

## Lefevre's Redemption

### Chapter One

Windsor – 3:28 a.m.

“You used to be only able to get this shit in *Toronto*, man.”

Two men stepped out the back exit of an after-hours club and into the privacy of an alleyway. The intense volume of the music and the crowd from inside was severed from their ears as the door fell shut behind them. The first man was a tall, broad shouldered bouncer from the club, called *Carroway's*, located downtown Windsor, Ontario. His name was Dave Jansen, but the boys on his football team called him Frump. He pulled the earpiece he wore to communicate with the other bouncers away from his head, and looked down at the bag that the second man was handing to him.

The second man seemed tiny compared to Frump's bulging body, but he wasn't intimidated. From a mixed family, the pusher's complexion was dark and brooding – his ancestry gave him a dark Mongolian appearance, even though he was part African and part Korean. But it didn't matter what he used to be.

“Take it. I'll give you a good price.” He handed a plastic bag of cocaine to the bouncer. Frump handled it, and reached for his back pocket to draw out his wallet. The dealer's eyes darted around scanning the alley to ensure their solitude. He wouldn't usually be dealing to strangers, but he had to get rid of his stash. He was loaded with drugs that were intended for the Toronto area, but there was way too much pressure up there these days. It was too risky anymore. He had to get rid of it here, and now.

Frump began leafing through his wallet, counting out twenties to turn over when the door flew open, announced by glaring music. The dealer reached under his shirt for a gun he had tucked in the back of his pants, and the bouncer darted the cocaine behind his big back – when they noticed it was just a girl. A thin dark-haired girl poked her head out. The dealer was relieved, annoyed and caustic all at once.

“Get out here!” he ordered, grabbing her by the arm and yanking her out into the alley. He slammed the door behind her. She said that she was looking for him. The dealer told her he didn't give a shit. The girl looked sad and lonely. Frump thought she looked like she was starving. Her eyes were wide and moist, but they never focused on one thing, always flowing from sight to sight, like they were searching, but expecting to find nothing.

Frump didn't like having an audience while he was making a deal. Witnesses, he always thought. Coke can make you paranoid. His earpiece ran from a battery pack hooked into the back of his pants, under his red collared shirt that had *Carroway's* embroidered in white over his heart, and dangled loosely from his neck. It began to buzz loudly with commotion. The bouncers were talking to each other – Frump was going to have to get back in there. It sounded like the crew was breaking up trouble inside.

“Look! Just give me the money. Let's get out of here,” barked the dealer. Frump was used to be yelled at by his coach, but he didn't like little punks speaking to him like this. He'd probably have one of the other bouncers kick him out once they get back inside. That'll teach 'im, he thought. Cash exchanged hands. The coke went into Frump's pocket, later it'd go up his nose.

Then the back door blew open as a gang of bouncers all in red *Carroway's* shirts shoved people out the door. Four men were forced out into the alley as the bouncers were keeping them in headlocks and shoving them down into the streets. The dealer was bumped and aggravated. The girl became suddenly aggressive and angered by the commotion. Her eyes flared with hate. The booming from the music and the yelling between the bouncers and bums joined together in a chaotic ruckus that put the drug dealer on edge.

One of the bouncers grabbed at the dealer and shoved him good and hard into one of the men who had just been ejected. The bouncers didn't seem to care who they were kicking out, so long as they *were* out. The men being ejected were shouting and throwing punches, while the bouncers were yelling louder, and throwing heavier ones. The dealer was caught in the middle, being shoved and even struck in some cases.

The girl swore at everyone at the top of her lungs. She was like a wild animal. Frump went to back up his fellow bouncers when he saw the dealer pull a black gun out from under his shirt and level it directly at one of the men who had just shoved him.

A brawl. A gun shot. Now a crime scene.

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Detective Luc Lefevre lifted the yellow Do Not Cross tape over his head as he ducked under it and into the crime scene. Red, white and blue lights flashed across the cold bricked walls of the alleyway that was wet from the melted frost. The smell of wet garbage and piss and vomit mixed together, but Lefevre was sure that he could also smell the rusty scent of blood in the air, too.

Luc was on the narcotics unit – and there were rumours<sup>1</sup> that this was a drug deal gone wrong. So he was pulled out of bed and called in on the weekend to review the scene before they removed any of the evidence. They always liked to clean up the scene as soon as they could. People got scared when they saw crime scenes all the time – but if they were cleaned up before citizens headed off to work, or church, then they'd never have to know what happened.

Lying on the cold November ground was a black heavy blanket covering the figure of a corpse. Lefevre knelt down beside the body, and lifted away the blanket – underneath he saw the face of a pale, cold little girl, no more than 14-years-old. Her eyes wide open, clouded over by death, brought upon her by the bullet that was shot through her chest.

Luc shook his head, clearing the image from his mind. That's all it was, just an image. Back in reality, he pulled away the black blanket and saw the dead head of an anonymous man from a bar fight – shot in a back alley after drinking all night with his buddies. He was an American, visiting Canada for the weekend with some of his friends. Friends who were down at the station now, trying to explain what happened.

He sighed. His head hurt. It was reportedly a drug deal gone bad, or a bar fight gone bad, different witnesses were telling different stories. It was the beginning of a bad weekend, is what it was.

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<sup>1</sup> rumors

# 'Police can't help her now'

Mother mourns after Boxing Day blood bath

Jan 12, 2007

Pickett Powell

TORONTO BOREALIS REPORTER

Two weeks after the senseless shooting of 19-year-old Caroline Cruickshank, police are no closer to finding the shooter than they were on day one.

Cruickshank, who was doing some boxing day shopping with her friends, was caught in what police are calling a 'gang related' shooting. Witnesses say an altercation in a local entertainment venue spilled out into the streets at the corner of John and Queen's.

Police are not commenting on the on-going investigation, but reports indicate that the victim was just 'in the wrong place at the wrong time.'

Toronto Chief of Police, Thomas Richmond, said "Caroline Cruickshank was returning to the subway station after an evening with some of her friends when an on-going dispute that originated in the Club Sienna spilled into the street. One of the suspects produced a firearm, and shot in the direction of the other combatant. The shot missed and tragically hit the young Miss Cruickshank, who was later pronounced dead at the scene."

"The police are continuing to work tirelessly," continued Richmond, "to find the men responsible and to bring them to justice."

Caroline's mother, Cynthia, 42, has appreciated the community's response. "We would like to thank the City of Toronto, and the community, for their outpouring of support. We'd like to say we have faith in the Toronto Police Department, and they have assured us that they are doing all that is possible to arrest the men responsible for..."

Cruickshank was visibly emotional and took a moment to pull herself together before continuing. "We will get the men who did this."

Mrs. Cruickshank concluded her address with support of the police's efforts to find justice. "Our Caroline has been tragically and senselessly taken from us, and the world has lost a beautiful daughter, a beloved FFF and a brilliant student. She will be missed. The police can't help her now, but it's not too late for all of the Caroline's out there who still have a chance to lead wonderful and beautiful lives. We have to catch these criminals and stop gang and gun violence now, for the sake of our community."

This is not the first time in the City of Toronto that innocent bystanders have been shot amidst gang violence. On Nov. 2, Allison Young, the mother of four, was gunned down near a west-end nightclub. Just earlier than that, in Sept. 9, 15-year-old Matty Brovonovski was shot to death as gang members fired at one another outside of Alexandra Park in an apparent drug deal gone bad. Brovonovski died three days later in hospital.

Police chief Richmond said he is concerned with the increase in gang violence and gun violence. He said, “We believe that people who engage in high-risk behaviour<sup>2</sup> such as selling drugs or carrying guns, increase their chances of becoming a fatal statistic.”

As a result, local ministers have started calling for stricter gun control laws and tougher penalties on violators. Conservative MP Glib Monforton said, “It’s high time that the Liberals quit dancing around this issue of gun and gang violence and really do something that protects the people.” He continued, “All the Libs is doing is protecting the hammer and not the nail.”

Liberal Minister of Justice, Dwight Hampton, said his party is drafting a bill that will make gun registration more difficult and involve a more lengthy and thorough background check. Said Hampton, “It’s to all of our benefits to be as certain as possible that guns do not get into the hands of dangerous or potentially dangerous individuals.”

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Luc Lefevre sat back in his wooden office chair and took a sip of his black coffee. Its bitter aroma stung his lips as much as the temperature, and he sighed. It was still early, and the Bravo shift was the only crew in. Detective Lefevre arrived a bit early before each shift, around six a.m. The day shift started at seven.

He sat in his small office, empty of any family portraits or scribbled drawings. The little room held a set of black filing cabinets, a creaky wooden chair that he refused to swap out for a newer model, and a solid desk covered in coffee stain rings. Behind his desk, he read the latest edition of *Windsor Borealis*. The front page story made the police station look awful; ‘Windsor cop arrested in sting,’ didn’t read too well.

“Shit,” he spat out. “The chief’s gonna’ be pissed.”

The cop in question shouldn’t have even been on the force, if you asked Lefevre. The guy was the cousin of a wife of a cop who retired three years ago. But, when blood flows thicker than water, you can imagine that complaints like this are sure to follow.

He wiped his hands over his face, cleared his eyes, pulled them down over his cheeks, and steepled them over his mouth, holding them there as he leaned on his desk in contemplation. The incandescent light from his office lamp stood motionless on his desk, and he took in a deep breath, assuring that this was not how he wanted to start off his morning. Yeah, the chief isn’t going to like this.

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Mickey Gordon poked his freckled head into the Lefevre’s office, creaking the door open just a shade.

“Hey partner, the chief has called an emergency staff meeting, and it’s starting, like, right now.”

“Right, alrighty, let’s get over there, then,” replied Lefevre. Luc heavily lifted himself out of his creaking seat before Mickey interrupted him.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, partner,” halted Mickey at the door. “What’s up with you pal? You look terrible!”

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<sup>2</sup> behavior

“I’m fine, I just haven’t been sleeping so hot,” Lefevre said.

“That’s it? You’re just not sleeping? ‘Cause you look a whole lot worse than a bad night under the covers, Luc,” pried his partner.

Impatiently, he retorted, “Believe it or not, Mic, this is what Luc Lefevre looks like in the morning – and I’m not sleeping as thoroughly as I would like. You going to be okay with that?”

“Yeah, man. I’m just busting your chops,” he answered with caution.

“So, everybody’s thinking this meeting has something to do with the article in the *Borealis* this morning, what do you think?” asked Gordon.

“I think you’re right, and the chief’s not going to be pleased,” said Lefevre. He creaked out of his chair from behind his desk, picked up his old coffee mug and headed for the door.

“We’d better be on our way. I don’t want to keep him waiting. Not today,” said Lefevre.

In the three strides across his office, he passed by his desk and chair, some uniforms from the drycleaners, and a picture of the Queen of England on his way out into the brightly fluorescent hallway of the police station. The lights stung his eyes, and he groaned.

Already in the hall a commotion was headed towards the staff lounge. Over the grey, carpeted floor and past the white, decorated walls cops were filing towards the staff room. Batons, handcuffs, keys and other dangling items set off a cacophonous clicking through the staff room as officers filed through the columns of chairs looking for a seat. They balanced their coffees so not to spill, and murmured amongst each other. Some had read the article in question, some heard rumours<sup>3</sup> beyond what was printed in the text itself, and for some, this was the first mention of the article that they’d heard.

And while the ambient noise of humans going through the formalities of seeing one another for the first time in day, Police Chief Hal Doric burst into the staff room, backhanding the door closed with an eruptive crash, and threw the last copy of the *Windsor Borealis* across the front of the room, into the wall. The impact disheveled a painting on the wall, enough to tip it, but not to knock it down.

“What the fuck is *this*?” he screamed with a red face and a stare that could stop a speeding car in its tracks.

In a heartbeat, all the officers that remained standing fell into their seats. Attention was undivided from the chief’s entrance, and few officers even looked up from the steam swirling up from their coffee cups.

“Did anyone know about this? Why is *this* the first I’m hearing about it?”

No one said a word.

“For the record, Constable Bradley Gregor has been suspended indefinitely pending an investigation. I don’t want a single one of you talking to the press about this. I will be in charge of communicating with them. I don’t want to hear anyone talking about this, nor do I want to hear any more about this from the goddamned newspaper!”

His voice exacerbated into a squeak at the end of the sentence.

The article indicated that the Ontario Provincial Police had received complaints about an officer on the Windsor Police force. A six month investigation had resulted in a

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<sup>3</sup> rumors

sting operation to catch the offending officer red handed. The investigation had begun after several when members of the public had made complaints that an officer had been pulling them over for speeding, but while questioning them, had extorted money and other valuables, which were referred to as “under \$5,000.”

Allegedly, Const. Gregor had pulled over a plainclothes officer and tried to extort money from him, at which point the OPP revealed themselves and arrested Bradley Gregor for violations of the Police Act, and criminal charges, including charges of discreditable conduct and neglect of duty.

Situations like this always percolated through the station causing low morale, shame and resentment. A damaged reputation always hurt, especially with civilian animosity crying foul and hypocrisy when those who are supposed to uphold the laws are found to break them.

“And I want to make this crystal clear,” said Doric, as serious as ever, “I don’t want anyone commenting or discussing the issues of *racism* that has been attached to this, case, whatsoever.”

*What?!* thought Lefevre. What was that about? This was the first time anyone had mentioned anything about racism involved with this case.

“Everyone, you’re dismissed,” said the chief.

Luc turned to face Mickey, mouthing the words ‘racism’ with a look of shock. Mickey shrugged and said, “I haven’t seen him this upset in ages, not since ...”

“Lefevre!,” Doric interrupted, “You and Gordon, see me in my office immediately.”

They stopped and stared at one another.

“Right now!”

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“You really poured it on hard, there, chief,” said Lefevre. “I think you got their attention.” Lefevre took a seat in Chief Hal Doric’s office. Mickey Gordon was soon to follow. Doric sat in his seat behind his desk.

“You know how it is, Lefevre. If you don’t show everyone where you stand, then they walk all over you. I don’t suspect anyone will be unclear with what I am asking.”

“I wouldn’t worry too much about the article, chief. I’ve never even heard of the reporter before, anyways. I don’t imagine anyone’s going to take notice. What was his name, anyways, N-something, right? Norman, or Newton? Seriously, are you that concerned?” quizzed Lefevre.

“Luc, I don’t underestimate the power of the press, and especially in a case like this, where that fool Gregor is as guilty as the day is long. What the hell was he thinking?” fumed Doric.

“The thing that gets me the most, is that the fucker was targeting Asians,” sighed Doric. “Allegations of racist cops,” he said with a mournful tone. “This department does not need a blow to its reputation like that.”

“What was he up to?” asked Lefevre.

“That dumb son of a bitch was pulling over speeders honestly enough, but the ones he was pressuring were the Asians, mostly women. He figured they were easy to intimidate, warned them that traffic violations could get them deported, could get them in

trouble with the law. He was pushing them into giving him money, asking for it blatantly in some cases.”

Lefevre exhaled a damned breath, imagining what it would look like if reports of this were ever to get out. Mickey Gordon seemed unfazed, however.

“What’s the big deal, chief?” said Mickey. “We’ve got nothing to hide. Constable Gregor was a fool, we should hang him out to dry. Make an example of him – separate ourselves as much as possible from his conduct.”

Doric looked across his desk and gave Detective Mickey Gordon a coy smile, and then referred over to Luc. Luc met his look, and returned the smile, exchanging an agreement silently between the two of them.

“You’re a good cop, Mickey, but you’re still young,” sighed Chief Doric.

“Hey,” said Mickey, “I’ve been a cop for ten years, and been here in Windsor for eight of ‘em. I’m no rookie, chief. And don’t pretend to treat me like one.”

“This is true, Mickey. You’re not a rookie anymore, and you’re a fast-tracked detective for promotion, but ... well, let me put it this way. Things didn’t start so smoothly for me around here.”

Mickey didn’t understand, and Doric wasn’t the type of man to explain himself. The chief gazed momentarily at the 20-year-old photo of his ex-wife, Annie, which still sat on his desk. A devil’s moustache had been drawn on it.

“Mickey Gordon,” Doric began, “this police department does not have a perfect record, and the press have a detailed and thorough record of all that’s happened in the past. We have demons in our closet, and I’m not about to pull them out and introduce them to you. Believe me when I say, ‘Do not let the press get a whiff of the racist allegations of this one individual.’ Nothing good will come of it, and it would be ungodly unjustified.”

Detective Luc Lefevre was familiar with all that Doric had been through. Lefevre had joined the force in 1988, and was training to be an officer during the entirety of the public’s flaming of Doric. While he was uncertain what to think of him when they’d first met, he was proud to be on Doric’s team, and knew that there was no one better to lead the department into the future.

