

Cold Case Equity

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Detective Harris wanted to work in the Homicide unit.

Being a hotshot type 'A' personality, he decided to make it his mission in life to bring who he presumes a guilty prominent citizen to justice.

What he found at the end of his quest was the real meaning of justice.

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Cold Case Equity

It's late Sunday night/early Monday morning. It will be a few hours before the sun starts peaking over the Kansas City Missouri skyline. A taxi is sitting at the cab stand adjacent the Parkway Theater Building. The driver has already deposited the cash from the night's fares in the bank across the street. She returned to her taxi and is about to go home.

Jyrone Givens walked up to the left side of the vehicle. A moment later, the driver is slumped over the steering wheel, dead from a single gunshot to the head. The victim is Roberta Alice Jefferies. She will forever be in her mid-forties. She drove her taxi during the evening/late shift. The cab is co-owned with her business and domestic partner Phyllis Branson. The murder was committed for thirteen dollars.

A couple of hours later, Mrs Carmen Munoz discovered the body while on her way to work at the Parkway Restaurant. A couple times a week, she comes to work around three in the morning to bake pies. This is one of those mornings. She thought the cab driver was sleeping with the engine running so she went to wake the driver.

Carmen looked through the passenger side window and discovered it was someone she knew in the drivers seat. Roberta would perform general repairs around the restaurant during her off hours. She was also a friend of the restaurant owner William Cann and his wife Marcy. They live in the apartment above the restaurant.

She started screaming and frantically ringing Williams' doorbell. Within moments, Bill is downstairs wearing nothing but sweatpants and carrying a hand gun.

Carmen pointed to the cab; "Roberta's been shot! I think she's dead."

Bill walked to the drivers side. He seen the shattered window first and then the body slumped over the wheel. Marcy came out to see whats going on. Bill told her; "Take Carmen inside please. Something terrible has happened. Call nine one one first. Then call Jimmy Smith and Phyllis. They both need to get down here right away."

Bill is standing behind the cab when the first police car arrived. The young officer exited the patrol car, immediately went into a defensive stance and yelled; "Put the gun down!"

Bill told the officer to go fornicate himself before he realized he has no identification. He handed the weapon to the officer handle first; "Now that you can see I'm unarmed you moron, I know the woman in the car. She's been shot in the head."

Still pointing his weapon at Bill and shaking; "Put your hands over your head, turn around and walk backwards to me. Do you have any more weapons on you?"

Bill dropped his sweat pants exposing the fact that he is only wearing his briefs. He started calling the officer everything except a human being. Marcy came back outside and told Bill to pull his pants up. She also brought down his slippers and sweatshirt.

He pulled his pants up and started pacing back and forth. Marcy finally grabbed his arm while telling him to stop. She convinced Bill to put his slippers on. She gave him his sweatshirt which he did not put it on.

Several more patrol cars arrived. The detectives arrived along with his two detective friends; Donna Nakai and Jimmy Smith who retrieved Bill's weapon from the patrol officer and gave it to Marcy. They told Marcy to put the weapon away and keep it away from her husband.

Donna told Bill; “You being here and interfering is not going to help anything. Go inside so we can start the investigation.”

Bill refused and told Donna he wanted to help. Jimmy tried to talk Bill into opening the restaurant and make coffee for everyone. Bill made it very clear when they catch the suspect, he wants to personally question the suspect; alone.

“Bring him here in the back of the wagon. I have a lot of experience in extracting information from hostiles. I’ll get you a confession. Give me five minutes and I guarantee he’ll be begging to sign a confession. That’s if he can still hold a pen and see the paper when I get through.”

Jimmy is shaking his head; “Come on Bill. You’re not a mercenary any more.”

“I promise I won’t kill him. How about I rip his fu**ing arm off and beat him half to death with it.”

Bill is so angry, it took Donna, Jimmy and Marcy to get him in the restaurant and calmed down. Phyllis showed up and is extremely distraught over her partner being killed.

Bill promised her the police will find the murderer; “He will not go unpunished. My friends Donna and Jimmy are great detectives. They’ll find the animal who did this.”

The investigation was very straight forward and swift. It was deemed Roberta died instantly from a single gunshot to the head. Her wallet, watch and cash box are missing. The offender was photographed shooting Roberta by Patel’s convenience store outside security cameras. The suspect tried using her bank debit card across the street and was photographed by the ATM. This helped capture the murderer within a few hours of committing the crime.

One of the detectives who arrived on the scene that evening was Russell Harris. He graduated at the top of his class at the police academy. He's a hotshot type 'A' personality. Newly out of the academy, he was assigned to the narcotics division because nobody on the street knew him. He worked undercover for a time before moving on.

Harris came to the homicide division after he worked in the sex crimes unit, organized crime and other units. The reason he wanted to get into homicide is simple. Everyone in the division have tee shirts that read; "Kansas City Homicide - Our day begins when your day ends."

This is the first active murder investigation he would be involved with. Like every homicide detective, Harris had to start in the cold case unit. Being an over achiever, Russell wanted to prove to everyone he's the best there is. He studied cold case files during working hours and at home. With the aid of the computer, he's able to collate information.

The stack of cold case files are mostly gang related shootings. One gang banger kills another for territory; who cares? Any unsolved murder which involved some dope dealer or gang banger went to the bottom of the pile. Why waste valuable resources on thugs. All that's left is a much smaller pile. That did not leave but a few dozen case files to go through. Seeing William Cann early this morning rang a bell in his memory from the files he read.

Back at the office, Russ searched William Jefferson Cann. Then he searched all the names associated with Mister Cann. The first incident report was filed several years ago by then Patrol Officer James Smith.

The incident occurred several years ago in front of a resale shop located in the Parkway Theater Building. The same building Mister Cann still lives in. William Cann was assaulting (choking) a Ricky

Mendoza for striking his daughter, causing her to have a bloody nose. The assault stopped when Mister Cann's daughter intervened. The daughter refused to press charges. No arrests made. Incident report filed and closed.

The second incident was from a few days later. Ricky Mendoza, Thomas Boyd and Justin Norton were roused from Victory Park about 2:30AM. They were intoxicated and making threats of rape and murder against three individuals. Nancy Swenson (Mister Cann's newly adopted teenage daughter), Marcy Smith (Mister Cann's girlfriend at the time) and William Cann. The subjects alcoholic beverages were disposed of and the ejected from the park. No arrests made.

The third incident which may be connected to William Cann involved Ricky Mendoza, Thomas Boyd and Justin Norton. They were found murdered in Victory Park by multiple gun shots.

According to forensics, Boyd and Norton were each shot in the back while trying to escape their attacker. They were executed by two shots in the back of the head, at the cerebellum, severing their spinal cords. There was no other trauma to the bodies. The third victim, Ricky Mendoza was beaten and tortured before being executed.

Mendoza was found in a state of partial undress, (his pants were around his ankles). He was shot in both knees; severely beaten, (multiple broken facial bones) and castrated. Shot twice point blank in the frontal lobe.

No shell casings were recovered from the crime scene. The only physical evidence is the nine millimeter hollow point projectiles recovered from the bodies.

According to the time line, an unknown male called 911 at 2:03AM and stated an officer is involved in a gunfight and another

officer has been shot. The location is the exact opposite side of the police district. While every officer and detective went to the officer down call, the murders in Victory Park were committed.

When responding officers returned to their regular patrols from the hoax call, they found 17 year old Isabella Salazar wandering the sidewalk bordering Victory Park. Her clothes were damaged. She was disorientated, appeared as if she had been the victim of a battery and possible sexual assault. The patrol officers attempted to question her, but she was incoherent.

