and the baby!"

Suddenly, Jack's head exploded in a mist of red spray. Father McConnell, hearing a shot, loosened his grip on Roberto's throat and looked over at Jack as his body started to fall.

Seeing his opportunity, Roberto pushed his body off the wall, forcing Father McConnell to start falling backward. Roberto pushed as Father

McConnell fell back, trying to maintain his balance.

When Roberto saw the fireplace behind the priest, he pushed as hard as he could, causing them both to fall onto the fireplace. Father McConnell's head made a loud crack and split open like a melon.

JJ saw his father hit the fireplace with the boy on top and pulled the trigger. The shotgun blast hit Roberto in the throat. JJ was shocked to see a woman running at him, firing a 38. All five shots hit JJ in his face as the woman closed, and the gun started clicking with every continued pull of the trigger.

The woman looked at Roberto's lifeless body, then William, still coughing. She ran over to William and bent down, still holding the gun. William grabbed the gun from the woman, wiping her prints from the gun with his bloody shirt. Holding his right hand up, William handed the woman car keys wrapped in a bloody piece of paper, saying, "Save your baby!" The woman ran into the bedroom, grabbed the gym bag containing her baby, and ran out.

\*\*\*

Frank was almost home. It had been a long night, and he was tired. As he got ready to turn left into his gravel driveway, He saw a white Nova fly out from his driveway. The car turned right, losing control. Frank thought it might hit him head-on. He swerved right to avoid a head-on collision.

As the car sped past him, he could see a red-headed woman with big blue eyes wide open, a scared look as she stared at Frank as she passed. Frank started to turn around but thought maybe Roberto or William were hurt. Frank turned left and drove to the guest house.

Frank saw the front door closed, so he ran around back, seeing a dead man in a suit lying by the rear door. His face looked like hamburger. Pulling his 38-service revolver, he entered the back door, seeing Roberto dead, lying on top of a priest, and just to the right, a Sergeant from the Georgia State Troopers. As he continued to look around and wonder what had happened, he saw William slumped over, dead.

He was mad at himself for not going after the redhead leaving in the Nova. Frank then noticed a

briefcase opened on the kitchen table. He put on his latex gloves and looked at the photos.

Amazed to see a State Trooper Major in the photos', and a man killing another man in a white suit. Frank recognized the Major and was not surprised to find he was somehow involved.

Frank saw the pad by the phone and, using some pencil shavings, saw the last message written. Frank saw Ian's Phone number and called him. After one ring, he heard Ian say, "Hello."

Frank could barely speak, saying, "Ian, this is Frank. Did William call you tonight?" Confused, Ian said, "Yeah, he was saying something about being in some jam, and he didn't even know what was happening. He asked me to watch out for a woman he sent me to protect."

Frank still couldn't figure out what was going on and said, "William and Roberto are dead. I don't know what happened, just watch for the woman, she is driving a white Nova, keep her safe, and I will call you when I know something," Ian choked up, could barely say, "OK, Frank." Then Frank hung up.

Frank threw a few things into the briefcase on the kitchen table, hopped in his Patrol Car, and left. He was headed to Major Jones's house. He was there one time before for his promotion party.

As he reached his house, he grabbed the briefcase from William's home and knocked on the door. Major Jones answered, wearing a house coat, he was surprised to see a Sergeant from the State troopers, saying, "Can I help you, Sergeant?"

Frank responded, "Yes, sir, I believe I have something you should see." The Major opened the door and let Frank in, looking for SWAT teams hiding in the bushes.

They walked over and sat at the coffee table across from each other. Frank put the briefcase on the coffee table. Major Jones opened the briefcase and was surprised to see his uncle's gold cross with a black onyx inlay and gold chain.

He removed the cross only to see the photos that Roberto had taken earlier. He looked closely, moving his head closer to the photos. Shocked, Major Jones looked up to see the barrel of a gun pointing in his face.

Major Jones thought, "Is that my uncle's Luger?" Then, a bright flash and darkness. Frank stood and dropped the Luger on the coffee table as the Major's body slowly slid down the couch. Walking out the front door, Frank removed his latex gloves and got into his Patrol car.

\*\*\*

As Ian lay half asleep on the couch he was saddened by the news of his good friends' death. As sleep set in he recalled a moment in his past when he felt just as bad. Ian was only 16 when his grandmother told him that the girl he loved from high school was killed in a car accident.

His grandmother grabbed Ian's hands and said don't be sad, one day your love will knock on your door with hair on fire holding a gift from God. Ian was awakened by a doorbell, he opened the door to see a redhead holding a baby in a large black gym bag.

Ian said "I've been expecting you", The woman walked in just past the fire extinguisher mounted to the wall next to the front door.