Mickey answered dejectedly, “Alrighty chief, don’t worry about me. Whatever you say.”

“Good. Now I wanted to discuss something along these lines with you two. Your ‘Gang violence’ and ‘Gun violence’ projects are illustrating a major prevalence of illegal guns and drugs in our community – but you’re going to have to rely on your research and intelligence for leads and progress. Random ‘stop and seizures’ are going to be unacceptable. You better have corroborative evidence that your suspects are people of interest to your investigations. There’s no better time than *all* of the time to remind you that approaching citizens of a minority background will not be tolerated without evidence and good reason, right?”

Lefevre agreed, “Of course chief.”

“Luc,” paused Doric. “There’s no one on this staff I trust more to handle the Gangs and Guns assignment. If there’s anything, absolutely anything, you need, you let me know, and it’s yours.”

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Lefevre and Gordon left the chief's office. "What's that all about? You two got some inside joke," asked Mickey.

Reluctant to answer, Luc tried to thwart Mickey's interest with a simple smile. It didn't work.

"Jesus Christ, Luc! You guys treat me like a kid around here, man! I've got a wife and two kids – I've worked here for a *decade*. When are you guys going to start letting me in the club?" demanded Mickey.

Luc stopped walking and looked his partner straight in the eye.

"Look, I know we don't tell you everything. But ... that's history, that stuff. Stuff you don't need to worry about. The chief, he's got some stuff in his past that he's not too proud of. I mean, we all do, right? God knows I've got mine ... you'll hear about it some day, but it's best you just let it be."

Defiant, Mickey retorted under his breath, "I don't have anything to hide."

"I know, Mic," replied Luc, "you're still young."

## **Chapter Two**

### **Windsor – Tuesday, November 13, 2:17 p.m.**

Detective Luc Lefevre and his partner Mickey Gordon were stationed in Ford City, parked at a YMCA parking lot on Drouillard Ave. It had been a quiet afternoon, and they were sitting quietly.

"... so I have to think," said Mickey, "that we're all doing what we're meant to do. Everything happens for a reason, man. Seriously, had I not been held up at the dry cleaners, I wouldn't have been six minutes late, and wouldn't have been able to help that lady move her car. Moments later, a driver on the corner pokes his nose out into the intersection, causing another driver to deke out of the way, resulting in him side-swiping her vehicle. She could have been crushed in the collision!"

"I don't know," disagreed Lefevre. "I just have trouble buying into all of that. I can't believe that everything that happens to us happens for a reason. I don't believe in the divine plan. Too many bad things happen to people, and we see that every day. We show up at domestics where women are beaten to degrees that I don't think *I* would even survive. Are you telling me these things are part of God's divine plan? You have a sick impression of what God is, Mic."

"Yeah, I guess that's why it's still a debate, eh?" Gordon paused for a moment, turned to his veteran partner and studied his face for a moment.

Lefevre met Gordon's gaze and shrugged. "What? Man, what are you looking at me like that for?" retorted Luc.

"Would you do it all again, Luc?" asked Mickey. "If you could do it all again, if you could go back to the moment you decided you were going to be a cop, would you do it again?"

Lefevre stopped and looked at Mickey, sitting across from him in his blue uniform, his seatbelt on, and his cheerful eyes opened wide enough that you could see his

heart in them. The question was innocent enough, but the reasons Lefevre joined the force were far from romantic.

Before he had a chance to respond, the radio crackled and the dispatcher reported, “Calling all units, a sexual assault at Westcott Park. Suspect is a white male, five-eight, early thirties. Last seen on foot heading northbound on Central Ave. Suspect is wearing blue jeans and a white windbreaker jacket and a black toque.”

“This is Alpha forty-one, we’re on it,” said Lefevre into the radio.

Mickey pulled the police car out of the parking lot, and threw his lights on. Traffic slowed to let them in, and they took off, driving around the Ford Test Track and over to Central Avenue. They cruised into the neighbourhood<sup>4</sup> scanning for the suspect. Cars were parked up and down both sides of the street and there were busy front yards, filled with fences, bushes, driveways and gardens, plenty of places to hide. Neither of the detectives spotted the suspect en route to Westcott Park.

They spotted a woman with her back against a chain link fence beside the tree-filled park. There was an old children’s swing set and monkey bars beyond the fence. They pulled up alongside the curb. Their response time was just under two minutes, not bad. She seemed collected and unharmed and was on her cell phone. Mickey climbed out of his seat and approached her, his lights still flashing showing that there was now a police presence at the scene. Mickey started asking her what had happened, and she began recounting the confrontation with the suspect.

Luc remained seated in the vehicle. Mickey’s question about whether or not he’d have joined the force all over again remained in the forefront of his mind. And this sexual assault seemed too eerily connected to his past to be a coincidence. His face was lost in thought, and his thoughts were jumping back decades to revisit his youth.

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It was a cold winter day in Waterloo, Ontario, 1980. Early in the second semester, 18-year-old freshman Luc Lefevre marched through the snow back to his apartment after his second day of classes. Wearing his father’s winter coat and the only pair of shoes he had, a black pair of worn dress shoes, he carried his books under his arm, with a proud smile on his face.

His first semester as a Sciences Major had gone relatively well. His grades weren’t outstanding, but he wasn’t focusing on his marks so much as he was focusing on his varsity soccer. A walk-on member of the Waterloo Warriors, Luc the rookie didn’t get much playing time, but enjoyed being on the team and the comradery of his teammates.

He had the opportunity to meet with his professors in a very personal nature, as well. He often had to make special arrangements to be away from class to make the trips with the team to games across Ontario. Some of the professors enjoyed his youthful jump, and took the time during his visits to recollect their memories of when they were undergrads themselves, playing varsity sports. Tennis and track and field had been more popular back in their days.

Luc stayed in touch with his mother and father through the mail, writing letters regularly about his classes, his professors and the soccer team. Once soccer was over, he wrote about playing billiards down at the pub, and always asking questions about how his

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<sup>4</sup> neighborhood

family was doing. Receiving mail from his folks always made his roommate Mark a little jealous. Mark didn't seem to get all that much mail.

A whiz at math, he quickly fired through his homework and examinations, but struggled in some respects to communicate his ideas during the Arts and Social Science courses, but those skills would develop with time. He wasn't certain, yet, what he wanted to do with his life, but wasn't in any real rush, either. He had the support of his family and a positive attitude that was sure to guide him toward his career path.

Most importantly, this was Luc's first time away from home, and his parents had saved a lot of money up to send him away. They also demonstrated a lot of faith in him, sending away their only child to school in another town to live on his own. He could sense the pride in their demeanour<sup>5</sup> when he left for second semester, but he could also sense a type of fear that they had for him, worrying that he would be safe, that he wouldn't fall in with the wrong crowd, and ultimately the fear of letting their only child go. Letting go of him as a child, and realizing that he was now a man.

Luc stepped into his apartment and placed his wet shoes on the radiator to dry out, took his gloves off and placed them by the fire to warm up, and removed his scarf and plaid winter jacket, brushing snow from his trousers. He called out to his roommate, asking if there was any mail today.

Mark appeared from another room and entered into the front den.

"Luc, your father called earlier today while you were out in class." Mark's tone was somber, almost soft. "He said you have to call him right away."

Luc was shocked. Long distance calls were expensive, and generally uncommon – it must have been very serious.

Luc Lefevre's world changed that day. He talked to his father, who delicately told him that his mother had been raped and beaten. Luc was on the next train back to Windsor the following day. He couldn't sleep that night, and felt pangs of panic every moment until he got back home.

When he returned to Windsor, he met his mother at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, and it brought tears to his eyes. Her face was swollen, her arm was in a brace, but she was otherwise just resting in a bed for observation. Luc dropped out of school later on that week, with intentions to care for his mother until she was better.

His mother, Colleen, handled herself with great self-control. She believed that these types of things happen, and it just so happened to happen to her. She dealt with the attack with over-rationalization and emotionally removed herself from the incident. She felt anger and hostility towards people who showed her pity and remorse, and expressed it privately towards her husband, Serge. When members of the neighbourhood<sup>6</sup> and her family began visiting, she was embarrassed that they all knew what had happened to her, and each phone call, get well card, and sentimental visit turned her stomach. She wanted to let the whole thing be forgotten.

Luc had never seen his mother intoxicated, but it became a regular sight within the next month. It began as a casual exercise in the evenings, and she said it helped her to remain calm and get ready to sleep. But then she started drinking in secret and in the mornings, just to get the fear of being in public to level off. It took the edge out of her day, she said.

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<sup>5</sup> demeanor

<sup>6</sup> neighborhood

Through this, Luc's father, Serge, lost a meaningful connection with his wife. Colleen wouldn't let Serge emotionally close to her anymore, and that pained him. He had been pushed away, and their intimacy all but disappeared. He didn't pressure her into anything physical, letting her be the one to instigate sexual relations when she was ready again. That time never came, and she withdrew into her own mind, being overly protective of who she came into contact with.

Serge turned elsewhere to cope with the absence of his wife's affection, but not to another lover. Rather, he too began drinking. But his drinking escalated into drug abuse, and that drug abuse escalated into him serving a brief jail term for possession. His drug problems bourgeoned from there. He lost his job at a machine shop for stealing from the till.

All the while, Luc felt a new direction in his life. The attack on his mother pushed him towards making a difference in the community and to stop attacks like this from happening. He saw the damage that it was having on his family, and rededicated himself to joining the police where he could track criminals down and deliver true justice to those who deserved it.

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Mickey Gordon was typing out the victim's statement on a laptop with his index fingers. His typing wasn't great, but his detecting was, so it was a fair trade off. The woman had made enough noise and commotion in the park to scare her attacker off, and she was lucky that he hadn't been armed. She described him as mentally unfit, and wiry, almost scrawny, yet still quite strong.

Mickey explained to her how the electronic signature on the laptop worked, and how it secured the statement so that it was unalterable, and should the case go to court that it would be available. The woman understood and typed in the four-digit code on the laptop, securing her statement.

By now an ambulance had arrived and they had provided her with a blanket to warm herself, and were evaluating the bruises on her arms and shoulders from when the man had held her down and groped her.

Luc was leaning against the squad car, still silent and observant. Sexual assault cases always gnawed at him, knowing that for all his effort, they're still happening, and the suspects are as difficult to find as ever. Where was the justice that he was looking for?

Just as Mickey was wrapping up the laptop and saying his final words to the ambulance drivers to release the woman, there were a series of cracking shots heard in the distance. It sounded like large fire-crackers exploding nearby, but both cops knew that those were gun shots. Mickey spun to face Luc, who had already jumped out of his daze, and into action.

"Let's go!" he called to Mickey. Mickey ran across the street to the car and threw himself into the driver's seat. Lefevre grabbed the radio and called in.

"This is officer Lefevre. Multiple shots fired west of Central, we're on our way."

It was just after 3 p.m. and the shift change at the factory had hundreds of Ford vehicles flooding the streets. Sirens and flashing lights meant nothing when there was nowhere to pull over to. There was a time when cars and trucks wouldn't give an inch when a police officer turned on their lights. Only a year prior, a Windsor police officer

was shot and killed by an armed drug dealer, just around the corner from where they were stuck, now. After the shock in the community of the Windsor Police force's first officer shot dead in the line of duty, their cooperation on the streets took a whole-sail change for the better. The community really shared in the loss of the officer, and took it upon themselves to do their part when emergency vehicles were looking for space on the roads.

Large trucks, minivans and cars with V-8 engines blocked their route. Spinning their car over to Seminole, there was only one lane to get through to the downtown core, and the whole route was jammed. All the best intentions to cooperate with the police were useless when there was nowhere to pull over to.

"Fuck," swore detective Mickey Gordon. "This is goddamned ridiculous."

Dispatch updated the situation, "Attention all units, all units please respond. There has been a drive by shooting on the corner of Ottawa and Lincoln. Multiple guns fired. Police, fire and ambulance requested. Suspects were last seen heading west bound on Ottawa in a grey<sup>7</sup> 2004 Ford Explorer. Four suspects all described a young black males, consider them armed and very dangerous."

"Jesus! A drive by?" said Lefevre.

A break in the traffic signals opened up some space on the street, and the vehicles were able to pull over just enough to open a free lane up the middle of the street, and Gordon accelerated toward Walker, taking the corner safely and continued on to Ottawa. Once off of Seminole, the streets were clear, and the two cops were the third unit on the scene.

The intersection was chaos. There was glass all over the place, glass from car windows, glass from store front shops, glass everywhere. There were interlock brick crosswalks that were filled with glass. There was the sulfurous smell of hot tires and gun powder. Crowds of people were climbing over one another to see what had happened. Some were shocked, some were crying. There was blood in the streets and flashing lights whipping all around the intersection.

Officers were already containing the scene, putting up police tape and rounding up witnesses. There was a car accident across the street, where one vehicle was trying to flee the intersection once they hear shots fired, but they accelerated into the back end of a truck, instead. There were three injured in the accident.

There were six others that were receiving medical attention for gun shot wounds. A stray dog still on a leash whimpered on the other side of the street, probably searching for its owner. One gun shot victim was pronounced dead right away, while the victims were injured to varying degrees. Two officers were redirecting traffic from Ottawa Street.

As Luc Lefevre and Mickey Gordon got out of their car, they lifted the police tape over their heads and stepped through the crime scene to be brought up to speed.

The first officer on the scene was Constable Dan Hallimut, who Lefevre hated. The guy was a major prick, and always was on his ass. Luc knew that they had to work together, so he did what he could to bear him, but ... if he never had to speak to that guy again, he never would.

Constable Hallimut saw them coming and met them halfway.

"It's about time you showed up – weren't you just around the corner?"

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<sup>7</sup> gray

“There was heavy traffic,” Mickey said, stepping in so Lefevre didn’t have to say anything.

“Well, now that you’re here, makes yourselves useful. We’ve got one man dead, three injured in a collision, and five others injured from either stray bullets or broken glass. Witnesses are saying that the deceased man was the target,” Hallimut indicated a bloody stump of a body that had been ripped up by gunfire. Hot black blood oozed away from him onto the interlock brick pedestrian cross walks.

“Apparently he was sent inside the bank to get some money, and then he returned out here and handed the money to another man. While that guy stepped away with the money, a truck came barreling through with the windows down and four men firing hand guns from across the street,” reported Hallimut.

There was glass everywhere. It was shot out of the windows of the corner shop and from the car collision. It was in gunshot wounds, it was in hair, and it was all over road and corner.

Hallimut looked across the crowd of on-lookers that were assembling, and groaned. While he was watching them, and the ambient commotion of sirens, flashing lights, traffic and banter filled the street, he suddenly became aware of a thin man in a long overcoat coming through the police tape line.

He was carrying a shoulder bag on his right side, and was squinting through a pair of round-lensed glasses. He stepped right through the glass, through some blood until Hallimut stopped him.

“What the hell are you doing? Get behind the line!”

The odd young man stopped and looked up at him, and pulled a tape recorder out of his jacket pocket, clicked the device on and started asking questions.

“Officer, can you describe what’s going on here? I know people have been tragically injured, what do the police plan to do to capture the perpetrators?”

“Who do you think you are?,” retorted Hallimut, “get behind the tape.”

“I’m Nathaniel Nardone, reporter for the Windsor Borealis, I need to ask you a couple of questions.”

“No you don’t. This is a crime scene. Stay *behind* the line, you got that?”

“Does this have anything to do with Constable Gregor being suspended earlier this week?”

“With Constable Gregor? What the hell are you talking about? What would a drive by have to do with ... no more questions. I’m sure the Staff Sergeant will have a formal press release later on,” he impatiently removed the reporter from the scene and turned back to his business.

Nardone put his recorder away and dug a digital camera out of his bag. He started snapping photos of the crime scene and flashes from his camera caught Hallimut’s attention again.

“Seriously, man. What’s your problem? You can’t be taking pictures here! Go on, get lost!” Constable Hallimut raised his hands to block the lens of the camera from taking more pictures. His black leather gloves were flashing back and forth trying to intercept the shots. The reporter continued to snap pictures, anyways.

“WHAT?” was distinctly yelled behind the quarreling officer and reporter, interrupting them as they turned to see what was happening now. It turned out to be Lefevre’s voice.

“He said he was WHO?”

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Lefevre was standing alongside two women, employees of the bank, who had just stepped outside for a cigarette break when the drive by occurred. They were describing the events just prior to the attack, and how one man appeared to hand over a lot of money to another man before the Ford Explorer unloaded about four magazines of ammunition into the street corner.