This is a summary of the report made by the responding officers: Miss Salazar stated she was initially met by three men, two of whom restrained her. A third male struck her, knocking her unconscious.

She recalls regaining partial consciousness and being restrained by two of the attackers. A third attacker was removing her garments when she heard a pop and her attacker collapsed on top of her.

The two males who were restraining her were surprised by the assailant. Miss Salazar heard a voice from the assailant; 'How fast can you run?' Moments later she heard two muffled pops. The voice spoke; 'Not fast enough.'

She recalls two voices moaning in pain for only a few seconds before two more pops were heard and a second later, two more pops. The moaning stopped.

Miss Salazar felt the unconscious Ricky Mendoza being removed from on top of her. She opened her eyes to see a large man bend over and pick her up using only his left arm. He gently set her against a nearby tree.

The witness heard Mendoza regain conscience. She heard him begging for his life while being beaten. She heard the screaming;

‘please don’t hurt me anymore.’ The witness stated she heard two more pops and the same man screaming in agony then crying; ‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean any of it’.

She also stated there were two more pops and the crying and begging stopped. A moment later, the same man returned with a gun in his right hand. He again picked her up from the ground with his left arm and carried her to the edge of the park.

The unknown assailant placed her on a park bench directly under a street lamp. She stated the offender has a terrible scar extending from his left eye to the corner of his mouth. His eyes frightened her because they are gray, like steel.

An ambulance arrived and Miss Salazar was brought to the hospital to be examined. She was the victim of a battery, not sexually assaulted. While being questioned at the hospital, she was asked if the man with the gray eyes hurt her and why didn’t she run away.

“He did not hurt me intentionally. He picked me up and held me against his chest so hard, I thought I was going to be crushed. It was hard to breath. When he looked into my eyes, I thought he was looking into my soul. There was no expression on his face. I didn’t see what he did, but I know he killed those three men.”

“Why didn’t you run away or try to escape?”

“I was paralyzed with fear. When I looked into his eyes, there was no soul. That man was death’s disciple. I thought I was going to die. When he spoke to me, his voice sounded like death itself. It sounded like gravel. Before you ask, he told me something to the effect; get a life. Then he put the gun in his pocket and walked away.”

The victims were not found after a routine search. Because there was alcohol in her blood, the investigating officers thought her statement was nonsense. The bodies were found in the interior of the park the next morning by a citizen walking his dog. The triple homicide investigation was started. No shell casings or any other external physical evidence was ever recovered.

It was recorded a Detective Grant was assigned to the case and went through the incident reports for that evening. He came across the only witness; Isabella Salazar. He also came across the incident reports linking William J. Cann to a confrontation involving the late victim Ricky Mendoza.

An interview was requested with the suspect Mister Cann who came to the district station of his own free will. The only possible witness to the murders, Isabella Salazar was watching the interview through the witness window and listening through the intercom. Miss Salazar could not or would not identify Mister Cann as the man in the park that night.

During the interview, the suspect tried to antagonize Detective Grant into physically striking him. Grant was stopped by the District Commander before any physical confrontation took place.

The investigation traced the fake officer needs help call to a prepaid cellphone sold from Hakeem's Variety store. Investigators went to examine the security video footage; their endeavors were worthless.

The surveillance recording machine had broken years ago. The store owner kept postponing replacing the system to reduce his operating costs. There is no video images to be examined. Because Mister Hakeem sells so many prepaid (burner phones), he could not remember what any of the phone purchasers look like.

Mister Cann is the only suspect in this triple homicide. He agreed to have his apartment searched with the exception of a footlocker with diplomatic seals on it. His apartment and footlocker were eventually examined by the chief of detectives and two other detectives. There was no evidence or weapon(s) found.

Conclusion: the murders were committed by person or persons unknown. There is no evidence victims Boyd or Norton knew their assailant. It is believed victim Mendoza was the target and knew his assailant. All three victims were executed by a professional. Most likely Boyd and Norton they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Because Mendoza was tortured before being executed; most likely gang related.

Case status: Open – inactive (cold)

The next case that caught the attention of Detective Harris is of the later murdered detective Roy Grant. He was fatally gunned down by a known gang banger Julio Garcia while in his car with detective trainee Donna Nakai.

They were to meet with an informant when the assailant opened fire through the unmarked patrol car windshield. Detective Grant was fatally struck in the chest multiple times. Detective Nakai exited the vehicle and returned fire fatally striking the assailant several times. Both the assailant and Grant were pronounced dead at the scene.

Further investigation regarding the shooter revealed he had been undergoing treatment for non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (blood cancer) at the county hospital. Julio Garcia was aware he only had a few weeks to live. The day of his funeral, twenty-five thousand dollars was wired into his mother's bank account from an off shore bank. She removed the funds and moved back to Mexico.

The only other possible link to the death of Detective Grant was a subtle comment made by Mister William Cann at the Ricky Mendoza death investigation interview. Mister Cann told Detective Grant his ending will not be a good one while smiling.

Further investigation revealed Mister Cann was in Washington DC at the time of Detective Grants murder. He was attending the opening of the Choam embassy and getting married by the King of Choam to his then girlfriend Marcy Leanne Smith. No connection could be found between Julio Garcia and Mister Cann.

The next name in Detective Harris' investigation into Mister Cann's acquaintances is his mother-in-laws live in boyfriend at the time; Duane Dennis Wyche. He died from Delirium tremens (DT's). A severe form of alcohol withdrawal.

Then Officer Donna Nakai informed Christine Smith (Mister Cann's future mother-in-law of her ex-live in boyfriends death. Mister Cann lived in the same building as Mrs Smith (separate apartment on the other side of the Theater Building). There is no evidence or link to Mister Cann to the death of the deceased.

Other items of note are William Cann donates to every politician in Kansas City who can do any of his businesses any favors.

Harris felt if he were to bring down a prominent citizen like William Cann, it would assure his ascension within the homicide division. He decided this is his mission in life to bring down Citizen Cann by bringing murder charges against him. Harris felt there must be some evidence somewhere connecting William Cann to the three unsolved murders in Victory Park.

Russell Harris is sitting in the detectives office when Detective Jimmy Smith made a phone call to his friend William Cann. Russell moved over so he could hear the conversation.

“Hey Bill, it’s Jimmy. We caught the perp who killed your friend Roberta. . . . We recovered the murder weapon, her wallet and her watch. --- Yeah, the scumbag removed her watch and tried to pawn it. --- The pawn broker seen the blood on it and stalled the perp so we could pick him up. --- I can’t understand you with a mouthful of cookies. --- Oh; his name is Jyrone Givens. He’s twenty-seven years old, ex-con and has a rap sheet longer than your arm. --- We’re going to hold him here and transfer him to county tomorrow morning for his bond hearing. --- No I can’t let you talk to him alone. --- Who’s working lockup tonight? Your buddy Walt is on duty. Why do you ask? --- Don’t come down here. I will have you arrested. --- I’m not shitting Bill, stay home. . . . Good. You stay home and I’ll see you later. Say hello to Marcy for me.”

“Jimmy; what was that all about?”

“That was my friend Bill Cann. He owns the Parkway Theater Building and the restaurant along with other businesses in the building. He was the big guy on the street at the taxi murder scene wearing the sweat pants. The victim was a friend of his. He wanted to interview Jyrone Givens alone in his cell before being transferred to county tomorrow.”

“Bill Cann was the big dude with all the scars on his body, the huge one across his stomach and the scar that looks like a zipper on his head?”

“That’s Bill. I almost used a tazer on him once. I think he would have removed the electrodes and kicked my ass if I did. The zipper scar on his head is where he took a machete. The doctors inserted a metal plate to repair his damaged skull. He was a mercenary and then a bodyguard in Choam. That was the injury that ended his highly paid career.”

