

Chapter 20

A month or so later, Dee receives a call early one morning; “Hello?”

“This is your Uncle Herbert. I have some bad news for you. Are you sitting down?”

“Why? Just tell me.”

“When you're sitting down, I'll tell you.”

“Okay. I'm sitting on a kitchen chair.”

“Your Uncle Harold had a heart attack early this morning. While at the hospital he had several strokes.”

“Oh no. Is he gonna be alright?”

“My brother, your Uncle Harold is dead. He passed early this morning.”

“He's only in his early sixties! He can't be dead!”

“I'm sorry. He's gone.”

After a long pause; “Do you need me to do anything? I don't know what to do. You and Uncle Harold took care of everything when my mom died.”

“You need to get to the restaurant and secure everything.”

“Why?”

“Harold keeps everything of value in the safe there. Only you, me and Mavis have the combination. As you know, he trusted her for years as the accountant. I trust her as far as I can throw the building.”

“Why? What was going on that makes you not trust her?”

“Harold told me she's been skimming off some of the profits from the restaurant and the laundromat for a long time. He didn't care because she was servicing him a couple times a week.”

“I thought she's married.”

“She is. Anyway, I have a funeral this morning and two wakes this afternoon. Cousin James and I are going to be too busy to get to the restaurant. I need you to get there before Mavis finds out and steals the place blind. If she finds the title and deed, she might steal the laundromat building, the restaurant building and both businesses.”

“Okay. Eddy and I are on our way.”

“Good. On another matter, so you may remember, Harold and I went to our lawyer a few months ago.”

“Why?”

“Neither of us has been feeling good for quite some time. We both went to the doctor. I'm not in really good shape. But Harold's blood pressure was so high, the doctor wanted to put him in the hospital that moment.”

“Oh my god. I had no idea.”

“They put him on some medications for the blood pressure and that kinda helped. He was on the verge of kidney failure and other problems. All those years of smoking and drinking took its toll on him.

That made us get to our lawyer. We're getting old and when our times come, we wanted to make sure everything is arranged.”

“So? I'm missing something important here.”

“You're Howard's sole beneficiary. You now own the laundromat, restaurant and both buildings. Or at least you will when everything goes through probate court.”

There's a long pause before Herbert asks; “Are you still there?”

“I'm here. This is all such a shock to me.”

“You're also the sole beneficiary for my estate. My house, my funeral parlor business and the graveyard. When I go, they'll all be yours.”

“Uncle Herbert, I'm so overwhelmed right now; let's concentrate on the living for now.”

“I know this is all so new, here's what I suggest. Get to the restaurant and fire Mavis the second she walks in the door. Check the books and see what my brother was paying her. Give her a couple of weeks pay and get rid of her. Call a locksmith and have him change the safe combination.

Take everything from the safe and bring it home until the locksmith gets there.”

“Okay. Then what should I do?”

“Marcus has really been running the place in spite of Howard getting in the way. Tell him what happened and go from there. Do whatever you think is best.”

“Okay. I'm on my in a few minutes.”

At the restaurant, when Dee and Edward arrive, she fills Marcus on what happened and what's going to happen. There will be no sale of the restaurant. His job is safe.

Dee and Edward go to the office where she opens the safe and places everything in a box to be examined at home.

Then she informs the entire staff about Harold's death and their jobs are safe. She initially plans on keeping ownership of the restaurant and laundromat, along with keeping them operating.

Then the fireworks started, Mavis arrives and sees Dee sitting in Harold's chair.

Addressing Dee; What are you doing here?"

She sees the safe open and empty; "You have no business here. Put everything you took out of the safe back in and get the hell out of here. And thank that fu**ing honky with you. Your uncle is going to have a lot to say about this bullshit."

"Really? Which uncle is that? Herbert? I talked with him this morning. He called and told me Uncle Harold had a heart attack and several strokes before he died. The bad news for you is he left everything to me in his will."

"That's bullshit! There never was a will and there still isn't one. Unless you and that honky forged one."