Mickey called out, “Luc, hey Luc!”

Lefevre turned and looked at his partner, as he bounded across the glass-covered corner. His three-quarter length winter jacket bounding up and down as he ran.

“Luc, one of the guys on the other side of the bank is saying your name, man. He says he knows you!” said Gordon.

“WHAT?” said Lefevre. He was shocked and panicked that someone he might know was injured, and his heart began to pound.

Mickey raised his hands haltingly, “That’s not the whole of it, partner.” Mickey paused for a moment, unsure with what sensitivity he should say it, but ... “he says he’s your father, Luc.”

“He said he was WHO?” Lefevre yelled, as he pushed Mickey aside and rushed around the side of the bank. Glass crackling beneath his feet and the tinny scent of blood in the air, he rushed over to the old man in a fetal position lying on the sidewalk.

The gun shot victim was laying motionless and unconscious. His right hand had been mostly blown off by a stray bullet, leaving behind just a bloody stump of phalanges. Another bullet had ripped into his stomach, and blood was pouring out of his mouth. His eyes were closed and deep weathered wrinkles twisted across his face.

There was no doubt about it, the man at Luc Lefevre’s feet was his father. Luc stood motionless and awestruck as the cold November air filled his nostrils. He hadn’t seen or talked to his father in eight years, and this was how they were to be reunited.

Flashes from the reporter’s camera captured the moment.

### **Chapter Three** **Windsor Regional Hospital – 6 p.m.**

Drive bys are incredibly uncommon in Windsor, but perhaps with the emerging gang presence that’s all going to change. Undoubtedly, the shoot up on Ottawa Avenue was instigated by a gang presence in the city, and a narcotic transaction. The intended target had been sent into a bank, according to witnesses. After withdrawing some cash from an ATM, the late 26-year-old Mark Wholman, walked down a block to a parked grey<sup>8</sup> 2004 Ford Explorer, where he made a transaction with a black male, height and age unknown.

After the transaction, the vehicle pulled away, but returned shortly afterward with the windows down, and at least three shooters fired approximately 23 bullets at

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<sup>8</sup> gray

Wholman, many of which missed. The gunfire caused a car crossing the intersection to lurch forwards and rear-end the minivan in front of it. There were three passengers in the vehicles, all of which were treated for minor scrapes and bruises.

The real damage was done by the stray bullets that buried themselves into a shopper, two employees leaving the bank, Mark Wholman, a man walking his dog, and Detective Luc Lefevre's estranged father.

Lefevre's father, Serge, now 63, was committed to the Windsor Regional Hospital, just a few blocks up the street from the attack. He had taken a bullet in the stomach, resulting in heavy internal bleeding, and he lost four fingers off of his right hand after a stray bullet blew most of it off in the lower phalanges. He wasn't in any pain because he was heavily medicated, but for him to make any useful statements toward the investigation, the doctors would have to alleviate his meds. There was little chance of survival. At his age, and in his decrepit health, his injuries were considered terminal.

Luc Lefevre sat with his father, looking at him during visiting hours at the hospital. The sterile beige room beeped with the monitoring equipment that provided his scheduled medications and measured his bodily functions. Nurses would come by to mark down his readings on a chart, sign their signature and make any necessary changes for his comfort. Serge lied still amidst it all, breathing regularly and saying nothing.

Chief Hal Doric appeared during visiting hours to show his respects.

"How're things looking in here, Luc?" he asked.

"They say it's a matter of time before he passes on – they're keeping him comfortable. His blood shows high levels of sustained crack-cocaine use for a prolonged period of time, so his old habits haven't dissipated." Lefevre paused, thinking back to the last time he'd seen his father eight years ago. Drug addicted and ashamed, his father had snuck out of town leaving an illegible note of chicken scratch as his last words to his only son.

"He's in no condition to comment on the drive-by shooting while he's on these meds. They're keeping him alive, but they're also keeping him unconscious. If we're going to learn anything from him, we'll have to take him off his medication – and the nurses have been absolutely clear, that will kill him."

As his next of kin, 'pulling the plug,' so to speak was Lefevre's call – and in a twisted way, the investigation that required his father's testimony was also under his jurisdiction. The coincidence between them both left him feeling abusive of his authority, and misguided as a son. But a son's last chance to speak to his father, however estranged, tempted him as well.

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While it wasn't the only reason, Luc's last conversation with his father was largely responsible for his desertion from Windsor. After Luc's mother was raped, familial relations fell apart in the Lefevre household. While Luc and Serge's life paths had the same inspiration and point of origin, they took their cues and started off on two very different routes. Serge started dabbling in drugs to deal with his emotional pain, and feelings of inadequacy, while Luc had dedicated himself whole-heartedly into becoming a police officer.

Starting off quietly, Serge's drug addiction grew slowly, but steadily. His wife Colleen was sexually unresponsive and emotionally vacant after her attack, leaving Serge feeling heavily inadequate. Not only had he not been around to protect his wife, but she had lost faith in him.

The drug abuse became more prevalent, and in time, he quit hiding it. Strewn about his house, Serge had paraphernalia evidencing that he was progressing into stronger and more potent drugs. And he was using them more and more often. He eventually lost his job, and started pawning off his belongings and then progressed to stealing things to exchange for drugs when he could not exchange them for cash.

By 1998, Luc was 'celebrating' a decade of service by being promoted to a drug trafficking beat and turning a blind eye to his father's indiscretions became a shameful neglect of his responsibilities. Rewarded with new duties on a high profile case, he was already covering up details to protect his father. When a drug trafficking case he was working produced a little black book with a list of meeting places and customers his father's address and 'street name' of S.L. were on the list of frequent customers.

Later that evening, Luc approached his father.

"Dad, I want to help you get out of this funk," he said with tears in his eyes.

His father was furious – he didn't want to be helped. "You think you know what it's like to be me? What it was like to live with your mother after what that man did to her?"

"No, of cour..., Dad, you've got to get some help. I want to help you get better."

"I'm *fine*. I don't need anyone's help and I can take care of myself."

"I loved mom, too, dad. And I hate what that son of a bitch did to her. I miss her laugh, and I miss her smile." He paused, tilted his eyes to the ceiling and waited till his throat could say the next words.

"I just started working on a drug trafficking case, dad. We're following a crack-cocaine dealer from Detroit who's dealing over here in Windsor ... We found an address book that names names, dad."

He stopped speaking, hoping that his father would understand what he was explaining to him. His father became more defiant and vehement than before.

"Are you *threatening me*? Do I need to remind you that I am *your father!* Who do you think you are coming in here and threatening ME? I am not a criminal on the streets that you can push around and extort." Serge was shouting now, the veins in his 49-year-old forehead pulsing, throbbing beneath his skin like the Great Wall of China.

"I can't hide your involvement in this case," Luc plead. "I'm not the only one investigating what's going on here, your name and address are going to come up! You don't have a lot of choices, you've got to start correcting all of this, now," he said.

"I don't need you protecting me, I don't want you protecting me, and I don't want to see or hear from you again, 'son.' Get out of here! You and I are *through*," he screamed, spitting venom out of his mouth.

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Lefevre's father had been gone for eight years. Living up to his word, he hadn't spoken to Luc since. But why did he resurface here and now? And why were his last

spoken words Luc's name? His partner Mickey sat beside him outside the hospital room while gurneys and hampers were shuffled from one room to the next in the busy hospital. He played the foil while Luc came to terms with what he had to do.

"I have to find out what he was doing in town, Mickey. Jesus, I haven't seen or heard from him in eight years. And my first chance to talk to him, he's fatally wounded and unconscious," he said in an exacerbated tone.

"What the hell was he doing here? What was he doing on that corner?" After a long pause, he said "Mickey, can you get the nurse?"

In moments, Mickey Gordon returned with a nurse in pastel-pink scrubs and a smock that resembled a table-cloth you'd see at kindergarten. Luc explained his situation. He told the nurse he needed to talk to his father before he died. He asked what they could do to help him regain consciousness.

The nurse advised him as best as she could. "Detective, if we lower the medications he'll wake up, but we won't be able to do anything for the pain, and his body is in a heavy state of detoxification. He'll be fighting the pains of withdrawal. These factors will cause his condition to deteriorate drastically. Do you understand this, detective?" asked the nurse.

"Yeah," he said in an almost whisper. "I understand."

Accordingly, the nurse turned down the morphine drip, and exited the pale room.

An hour later the withered and bandaged old man began to moan and toss back and forth. The pale-beige walls echoed his audible discomfort, and Luc sat up from his seat. He stared at his father to see if he was awake, or if he was just tossing in his sleep.

"Are you there, dad?"

"Uggghh, Luc," he said weakly. "Luc, I had to find you." Laying back with his eyes still shut, he lay motionless save for his mouth, which barely even twitched while he spoke.

"I was looking for you. You need to help her," he said.

"Help who, dad? What are you talking about?"

"Drop dead," he sighed. Pausing to gain strength, he more forcibly reiterated, "Drop dead, Luc."

"Wh..what's this all about! You come looking for me and .."

"NO, drop dead." He started panting, and coughing. Blood appeared in his mouth, darkening the colour<sup>9</sup> of his lips as he struggled to maintain consciousness. Luc couldn't take his eyes off his father's mouth – the colour<sup>10</sup> of death staining and blackening his teeth.

He struggled to lift his head off the pillow, "I came back to ... save her." His strength faded, dropping his skull back onto the pillow.

"Save who, dad? You've never saved anyone in your life! Who did you think you were going to save?" asked Luc, with escalating frustration.

"You've been a drugged-up zombie for twenty years, dad! You tore the family apart and wasted yourself to nothing, and you come back now? You come back to tell me to drop dead! You walked out on us! You had what it took to hold us together, and

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<sup>9</sup> color

<sup>10</sup> color

instead you just got fucked up until you were blind to anyone who cared about you.” He was yelling at him now, this was his chance to tell him what he thought – he never had the chance to show him who he’d become or what he’d done with himself after all these years, and he wasn’t going to let his father’s fading consciousness interrupt him now.

The hairs were standing up on the back of Luc’s neck. He was half-standing, fingers strung out and ready to grab onto anything.

“Son, son, so, s ... ..” Serge was fading, overwhelmed with exhaustion, blood freely flowing from his mouth now. He gurgled and choked for a moment, going rigid with the convulsion of swallowing blood.

“Son,” in a clear moment, “Luc. Listen, ... listen, listen, list..” he was fading in and out, too quickly to say anything clearly. “Ghosts of men ... suicide pacts .. empee, ... she’s alive, Luc.”

Luc stared, rigid and shocked. His eyes welled with tears, but did not fall down his cheeks. His father was dying right before his eyes, and the fear of being alone, the anger of being abandoned, and the pain of losing a loved one culminated in a petrified moment of inaction. He couldn’t move, just watch. Just listen.

His father’s last words echoing in the room, “Eemmpee ... she’s alive Luc.”

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Mickey Gordon heard the commotion from down the hall and ran into the room, his face searching for an explanation. He looked at the suffering in Luc’s face and then swirled his head back toward the dying man on the hospital bed. With adrenaline rushing, he looked back at the motionless Luc sitting in his chair.

Luc didn’t move his head, he just said, “He died, Mickey. He told me to drop dead, mumbled some nonsense, and then died.”

“He’s not dead, Luc – the heart monitor shows he’s still working, right?” Mickey crossed the room and started referring from one instrument to the next, confirming that they were all still functioning. But soon enough the monitor began to take negative readings from the passing Lefevre, and started sounding the alarm to nurses, indicating his downturn in health.

A nurse rushed in and did what she could to stabilize his condition, but he was fading away. Serge’s heart was too weak to go on, and the blood that filled his mouth was increasing, oozing out and onto his neck.

“You’ll have to leave the room, sir,” said the nurse forcefully. She got up and started to usher Luc out the door, putting her hands on his frozen torso, and guiding him, then pushing him, out the door. “We’re going to do what we can to ease the pain, you’ll have to wait for us outside.” And then he and Mickey were outside the room.

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Standing outside the hospital, Mickey Gordon was having a cigarette. There were a half dozen people, standing just outside the large glass doors. Some were visitors, bundled up in their winter jackets holding their smokes through fingerless gloves. Some smokers were patients still dressed in their green fatigues.

Luc Lefevre was irritated and pacing. What the hell was his father doing in town? Where had he been all this time? What the hell was he talking about? The cold air made his breath visible, and it trailed behind him as he paced back and forth.

“Can you make any sense of what he was saying?” asked Gordon.

“It all seemed like gibberish. After all the drugs and the meds, I don’t even know if he can put a sentence together. He tells me to ‘drop dead,’ then mutters something about ‘ghosts, suicide pacts ... I ... I haven’t talked to him in eight years, Mic. This isn’t how this is supposed to be.”

“He came back for you, Luc,” said Mickey. “That’s what he was doing here. He was asking for you at the crime scene, man.”

“Then what is he trying to tell me? He comes back after all this time, what’s he trying to tell me? It’s not about ghosts and suicides. This is ridiculous.”

Pressure to find the answers went beyond the call of duty this time. A man that Luc had loved and a man that Luc had hated was playing games with his temperament. His dad taught him how to be a man, sent him to school, and loved him dearly – that was the man he loved and the man that he missed. But his father was also a drug-fiend who tore his family apart, lost his job to his addiction, and lost control of his life entirely. That was the man that Luc hated, and that was the man that he had to deal with now. His ears were near frozen from the dry November air, but he was impervious to his physical extremities. His mind battled back and forth, recalling the good moments of his father’s life, and the despicable habits and cowardice of a true loser. His mind was mixing the disparate memories of Luc’s father together. His emotions were fluttering between compassionate forgiveness and unmoving resentment.

How could he still care so much for a man who had hurt him so much? How could he hate a man that had done so much for him? Indeed, his father’s life was dividable into two distinct men; a great man died the day the other was born, and that was when Serge’s wife, Colleen, was raped.

“Don’t worry, partner. We’re going to figure this thing out,” reassured Mickey. “We’re going to start with the vic from the drive by, then we’re going to get the rest of the info from your father, and we’re going to have lots to work with on this one.”

“Thanks pal,” said Lefevre. “I need somebody to settle me down – so much has happened all at once, ... but there’s something else that’s ... hard to explain.”

Luc paused. He’d never talked about this with anyone, and it was a sick twist that it would come up because of his father. He regrouped, trying to find the words to make the whole thing make sense.

“I think he ... I think he said my sister’s name.”

Mickey raised an eyebrow. He’d never heard of Luc having a sister. In fact, Lefevre hadn’t made any mention of any of his family the entire time they’d worked together. This was definitely the first he’d heard of a sister.

“I didn’t know you had a sister, man.”

“Yeah, well I haven’t talked to her in eight years, either,” said Lefevre. He laughed, in a distant and uncomfortable way. The kind of laugh that helps you deal with trauma rather than the kind when something’s funny. Where to start to explain his sister? “She ran away eight years ago ... after she had a big fight with my dad.”

Mickey looked at him, funny. “Eight years ago? What do you mean she ‘ran away’?” He studied Luc up and down to make some sense out of it all. “She’d be, like, forty-something, right?”

#### **Chapter Four** **Windsor Regional Hospital – 7:12 p.m.**

Mickey looked at him, funny. “Eight years ago? What do you mean she ‘ran away’?” He studied Luc up and down to make some sense out of it all. “She’d be, like, forty-something, right? Isn’t that called ‘moving out,’” he scoffed.

Where to start? Lefevre took a seat on a bench just a few metres<sup>11</sup> from the hospital entrance, and got himself comfortable. He patted the bench seat beside him and invited Mickey to join him. Mickey smiled a little, and sat down beside Lefevre. He lit up another cigarette, and just as he’d finished exhaling his first toke, he looked at Lefevre, encouraging him to go on.

“Gotta get comfortable for this one, eh?” remarked Gordon.

“I don’t even know where to start, Mic. I guess you start at the beginning. My sister is 22 years younger than me. She ran away at only 15 years old. I haven’t seen or heard from her in eight years, and she’d be 24 now. It was just her birthday a few weeks ago, earlier in October.”

Luc Lefevre’s sister was the second most devastating thing to ever happen to his family – the first being the rape of his mother. Colleen Lefevre was attacked in her own home when she was raped. While Colleen was out shopping for some groceries on her day off from work a man broke into the Lefevre household and was looking for items he could steal. She would later be described as simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The details she recounted were blurry, and she never spoke of them to Luc. He had gleaned at the police report a day after he’d been instated as an officer five years later. The rapist had come in through a window, so there were no indicators that there was a prowler in the house when she came in through the garage entrance. It was early January and he was careful not to leave footprints behind him as he approached the house.