“He looks like he's been in a few too many wars.”

“The scar on the left side of his face was from a knife wielding woman who was trying to kill the Queen of Choam. The huge nasty one across his abdomen is when he was almost cut in half. Bill told me he got it at the Al-Qaeda Motel. He refuses to say anything more about it.”

“You call this guy is your friend? He’s linked to the Victory Park triple homicide and possibly the detective Roy Grant homicide. I’ve been reading the cold case files. Your buddy’s name comes up way too many times to be a coincidence.”

“Russ, you're a rookie in homicide. Learn to pick your battles carefully. Some dope fiend kills another dope fiend, so what. A bunch of gang bangers kill a bunch of other gang bangers; nobody could care less. When they’re done, we go pick up the bodies and save the taxpayers a fortune in court costs.”

“I agree if dope fiends kill each other, they won't clog the courts and jails. Your buddy killed three citizens and he needs to pay.”

“In Victory Park, three assholes are prevented from gang raping a young girl. They get killed by a person or persons unknown. The girl is safe, three assholes wind up in the morgue. There’s no expensive trial, no feeding them and keeping them in jail for years. There's no spending millions of taxpayer dollars on their appeals. So the only cost is their burial expenses. I don’t see a downside at all.”

Harris is wide eyed; “I can make a name for myself if I bring your buddy down. Maybe if I lean on his wife and put pressure on her, I can get to him that way.”

With a voice of disgust; “Before you get stupid, file a federal background request on William Jefferson Cann. You better know and understand who you're going up against.”

Jim looked away in disgust for a moment before he turned back to face Harris; “Let me give you one last piece of advice. For you're own good, his wife Marcy is off limits. If Bill thinks you're trying to hurt her; well let's just say I won't get in his way. I really enjoy breathing on my own and not with the aid of a respirator.”

“I know he carries Homeland Security and State Department credentials. I understand he's your friend; but I know what I'm doing.”

“I'm sure you think you do. I'll give you this little bit of insight to try and save your ass. You've heard the story of David and Goliath?”

“Sure, little David with a slingshot takes out big bad Goliath.”

“Let's look at you and Bill in the real world. You're David. You can't find a rock, you're slingshot is broke and you have sand in your eyes. Goliath has full body armor and an AK-47 aiming at your head. He's not going to shoot you; he will crush you like a bug with his foot so he doesn't have to waste the ammunition.”

“You talk like he's some kind of super bad ass. He's only human.”

“Only human? At the murder scene, you seen him without his shirt on. He's been shot and stabbed so many times, he don't remember. Bill was almost eviscerated and survived. He took a machete to the head which took out a quarter of his skull and survived. Only human? I'm not so sure.”

“You'll see. I'll get him and make a name for myself.”

“You're screwing with fire Russ. He will burn you to a cinder, kick your ashes to the side and not even give you a second thought. By the way, from this moment forward, address me as Detective Sergeant Smith. Since I outrank you, I want to make sure we are

separated by protocol at minimum. When you go down in flames, I want to be as far away from you as I can get. Goodnight Harris.”

Jimmy walked out of the detective’s room and went home. That night there was another incident that fired up Detective Harris. Prisoner Jyrone Givens who was being held in the police station on charges of murder and robbery overdosed and died.

The officer on duty in the lockup that night had a touch of food poisoning. He was in the bathroom when the power to the video surveillance system was turned off for approximately fifteen minutes. Someone tripped a circuit breaker and while trying to reset it, turned off the surveillance system by mistake. When the power was restored, the suspect was deceased.

Detective Harris asked himself; “Was the death of Jyrone Givens an accidental overdose, a suicide or a well-staged murder? Was William Cann involved with the death of Givens? He's rich; so did he have someone help him overdose? Who brought the narcotics to the prisoner?

Was the power outage really an accident? Why would someone go through so much trouble to kill a crack head? Was it revenge for the killing a lesbian cab driver with no family? Officer Walt is single, so he eats at the restaurant William Cann owns several times a week. Could he be involved?”

There didn’t seem to be much urgency because everyone involved is dead or not going anywhere. Russ went home to his wife Pamela and his children for the night. The following morning upon entering the detectives office, he ran a federal background check on William Jefferson Cann.

The computer displayed; 'Top Secret: Sensitive Compartmentalized Information Security clearance required.' A moment later, the computer is displaying the home page for Homeland Security.

In under an hour, two FBI agents are in the police station asking the district commander for Detective Harris. They wanted to know why a Kansas City detective would be requesting a background check on a member of Homeland Security and a consultant to the State Department.

Special Agent Clarence Magee is the aggressor of the two agents; “Detective Harris; is there an active investigation which involves Mister William Jefferson Cann directly?”

Russell started being coy and backing down; “Well, no there is not. I'm investigating several deaths which appear suspicious and Mister Cann may be involved.”

“Do you have any evidence other than rumor and innuendo linking Mister Cann to any of the victims?”

“No, not at this time. Let me tell you the FBI has no authority to come here and tell us how to conduct our investigation of a local matter.”

Special Agent Julian Penton spoke with sarcasm in his voice; “We're not here to piss on your parade. If you want to play super cop, that's nice. Maybe someday you'll be able to lift your leg like the rest of us big dogs. Until that day arrives, stay out of our way. If you don't, you're going to get pissed on. Trust me, us big dogs will give you one hell of a shower. That's after we bite you in the neck.”

Special Agent Magee relaxed his stance; “Any further background checks of Mister Cann will not be treated with this level of professional courtesy. You obviously had a momentary lapse in judgment. This will not be repeated now that you understand the seriousness of this matter. You understand any future investigations

involving members of Homeland Security or the State Department are conducted exclusively by the FBI.”

“Yes I understand your request, but I have an investigation to continue.”

Special Agent Magee shook his head; “Let me make this very clear and simple so even a jockey like you should understand. This is NOT a request. We will personally arrest you, put you in leg irons and shackles for violating the Homeland Security Act. I will personally see you shipped off to Guantanamo Bay as a security risk. Am I perfectly clear?”

“Okay, I understand; no more investigation. I have a question; what does Mister Cann do for Homeland Security and the State Department?”

“This is somewhat classified so don't repeat what I'm going to tell you. Mister Cann makes over a hundred thousand a year listening and analyzing Arabic language phone calls. Because he was the personal bodyguard for the King of Choam, he knows the leaders of every country bordering and near Choam. The State Department has him on a fifty grand a year retainer as a consultant. A hundred and fifty grand a year is not bad for a guy who finished high school with a C average.”

“Your shitting me.”

“That is all we can tell you about Mister Cann. I have no idea how much he makes from his businesses. Why don't you go visit him? I understand he's very friendly to law enforcement. I hear any law enforcement officer gets free coffee at his Parkway restaurant. If he's there, he always picks up their meal tab regardless of the amount.”

The agents finished with Harris and talked with the district chief of detectives for a couple of minutes before leaving. Detective Harris decided to interview the only possible witness; Isabella Salazar.

He called her home and her mother answered. There are children's voices in the background. He was told Isabella is married and working for the States Attorney office. Her married name is Salazar-Duke.

Russell drove to the State building and requested an immediate meeting with Mrs Isabella Salazar-Duke. It turned very brief; "Mrs Salazar-Duke, I'm investigating a cold case where you are the only possible witness to a multiple homicide in Victory Park several years ago."

"Detective, you can stop right there. I'm sure you've read the transcripts of my statement to the police that night and the incident reports. I have nothing to add."

"Isabella; I want to go over the events of that night with you again."

"How is your sight Detective?"

"Twenty twenty. Why do you ask?"