"You should have looked beyond the cash box in the safe. I also know you've been skimming off some of the profits for yourself. That's over. You're fired effective this instant."

Edward reaches into his pocket and hands Mavis \$500 cash. She does not take it, only stares at the cash in his hand and; "I ain't taking money from no honky."

"I own this restaurant now. My Uncle Harold gave it to me. You will now get out of my building. You can leave with the five hundred in cash or leave with nothing. But leave you will leave and you will leave now."

Mavis takes the money in a huff. On her way out, she turns; "I told Harold you're a slut and always have been. You're letting a honky have sex with you? You're probably on your knees for him too. You would be an embarrassment to our race if you were truly black and not part white trash."

"I'm married to a man who loves me and treats me as a woman. I'm not married to a slug who never had a job because he's too busy at the race track betting the money you stole from my uncle."

The old bitch snarls.

"So long you fat bitch. Maybe I could call your husband and tell him you have five hundred dollars cash. Oh I'm sure he'd grab that money and be at the racetrack in no time at all."

"Fu** you bitch. This isn't over, you'll see."

When she's out the door and it slams, the kitchen crew started cheering.

Dee comments loudly so everyone could hear; "When her dead beat husband blows through that five hundred, she'll be back here begging for her job. There is no way she's ever allowed back in her again for any reason."

Because there's so much buzzing around the businesses, Edward went next door and asked the laundromat manager to come to the restaurant. With every employee in the dining room, Dee put all their minds at ease.

"If any of you weren't here earlier, my Uncle Harold passed this morning. I will own this restaurant as

soon as his will gets through probate court.

I'm not selling the restaurant or the laundromat. Both are going to stay open and it will continue to be business as normal. Do your jobs as normal. Mavis no longer works here. She is not allowed in either business. Now keep up the good work. Marcus, I need to see you in the office."

In the office; "I'm not going to take the place of my uncle. I have a business that requires me to work insane hours of the day or night. There's no way I can manage this restaurant and keep my other business."

The man looks like he's waiting for something to hit him, but he don't know what.

"Effective immediately, you are the general manager of H and H. That means you need to hire an assistant manager. I haven't looked at what my uncle was paying you."

"He was paying me eight dollars and fifty cents a day. You can check if you don't believe me."

"I believe you. Here's what I'm going to do for you. Twelve dollars a day, seven days a week. You will not call me for little bullshit problems. Operate my restaurant as if it's your own. We'll figure out some kind of performance bonus after the will is settled."

His eyes are almost as wide as his smile; "That's wonderful! Thank you. Is there anything else?"

She writes the warehouse/apartment address on a sheet of paper.

"I'll come by at least weekly to audit the books and check the receipts. It will always be unannounced. If for some reason I can't make it, here's my home and business address. I'll call you if I need you to bring the records or something to me."

Marcus is all smiles as Edward congratulates him and shakes his hand.

Dee is smiling also as Marcus asks; "May I ask both of you a rather personal question?"

"Sure. What's on your mind?"

"A couple of things. One day when Harold was drinking, he told me when you first seen Dee, you were going to kill her because you didn't want any witnesses to a murder. Is that true?"

"Yes."

The 40 something man looks nervous.

"May I ask you another question?"

"Sure. I may not answer, but feel free to ask anyway."

"The cleaning business you two have; I assume it isn't exactly legal?"

Edward looks to Dee. Then she returns the look; "Don't look at me. He asked you, not me."

“For your continued good health and well being, Dee and I own another business. You don't know what that business is and that's all you need to know.”

Thank you Mister Gibson. I understand.”

“Good. Since we're friends; call me Eddy.”

“I prefer to call you Edward if you don't mind.”

“Not at all. Whatever makes you comfortable is fine with me.”

Dee's uncle Herbert made all the arrangements for his half brother's funeral.

The will went through probate court without any difficulty. Now with them owning the laundromat and restaurant, those businesses gave Dee more places to launder their huge cash income.

Because of their cash only business and with Alex's help, the couple arranged to have some of their illegally gained money, laundered through a couple local banks.

They still have safe deposit boxes filled with what they call retirement cash.