Carrying a load of groceries, she placed them on the kitchen floor. By the time she noticed that there was someone in the house, it was already too late. The attacker was upstairs, and he checked to see that she was alone through a bedroom window. He pulled the knife he used to cut through a window screen out and approached Colleen.

Armed, he jumped out from around a corner and yelled at her. With a quick swing of his forearm into her face, he physically overpowered her. She fell to her knee, slipping in the melting snow from her boots on the linoleum floor. He grabbed her by the arm, and lifted her up with one hand. Flinging her across the room, he threatened her life, and showed he meant business with another strike to her face.

Pain streaked across Colleen’s face, and she felt a concussing reverberation throughout her head. The shocking reality that was unfolding on top of her slipped into an

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<sup>11</sup> feet

abstract and slowed-down observation. She almost felt as if she were viewing the whole thing from outside of her body. She could only watch, she could not move.

Crying and scared to death, she did as she was told. That's probably what brought her the most shame; that she did what she was told. She had always thought that she could have fought back more, that she could have stopped him – and she had felt that she was a failure. Shame burned at her whenever she thought back on the attack.

Three months after the rape Colleen had turned to alcohol to help calm her nerves. Her nerves were so bad that she was throwing up in the mornings. She was uncomfortable in her own skin, and every touch to her skin made her recoil in contempt. Each touch to her skin reminded her that she was raped, but more specifically, it would remind her that she let herself be raped.

Turns out the morning sickness wasn't related to the nervous tension that she lived with every day, but rather, it was because she was pregnant. She hadn't slept with her husband in months, she was just too sick to have physical relations again. And that meant that her child was the rapist's. Lovingly, her son Luc had moved back home and was doing a terrific job caring for her. He was cooking meals, he was tidying around the house, he was doing all the chores, while he worked to become a cop. He abandoned his future at the University of Waterloo and had found a direction for his life.

The burning shame that Colleen felt turned her cold and distant to her husband, Serge, who responded poorly. The two hardly would speak to one another anymore. He began sleeping in the guest room, trying to give her the space she needed. She didn't miss sleeping with him – but she did miss the partnership that they once shared. The first time she caught him doing drugs, she was shocked and she felt like he had been lying to her by concealing it. The second time she caught him, he shared the drugs with her. Weed was alright once in a while, but when he started to bring the crack back to their home, she felt an immediate rush. Was this the rush she had been waiting for? Was this the drug that was going to be able to help her escape her pain?

She knew that it was all bad for the baby, but who the fuck did this baby think it was? She didn't have the heart to abort it, but she wasn't going to do it any favours<sup>12</sup>. She was disgusted that the baby belonged to someone outside of their family. She was disgusted that the rapist was going to be a part of her family. Every kick the child made in her womb shot the hot pangs of shame up her spine.

A perfect nine months later, October 10<sup>th</sup>, Colleen Lefevre lost her life in the maternity ward. She was only 44 years old, older than most mothers in the ward. The complications in the delivery set in shortly after her contractions began. The alcohol and drug abuse that she'd resorted to for the many months during her pregnancy escalated the problems that a smooth childbirth would like to see. Rather, her heart was unfit and her respiration was weak. She began bleeding uncontrollably, from the vagina, and her heart started pounding dangerously hard. Colleen died in a fit of panic and pain.

The obstetrician resorted to an emergency cesarean-section to pull the baby from the already-dead womb. The bloody baby girl was pulled out of a corpse, and what is generally a beautiful moment in the lives of any family, became a devastating tragedy for the Lefevres.

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<sup>12</sup> favors

Serge and Luc wept that night, while there was no one to breastfeed the newborn. She cried openly, and the only responses were resentful and mourning glares. There was nothing that they could do for the latest addition to the family. Genealogically speaking, Serge had nothing to do with the infant, while Luc was the half-brother to the young child. What remained of the family unit that was called The Lefevres died in hospital that evening.

Even though Luc was working as hard as he could to make it to the police force, his father was setting a different example. Serge named his ‘daughter’ Marie-Pierre, or MP. As a youngster, drugs were a common sight around the Lefevre household, and Marie-Pierre was exposed to illegal highs at a very young age. It was entirely common for Serge to be high when he was playing with the young girl. Each playful toss on his knee, he was unconsciously reminiscent that this infant killed Colleen.

Marie Pierre was a healthy young child, despite the impending complications that were promised by the ‘Midwives of Canada’ support group. She gasped for air when the doctors pulled her out, and she cried through the birthing process.

Serge honestly believed that MP was too young to understand the drug abuse that he had turned to, but her young exposure to that side of life ushered her into a world where substance abuse was a recreation. MP grew up with strange men coming and going around her house as Serge had many dealers visiting. She was also regularly left alone at home, without any supervision, at a very young age because Serge would leave – either to steal, to get more drugs, or to get some alcohol. He wouldn’t think anything of it.

As MP grew older, she began going to school, and she was invited to birthday parties. It didn’t take her long to catch on that her birthdays were significantly different from those that her friends were celebrating. She couldn’t understand why all of her friends were receiving gifts and having parties – her birthday was a somber remembrance of a mother she never knew. On her birthdays her father was more drunk and more violent around the house than any other time of the year.

Luc would come to visit and make dinner for them regularly, and would bring cupcakes with icing sugar on them on her birthday. But he always appeared distant.

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“One day she asked me what made her birthday so different,” said Luc to Mickey. “And I didn’t know what to tell her. She knew that her mother was dead, but ... we’d never told her how she died.”

Mickey Gordon sat quietly, deeply absorbed with Lefevre’s story.

“She was only nine years old when I told her. Even then she was able to connect the dots and figure why daddy behaved the way he did. She was able to understand the pain that we were going through when we remembered her birthday. She understood that we remembered Colleen’s death when we thought of MP’s birth. And she knew that we treated it very differently than her friends did.”

While MP’s friends all told her about the presents that they got, the cakes that they had, and the candles they blew out, she was aware of the stark difference in our household – and she directly correlated that with a deep feeling of not being loved.

She became very moody and started acting out in school, she started hurting children in the school yard. She was unresponsive to her teachers and easily found her way into the drugs that Serge had lying around his apartment all the time.

“I had such a great childhood, Mic. I mean, my parents were there for me all the time and they took great care of me. I didn’t have all these bad influences and I did great in school. But after mom died, well, dad resented MP so much. He didn’t love her like a daughter. I can’t imagine what it was like for her to be living in a household where you know you’re not welcome.”

“Eventually, she was hanging out with a much older crowd while she was still a very young girl, and she quit coming home some nights. We were never all that close, I mean, I didn’t know what to tell a 14-year-old! We were 22 years apart, and we hardly even had our parents in common. I ... I just didn’t know what to do with her, how to talk to her.”

“I didn’t know what crowds she was circulating in, and dad was so high all the time that he didn’t care. I’d been on the force for a couple of years when she ran away and thought that I might hear from her again, but I hadn’t. I remember when she took off. Dad said she’d been gone a few days when I showed up asking about her. Dad was so stoned he could barely put the sentence together to tell me that she’d run away.”

“That *son of a bitch* didn’t even *care* that she’d run away, Mic!”

Luc paused, and cleared the moisture that was building in his eyes with his left hand. He took a deep breath and readjusted his jacket to keep the cold out. He didn’t stop staring straight ahead of him. He was avoiding making eye contact with Mickey. His nose began to run, partly because of the cold, but also because he was getting emotional thinking back on all of this.

“Dad was so relieved that she was gone. It was like he’d been trying to drive her out of the house all those years. He never told me what set her off, but all I could think of was such a young girl all on her own. I was also thinking how much better off she must have been not being anywhere near my father, though.”

“... and a part of me was relieved that she was gone, as well. She was like ... the unfinished business of all the damage that had happened to us, and when she took off ... it was like closing that chapter. Dad didn’t go looking for her, and ... well if I’d brought her back, where the hell would I put her?”

“And we let her go.” Luc shrugged and exhaled. Those were the skeletons in his closet, and there was nothing else in there. He felt like a monster for letting her go, for having so much resentment for such a young girl. He turned to face Mickey, expecting to be judged like a monster.

Mickey just stared back at him, no words came to him. Mickey Gordon had known Luc since he transferred into the city in ’99. As far as he knew, nobody on the force knew this story. He could understand why Luc wouldn’t tell a lot of people.

Mickey thought about his own wife and kids. He couldn’t imagine what any of the details that Luc had related would have been like – he couldn’t imagine letting his little sister run away without searching for her. He also couldn’t comprehend what sort of household that young child had grown up in with a drunken father, no mother, and an absence of love.

Detective Gordon placed his hand on Lefevre's shoulder. "I can't even start to express myself to you. I've never heard of anything like that in my life. Have you told anyone else?"

"No. I've never told this to anyone – frankly I've never had anyone to tell it to. But my father said her name. He said that she's still alive. He must have found her."

Serge's delirious ranting in the hospital included "Eemmppee ... she's alive Luc." And that had to allude to Marie Pierre. Luc hadn't heard of her for ages. He hadn't heard of anyone named MP at all. But when his father came out of nowhere saying that she was alive, well, Luc paid attention.

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"If your father had found her, then maybe that's what he's doing here. Maybe that's why he was looking for you!" said Gordon. "Let's get back upstairs and see if there's anything more we can get out of him."

Lefevre and Gordon headed back upstairs to the fifth floor to find the room locked. They went back to the front desk outside the elevators and tried to find out what was going on.

"I'm sorry, sir. Your father passed away while you were out." The nurse was speaking slowly and thoughtfully. She was experienced with delivering such news.

"We're making arrangements to transport him to the morgue, and we've locked him in his room until we get the gurney up here," said the nurse. "I'm very sorry for your loss, sir."

Luc had come to terms with his father's fate. He knew that he wasn't likely to return to consciousness after his last fit. He was too weak and badly injured to ever survive. Mickey put his arm around Lefevre's shoulders to offer him some friendly support, but Luc seemed okay with the circumstances.

"It's alright, Mickey. I hardly knew that man in there – he's not the man that raised me or the man that married my mother. He's a person of interest in this investigation, and we're going to need his property that he checked in here with. Maybe we can find some clues to sort this whole drive by shooting out."

The nurse led the two detectives down the sterile hallway to his father's body. She unlocked the door, and swung it open. The lights were out in the room, and only the light from window beamed in. The instruments that beeped and blinked only an hour earlier were silent and dark. The motionless body of his father was no longer struggling to breath or convulsing from his gun shot wounds. It was a peaceful change, and probably the first time his body had been at peace in the last 24 years.

"We're going to need his possessions," said Lefevre.

"Yup, they're right over here," responded the nurse, who ducked down to pick up a plastic bus bin by the intravenous medicine stand. "It's all in there. He didn't have much on him. I'll let you guys be."

As the nurse left the room, Mickey called out, "Thanks." His voice trailed off as she was already on her way to catch up on her other duties.

“So, what have we got here?” said Lefevre as he started digging through his father’s possessions. “A plastic digital wristwatch, a filthy pair of track pants, a bloody ski jacket with a bullet hole in it, no undershirt,” ...

“The surgeons probably threw it out after they cut it off him,” said Mickey.

“Yeah. A pair of rundown sneakers, a blood encrusted toque,” continued Luc. “In the coat, we’ve got ... a wallet, a lighter, one mitten – looks like it’s been run over by a car – a crumpled up bus ticket. Aaaaand in the wallet we do have,” said Luc as he set aside the jacket’s contents, pulling out the wallet. “Jesus, look at this! He had a couple hundred dollars in here,” said Lefevre.

“He was right outside a bank,” added Mickey Gordon.

“No driver’s license, no identification. Just a whole load of cash.”

“Likely looking to pick up, eh?”

“I would think so. Buuut there’s no transaction receipt.”

Luc took the bills out of the wallet and leafed through them to count how much was there. The bills were worn out and crumpled.

“I don’t know if these came from the bank. Banks usually give you new cash – this stuff is ... like *this* one is even taped together. He didn’t get this from the bank. I would doubt he even *had* a bank account. You’d need a fixed address for that.

Amidst the twenties in there was a scrap of paper torn off from a cigarette pack. Written in blue pen, it said:

“MP – November 16, 11 p.m. at the Mill.”

“Looks like he was supposed to be meeting my sister this Friday,” said Luc.

“Or maybe he was trying to get you to meet her then. He was looking to tell you something,” suggested Mickey. “If she’s in town, we could put out an APB with her description, it could turn up something. Or put something on the news announcing her as a person of interest.”

“She was just a kid when she left, Mic. I haven’t the slightest idea what she looks like now,” said Luc disparagingly. “But it can’t hurt. If she’s in trouble, she could be looking for us, too. Perhaps she’ll see it and come forwards?”

“Yeah. We’re going to find her, partner. Things are going to be okay,” said Mickey.

## **Chapter Five**

**Windsor – 7:58 p.m.**

Before Luc and Mickey left the hospital, the nurse reassured them that she would get his father’s body taken to the morgue and sent to a funeral home of his choice. When he was uncertain what he wanted to do, she had some recommendations, which he took kindly. He would just have to call the funeral home and all the complications surrounding his father’s burial would be taken care of. Luc had mentioned that he was a busy man and didn’t expect anyone to attend the funeral – there was no immediate family and no one had talked to his father in years. The nurse said that a formal funeral wasn’t necessary and suggested just having a memorial some point later in the year, and taking care of the burial right away.

With the nurse's recommendations in mind, the two headed back to the station with a lead in the case, too.

Mickey recommended that they go see a police informant they called 'Dougie.' Dougie was a known drug offender that the police would turn to for information on the streets. Sometimes he'd help out, and other times he wouldn't. Dougie'd been in and out of jail frequently enough. Often times they made bargains with him to keep him out of the pen if he 'fessed up to B&Es so they could clear their books. They weren't looking to charge him, they just had so many reported 'break and enters' all the time that they were willing to give Dougie a free pass once in a while to help lighten their case load.

They called him 'Dougie' because he was scrawny, dark-haired and missing his front teeth, just like former Toronto Maple Leafs captain Doug Gilmour. The cops all thought it was hilarious – they weren't sure if Dougie even knew what they were talking about.

Luc could remember the first time he was on the beat and he went to meet Dougie. He was trying to understand crack and its street value. When he asked him how long an ounce would last him, he laughed, saying 'You really don't know shit about this, do you?' Luc didn't.

"Let me tell you, man. Crack isn't like a case of beer, where it'll last you a week. Ha, na, man. If you sell me a hit, I'll do a hit. If you sell me three, I'll do three hits in a row. And if you sell me a pound, I'll stay up for four days straight getting high."

"But ... we, like, lock you up for three weeks at a time. Don't you cut yourself loose of the addiction while you're in there? What makes you come back?" asked Luc.

"Nah, it's not a physical addiction, it's a mental one. I'm fine while I'm in jail 'cause I know I can't get any – so I don't worry about it. But as soon as you let me out, as soon as I put one foot back out onto the street, I know that I can get it again. And I've got to do everything I can to get some," said Dougie.

These days the cops would stroll into his place and he wouldn't even flinch. It was routine for officers to visit. Sometimes Dougie was who they were looking for, and sometimes he wasn't. Sometimes he had answers that helped with projects they were working on. Sometimes he was able to point them in the right direction. Dougie got into their good books years earlier when they were on a case searching for a burglar.

Dogie had broken into a couple's place and lifted a military decoration that had been passed down through their family for four generations. It turned out to be a Congressional Medal of Honor, actually handed out in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln, himself. It was honoured<sup>13</sup> for services performed during the American Civil War. The medal had tremendously high sentimental value to the family, but was shiny enough to catch a crack-addict's eye. As the police were searching for suspects, they eventually came across a Dougie.

While they were questioning him, they decided to give him a break if he could recover the war medal. It seemed reasonable to him. He hadn't been able to pawn the medal off yet, and didn't even know what he was carrying around with him. Bumping multiple charges of drug possession, drug paraphernalia and breaking and entering they cut him a break in order to recover the stolen medal. He'd been cooperating with the cops ever since. He was almost happy to see them most evenings, giving him a sense of value.

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<sup>13</sup> honored

The two officers passed by his house that evening, but he wasn't around. The scum he was living with didn't know where he was or when he'd be back. They left a message with him saying they'd be back first thing in the morning.

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Back at the police station Mickey suggested that he take Luc out for a drink. He'd had a tough day, and Mickey wanted to help out. Luc agreed. They changed into their street clothes and stopped in at a local place just around the corner from the station. There was a quiet little spot across the street from a smoke shop that cops went to all the time. The owners liked it that way, it helped keep trouble from brewing. The bar was quiet; it was a late on a Tuesday in mid-November. They weren't expecting a busy night.