"Then you seen my name on the door as you entered and the name plate on my desk. Assistant States Attorney Isabella Salazar Duke. You will address me as Mrs Salazar Duke or Mrs Duke. We are not on a first name basis. Understood?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Good. Remember that when you come to me to prosecute someone. To the other matter, I am not reliving that night for you

or anyone. Every fact you need is in the original investigators report. Good day detective.”

“I really want to go over the events of that night with you. I wouldn’t think a woman in your position would be hiding or holding something back to prevent a murderer from being brought to justice. Think of the welfare of your children.”

“Are you a religious man detective? Do you believe in heaven and hell?”

“Yes I do. Why would you ask?”

“People in hell want ice water. When they get their ice water, I will relive that night for you. Until then, close the door on your way out. Now if you will excuse me, I have a very important urgent phone call to make.”

“Who are you making the call to? Perhaps you’re calling William Cann, a co-conspirator Mrs Duke?”

“You are treading very thin on my nerves. The door is still open behind you Detective.”

“It’s Detective Russell Harris.”

“For the time being it is. Why are you still here?”

Next he went to see Marcy Cann; formally Marcy Smith at her Dreams Prep Kitchen in the Parkway Theater Building. He spotted a woman around forty something wearing a chef’s outfit. The name on jacket read; Marcy.

“Mrs Cann hello. I’m Detective Harris of homicide. May I speak with you for a few minutes?”

When Marcy turned to face him. The scared burned side of her face startled him. She went into damage control instantly.

“I’m sorry I offended you. The burn scars sometimes startle people the first time we meet. Please stay to my right, that way you won’t be distracted.”

Harris moved to Marcy's right side.

“That's so much better. Now try this recipe I’ve been working on. These are mini beef wellington with red wine sauce. Don’t worry, the alcohol evaporated in the oven. The mashed potatoes have garlic and cheddar cheese in them. The asparagus is wrapped with bacon and grilled. I added a little sea salt.”

“Mrs Cann, I came to interview you about an incident that happened several years ago.”

“Detective Harris; how rude of me. I forgot to give you a plate and a fork. Please call me Marcy; everyone does. Even my husband’s three grandchildren call me Marcy.”

She gave him a plate and fork. She insisted he try her samples. Russ couldn’t get a word in edgewise for several minutes. Being bubbly Marcy, she had the detective eating her samples and asking for comments about her creations.

“Mrs Cann, I mean Marcy; the samples are wonderful. I came by to talk to you about the three people who were murdered in Victory Park early one morning several years ago.”

“Oh I remember something about that. They were found by someone walking their dog as I remember. That must have been a terrible thing to stumble upon. My husband told me it might be gang related. That’s all I really know about that morning. Would you like some milk to wash everything down?”

“What can you tell me about that night before the murders?”

Marcy walked over to the refrigerator and removed a gallon of milk. She poured two glasses full and placed one in front of the detective.

“I hope you don’t mind two percent milk. Well let’s see; the day before was a very long day as I remember. I was busy with starting up this business and the Cooks Dream Emporium at that time. That’s my cooking supply store next door. Did you know my husband invested over a million dollars in these two businesses?”

“No I did not. How fortunate you are.”

“Thank you. I like to think I am. Anyway, I was exhausted and I wanted to go to my apartment to rest and get some sleep. William, my future fiance at the time, talked me into going to dinner with him that evening. I really didn't want to go, but he insisted so I agreed to a light meal.”

A warm glow came over her face as she smiled; “I remember so clearly because that was the evening William proposed to me. I accepted and I remember wanting to sleep with him, but I was exhausted from the business startups and emotional about the marriage proposal.

By the way, if you ever need cooking accessories, come next door to the Cooks Dream Emporium and I’ll give you a ten percent discount.”

“Mrs Cann, Marcy, I think you’re holding something back. As an example; where was your husband that night?”

“My William slept in his apartment that night. He was taking several medications because of a very serious head injury. We celebrated our engagement a couple of days later.”

Marcy’s face became red with embarrassment. She partially looked away; “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. I’m sure didn’t want to hear that about William and me.”

Aggressively; “You need to understand it’s very serious to hold back any information involving a multiple homicide. I wouldn’t want to see a nice woman like you involved in a triple murder cover up and sent to prison. By the time you’d get out of prison, you would be a very old lady. A very senior citizen.”

Marcy now visibly upset; “Detective Harris, I don’t understand why you’re being so rude to me? I don’t think I did or say anything to offend you. I can’t tell you what I don’t know. Excuse me, you really need to talk to my husband.”

Marcy walked over, picked up the phone and called Bill; “Honey, there’s a detective down here and he’s being very rude. He thinks I’m covering up a multiple murder. He says I am going to prison and I’ll be a very old lady by the time I get out.”

She suddenly jerked the phone away from her ear and has a surprise look on her face as she set the phone down; “My husband cut me off. I’m sure he’s on his way downstairs right now to talk to you. Be careful. William is not very pleasant when he’s angry.”

The almost six feet three inch two hundred and seventy five pound William entered the kitchen wearing a sleeveless tee shirt with rage in his eyes; “Is this the dead man who’s upsetting you?”

Marcy stood with her left arm across her stomach and pointing with her right hand.

In an aggressive posture and anger in his voice; “Who the fuc* do you think you are coming in here and upsetting my wife? For your sake, the reason better be god dam good.”

“I’m Detective Russell Harris, homicide division. I’m investigating the triple homicide that took place in Victory Park several years ago. I thought your wife could shine some light on my investigation.”

Bill is barely controlling his anger. Spit is flying from his mouth; “You fuc*ing thought my wife was somehow involved? Tell me Sherlock the fuc*ing moron; what’s the description of the suspect?”

“We only have one possible suspect. A very large man with ...” Bill cut him off.

“Does my hundred and twenty pound, five foot four wife match the description of the suspect?”

“No, but I thought ...”

Bill interrupted raising his voice; “No you fuc*ing idiot; you didn’t think. Judging by what I see, my wife gave you food, drink and hospitality. You repay her by insinuating she’s somehow involved with covering a multiple homicide. Get out while you still can walk out under your own power. Get out before you need to be carried out.”

“I’m armed and willing to defend myself.”

“Your first shot better be fatal or I’ll rip your arm off and beat you to death with it. I’ll break you in half punk. I’ll crush your fuc*ing head like a grape.”

As Harris is heading for the door; “You haven’t heard the last from me.”

Bill started to move toward the door when Marcy grabbed his arm to stop him. He's breathing heavy; "Listen punk. You have no idea who you're fuc*ing with; but you will very soon. I will reign terror on you that will be legendary."

Russell left the prep kitchen without saying another word. Bill apologized for his language and comforted Marcy. When they both calmed down, Bill made a couple of phone calls. Then he ate a plate of her samples. She complained it would spoil his dinner. Russell returned to the detective's office to find a flurry of activity. One of the other detectives approached him; "Hey Russ, the Commander wants to see you in his office the instant you arrive."

When he approached the District Commander's office, Russ sees there's someone very well dressed sitting across from the Captain. He entered the office and air is thick with tension. The Captain and the well dressed visitor looked in his direction. They both have scowls on their faces.

"You wanted to see me Boss?"

"Homicide Detective in training Russell Harris; I want you to meet Inspector Roger Duke from internal affairs. The Inspector would like to know why you're investigating a cold case from several years ago that may have involved Isabella Salazar. You have her written statements readily available. Those should be more than adequate.

Before you answer, what brings the Inspector here is you crossed the line when you went to her office and confronted her. You also insinuated she is holding back evidence in a capital murder case. Then you had the audacity to threaten the welfare of her children? You are treading on very thin ice Detective."