Sitting in a dim-lit corner together at a table, Lefevre was talking about his old Yamaha motorcycle. He'd pulled it out for the first time in 15 years earlier in the summer hoping to make some more use of it. He had to change all the fluids and make sure the battery still worked, but never got to riding it. He was thinking of selling the bike, maybe Mickey was interested?

Mickey saw Lefevre's weathered face and worried about him. For the last little while he'd been acting edgy and uncomfortable, and Mickey wasn't the only one noticing. Mickey was even more worried with how today's events could exacerbate Luc's situation. He had said he wasn't sleeping well, he said he was just restless at night, but a few guys on the force were suspecting that he was up to something else. The station had a great in-house AA system, but Mickey didn't want to accuse Luc of anything unless he knew for sure that there was a problem.

Detective Mickey Gordon could see that Luc was mulling over something in his mind, he was thinking deeply. He was vacantly staring while his mind spun. Mickey wasn't sure how to bring up his suspicions of substance abuse with his partner. How do you bring this sort of thing up? Do you just ask away? It seemed so awkward and he didn't know what to do.

"Luc," started Mickey. Lefevre's attention faded back in and he looked at his partner. "I've been meaning to ask you something," he said.

"Yeah, I know what you're going to say, pal," interrupted Luc. "Alright – I'll come clean. You deserve to know."

That was easy, thought Mickey.

"You asked me earlier today why the chief and I don't share everything with you. Well, I never told anyone what I told you today about my sister and my family. I trust you, and ... well, you deserve to know the whole story."

"What, you mean about the chief?"

"Yeah, you were upset that we weren't including you – that you were out of the loop and you didn't like it. Well, I'm going to make it up to you – the chief is overly sensitive about the racism angle on the Constable Gregor case because he had a big problem with racism back when he was still new on the force."

Mickey had never heard anything of the sort.

"Everyone's been keeping it quiet. No need to dig up old bones, ya know what I mean? But we shouldn't be keeping you out of the loop, and I'm sorry."

“So, what did the chief do that’s got everybody so ‘hush hush?’” asked Mickey.  
“Well, of course he’s the chief *now*, but things didn’t start so smoothly for Hal Doric.”

In 1983, Hal Doric started his career a bit older than the average young constable. At 27 years old, he was mature among his class, and more so than even his older age would suggest. He was looked up to in his graduating class, and among the community at large. He wasn’t tall, but he was broad in the shoulders, and it didn’t hurt that he was a handsome devil, either.

Loved in the community for his philanthropy with the service clubs in the city, he was highly regarded on the force and an inspiration for all those interested in being a cop.

The next year, he was married to his high school sweetheart, Annie Showalter, in a lovely ceremony with a large family turnout from both sides, and they moved into a nice home in LaSalle together.

Annie began a career at Century High, a public school known for its delinquents from around the city. Problem children filled the halls of the west end school, and Annie enrolled by choice. She was given to caring for youngsters and had the patience to do the job right.

Constable Doric was cruising along the west end of Windsor late one January afternoon when he spied a suspicious looking man driving an unmarked van along Prince Ave., heading north. Doric began to follow the van, believing that the vehicle might be stolen. The worst mistake he’d ever made. Why ever did he think that the van was stolen? What was it about the vehicle that caught his suspicion?

The van pulled into a gas station just on the other side of some train tracks on College Ave. Once parked, three black men exited the van and walked east up the street towards some planned housing. Only the driver, a black male wearing a dark hat and yellow coat with short dreadlocks remained, pumping gasoline into the van.

Once the suspect was done filling up, Doric decided to confront him and find out where he had got the van from. He quickly pulled up his vehicle and hopped out of his car, with the lights flashing. Doric walked up to the man.

“What’s going on?” asked the man at the van, with a notable Jamaican accent.

“Let’s see your license and registration for the van, pal,” said Doric, taking command of the situation.

“What have I done? Why do you want to see these things,” asked the black man, who was beginning to stutter and become visibly nervous.

“Where’d you get this van, buddy? You steal this van?” he asked.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” said the suspect.

“Perhaps a ride downtown will make you more cooperative, eh sir? Is that what you’d like? Why don’t you get in your car and get me your license and registration, or you’re going to be taking a seat in the back of my cruiser,” said Doric.

The suspect began to dig his hands through the pockets of his yellow winter jacket, showing signs of panic. Doric’s instincts flashed into gear – what was he reaching for? What was he carrying? Was he armed? He couldn’t chance it.

Doric jumped into action, slamming the man against the van and went to turn him around to place handcuffs on him.

The suspect bounced Doric off of him, and shoved the officer away.

Stumbling in his first step, he regained his footing and sprinted off behind the edifice of the gas station, looking for an escape from the police officer.

Doric, embarrassed that the suspect eluded him so easily, and even more so that he had man-handled him as effortlessly as he did, he drew his baton from his belt and ran to catch up.

The young constable was quick, and covered the ground between the fleeing suspect easily, slamming his baton across the upper back of the black man, dropping him to the ground. Laying on the ground, staring up at Doric, the man continued to fumble through his jacket.

Doric drew his gun, pointed it directly at the man's head and screamed, "Freeze *nigger!* Or I'll blow your brains out." Those words echoed through the clear winter sky, with an emphatic exhaust of breath into the cold air from his mouth. Those words would continue to echo in his conscience for years.

Uncertain whether the suspect was armed or not, he pepper-sprayed him into submission, turned him over and cuffed him, before dragging him back to the squad car and taking him downtown.

In the hospital afterwards, the doctors said that the man had been badly beaten, although Doric had only hit him the one time across the back. He had sustained injuries to his neck, his shoulders and his head.

It turned out the man was unarmed. Richard Staley had been a permanent resident of Canada since he was eight years old. The vehicle he was driving was his family vehicle, and Doric hadn't even pulled him over, but rather approached him while he was parked at a gas station. It was chalked up as a case of DWB, or 'Driving While Black.' The incident became a case for the courts, and was the first major account of racial profiling in the judicial system.

Doric had deemed a black man driving a vehicle as suspicious. He hadn't even pulled him over for a Traffic Act violation, and the case represented a succinct candidate for systemic racism and labeled the Windsor Police as inherently racist. It also called into question the colour<sup>14</sup> of justice in Ontario and Canada. The case itself became a point of contest to revisit police procedures.

Doric was suspended with pay and became a pariah in the Windsor community. Because he had been so beloved, everyone who had appreciated or revered him felt betrayed. The community turned on him.

The press had sold papers with his name in the headlines for months. Local and national news coverage were making a mint off of his demise, as they kept everyone up to date on the latest accusations, convictions, suspensions and reinstatements in Doric's career. His face was on all the covers, and just the image of him became a symbol of racial intolerance and guilt. With that kind of negative publicity and public scrutiny, marital complications were inevitable.

His wife felt the pressure at her work. Century High had a large black and minority student population, and parents came in to the school to complain to the principal about having a known racist on the PTA. The PTA itself suspended her from the board.

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<sup>14</sup> color

Annie Doric's commitment to her husband started off devout, but after months of being shunned in the community and accused of racist motivations herself, she started to lose faith in him. The shame of her name turned to embarrassment, which turned to anger, which eventually resulted in her separation from Hal. She moved out by 1988.

Left with nothing, Doric dedicated himself to his work, and wore his uniform with a sense of unworthiness. His career was all he had left, and even that came with a great deal of shame. When he returned from his suspension, he was a changed man. Weathered in the face, absent of a sense of humour<sup>15</sup>, and still unpopular around the city, this was an ordeal that he wouldn't soon live down. Certainly, things did not start off smoothly for Doric with the Windsor Police.

But redemption was his. As part of his punishment he was required to attend workshops and clinics focused on racial sensitivity and racial profiling. He learned more than was required of him; in fact he became an expert on racial profiling and systemic racism, leading workshops all across Ontario on the subject. He never quit, and demonstrated remorse and sincerity in his every action.

It took a lot of work, and a lot of good work, but Constable Doric was promoted to Commander in 1992. His commitment and service was noticed, and he commanded with authority and with leadership. He regained the support he once had in the department, and some of the reputation he once held with the community. While the Windsor community was vengeful, it was also forgiving, if it felt one were deserving. Doric made his case, not to be back in the community's graces, but rather to redeem himself in his own eyes.

For all the costs his actions had led to, his personal growth developed him into a man accountable to himself, to his community. By 1995 Doric was promoted once again to Deputy Chief, and later assumed his own boss's position by 1998. No one had been more worthy.

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"That brings you up to speed, buddy," said Luc. "But keep it to yourself, eh? The chief is happy where he is these days, but I've got a feeling not a day goes by that he doesn't wish he change it. He committed an injustice, and he paid for it. He's worked damned hard to get back to where he is now, and, well, that's justice. And that's a rare commodity in this world. We know all too well that justice isn't guaranteed."

Mickey didn't know how to answer. "Thanks," he said softly. "I'm glad you told me. It means a lot. All of it, Luc. You can tell me about anything, man, I'm here for you. Alright? Anything."

Luc lifted his pint of lager and drank. He put the empty glass back down and wiped his mouth.

"That's enough for tonight," he said, rising out of his seat. "We've got a long day tomorrow. I'll see you bright and early – we've got to get some answers out of Dougie."

## **Chapter Six**

### **Dougie's House – Wednesday, November 14, 6 a.m.**

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<sup>15</sup> humor

Detectives Luc Lefevre and Mickey Gordon arrived at Dougie's address out in the 400-block of Tuscarora first thing the next morning. His shanty house had a broken-down front porch and stained red bricks. The roof was in severe disrepair and the yard hadn't been raked of its yellow leaves. The streets were lined with older models of cars, as there were no drive ways on any of the properties. Rather, there was a dirt alley that ran behind the units, some of which had parking spaces. It happened all too often that, in this neighbourhood<sup>16</sup>, suspects would run off down the unlit allies to escape.

They parked their car on the street, not bothering to pull over to the side. It was still dark and it was very cold. They were heading into the mid-November weather.

Stepping heavily up the ragged front porch steps, they knocked on the door, calling out Dougie's name. Luc was carrying a paper bag with some donuts in it.

"Come on Dougie. This is the police. Open up the door," said Gordon routinely.

When there was no answer, Luc reached for the door and let himself in. The door wasn't locked.

"Dougie, come on out. Time to wake up," called out Gordon.

They walked into the front of the house and began poking their heads in and out of each of the rooms, continuing to call out for their informant. The house was full of filth, but not as bad as things can be. Reports out of Detroit had crack dens filled with human feces and dead animals. This was tidy compared to how bad things could be. There was half-eaten food all over the kitchen, there were clothes strewn about some of the rooms, but most noticeably was the absence of a broom. Dirt, leaves, food and just general filth was all over the floor.

"Come ON Dougie!" Gordon called again.

The sound of rustling drew their attention to the back of the house, and they headed off in that direction. Looking into the back room, they saw Dougie still wearing all of his clothes. He might have been wearing them because he was too high to undress before he fell asleep, or it may have been that he was too cold to undress. For this time of year, their heat was turned off, probably because they hadn't paid their gas bill.

"Let's go Dougie, rise and shine," said Gordon, smiling.

Dougie rolled back and forth and swore. His gravelly voice protested.

"What do you want?" he rasped.

"We need some help, Dougie. Hey, we brought you a coffee and donuts," said Gordon, luring him awake. "Come on, let's have a little talk, pal."

Dougie raised his head, wiped his face with his hand, and crawled to his feet.

"So," said Dougie, "what can I do for you two gentlemen?"

"We're running an investigation on that drive by the other day. You know anything about that?" asked Lefevre.

Taking a bite of a warm donut, he said, "No. I don't know nothing about that, man. Honest to truth."

"Really? It was two days ago, bunch'a guys in a Ford Explorer shot a couple Glocks after making a deal. They blew the guy away – name was Mark Wholman."

"Ford Explorer, eh? Was it new and shiny? Sounds like Yankees. I'd go check with them," said Dougie.

"Has there been a lot of traffic coming in from the States lately?" asked Lefevre.

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<sup>16</sup> neighborhood

“Nothing more than usual, officer. You got any more of those donuts?”

Handing Dougie the whole bag, Lefevre repeated, “So you don’t know anything about the drive by the other day?”

“Cross my heart and hope to die, officer.”

“One of the by-standers mentioned a few things before he passed away. We were wondering if you knew anything about it,” asked Lefevre. “You know anything about ghosts of men or suicide pacts?”

Dougie stopped to think for a moment, his eyes darting back and forth. He didn’t quit chewing his donuts, though, which were falling out of his mouth through the huge gap between his teeth. He started to giggle, in a raspy and almost childish sort of way.

“Do you mean ‘Ghosts of *Man*?’” he snickered? “You cops never know what you’re talking about. The Ghosts of Man are just a gang in Detroit. I seen ‘em around sometimes. They’ve got some nice wheels when they’re cruisin’ around.”

“Yeah? You think they’d come over here and shoot the place up?”

“Sure, if they’ve got reason enough. They bring over some scary stuff, man,” said Dougie.

“Scary stuff? What do you mean by that?” asked Gordon.

“They’re sellin’ suicide packs, man,” he answered. “Like, suicide packs. You never heard of ‘em. Also called ‘drop dead!’ It’s crack, but laced with some shit. It’s crazy stuff. It’s killing people all over the place, if they’re not careful.”

“Drop dead? Suicide packs. Jesus, *that’s* what he was talking about,” said Lefevre.” His father’s mad rantings were finally making some sense. “So what is it that’s being added to the crack, Dougie? We’ve gotta know.”

“I don’t know what it is, man. I swear to you,” said Dougie.

“Come on man, we’re treating you real good here, pal,” coerced Gordon.

“Hey, I just don’ know officers. I’d tell you for sure,” said Dougie.

“Alright. Thanks for your time. You stay out of trouble, you got that?”

“Yes. Thank you, officers. Don’t be strangers,” smiled Dougie.

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The sun was coming up in the cold November sky as they slid back into their squad car on their way back to the police station. With a smile, Mickey couldn’t help but think to himself how smoothly the investigation was going. Usually they don’t make it anywhere, but their witnesses and informants had been leading them in the right direction. When they got back to the station, he and Lefevre were going to call up the Detroit Police Department and see if there was any information they would share, and the possibilities of getting a cooperative investigation was very probable. Extra manpower and the sharing of information was sure to put a dent into the field work.

They parked the car in the underground garage at the station, and headed up the elevator to the second floor where their offices were. Lefevre and Gordon split their ways and returned to their respective desks.

When Lefevre entered his office, he unlocked the door, and stepped into the dark room, waiting until he reached his desk lamp to turn it on, rather than using the switch at the door. He simply preferred the incandescent bulb and the glow it provided over the full

illumination of the overhead fluorescents. The dimmer glow helped him to think, helped him to use his imagination. The bright lights distracted the use of his mind's eye.

But his room wasn't all that dark when he entered, as the red light on his phone was blinking, indicating that he had a message. He put his fresh coffee down on his desk and took a seat in his wooden chair. Lifting the receiver to his ear and typing in his code, he heard Chief Doric asking him to see him in his office, as soon as possible.

Erasing the message and sitting back into his seat, he said, "Sorry Chief. This is gonna have to wait till after my coffee."

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## 'Ottawa Drive By' body count rises

Questioning leads to detective's family

Nov 14, 2007

Nathanial Nardone

WINDSOR BOREALIS REPORTER

The death of Serge Lefevre, 63, last night has now raised the death toll to two after the Ottawa Ave. drive by shootings from last Nov. 12, which has left seven others injured. Serge Lefevre is the estranged father of Detective Luc Lefevre, one of the officers currently working on the case. He died after Det. Lefevre had finished questioning him at the Windsor Regional Hospital yesterday.

Police are saying that the 'Ghosts of Man,' a Detroit-based gang, is responsible for the drive by attack. The Ghosts of Man are believed to be introducing a drug being called 'drop dead,' and 'suicide packs,' into circulation in southern Ontario. The gang has been suspected of lacing their crack-cocaine and heroin with fentanyl, a drug that has a potency 80 times that of morphine. Distributed in patches, the drug can be either cut up and eaten, or removed from the patch and smoked.

The illicit lacing of the drug is leading to outbreaks of overdose deaths in cities like Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago.

26-year-old Mark Wholman, the intended target of the drive by shooting, was pronounced dead at the scene. Police are searching for any information on the three assailants who were driving a grey<sup>17</sup> 2004 Ford Explorer with Michigan plates. The suspects are described as black males, between the ages of 18 and 30.