While Harris is trying to form a coherent answer, the Captain dropped the bomb; “While you're thinking of a good excuse; did you know Isabella Salazar’s married name is Duke?”

“Yes I did. It's on her office door and the name plate on her desk. She pointed those facts out to me.”

“Very good. Isabella Salazar-Duke is married to Internal Affairs Inspector Roger Duke. Since you’re screwing up by the numbers, let’s look at a couple of other things. I would like to know why you're harassing Mrs Marcy Cann. The wife of an employee of Homeland Security and a consultant to the State Department.”

Russ is trying to figure out an excuse to immediately leave.

“By the look on your face, you’re trying to dream up an answer. I would also like to know why I’m explaining all of this to the police commissioner along with the fact that you, a rogue detective have Homeland Security and the FBI pissed off at this department.”

“I’m investigating a cold case. I feel when I solve this case, I will be promoted to full detective status in the Homicide Division.”

Inspector Duke is not pleased; “I will say this only once wannabe Homicide Detective Harris; if you attempt to interview William Cann or his wife again, you will be charged with abuse of police powers by means of harassment by my office. That is a felony which will result in your immediate suspension and upon my guaranteed conviction of you, the termination of your employment. I will personally call for and be granted the elimination of your pension.”

Harris looked like he's just been shot.

“You have all the files you need to conduct a cold case investigation. Remember this because I will only say this once. If

you threaten any member of my family or attempt to interview my wife again, I will look upon that action as a radical abuse of police powers. Take this as an official warning; you are bordering on a charge of felony official misconduct. I'm going to write my report, date and hold it. If you get stupid, I will officially file my report along with a complaint. I will have your badge, your retirement, and your ass. Am I perfectly clear on this detective?"

"Yes."

"Yes what."

"Yes Internal Affairs Inspector Duke."

Inspector Duke arose from the chair and shook hands with the Captain; "Thank you for your time. We can't allow the actions of a renegade wannabe homicide detective tarnish your excellent record of command. I fully understand nobody wants to see an internal affairs investigator in their district; especially in a clean command like yours. It has a tendency to get the rumor factory started."

"Well thank you inspector for your appraisal of my district."

"My wife and I are having lunch with Commissioner Dickerson this afternoon. When he asks about these unfortunate incidents; I will let him know you handled the matter with the utmost professionalism. It was only a case of a newbie detective being over aggressive. Problem solved and will not be repeated."

With surprise in the Captains voice; "I didn't realize you or your wife knew the commissioner. Frankly inspector, I didn't think you're that high up on the chain of command."

Harris stood pouting in complete silence.

With a smirk on Duke's face; "You're right Captain. I'm not in the upper management office yet. It was quite a shock when Commissioner Dickerson attended my wedding in the mayor's office. He brought the flowers. My wife and I had never met him before that day."

The captain looks surprised.

Duke continued; "I was surprised this morning when I received the call from Commissioner Dickerson and he asked me to look into this matter and get back to him over lunch today and to be sure to bring my wife along. Well how could I refuse such a request."

Inspector Duke is in the doorway when he partly turned; "By the way; my wife used to work as a server in Mister Cann's restaurant. I have never met Mister Cann or his wife Marcy. I understand Mister Cann is on a first name basis with the mayor and our boss the Commissioner."

Harris looked like the floor was going to open up and swallow him. The Captain looks very surprised.

"Captain, have a good afternoon. Harris, don't get foolish; be a good detective. Forget the shortcuts. Good police work and solid investigation practices are your best tools to success. Pissing off my wife and upsetting the wife of a upstanding citizen of the community will end your career in public service. Your misguided actions will get you looking for work in the private sector. Good day gentlemen. I'll see myself out."

Their guest threw his jacket over his arm and exited the office. The Captain is all smiles until Inspector Duke closed the office door. As soon as Duke is out of sight, Harris is read the riot act.

"Were you born a moron or did you work at it? You insinuated to Mrs Cann she's involved with covering up a multiple homicide?"

You told her she would go to prison? Good grief man. The mayor presided over the Cann's wedding. If you bothered to look at the files you would have known that. William Cann is a heavy campaign donor to the mayor and may others."

"I didn't know."

"Then you try to interview the wife of the toughest internal affairs investigator in the department. Duke has a reputation of being a pit bull. Once he gets his teeth in you, he won't let go. I'd be willing to bet if you so much as pass gas and offend someone, he'll be there to write the report, charge you with misconduct and take your badge.

I like to get the background of who I'm dealing with. While Duke was on the phone waiting for you, I pulled up his file. Someone is pulling some serious strings for him."

"How's that Captain?"

"Duke went through the academy like everyone else. A couple of months later, he's pulled from patrolman duties and put into internal affairs. As soon as he has enough time in grade, the next day he gets a promotion. Someone is pulling some serious strings for him."

"But Captain, maybe if I tried ..."

The Captain cut him off; "You will do nothing more with this investigation! Duke and his wife are having lunch with the commissioner this afternoon. Are you trying to take me down with you?"

"No. I guess hind sight is twenty-twenty boss."

“If you ever drag me under the bus like this again, you'll be writing parking tickets for the rest of your life; if you're still a member of this department.”

“But Captain, I thought William Cann arranged the Roy Grant murder.”

The Captain started almost screaming; “I don't care if you have a video of William Cann pulling the trigger! Roy Grant was a total asshole. He had so many enemies; it would be easier to figure out who didn't want him dead. If you would have checked the date Grant was murdered, William Cann was in Washington DC getting married. He was with the US ambassador to Choam and diplomats from at least a dozen Arab countries.”

The two men discussed the future of Detective Harris, or the lack thereof if he continues on this path. He left the Captains office contemplating his future. He returned to his desk wondering what his next step should be.

Russell knew the usual information channels are closed to him so he needed an alternative. Then he had an epiphany. There's the Arabic news organization Haqiqa (truth). They publish anything and everything negative about anyone from the west. Especially the western infidels.

Harris is able to locate news articles about William Cann. The problem is the articles don't do him any good with his investigation. He found William Cann was the personal bodyguard for the Queen of Choam. He saved her from an assassination attempt and became the personal bodyguard for the King. That explains the facial scar.

He was also friend to Prince Al-Lam, the King's only son before the Prince's assassination by an Al Qaeda splinter group. There was a wide spread rumor the group of approximately sixty plus

members including their families had declared a Jihad against the Royal family of Choam and their personal bodyguards.

A few days later, the entire group was found assassinated in their hideout. Their bodies along had been incinerated. The location was nick-named: The Al-Qaeda Motel. It was reported infidel William Cann was mortally injured the same night the splinter group was eradicated. That explains the scar across his midsection.

It was reported William Cann was dead when he arrived at the Choam capital hospital that night. It was rumored the royal family's bodyguards eradicated the splinter group and William Cann was a casualty.

After the groups eradication, the Kingdom of Choam became a much more peaceful country. If the news articles would have been any more positive, the King would have made William Cann a prince. That was the end of the Haqiqa news articles.

Russell had another epiphany; search William Jefferson Cann through Interpol. The report was dated four years after he was discharged from of the United States Army as a Para Rescue Specialist. He was working for Black Creek Solutions as a mercenary. Russ noted this was also before becoming a bodyguard for the Royal Family of Choam.

The information is not what he expected. According to the report; two African countries (Austro and Maghreb) were at war. Over the years, it became a war of attrition. Both sides had been reduced to fighting with a limited amount of weapons and short on supplies. Much of the fighting taking place is with axes, clubs and machetes.

President Champa of Austro wanted to end the war. He contacted with Mister Lewis Elliott, the owner of Black Creek Solutions. Mister Elliott advised President Champa to move all his military to places of safety.