Police are currently searching for Lefevre's younger sister, Marie-Pierre Lefevre, 24, who is believed to be in the city. She is wanted for questioning.

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"Lefevre!" yelled Chief Hal Doric, "What the *fuck* is this!"

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<sup>17</sup> gray

Red in the face, the chief was fuming. The *Windsor Borealis* had a new report this morning naming Detective Lefevre, and his father and sister.

“Why are you sharing this information with the press, Lefevre?” yelled Doric.

Luc hadn’t read the article yet, but glancing at the brief report, it appeared that someone had learned all about what was going on. He took a moment to read the article, hoping that Chief Doric would calm down. It took only less than a minute to finish the snippet, unfortunately not long enough for the chief to defuse.

“Why is the press being briefed on your progress instead of me? You’d better have a good answer, detective.”

“I ... I have no idea how he got this information. I never talked to any reporter, chief. You *know* I don’t even like reporters – it doesn’t make any sense - where did he get this stuff,” said Lefevre.

“What’s all this about the ‘Ghosts of Man,’ and fentanyl, then? Is there any truth to any of this?”

“Well,” he cleared his throat before he answered, “to be honest, Mickey and I had just gone over to question an informant – we didn’t even know about the Ghosts of Man till this very morning. We hadn’t even identified the drug that was being cut into crack. In fact, we hadn’t recovered any drugs at all. I’m telling you chief, I don’t know where this guy, who is it? Nardone? I don’t know where he got his information for this thing...”

“What about this shit about your father and your sister?”

Luc exhaled, finding himself more and more frustrated with how quickly the case had fallen out of his hands. Everything was under control, until some reporter showed him up and unveiled all the things he didn’t want anyone to know about and all the stuff he hadn’t figured out yet, too.

“It’s all true, chief. I haven’t seen my father in eight years, and then at the drive by shooting the other day, he was one of the victims. Mickey and I interrogated him, but he passed away before we could make any sense out of what he was telling us. Turns out he was in town trying to find my sister.”

“Luc, you know I can’t leave you on a case that you’re personally involved in. It’s a severe conflict of interest that I definitely cannot overlook after it’s been published all over the goddamned city!”

“Wh, what are you getting at? Are you saying I’m off the case?”

“Yeah, you’re off the case! Not only am I bound by my duties as chief to not let rogue cops go chasing after personal vendettas, but I’m, in fact, motivated to kick you off because you were too goddamned stupid to keep this shit out of the paper!”

Luc stood speechless in front of the chief’s desk. He’d never been chastised like this before. He’d never been so humiliated.

“I’m going to be moving Officer Hallimut up to fill in for you on this case, and you will be reassigned to another file. You are to have no further involvement, is that clear?”

“Yes sir,” said a dejected Lefevre.

In a softer tone, coming to Luc as a friend and not the chief, Doric said, “Take the rest of the day off, Luc. Have the day off and take care of the arrangements for your father’s funeral. Find some closure in this, and know that we’ve still got two great cops working the case. We’ll sort this thing out.”

## Chapter Seven

### Windsor Police Department – 9:45 a.m.

Defeated, Lefevre returned to his office, closed the door, and climbed into his seat. With his elbows on his desk, he buried his face in his hands to figure out what the hell had happened. How had that reporter figured everything out? How was he a step ahead of them? What was he going to do about his sister? He still had the note indicating that she'd be at the Mill on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

Still two days away, there must be some way that he can find her before that. Hopefully the All Points Bulletin that was broadcast the night before would turn something up. Hopefully she still had black hair, although what length it could be was a mystery. She might have tattoos and earrings, or nose rings or god knows what else. She was short and thin at 15, but that could all change. She might not even be going by the name of MP or Lefevre. Even with the APB, it's still a crapshoot.

Luc picked up his phone and dialed the number to the funeral home to see how the arrangements were being made. A woman answered the phone – she was wondering at what times he would like there to be a viewing and when the burial was. Luc told her that he didn't want a service, and that there was no need for a viewing.

She had already placed an obituary in the paper for him, and he was thankful. He looked it up in the paper, and it was neatly done, indicating the time and place of the burial. Arrangements had been made to bury Serge Lefevre first thing in the morning at the Country Meadows Cemetery in Amherstburg.

With that being the only real order of business for him after being relieved of his duties for the day, he threw on his overcoat and was leaving the station when he bumped into Mickey Gordon.

“Luc, I just heard that you were bumped from the case. What's going on, man?”

“Yeah, did you see the article in the paper today?” asked Lefevre.

“What was that all about?” said Mickey wide-eyed. “How did that reporter know all that stuff?”

“Well, pal, we shoulda come back to the station and got our shit done last night instead of waiting 'til this morning, I guess. But I'm as baffled as you are, I haven't any idea how he got his hands on all of that information. It's like espionage, ya know what I mean?”

“You shouldn't have been pulled from the case, though. That's not right,” said Mickey.

“No, it's probably the right decision. The chief spelled it out for me. I've got to deal with these family issues, and we don't need these things spilling into the investigation. It wouldn't have been *my* choice, but that doesn't mean that it's the *wrong* choice, eh?”

“Yeah – but now they've got me working with that asshole Hallimut. I hate that guy.”

“I know, Mic. He's a tool. But don't let him get to you.”

“Buddy, I'm going to keep you up to date, with your sister, with the case, with everything, okay man? You're not going to be out of the loop, I promise,” said Mickey.

“Thanks, I appreciate that. I'll catch up with you later.”

Lefevre changed back into his civilian clothes and left his gear in his locker at the station. If he was going to take the day off, he wasn't going to tote his gun and badge around with him. He almost smiled to himself thinking that he was getting off so early that it wasn't even noon yet. He'd have a good chance to unwind and decompress after everything that had happened. It was certainly a busier couple of days than the usual.

From the change room to the elevator, he swung down into the parking garage and found his ol' Dodge Stratus. He pulled out from the underground parking garage and out into the midday streets of Windsor. Curling around the one-way streets and north towards Riverside he relaxed a little, and had the radio on.

Flipping from sports talk, to oldies to right-winged super anchors, he opted to ride in silence. The Detroit River looked cold and rough, but it still reflected the noon-day sun brightly, and reminded him of the beauty that lay only a few blocks away from him every day. He regularly forgot how enchanting the heavy and steady flow of the Detroit River could be, or how deadly it could be.

Cruising westbound down Riverside, he was heading to his LaSalle home, in a quiet neighbourhood. The traffic surrounding him thinned out as he passed underneath the Ambassador Bridge, and twisted his way through Olde Sandwich Towne. There was a coffee shop just up the road, and he pulled over to pick up some lunch. He wasn't in any hurry, so he decided to eat in.

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While his dark green Dodge Stratus was parked in the restaurant side lot, a grey<sup>18</sup> 2004 Ford Explorer slowly pulled up along side it and parked. A black man jumped out of the backseat with an aluminum baseball bat and took a swing at Lefevre's passenger-side rearview mirror. The vandal was wearing a red plaid jacket, similar to what you'd see a typical lumberjack wear, along with a black toque and a pair of loose jeans.

With a loud crack, the rearview mirror broke free from the side of the car and bounced off the ground. Small amounts of glass spread immediately below the car. The noise and motions of the attack caught the attention of onlookers, both outside the restaurant, and in.

Lefevre was finishing some chicken noodle soup, when a middle-aged woman said, "That man's smashing someone's car!"

The restaurant's patrons all turned to look. Customers rose out of their seats and approached the window to see first, if it was their car, and afterwards, to see what would happen next.

The man with the bat took a second swing directly into Lefevre's side-panel, denting the door. A third swing came down on the backend near his trunk, but didn't cause as much damage.

Lefevre's instincts kicked in and he stormed outside and into the parking lot, then he realized he was unarmed and without identification. Shit. The men saw him come bursting into the parking lot, and recognized him.

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<sup>18</sup> gray

“You’re that cop, right?” said the man with the bat. “De-tec-tive Lefevre, right?” He broke the syllables down into an inner-city rhythm, showing disrespect to the title of his office and more so, to indicate that he was in control of the conversation.

He walked out from behind Lefevre’s damaged car, and stepped out into sight to face him directly. He was threateningly smacking the head of the bat into the palm of his other hand.

“You’re the cop that has the funeral out at the Country Meadows Cemetery, tomorrow, right? The one that was listed in the paper?”

Luc remained silent, he didn’t like where this was going.

“That old man been bumblin’ around wit’ our bizness for too long, man. And he was in da wrong place at da wrong time. But I’ll tell you what, Luc,” his staccato inflection on Luc’s name carried the ebonic intonation of a seasoned gangster. “I’ll tell you about how to *avoid* being at the wrong place at the wrong time – a little tip I’m going to give to you ‘cause I’m a nice guy.”

“What do you want?” he asked, firmly.

“I’d better not see you, or any of the other cops out there at that funeral tomorrow. I got a girl that wants to be there, and ain’t nothing is going to disrupt that, you understand me?”

“What girl? Who are you talking about?”

“Oh ...” the man smiled, “I think you know exactly what I’m talking ‘bout.”

MP, this thug knows where she is. The mutherfucker knows where she is!

“Yeah, man! That’s right. You do know what I’m talking about, don’t you,” he continued. And then he winked at him, coolly and confidently.

“She’s gonna be there, you got that? And that mean’s *I’m* gonna be there. And if *I’m* gonna be there, that means *they’re* gonna be there.”

He motioned his head over towards the Explorer, and there were three other men staring out the windows into Lefevre’s eyes. They were fearless and aggressive – one of them flashed a gun.

“And I don’t think you’re going to want to bump into them tomorrow morning, Luc. It’d probably put a damper on your day, man. Shit, it might put a damper on your girl’s day, too,” he shrugged. “So you STAY CLEAR and don’t FUCKING come NEAR, you got that! An’ if you come lookin’ for us wit’ somet’ing to prove, I’d recommend against that, too. We don’t need any heroes showin’ up an’ making problems, man.” He paused to laugh at what he was about to say, “Tomorrow we’re honoring the life of a great man.” His voice was dripping with sarcasm. “Right? Best to let it be, Luc.”

He swung the bat around and laid it over his shoulder, and stood up straight.

“I’m glad we have an understandin’ detective. I’ll be seein’ you around.”

And with that the man turned his back on Lefevre and strolled leisurely back to his place in the Explorer. Shutting his door gently, the vehicle pulled out and cruised slowly by Lefevre who remained stoically motionless in the centre<sup>19</sup> of the parking lot. The group stared out at him from their truck, while Lefevre stared right back, and they circled around him and out onto Sandwich Ave., squealing their tires aggressively as they headed westbound and out of sight.

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<sup>19</sup> center

Lefevre stood motionless for a long while in that parking lot, feeling very alone and very troubled. The onlookers remained inside the restaurant, unsure of what to do next, while some of the employees at the restaurant had phoned the police. No one there was aware that Luc was a detective.

When the police arrived, he told them what had happened, but omitted the details about the funeral – he didn't want to put his sister in any danger. While it took the police three and a half minutes to arrive on the scene, it took them an hour and a half to take a statement and report the damages done to his car.

Those bastards knew about the funeral from the obituary, they knew about his relationship to his father because of that article that came out this morning, and now they knew that he was related to MP, who they apparently were taking to the funeral.

This was all because of that goddamned reporter.

## Chapter Eight

### Ottawa Ave. – 3 p.m.

TWO DAYS AGO – Reporter Nat Nardone was stationed at the *Windsor Borealis* waiting for an assignment. It was a slow news day and he was still resting on his laurels after having received an excellent public response from his article written on the Constable Gregor case. He had a great ear for news, and when he caught breath of the OPP<sup>20</sup> setting up a sting on a constable who was known for extorting speeders that he'd pulled over, his eyeballs rolled backwards like slot machines, complete with a 'ca-ching.'

He had included quite a bit in the article about Gregor targeting Asian women when he was pulling over speeders, and how there might be racial undertones to the investigation, but his editor, wisely, omitted that information. Accusing any part of the police force was simply asking to be sued, and his editor thought better of it.

That was Nardone's style – tell it like is, but that didn't lend itself to balanced journalism. His editors were constantly having to reprimand him for being far too leading and accusing in his work – even for the *Windsor Borealis*. He would shrug the stern tongue lashing off. Checking for libel and slander was an *editor's* job, not his.

But his editors couldn't stay mad at him for long, because despite the difficulties they had with his over-disclosure on sensitive issues, he still dug up major dirt on important city officials and publicly funded branches of the government, so he kept his job. There was no denying that Nardone was very good at getting the dirt.

The police scanner was a great source of news on a slow day, and lucky enough he was listening at a little after 3 p.m. on November 12.

The radio said, "This is officer Lefevre. Multiple shots fired west of Central, we're on our way."

"Whoa! Here we go," smiled Nardone. He threw on his long overcoat, tossed his recorder into his pocket, packed the digital camera into his shoulder bag and headed for the exit. His editor saw him taking off, and protested.

"There's something big going on! I've gotta' roll."

"What the hell are you .." his editor's voice tapered off as Nardone spun around a corner and hit the stairs. Jumping down the two flights three steps at a time, the reporter

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<sup>20</sup> Ontario Provincial Police

raced across Ferry Street and into a car with Windsor Borealis decals all over it. The otherwise white vehicle jolted into motion, heading out toward Central Ave.

As soon as Nardone got his car rolling, as if on cue, the dispatcher updated the situation. “Attention all units, all units please respond. There has been a drive by shooting on the corner of Ottawa and Lincoln. Multiple guns fired. Police, fire and ambulance requested. Suspects were last seen heading westbound on Ottawa in a grey<sup>21</sup> 2004 Ford Explorer. Four suspects all described as young black males, consider them armed and very dangerous.”

Whoa!

Nardone readjusted the front of his car to make a right hand turn and get headed in the direction of Ottawa Ave. *A drive by shooting?* When did Windsor get drive bys? The mid-day traffic slowed him a little, but he managed to arrive on scene very shortly after the authorities had begun to put up police tape.

The first thing he noticed was how much glass there was everywhere. There was glass far beyond the simple area that was being taped off. A car accident on another side of the intersection had two vehicles stopped, with shattered bits of taillight and fiberglass on the streets. A storefront had its windows shot out in such an explosive way that it absolutely covered the sidewalk. It crackled under the feet of all the officers who were on site trying to preserve the crime scene.

Nardone had learned at an early age that you shoot first and ask questions later, so he grabbed the camera out of his bag and started flashing away. He had shot after shot of the initial chaos. There was blood seeping across the sidewalks into the cobblestone cross-walks that lined up and down Ottawa Ave. He took an excellent picture of a dog that had been separated from its owner, as it watched from across the street with big droopy eyes. The expression on the terrier’s shaggy little face vividly caught the ‘big picture’ of the surrounding circumstances.

All around people were gathering, talking about what they saw, or asking what had happened. Some people were being immediately attended to by paramedics, while others waited on the ground for medical attention. There must have been a dozen people involved in the whole thing, and it takes just too long for that many ambulances to arrive.

Shortly, a fire truck parked itself at one end of the street to block off traffic, lending support to the team. A job like this was tremendously uncommon, and all the Emergency Response Teams were on scene to pitch it. In a sense, it demonstrated an excellent cooperative effort of the municipality. That was a good angle for his article.

After a few pictures, he lifted the police tape and got started heading towards one of the officers to get an initial response. Rarely does a reporter get to a crime scene this fresh, and getting immediate emotional reaction can be priceless.

As soon as he started walking into the taped-off area an officer began to protest and came toward him.

“What the hell are you doing? Get behind the line!” said the officer.

Nardone stopped and looked up at the taller man. Time to get to work. He pulled the tape recorder out of his jacket pocket and began asking questions.

“Officer, can you describe what’s going on here? I know people have been tragically injured, what do the police plan to do to capture the perpetrators?”

“Who do you think you are?,” retorted the cop, “get behind the tape.”

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<sup>21</sup> gray

“I’m Nathaniel Nardone, reporter for the Windsor Borealis, I need to ask you a couple of questions.”

“No you don’t. This is a crime scene. Stay *behind* the line, you got that?”

“Does this have anything to do with Constable Gregor being suspended by the chief earlier in the week?”

“With Constable Gregor? What the hell are you talking about? What would a drive by have to do with ... no more questions. I’m sure the Staff Sergeant will have a formal press release later on,” he impatiently removed the reporter from the scene and turned back to his business.

Back behind the police tape, he pulled the digital camera out once again. The sun was hanging late in the sky, casting long shadows across the ground. He had to switch the flash back on to catch any details of the scene. The flashes caught the officer’s eye, and he turned back around to continue to scold Nardone.

“Seriously, man. What’s your problem? You can’t be taking pictures here! Go on, get lost!”