Black Creek mercenaries intervened, the war was over within a couple of days. The president of Maghreb was assassinated by a sniper. With their leader dead, the surviving Maghreb fighters gave up and went home.

Problems arose when President Champa refused to pay Black Creek Solutions the agreed fee for winning the war. Witness reports say eight heavily armed mercenaries captured the president's immediate family and took them hostage in a unknown location.

President Champa paid the millions of dollars he owed Black Creek to get his family back. The mother and two daughters were found unharmed. Interpol investigated the situation for possible war crimes.

The statement from the kidnapped wife is more enlightening. Here is the summary: According to her statement; a group of armed men killed their bodyguards and entered the presidential palace. They were handcuffed, gagged and cloth bags placed over their heads. They were transported by truck to where they were held captive. While alone in a room, two of the men who captured them entered. The youngest of the two teenage daughters was untied to be violated.

Here is the transcription part of the Interpol interview: "My thirteen year old daughter Maya started screaming. That's when the big white man with gray eyes entered the room. He hit the man who was holding my daughter with his gun, knocking him down. He grabbed the other man who was going to violate my daughter by the back of his neck with one hand and threw him aside.

The first man he knocked down reached for his gun. The big white man with the gray eyes shot him twice. The man who was thrown

to the ground is now getting up and pulled a knife. Gray eyes killed him also.”

Interpol investigator; “How did you know the men were dead? How could you be sure?”

“Gray eyes shot both men in the chest twice. They were not moving, but they were moaning. He shot both of them in the head twice before he dragged the bodies with one hand each out of the house.”

“What happened next? Did the man with the gray eyes harm you or your daughters?”

“Men from the other room came rushing in yelling; 'Bill; what's going on? What are you doing? What's the matter with you? You killed two of our own!'”

That is how I know his name is Bill. He was very angry and told them he will not work with strangers anymore. Then he cut my and my daughters bonds and asked if I speak English. I was so frightened, I could only nod my head. Gray eyes told me he is very sorry and to comfort my daughters.”

“What happened next? Were you released?”

“We huddled in the corner while he was arguing with the others about having to work with people he did not know. He was telling the others kidnapping and holding us hostage is all he was hired to do. Violating women and children is not part of any job he will be involved with. He said he is finished working for the company.”

“Did the other men leave you alone?”

“Yes. Gray eyes told the others he would watch us. He told me if we do not try to escape, he will treat us well. He smiled and said if I don't get stupid, I will live to see my future grandchildren.”

“Did you believe him?”

“Yes I did. My daughters do not speak English. They asked why the man with the gray eyes is smiling and talking friendly to us. They also asked if he or the other men will try to have their way with us. I told him what he said. Bill said he would stay and protect us until this is over. He promised no harm will come to us.”

“What happened next?”

“Bill asked the other men to bring him something to eat and drink. They brought him food and beer. He offered us food. We were too upset to think of eating. He sat in the room with us while eating a sandwich and drinking beer from a can. He drank three of them before asking us again if we are hungry. He offered me beer and food again. When I refused, he ate the second sandwich.”

“Did you try to reason with him?”

“Yes. I asked him how he could eat and drink after doing when he did to those men. He told me it's nothing personal, only business. The two dead men tried to make it personal, he can not allow that to happen. Then he said he eats when he's hungry. Doing what he does gives him an appetite.”

“Did he say anything else to you?”

“He told us the two dead men were last minute replacements. Two members of his normal team are sick with the flu. The replacements were their first and now their last mission with the company.

While he ate his second sandwich, I asked him if he would kill us if my husband did not pay his debt. Bill smiled, took a big drink and told me he would never allow that to happen. I told my daughters what he said.”

“You overheard his first name was Bill. How did you learn his last name?”

“I remember looking at a word on his vest; Cann. I asked him what that word meant. He told me Cann is his last name. He's an orphan who was found on the Cann street church steps in Kansas City. That is how he received his last name. He said his first name is William because the woman who found him thought he was strong willed as an infant. His father admired United States President Jefferson. That is his middle name. His friends call him Bill. He said I could call him Bill.”

“Is there anything else you can tell me about this incident?”

“I asked him what would happen to us if my husband refused to pay the debt. Bill did not answer directly at first. He asked me where I learned to speak English. I told him London where I went to college. He told me he barely finished high school. He broke up with his girlfriend, and joined the army. I asked him again what is going to happen to us if my husband won't pay.”

The investigator noted she became very upset; “Please continue. This is very important we get all the facts.”

“Gray eyes Bill said within the twenty-four hours, he would personally take me and my daughters to London as a widowed political refugee with two children seeking asylum. My husband would have been assassinated by then and my country would have a new president.

My daughters were frightened of Bill. They have never seen two people murdered before. They couldn't understand how a man could kill two people, then minutes later eat lunch and hold a conversation. I calmed my daughters the best I could.

Trying to gain his confidence, I asked him about his former girlfriend. A sad frown came over his face and he became quiet. He just sat on the chair with his eyes constantly roaming. He almost never blinked. I think it was because of the stress. My daughters and I went to sleep holding each other huddled in a corner. When we awoke later, everyone was gone. The bodies of the two dead men were gone also.”

Interpol investigated for possible war crimes. No conclusive evidence was found. No food wrappers, beer cans or bodies. Only blood spatter and spent cartridges were found. Not unusual for a country who just ended a civil war. Interpol case closed.

Harris gained nothing except the thought; “William Cann is a psychopath. Murders two people he's working with, sits down, has a meal and downs a few beers. He's far beyond tough and will not bend under any kind of pressure. He must be protected from atop of Mount High by the Prince of Darkness.”

While sitting at his desk wondering what his next possible option is going to be, Detective James Smith came into the homicide room.

“Hi Russ. I heard you had quite an active day. You've been to new places and met interesting people. I also understand you've had some very interesting and stimulating conversations.”

“I guess you could say that. First I tried to run a federal background check on your buddy. It went worse than nowhere. Because of that, I had my ass handed to me by the FBI and then by the district Chief of Detectives.

I went over to the state building and met with Isabella Salazar. I didn't realize her married name is Duke and her husband is an investigator for internal affairs. Did that turn into a train wreck. Then I went to see your buddy's wife Marcy.

While talking with her, Big and Ugly showed up. I forgot how scary he is close up. You were right; he is extremely protective of her. He told me he wanted to rip my arm off and beat me to death with it. I'm sure if I shot him, it would only piss him off even more."

Jimmy is now chuckling.

"After that, I come back here to find Isabella Salazar's husband Roger Duke waiting for me in the commanders office. Now I understand why he has a reputation of being the pit bull investigator of internal affairs. He wants my head on a pike for target practice. That's after he rips my eyes out.

When he left, the commander jumps down my throat. I thought he was going to reach down and turn me inside out. What's going to happen next? A plane crash or do I get run over by a semi?"

"Oh Russ, will you ever learn. How far back were you able to search? Did you learn anything interesting?"

He sat silently for a moment; "I don't know how to answer; let me think for a minute. I've never met a mercenary before. Your buddy is definitely not even close to being right in the head by anyone's standard. Looking into his eyes is like looking into the soul of darkness. Do I believe he's a murderer? Oh hell yes. On how many counts; I have no idea."

"How far back were you able to get?"

“I was able to go back to when he was in his early twenty's as a mercenary. He killed two people and dragged the bodies outside. Then sits down, eats lunch, downs a few beers and has a calm conversation with people he kidnapped. He's a psychopath.”

Jimmy is sitting at the next desk smiling and shaking his head in amusement; “I warned you. I told you to leave well enough alone but you wouldn't listen. Anyway, William wants to make amends with you. He told me you were pressuring Marcy and threatening her with prison. Bill feels he may have slightly over reacted with you.”

“Slightly over reacted? I thought he was going to stomp me into the ground. It's a good thing his wife was holding him back. I believe she's the only reason he didn't punch my lights out. Looking into those cold steel gray eyes of his gives you the feeling he's capable of doing anything. I think if I shot him, it would only piss him off. Dam does your buddy have a short fuse.”

“Not unless it involves his wife or daughter. Marcy will hold him back. His adopted daughter Nancy is another story. I'm not sure what she would do. Anyway, you've been invited to this weekend's shooting at the department gun range. Bill comes down to the range most Saturday mornings to shoot with anyone who happens to be practicing. You've been invited to shoot with him.”

“Really? What do you think that means? I'm the target?”

“It means he will supply us with free cartridges. He usually comes down with two or three boxes and shares them. In this case, he said he would share his with you.”

Jim talked with Russ to put him at ease about William. Russell told Jim he gave up on trying to connect Bill to any unsolved homicides.

“That's a real smart idea and will help you keep your career.”

Saturday morning came at the firing range. Jimmy Smith, Russell Harris and William Cann are there. Both detectives had the standard nine millimeter semi-automatic pistols. Bill has his custom Glock. After introductions and apologies, the talk became casual.

The firing range has six shooting lanes. Jimmy chose lane one and demonstrated his shooting ability going through a ten round clip at his target. He replaced the target, reloaded and repeated his shooting. Russell repeated Jimmy's actions in lane two. Bill's turn came and he produced two twenty round clips for his Glock.

He placed his targets in each of the four remaining lanes. The targets can be placed at a fixed position up to fifty yards down range or the computer will move them randomly. He set the computer targeting to random. Bill asked Russ and Jim to stand back. He loaded his weapon and in rapid succession fired four shots into each target while he moved down the walkway.

He rapidly dropped the empty clip and before it hit the floor, a full clip is entering his weapon. He proceeded to fire again. Every target was shot multiple times in the chest along with two in the neck and two in the center of the head. The display of Bill's marksmanship was so fast, the two detectives looked on in shock. Bill cleared his weapon and retrieved the targets. Russell stood silent while looking on.

The three men removed their hearing protection; “You're a little slow today. Were you and Marcy entertaining each other a little too much this morning?”

“Marcy had me help her clean the prep kitchen ovens last night. I told her to hire a cleaning crew, but she insists we do it. She wants to be sure everything is clean. She was calling the health

department for inspections every week to make sure she didn't overlook something."

"How did that work out?"

"They very politely told her to stop calling. Their semi annual inspections are adequate. Now on to a more pressing matter at hand. Jim, fill Russell in on the facts of life we talked about."
"Russ, if you attended the daily homicide briefings, you would know Julio Garcia shot Detective Roy Grant. He did it because Roy was shaking down the gang for protection money. The bangers had enough and that is why Roy was killed. The money Julio's mother received was for services her son rendered."

Harris's eyes are wide open; "I thought you were behind that Bill."

"I have no use for gang bangers. Roy Grant was a pimple on a gnat's ass as far as I'm concerned. When he tried to interrogate me, Roy became a minor irritation.

Now allow me to answer some of the other questions I know you have. I did not avenge the death of Roberta the taxi driver. I knew her well. She used to repair all kinds of things in my restaurant. Jimmy, tell him what happened."

"Jyrone Givens died from a drug overdose. He was a mule for his gang and it seems he was using a little too much of the product. He had a couple of visitors while in lockup. The gang did not want him making a plea bargain so they must have slipped him something to calm his nerves. He died from an inhaled heroin overdose; no great lost to society."

Bill seen Russell looking at the targets and the shooting patterns on them.

"Detective Harris; are you a married man?"

“Yes I am.”

“Do you have any children?”

“Yes. I have two daughters. Why do you ask?”

“I have a wife and an adopted daughter who I love very much. Let me ask you this. Would you protect your wife and daughters from harm?”

“Yes; and I would stay within the law. Not like some vigilante on a shooting spree in the park.”

“You use the term; shooting spree. That implies recklessness on the shooters part. A gang rape and three planned murders were prevented. Three dirt bags are not in the state penitentiary absorbing taxpayer dollars for their death row appeals. The way I see it, justice was served.”

Harris became aggressive; “Look at those shooting patterns. They're the same as the murdered park victims. I know you did it and got away with three premeditated murders.”

“Detective; I have admitted nothing. When I was interrogated, I never lied. I was asked to confess to murdering those three in the park. My answer was always; their deaths may be gang related. I never denied anything.”

“You did it and there isn't a dam thing I can do about it.”

“Harris, you should be thankful you have your wife Pamela and your daughters Megan and Michelle to go home to; located at fourteen eighteen West Denton Street. You should contest your property taxes. Five thousand dollars is too high for your eighteen hundred square foot house.”

Harris has the wide-eyed look of shock on his face; “How did you get that information about me and my family?”

“You're not the only person who runs background checks. I can assure you my background reports are far more comprehensive than yours. I know everything about you from the day you were born to Ben and Pam Harris, your school grades to your bank account balance as of last night. You have a little over fifteen hundred dollars in your checking account. Your savings account has just over four thousand dollars. Your last ATM withdraw was for three hundred dollars two days ago.”

Bill leaned forward and sniffed the air around Russ; “You know; I’ve almost forgotten the smell of fear until now. Jimmy, please leave us alone would you? I would like a word with Russ alone please.”

Jimmy left the soundproof room, leaving the two men alone; “Remove any electronic devices you have, remove the batteries and put them on the table.”

Russell did as he was instructed; “Do you want to search me too?”

“No, I don't need to. You're smart enough not to make the mistake of crossing me. Now don't think conspiracy when stupidity will suffice. Someone on the night-shift plugged in his coffee maker and tripped the circuit breaker. He plugged it into another outlet and tripped another breaker. It was stupidity, not conspiracy. Then he turned off the security cameras while trying to reset the tripped circuit breakers.”

“But I thought ... “ his voice drifted off and Russ has a blank stare.

“Russ, you wouldn't hesitate to protect your loved ones would you?”

“I would lay down my life to protect my wife and children.”

“That's my point. We do what is best for our loved ones. If we can prevent something bad from happening to them, we do it without any fanfare and without their knowledge. We do it because we are men. We are the guardians at the gates of our castles.”

Harris looks beaten; “What are you going to do with all the information you have on me?”

“Nothing. I already deleted everything before I came here. I want you to understand you are not the center of the universe. There are more powerful people and forces in the world than you.”

“What can I do to make amends to you and yours? I know you're guilty, but there's no evidence. I'm sure the gun you used ceased to exist so there can never be a connection. None of it matters anymore.”

“You're absolutely right. None of it matters anymore. You can start by making a heartfelt apology to my wife. A dozen red roses and a vase would be a good start followed by an honest apology.”

Russ is about to gather his phone when Bill whispered into his ear; “For your peace of mind; the assumptions you made regarding the three dirt bags in Victory Park are correct.”

“Doesn't your conscious bother you in the slightest? I read about the sixty plus people you and your fellow mercenaries killed in Choam at the Al-Qaeda Motel.”

“You're only partly correct. I was the only one inside the building. The two others were outside waiting in case I needed backup. It was never needed.”

“It was only you who did that?”

“Lets not dwell on the past detective. Speaking of Victory Park, if someone has already sent countless assholes to meet their ancestors; what's three more?”

Bill notices Russ can't think of a thing to say.

“Remember this; even the best plan may have an unexpected glitch; like a teenage girl who's destiny was not to become a victim.”