Then that bastard cop started trying to block the shots with his hands. When Nardone got back to the office, he had a whole sequence of images filled with black leather gloves blurred all over the place – just great.

“WHAT?” was distinctly yelled behind the interfering officer, catching his attention. When the officer turned to see what was going on, Nardone twisted around him to get a better look.

The same voice yelled again, more exacerbated than before, “He said he was WHO?”

Nardone sensed that this story was going to take on a whole new direction, and he smiled.

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Rule one of journalism, nothing is off the record. If a journalist decides to burn some bridges and report on something that’s going to damage a whole lot of people, he’s fully entitled to do so. A journalist can protect his sources, and leave them anonymous, but where’s the fun in that?

Eavesdropping becomes a tool of the trade, and excellent for picking up dirt and developing hunches. It takes a bastardly spirit, strong gut, and a social imperfection that leads a journalist to take a personal tidbit and develop it into the crux of an article. While columnists have much more liberty and freedom, journalists are required to report the facts and just the facts, and developing overheard rumours<sup>22</sup> into a municipal scandal is a gift not all possess.

When Nardone discovered that the detective working the case was in fact related to one of the men that was shot down by a bunch of drive by hooligans, he was inspired to dig. He had this hunch that the detective had personal links to the mob, and that the hit was personal. He dreamed that the detective himself might have ordered a hit, orchestrating the whole scene to make it look like an accident, or a hit gone wrong. Perhaps it was the conspiracy buff in him, but his imagination began to develop complicated tales of deceit and police corruption – and he was eager to tell it like it was.

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<sup>22</sup> rumors

He laid low at the crime scene, and watched when the paramedics carried the injured father away. Nardone followed the ambulance back to the hospital, got the room that the father was recovering in, and dug as much info as he could. The father had gone into surgery and Nardone had no access to anything further, so he decided to go back to the office, punch out his report on the drive by shootings, and then return the next day to see what he could find out about the Detective/Father relationship.

Nathaniel Nardone was lurking around the hospital when he spied two police officers approaching the injured Serge Lefevre's recovery room. No, Nardone wasn't admitted to visiting, but then again, he wasn't visiting – he was just nearby, standing around the hallway, going for a stroll – in any case, he wasn't technically there.

When he noticed the two police officers entering into the room, he took action. Pulling out his notepad and turning on his recorder, he stood outside the recovery room, overhearing the entire conversation between the two detectives and the patient. Taking notes, he jotted down 'Drop Dead,' 'Suicide Pacts,' 'Ghosts of Man,' and the vehement hatred between the father and son.

Unfortunately for Nardone, leaning against a wall jotting down notes outside of a recovery room looked quite suspicious, and when the son raised his voice and started yelling at his old man, the other detective came running down the hall to see what the commotion was all about. Nardone quickly realized how suspicious he indeed looked, and turned his back to the approaching detective in alarm. He scuttled down the hospital hallway, hoping he hadn't been noticed. It was a rare blessing that he wasn't. So much for detectives, he thought.

But the close call gave him reason to be more cautious, and he took a station further down the hallway to observe more carefully. Shortly afterward the nurse pushed the two detectives out of the recovery room as the patient's life was taking a severe downward spiral. Nardone was pleased with himself that he'd remained discreetly concealed amongst the crowd in the ward's wing.

The detectives were on their way out, and Nardone waited to take the second elevator down, hoping that he could catch up with the two once they hit the ground floor. He shoved his notepad in his pocket and clicked off his recorder and stood impatiently waiting for the next elevator to arrive. Using his shirtsleeve, he wiped the lenses of his glasses. With a ding, the deep and wide carriage of the elevator, suited for transporting patients on gurneys, opened and took him to the front lobby.

He scanned the immediate surroundings and couldn't initially locate the police officers, but when he stepped outside to see if they'd driven off, he found the two of them seated at a bench. One was having a cigarette, and the other was lost in thought.

Listening as closely as possible, he noticed they were still talking about the case, trying to decipher the cryptic information that the passing father was able to relate. It turned out that one of the words was the name of the detective's sister – what a twisted story this was all turning out to be.

He caught the names of the officers, Luc and Mickey, and a quick reference at the office would be able to give a background check on the both of them. But the story that 'Luc' was telling to 'Mickey' dispelled any conspiracies or shady dealings with organized crime. In fact, the story itself was heartbreaking, really. Nardone almost felt

ashamed of himself for eavesdropping on such a very personal conversation between two partners.

After a while, Nardone felt so upset with himself that he decided to sneak back into the hospital to check on the father. Back upstairs he found the father dead in his hospital bed. Staring at the dead man lying in his bed, he instinctively reached for his camera. With his left hand, he pulled it out of his bag and turned it on, held it in front of him and paused – this wasn't something the public needed to know. The sight of the dead man's old and bloody body began to put all his intentions into perspective and ...

“What are you doing here, sir!” said a stern female voice.

“Wh., what?”

A nurse grabbed him by the arm and instructed him out of the room.

“I .. I'm sorry. I've got the wrong room. I'll be on my way,” said Nardone.

As he walked away, the nurse pulled a set of keys out of her smock and locked the door, giving him an evil eye as he headed toward the elevators once again. He knew he deserved it. He pressed the button and waited for the lift. When the doors opened, he felt a moment of panic and the two detectives were waiting to step out of the elevator, almost bumping directly into him.

They looked at him directly in the eye, and then they passed him by, and headed toward the locked room. Nardone's adrenaline pumped heavily in a moment of panic, realizing only afterwards that they hadn't recognized him, and didn't even know what he was doing there. Then he thought of the nurse, and what she might tell the detectives now that they were here.

Nardone jumped into the elevator and escaped the hospital.

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Back at the Windsor Borealis offices, Nardone rewound his tape recordings of the conversations, and pulled out his note pad to review what information he had. It was late in the afternoon and his deadline was coming up fast. He still had to put this whole mess together into something the editor won't throw on the floor and replace with copy from the wire. Nardone ran a quick browse through their database. ‘Ghosts of Man’ brought up a hit from the newswire. The AP had a story mentioning a list of gangs and gang names. Apparently Ghosts of Man was among them. Well, one item off the list – he had a gang.

He then typed in ‘Drop Dead,’ which came up with so many hits that he couldn't search them all in time for related material. Even if he did have the time, he couldn't link one mention of ‘drop dead’ with anything conclusively. ‘Suicide Pacts’ didn't hit with anything in particular either.

He tried throwing them all into one search through the database to see if there were any cross-references between them all. BINGO!

[PDF]

[DPD: Crime Database](#)

File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - [View as HTML](#)

**Ghosts of Man** in Metro Detroit Area by Mary Creek, 2006 (M CREEK) ... Young gang known for its imported shipments of fentanyl, commonly referred to by its street name, **drop dead**, and **suicide packs**: ...

[www.dpd.mi.us/library/gangs/ghosts\\_of\\_man.pdf](http://www.dpd.mi.us/library/gangs/ghosts_of_man.pdf) - [Similar pages](#)

With that information, Nathaniel Nardone was well on his way to finishing his work, and got the feeling that he was on the verge of something big. Adrenaline rushed through his body, as he put his fingers to the keyboard. It was moments like this, the great scoop on a big story, that made all the lurking and eavesdropping worth while.

A policeman investigating a case which involved two members of his own family? Scandalous. An emerging gang pushing an incredibly deadly batch of heroin in Windsor? Criminal. Put those things together, and his story was going to be the most talked about article over the next week. Nardone let a smug smile of satisfaction creep upon his lips like a caterpillar across a maple leaf.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Restaurant parking lot – 10:30 a.m.**

Luc Lefevre stood motionless for a long while in that parking lot, feeling very alone and very troubled. He didn't move any closer to his vandalized vehicle, and he didn't look at the people in the coffee shop that were stepping out to see if he was okay.

It was happening all too fast. This was *his* case, and now he was a victim filling out a report the very day that he's kicked off of it? He was giving statements to Constable Dan Hallimut, his replacement, describing the truck the men were driving, the men in the car, what they were wearing and what they told him.

How absolutely surreal it felt to him thinking that only this morning he was working with an informant to gather more details about this case, and now there was someone else doing his job. It felt like it was only moments ago, and in a way, it seemed like it was ages ago. Like it was all in his past. Like it all had happened to someone else.

Lefevre's heart was still pounding irregularly; it accelerated at random moments almost reaching levels of panic while recalling the details. His hands were shaking, and he was disappointed in himself. He thought he was a pretty cool customer, unflappable and unflinching, but the truth was – he was scared. He was targeted, and the fear of knowing that there was someone out there who was looking to get him was uncontrollably troubling his mind. His mind was overrun with a prevalent fear that at any moment the gang could return and do much worse than smash more bits off of his car – and worse still, they could do worse things to his sister.

What did his sister have to do with all of this? How had she gotten involved? His dad had told Luc that his sister was alive and that she needed saving. What kind of danger was she in?

“Look, Dan, we've got to find my sister,” said Lefevre to Const. Hallimut.

“How about you let *me* handle this, alright? You're off the case, I'm on it. I'm going to do this my way. Okay, poncho?” retorted Hallimut, not even looking up from his notepad while he wrote Lefevre's statement down.

Damn it, Luc hated this prick.

He tried another angle, “These guys say they know where she is. Do we have any more information on them, yet?”

“Lefevre, let it go,” Luc hated when this bastard even said his name.

“This is in good hands,” like it wasn't in good hands before? Asshole.

“I'm personally taking care of everything,” I personally can't stand you.

“So you can just head home and put yer feet up,” don't talk down to me, you ass.

Hallimut looked up from his notepad and stared Luc directly in the eye, and a smile crawled over his face, as if he'd just thought of something completely hilarious.

“Think of it this way, Lefevre. At least now you've got a *reason* to drink yourself to sleep tonight.” Luc was speechless and Hallimut knew he'd delivered the perfect zinger. Hallimut was content with himself, pleased that he'd shut Luc up.

Lefevre stepped back and stewed in his own anger, resisting the urge to pummel Dan Hallimut within an inch of his life. Luc hated this guy, and didn't trust him for a second. This bastard was wrong for the case. He wasn't going to save anyone. MP was going to wind up dead if this asshole stayed on, Luc could feel it. He could feel it deep down in his gut. In the mean time, Luc stayed out of Hallimut's way while he finished taking some snapshots of the damage to Luc's Stratus.

When Hallimut left, Luc picked up his rearview mirror and tossed it in the backseat of his car and headed home.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **McGregor County – Noon**

Out in Windsor Essex County in the hamlet of McGregor, the recently purchased estate off of Townline Road 8 and Walker was burgeoning with activity. The enormous thirty-acre property had construction crews erecting a rolling front gate and perimeter fencing with eight-foot high walls, secluding it from the view at the street level. A solid stone fencing was rimmed with wrought iron spikes along the top. Unscalable and opaque, intruders were unwelcome.

Construction on an enormous fence coincided with major installations throughout a mansion drawing the attention of many passersby. Whoever had purchased the property and home was customizing it to fit his own purposes, and had a lot of money to do so. The property had been sold earlier in the summer, and construction and renovations started slowly. But now they were heavily underway.

Short green and well-maintained grass was moist from the thawed frost, and small trees denuded of their leaves dotted to the large property, standing in the foreground of the enormous residence beyond. After the vast renovations, a crew poured a white concrete driveway up the centre<sup>23</sup> of the property that led around to an attached three-car garage. The driveway was lined with small shrubs, creating a tunnel of coniferous foliage into the property.

The garage had an apartment above it, and a large peaked roof. There were windows all along its sides and its cavernous inside appeared to be loaded with mysterious equipment that neighbours<sup>24</sup> speculated over for months.

West of the garage was the main house, the two buildings were attached under peaked roofs on the second story. There were wide circular windows and a large overhang that reached out over a spectacular front porch. The porch was fronted by massive grey<sup>25</sup> cylindrical columns. The red brick of the house had been plastered over with a dull mustard-like yellow, giving it a much more Mediterranean or South American style.

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<sup>23</sup> center

<sup>24</sup> neighbors

<sup>25</sup> gray

Further wooden fencing was installed in a back corner close to the partial erection of a stable. Though no horses were actually present on the location, it appeared that some were planned for the future. All the community knew was that a foreign man of great wealth was building a private estate all to themselves. A foreigner nobody had ever met or heard of.

Arsenio con Pisco pulled up to his estate in a Mercedes S-Class sedan, admiring the great progress made to this point. It had cost him a lot of money, but this residence would prove to be valuable, and necessary to protect. Con Pisco was a member of the Peruvian Ochoa family, members of an international drug cartel from his homeland, which had been operating for more than fifty years. He himself was a young man when he was first enlisted to traffic pure uncut cocaine to other members of the family in the southern United States many, many years ago.

Back then, trafficking goods was easy and affordable. Any authorities required simple payments for safe passage of any good that you wished to move. Whether it was cocaine, weapons, or even people, money was an international translator that everyone could negotiate with.

Arsenio con Pisco admired his family, and revered them with dignity and legacy. He was very proud of everything that they had accomplished, and could see the good that had come from their efforts. Their families were very well taken care of, and everyone involved with their operations was handsomely rewarded. Their careers had led everyone they shared their lives with to great fortunes and happiness.

Of course, their prosperity came at the cost of street urchins, heroin addicts, crack whores and broken homes, but those people were not who he set out to protect. He, and the Con Pisco *familia*, had originated in very modest and rural backgrounds, but found great fortune in harvesting opium and exporting it into Asian markets. Shortly after they began selling it to nautical merchants, the word of the great South American cocaine and heroin production became synonymous with places like Argentina, Columbia, Peru and Brazil.

The global schematics of international drug trafficking hadn't changed much in the many years that the Con Pisco *familia* had been involved. In fact, *la trafica con drogas* mostly involved lubricating one's way through the various jurisdictions with as little discomfort as possible. While the firepower and manpower to eliminate a threat was greatly available, it was much more amiable to purchase safe passage.

In the motherland, the empires of *Las Familias* reinvested their wealth into their surroundings. They built schools and churches for the villagers that lived in their midst. They provided support to the local farmers who oftentimes struggled to make ends meet. To their people, the Con Pisco family was merciful and providing, revered among the countryside. International investigations often stayed their distance, knowing full well that the firepower and battalions that the cartels employed were dangerously powerful, and a full-out war was highly possible. There was no safe approach for the law, either. The villagers surrounding the great *familias* protected their providers, sending out warning signals at any investigator's or an assassin's approach. It was a symbiotic relationship that both entities treasured.

Arsenio con Pisco first arrived in the United States delivering goods to parts of the Ochoa family in Miami, Florida. His brothers, nephews, cousins and uncles all had their territories in which they operated. His uncle Ledher Ochoa established himself in Miami, decades before and had become exceptionally wealthy and powerful. His older brother had moved himself into Albuquerque, New Mexico and had incredible success, too. But *Las Ochoa Familia* hadn't made the trek north in all their time.

Con Pisco married his way into the family in 1976, to Ledher Ochoa's daughter Carmen. She was very young and very beautiful. Having served him faithfully in Miami, Ochoa graced Con Pisco with the honour<sup>26</sup> of Carmen's hand in marriage, and also said that a man who provides for an Ochoa must be the master of his domain. He insisted that Arsenio move north to expand the family business.

Once in Michigan, Con Pisco found great success marketing their goods to the people of Detroit and the surrounding boroughs. Michigan was a hot spot for major drug use. Back in the early days, the manufacturing industry was booming. Assembly line workers, tool and dye shops and machinists were employed relentlessly with more work than they could handle. Yet all these men were unhappy with their jobs, and dreamed of careers away from the polluted environment of the factory.

The workers couldn't stand to work at their jobs much longer, but they were being paid tremendously for their efforts thanks the United Auto Workers union. Rather than taking a pay cut and moving into a field they would be more satisfied with, the UAW employees opted to find more expensive recreational activities to help them take the edge off of their dissatisfaction.

Con Pisco's business was never slow for a moment. He had a few business associates which helped him begin distributions throughout the metropolitan area, and he was pleased with the amount of business they drummed up. It was almost too easy. The drugs basically marketed themselves. Rock legends and hip hop stars graced the music scene in a market named 'Detroit Rock City.' The drugged-up images of rock and roll, blues, hip hop and jazz artists marketed Con Pisco's intoxicants better than he could have ever done by his own effort.