Bill could see the wheels turning in Russel's head; “As a cop, you should know very well if no one talks, everyone walks. I'm not a bad man Harris. Most if not all my employees think I'm a really nice guy. But if anyone threatens the health or safety of me or my family; very bad things will happen to them. Sleep well tonight.”

“I read about you being investigated by the United Nations War Crimes Commission and the International Criminal Court for your actions as a mercenary.”

“The Geneva convention was signed by countries. It does not apply to mercenaries. Bad things happen in war. Times change Russ. Those days are over. Now I'm a respected businessman in the community.”

Harris shot him a look and the two men exited the firing range to join Jimmy Smith in the hallway. Bill invited them for coffee, they both declined. Jimmy said he had soccer practice with his son Trevor. Russell said he has an important mission that came up suddenly and needs his immediate attention.

Bill went outside to catch a cab back to the Parkway Theater Building. He turned his phone on. There's a voice mail from his adopted daughter Nancy. She informed him to come directly to the

restaurant as soon as he gets this message. Two of the busboys didn't show up and the restaurant needs help because they're busy.

Bill called his wife to let her know because the restaurant is short staffed, he'll be busy there for a few hours. When he arrived, he started busing tables and anything else that's needed.

While Bill's in the restaurant, a couple of doors down Marcy has an unexpected visitor; "Detective Harris, I thought my William made it very clear you are not welcome here."

Harris gave Marcy the vase first. He's holding the surprise behind his back. He moved his hand and handed her a dozen long stem red roses. She's surprised.

"I spoke to William, your husband this morning. He made me understand the error of my ways. I am truly sorry for my actions earlier this week. They were uncalled for. I'm here to ask for your forgiveness."

"Your apology is accepted detective."

She set the vase and the roses on her desk in the rear of the prep kitchen, then turned; "Now you're going to call me Marcy and I'm going to call you Russ. Okay?"

"That's fine. If we called each other by our formal titles and names, we would never get to know each other."

"Okay Russ. Let's see how much we can trust each other. Put your phone and any other electronics on my desk. I would like to talk to you in private without the possibility of being recorded."

He removed his cell phone from his pocket. Once again he removed the battery and placed both items on her desk. Then he removed his jacket and hung it on the back of Marcy's chair.

“Would you care to search me?”

“That's unnecessary. We need a level of trust. Come with me.”

They walked outside behind the store, next to the garbage dumpster.

She looked directly into his eyes; “We can talk here until someone comes out from the restaurant and empties the garbage. Are you comfortable talking to me? You understand this is strictly only between you and me.”

“Yes on both counts. What we say here goes no further.”

“You may have noticed my husband is a strange and intense man.”

“Allow me to interrupt. Your husband is a strange and scary man.”

“Let me tell you a little about my husband. If William says he's going to do something, consider it done. His word is his bond. When we broke up just before high school prom, his last words to me were; I love you Marcy Smith and I always will. I will never love another woman as long as you draw breath.”

“I'm sorry, but I don't understand what this has to do with anything.”

“I didn't see my William for eighteen years. When we reunited eighteen years later; he had never known the pleasure of a woman.”

Russell looked on while analyzing what she just said.

“My William lives by the Japanese code of conduct and honor called Bushido. I looked to see what that word meant. It means the

way of the warrior. To live by a code of honor and conduct. The wife of one of your co-workers told me some thugs planned on kidnapping William, his adopted daughter Nancy and me. Then while he watched, they were going to gang rape Nancy and me and then murder us.

The wife told me her husband told Bill about it. William never spoke a word about this. A two days later, I received a phone call from the same woman. She told me I'm safe now because the people who made the threats are dead."

"Was that Jim Smith's wife?"

"You don't need to know who detective. It would serve no purpose. I'm here speaking with you now because three people who threatened to do harm to Nancy and me died one night. Bill's daughter is alive and he has three grandchildren because of what I believe he did that night in the park. A young Hispanic girl wasn't gang violated because he prevented the heinous acts from happening."

"Have you and Bill ever talked about that night?"

"No. And we never will. He will never know I believe he did those bad things. There's no need for that. And before you ask, I'm very aware of my husband's past."

"Speaking candidly, I know your husband is as guilty as the day is long. I can feel it in my bones. The problem is there's absolutely no evidence connecting him to any crime. There is nothing I can do except kill my career trying to solve a cold case."

"Let me give you some advice. I'm a few years older than you. I've seen a lot of things in my forty plus years on this earth. You need to put things in perspective. Some dope fiend murders an old lady for her purse; that's important.

Mister Honest citizen sees the crime being committed, shoots and kills the dope fiend. He prevented an old lady from being murdered and is now a hero. It's all about perspective. Speaking of perspective, why aren't you home with your wife and daughters on this fine Saturday?"

"How did you know I'm married with two daughters?"

Being coy; "I don't live in a vacuum. My husband talks with me. We discuss almost everything. Now go home and be with your wife and children."

They slowly walked back inside and returned to Marcy's desk where Russell retrieved his cellphone. He was surprised when she announced; "I see our talk did you some good."

"Yes it did. I feel much better now."

"That's part of it. But you as a man have changed for the better."

"I'm sorry. I don't understand what you're getting at."

"It's your eyes. When we started talking earlier, you kept looking away from my face and winced when you seen the scared side of my face. Now you look into at me as an equal. I'm impressed Detective. Now go buy your wife some roses and take your children to the movies."

"Answer me one question if you would please. I've read all the Arabic news articles from Haqiqa. While your husband was a mercenary in Choam; on one occasion, he was linked to at least sixty plus deaths involving an Al Qaeda splinter group. It's rumored he alone committed the murders in cold blood. Aren't you afraid of a man who is capable of such things?"

She gave a little smile; “Let me tell you what I seen the other afternoon. My William was sound asleep on his back, on our bed with all three of his granddaughters. Five year old Faith was being cradled in his right arm. Two and a half year old Hope was cradled in his left arm. Infant Charity was sleeping on his chest moving up and down as he breathed.”

Sarcastically; “I’m sure that was a warm and fuzzy sight.”

“It was. Baby Charity had her arms outstretched to keep from rolling off. We do things for different reasons detective. Life and circumstance dealt me almost a third of my face burned off along with a half of my left ear. On the other side, it gave me back my high school sweetheart and two successful businesses.”

“Are you telling me to go with the flow of life?”

“Yes I am. Do what you do best. Don’t try to push a string straight, pull it! Why work on a cold case which will only cause you grief, pain and your career? Work on the things worthwhile. Look for the real bad people.”

“Goodbye Marcy and thank you.”

“Now go and get your wife those roses. By the way, Saturdays there’s a cartoon matinee in our theater. Children get in for two dollars and adults four dollars. You could take your whole family to the matinee for twelve dollars. Include drinks, candy and popcorn, maybe twenty bucks or so.”

With a smile of his face; “Thank you. You’re a hell of a saleswoman.”

Harris stopped and purchased his wife some roses on the way home.

When his wife asked him why; “I met a woman today who made me think I better slow down and smell the roses.”

The Harris family came to the Parkway Theater for the matinee that summer day. They were entertained by the theater manager playing the old upright piano until the cartoons started. After the cartoons and movie, they had ice cream in the restaurant next door. That day was the start of a new Russell Harris.

The detective used the advice he was given. Out of twenty four unsolved murder cases, he solved four within the first year, which is a very high rate of cold case closures. He did become a homicide detective and a very good one.

During his career, he solved 78% of his cases. The national average is 61%.

Russell had a placard on his desk that read: Victims and suspects and clues Oh my!

He retired with full pension at 62. Russ and his wife retired to Tucson with their cats. He passed away in his sleep at 84.

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