But, over the decades the market turned for the worse on Arsenio. The city had a downtown population over one and a half million for many years, prospering along with the automotive industry, but in recent years there had been a grave depression in productivity, sales and interest. While the Detroit area still retained a comparable population to the '70s, the downtown core shrank upon itself down to under a million people. Not that nine hundred thousand citizens wasn't a bountiful customer base, but the customers with the posh tastes who could afford to move out of town, did, and they took their money with them. The city was retracting, and they weren't migrating out into the boroughs, they were leaving town altogether. The only ones who couldn't afford to leave were those who were so heavily addicted that they didn't know where they were going.

So the move was on, and Con Pisco had to find a way to continue to make money and to expand his market. It didn't take long for him to realize that pushers were commuting over from Windsor and buying up crack, risking being caught at the border, and then marking the price way up. The pushers were making a mint off of Arsenio's goods, and he knew it was time to capitalize.

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<sup>26</sup> honor

Once he started investigating the Canadian market he was shocked to find that the neighbour<sup>27</sup> next door weren't the quaint pansies that the American experience had led him to believe. Canada had their vices, too, and southern Ontario had the highest population and the most money in the whole nation. He knew that an expansion into the region would be a financially rewarding venture.

Years later, he was still operating a tremendously successful drug empire out of Detroit where he had the municipal government under his finger. The first step of setting up a safe operating enterprise was to buy out the police. In fact, Con Pisco had one of his own men running the city at the moment. He was a Detroit native, but someone who grew up near and dear to the Con Pisco's. After rigging an election, the mayor was running things as an entrepreneur rather than a civil servant dedicated to the electorate, and that was fine with Arsenio. In fact, national magazines would rank him among the worst mayors in all of America each year.

In the last election campaign, the mayor had a formidable competitor challenging him in the polls. All that changed quickly after Con Pisco sent his men in to the downtown campaign headquarters for the challenger to ransack his offices and steal his list of financial contributors. All his campaign information was destroyed and he had to start from scratch to establish financial backers. Not a single member of the regional media dared to suggest that the incumbent mayor had anything to do with the situation, and that was a good thing.

Arsenio con Pisco learned that corruption could run deep, but only if it ran quietly. It wasn't so much a conspiracy as much as it was simply good business. The cities still received their money, and they weren't subjected to any gunfights or shootouts. Things would run smoothly and quietly so long as each party lived up to their end of the bargain. Yes, money was the lubricant that made business run smoothly.

Con Pisco started shipping product across the Detroit River via Native Americans up near the Sarnia crossing, where the native land was free of tariffs and inspections. Initially used to import and export contraband tobacco and alcohol, Con Pisco started moving his product through the native channels. The reserves were out of the way and he had to share the profits, which he wasn't impressed with. He also had to move product under the native's terms.

Things took a turn for the more difficult after the Toronto crack-down on gang violence, gun control and drug trafficking. Toronto's efforts did a formidable job discouraging major dealers from shipping guns and drugs into the GTA. With distribution and freight lanes interrupted, Con Pisco was having significant difficulties recruiting and maintaining good help that wouldn't drop his name if they were pressured by the cops.

The reliable pushers turned out to be the existing organized crime in southern Ontario. They were much smaller than what Con Pisco was used to dealing with in the United States, but they were no less organized. And they took care of all of the business, they just needed suppliers – and that was where Arsenio's idea to produce his goods in the region was born.

After importing his family's cocaine and heroin, he began setting up a makeshift storage unit inconspicuously located in the west end of Windsor, Ontario. It aroused little suspicions and was very affordable. It was going to serve as the perfect interim location until the finishing touches were completed at his production facilities in McGregor.

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<sup>27</sup> neighbor

Con Pisco had quickly established a connection with the Bonnot family that moved his product all throughout southern Ontario, and also a connection with the well organized Bandidos, who weren't overly popular by name, but were definitely intimidating to see.

The Bonnot family was every bit the French mafia in Toronto, who had been operating throughout Ontario with secrecy and intimidation. They were the type to enter into contracts that they had no intentions of honouring<sup>28</sup>, but because they were incredibly ruthless, it was strongly advised that you didn't bother trying to get reimbursed. It was easier to write off their account than it was to jeopardize the safety of your family. The Bonnots were the type to find your parents, your children, your relatives and your loved ones and give you a 'message.'

The Bandidos were equally dangerous, but in a much different way. Although they were rowdy motorcycling vagabonds, when they settled into a neighbourhood<sup>29</sup>, they made it clear that gang-land bullshit was not tolerated. While their business was dangerous, violent and sometimes deadly, where they lived was peaceful – by force if necessary. Often living amongst each other in the same communities, their business didn't go home with them, and they patrolled their neighbourhoods<sup>30</sup> with a sense of security. If there were any problems around their homes, it was quickly discouraged or extinguished, depending on how their first meetings went. They were well liked in their communities, yet equally intimidating. They would do whatever they felt like, and if you didn't like it, well ... beware.

The Bonnots and Bandidos had their own networks and ways of doing things, and frankly, they had all the help they needed. What they didn't have was a reliable source to turn to for their drugs and weapons. Arsenio con Pisco, on the other hand, had a bold artery pulsing with both weapons and drugs, but needed the dealers. They were partnerships that couldn't have come too soon.

Once Con Pisco had his manufacturing lab and estate finalized, he would be protected, profitable and pleased – he foresaw a completion date early the next summer. For the time being, he was going to crank out a few test runs to gauge the performance of his latest acquisitions. He was set inaugurate his production schedule later this week, even though he didn't have a large crew and didn't quite have all of the equipment he needed to convert and reduce tropinine for cocaine, extracting and purifying opium, and the more complicated chemistry involved with producing methamphetamine. He certainly didn't have the staff and equipment to produce in the volumes that he had planned. But his first run would be to work out the kinks and to impress his customers only.

He was specifically looking forward to meeting with the local and provincial police in the near future, to bargain with them. He didn't need any complications surrounding his work, and he knew that a few well-paid officers would ensure that things would operate smoothly. As in all metropolitan districts, the protectors of the people were really out to protect themselves. It had worked in Detroit, and he was certain that the Ontario Provincial Police would be just as pliant as their American counterparts.

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<sup>28</sup> honoring

<sup>29</sup> neighborhood

<sup>30</sup> neighborhoods

Most beneficial to Con Pisco was access to prescription medicine. In the United States, prescription drugs were difficult to come by in large quantities. The hospitals in the Detroit area were particularly strict, and Arsenio had difficulty finding reliable sources who could acquire large quantities of Sudafed, kerosene, ammonia, morphine, lime, ammonium chloride, and other over-the-counter drugs.

But in Windsor, the opportunity for corruption was much greater. The federal government implemented a socialist medical care system that left practitioners at the government's mercy when it came to getting paid. It was especially discouraging when it was juxtaposed with the United States, where mandatory emergency surgeries would rake in exponentially higher revenues.

Selling prescription drugs under the table remained a tremendous breach of the Hippocratic Oath and a dodgy move to boot, but it was incredibly rewarding financially for Canadian practitioners. Con Pisco wasn't clear how his pharmaceutical providers were obtaining the materials he required in such abundance and regularity, but he was satisfied. The *mulas* that he'd been having to use to cross borders were expensive, unreliable and they couldn't carry the quantities that he was looking for in their bowels. So this was a pleasant development. Plus it always disturbed him that all his drugs had to be shit out.

But the time was coming that he was going to have to meet up with the local officials to strike a deal. Whether it was the Commander in Chief of the Ontario Provincial Police, a high ranking officer in the RCMP, the Mayor of the City of Windsor, or the Chief of Police in the city, he couldn't have pesky investigations, allegations and attention involved with his operations. The time would come, and it would come soon. He had cash at the ready and was looking forward to it. It always pleased him on the inside showing a man ten thousand dollars in cash and watching his reaction.

He would watch the man's face, and he could see the ethical debate running through his mind. He could see him tackling the duties of his office, the explanations to his family about the sudden increase in income, how he could hide the situation from his colleagues. Then he'd wonder if ten thousand dollars was enough. Arsenio con Pisco had seen it over and over again. It was predictable now. It was also inevitable.

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Sitting in a mangled easy chair in a dim-lit bedroom, Chase Nguyen carefully balanced white baggies of cocaine making sure that each one weighed a gram before wrapping the plastic into a knot and setting it aside in an azure unzipped duffle bag. Loud highlights from a basketball game were blasting through the house from the living room downstairs – these were members of Nguyen's gang created a ruckus.

Chase's thick eyebrows lowered as he worked to push the noise out of his mind and focus on what he was doing. Chase's mother was North Korean and his father must have been a soldier on leave one drunken evening. All he knew of his father was that he was in the military, was from America, was black, and that he was gone the next day. His mother was very young when they moved to the United States, setting up in New Jersey where there was a large Korean population. All in the past – a life time ago. Now he was rushing through the remainder of a big quantity of cocaine that he had to move as soon as

he could. He was supposed to have shipped all of it up to the Greater Toronto Area days ago – but his *colleagues* weren't available anymore. They said there was too much attention in the area these days, that they couldn't move product right now. They said Chase would have to wait for a while until the heat died down before they could open up the trade routes again. They said it might be a year or two before things were safe.

That left Nguyen sitting on a big inventory and no market. He and his crew, The Ghosts of Man, weren't in the business of storing drugs (what was he? A fucking warehouse?) – they were supposed to be dealing them. And Chase knew if he didn't get rid of the drugs now, they'd eventually wind up the nose of his dumbass roommates, all coming out of his pocket.

A young woman quietly climbed up the creaky stairs and entered into Chase's bedroom. She lithely sat herself down beside him and ran her fingers across one of the tied baggies. Her fingers slid over it sensually, intended to catch Nguyen's interest. He stopped balancing the scale and gave her an annoyed glance. The annoyance faded when she gave him a coquettish smile. She asked if one of those little bitty bags could be for her. And Chase knew that one of them could. She palmed it and slid it into her pocket, and then reached over to give him a lusty hug.

Chase felt her thin but strong arms pull around him, and she nuzzled her face into the nape of his neck. She breathed heavily. Their embrace ended, and she sat cross-legged on the bed beside him.

"What will we do if he shows up?" she asked, changing the subject. The sensuality in her tone absent now that she'd got what she came for.

"It ain't gonna to be a problem," he answered curtly. "We took care of the problem. He ain't comin' anywhere *near* us tomorrow."

"He's a *cop*, Chase."

"I *know* what he muthfuckin' *is!* ... We *took* care of it. He's *not* showin' up tomorrow. We smashed his ride, looked 'im straight in the eye, and told it to 'im plain as day. He knows the rules and he's gonna play by 'em."

The woman wasn't satisfied with his answer, but she didn't want to excite Chase any more than he already was. She uncrossed her legs and climbed onto his lap, coming between him and his work. She pulled her mouth in close to him and gave him a short and lippy kiss. Chase looked at her deep and moist eyes.

"But what if he *does* show up, anyhow?"

He gently pushed her back to an arm's length from his face and leveled with her. "MP, we aren't gonna to do anything to him. Trust me, *sista*, he's *not* going to show up. I swear it. Nobody'd be that stupid," answered Chase.

MP was happy with that answer and gave him a second peck to show her satisfaction. She climbed out of his lap and left him to his business. She'd only just left the room when one of the other Ghosts of Man knocked on Chase's door. Chase turned to answer him.

"Yeah, boss. I know what you said, but ... what if he really *does* show up? What're we gonna do then?"

Chase balanced the scale, and tied another baggy into a knot, full of cocaine. He dropped it onto the growing pile of baggies that filled his duffle bag. "If he's *stupid* enough to show up – we're gonna kill'im."

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Luc sat in his living room with an open bottle of whiskey, watching traffic flow by his house, later that evening. It was after 10 p.m. and he'd been drinking since he got home. The headlights on the cars passing up and down the road in front of him were blurred streaks of yellow and red. His eyes were red and dry as he watched the cars flying by. Dizzily, he drooped his head and rolled his eyes around inside his head, feeling the heavy effects of the alcohol in his system.

No ice and no mix – just whiskey, straight from the bottle. He wanted to get his thoughts as far away from anything that had happened to him in the last day.

His body was flushed and red, and leaned forward and took another drink out of the bottle – the alcohol stung his mouth and throat and went down in a heavy gulp. His heart pounded and his thoughts still raced violently around his head. He thought about returning to the police station, getting his gun, and heading over to the cemetery in the morning and shooting each of those motherfuckers in the head. He thought about blowing bullets right through their skulls and kicking them in the teeth.

His upper lip curled into a sneer as he plotted all the things he would do. He could see every punch he'd burry into the faces of those goddamned bastards with vivid clarity. *Tell me I can't go to my own father's funeral?* His eyes stared inward at his own imagination, and he leaned forward thinking more and more deeply. He gnashed his teeth and pictured himself kicking his boots so deep into their ribs that they cracked. He was furious. *Smash up my car right in front me ...* he put the bottle to his mouth once more, but it was empty.

Luc could see in his vision the Ghosts of Man surrounding his father's final resting place. They encircled the grave like the stacked blocks of Stonehenge, shadows casting mysteriously across the morning light. They surrounded a long solid cherry wood casket. Just as it was harnessed and about to be lowered into the grave, Luc noticed, in his vision, that it was open – it wasn't his father inside – it was a little girl. Her cold pale skin showed that she was young, only fourteen years old. A dead little girl was being lowered into his father's grave at the hands of the Ghosts of Man.

Then there were thugs, no gangsters, no men in plaid jackets and guns. It was just Luc standing by the dead little girl's body in the cold mist of the cemetery. Luc kneeled down by the hole and saw the pale skin and the blue lips – the lifeless child sitting in a dark box in the ground. Tears welled up over his cheeks and the exhausted a mourning sob that almost scared birds from the trees around him.

He didn't know what else to do, but to speak to her.

"I ... I don't know if you can hear me," said Luc. "I don't even know what to say, really. I'd expected you'd be happy to see me, or perhaps angry, but ... I didn't plan to find you like this. Jesus, how did you get caught up with these guys? Why didn't you come back home? ... Not that I can't think of a dozen good reasons why."

"I came looking for you. I mean, years ago, after you left. I was at the station keeping an eye on all the reports, checking to see if anyone had found you. For weeks at a time I would have my heart climb out of my throat whenever an unidentified body came

into the morgue. Over the years I've found you dead in my mind on my way over the morgue over a dozen times – and each time a bit of my memory of you dies, too. I've wondered what to do when I find your body for so long that I didn't know what to do when I found you alive.”

“This is just like my last meeting with dad, in a lot of ways. He was looking for you, you know? It had been very hard on us when you left us, MP. I don't know if you knew this, but shortly after you left us, dad ran away, too. Hmph, basically I chased him out of town. You know how he was ... drunk all the time and cracking up whenever he felt like it. Well ... I was new on a case, and we were pursuing some leads, and dad's name came up. I had to confront him, give him a chance to clean up before the investigation started pointing towards him. Basically, he blew up at me, and took off.”

“He had a note in his pocket when we found him, when your 'boys' shot him up. He said he was going to be meeting you tonight at the Mill. What were you guys up to? Had you talked to him? ... Yeah, you can't answer. That's just how this week has gone, not an answer to be found. Dad was the one who told me you were still alive, did you know that? Yeah, when he revived at the hospital, he told me he was trying to save you. Now that he's gone, I guess, ... well I guess I'm trying to pick up where he left off.”

“It's been so long and you've grown up so big from all those years ago. I'd been so scared of finding you dead that ... well I'm scared to keep looking. Scared for my life, because those thugs you're hanging with said they were going to stomp me down if they found me at the funeral, but at the same time, I'm scared that you still hate me. I can't imagine what it must have felt like to be so young and to have no one you could trust, and nowhere to turn. You must have hated us so much, MP. I'm so, so sorry.”

“Dad and I, we wanted to raise you right, to love you as much as we loved mom, but ... you reminded me of that bastard that had raped her, that had *killed* that ... god, sometimes I hated *you*. If you hadn't been born, at least mom would have still been alive. Well, maybe. You wouldn't know this, but she was doing drugs and bingeing on booze all the months that she was pregnant with you. God, even *she* despised you ... Only now do I think of how selfish we all were when it came to dealing with you.”

“God, if I could do it all over again, MP I'd change it all. I swear I'd do it right if I had a second chance. I'm so sorry we treated you like that. I wish that we could give you back your youth, I wish we could have set better examples, I wish that you never had to live this life. I'd give anything to have saved you from this. If I'd known things were going to be this way, I'd never have let this happen.”

And in his nightmare, Luc felt a cold gust of air flash through his hair – and he could imagine that it was MP's soul leaving her body for good. Her body was at rest, but her spirit was still being whipped through the cold air, being tossed back and forth with its chilling strength.

It was all in Luc's mind, all in a dream, all in a drunken blur, but for the seven hours that Luc slept that night, they were as real as he could possibly imagine.