

Blood on the Deuce

by

Greg Smith

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The metal ladder, rigid and erect, rose up to the movie house marquee. One patrolman, an iron claw dangling from his belt, scaled it; another, holding a rung, spotted him. The rest, hands on batons, moved to perimeter positions. They faced off the gathering, swelling throng. Inside the ring of protection, police brass huddled, speaking low. A fat City Hall hack ogled an explicit one sheet. And Shotgun Ed Miller, my new partner, chatted up a handcuffed female. I hung back. This attachment was cherry and would lead to prestige posts; I just had to keep above all the dirt.

“Look out!” came a cry overhead. I looked up. A giant red “D” hurtled toward me. It missed cracking my skull but gouged my shoulder. A sharp pain shot down my arm. I winced and swung blindly at the air. The letter bomb ricocheted to the ground and, with a metallic clanging, bounced to the gutter.

“Yeh!” cheered the mob of spectators.

I shook out my arm, hand, and wrist to allay the pain; atop the ladder, the patrolman gripped the marquee with one hand and held a huge “E” in the other. Stupidly, he waved the outsized letter at me.

Ed Miller broke from his cuffed paramour and shouted, “Hey! Who the fuck you dropping bombs on? That’s my fucking partner!”

The patrolman on the ladder froze. All activity stopped. The crowd held its breath.

“Get your rookie ass down here.”

I rubbed my shoulder, flexed my arm, and told the kid, “Forget it. Just keep ahold of your alphabet.”

A ripple of laughter went around but Ed glared. He strode up to me, and, safe inside the police line, made a production of showing off his emerald-studded gold cuff links, monogrammed “EM,” to all the hustlers and miscreants around us. “I should have buried him.”

“He’s patrol.”

“You think I haven’t got the juice? You think I couldn’t bust his ass?”

I'd lined up a kick to Ed's shin when a giant, Detective Lieutenant Peter Heinrich, our skipper's strong-arm, interceded. "Inside" was all he had to say.

Ed smiled and slapped my back. We were buddies again. I went behind him into the jizz flick palace. Heinrich loomed after me.

The lobby was filthy and dark, the red carpet torn and soiled. More XXX posters advertised "Coming Attractions." At a concession stand, two sergeants raided the candy counter, stuffing goodies into their pockets.

The screening room was worse, smelling of stank sweat and moldy lust. There, under low-watt lights, with two plainclothes detectives and two uniformed officers holding bulky film cans, Captain Eammon McGregor of the Four-Five Morals Squad did it by the book.

"It is August 28, 1972. Seized at the New World Theater, 541 West 42 Street, in accordance with a lawful warrant is one print in four parts of the pornographic film *Deep Throat*, one set of accounting volumes, and \$5,300 in cash receipts. Arrested are one box office clerk, Peter D. Murphy, one projectionist, Aaron T. Spielberg, and one theater manager, Martin A. Excaliber. One concession stand worker, Margaret Thorndyke, will be released, as there is no matron present to process her. Those arrested will be booked at the Four-Five, transferred to the Manhattan Detention Center, and arraigned at Supreme Court this afternoon. Brown, you will be there to assist the District Attorney's office at the arraignment."

I let loose with a loud groan to vaunt my high-flying position.

“You are here to testify, Brown. After that you can watch Soupy Sales. I won’t care. But you make sure you are at Supreme Court at three o’clock to meet the Assistant District Attorney Adam Fishman. Now, for your commentary, you will accompany patrol with the film prints to the evidence locker where you will get a proper voucher. Then you will deliver it to my desk personally.”

“Yeh, Captain. How about I do some investigating? You know I’m a detective.”

McGregor smirked, “You’re not such a pretty face, Brown, but I’m stuck with you for now. We’ll leave investigating to the real detectives.” Carlisle and O’Shea, the real detectives, snickered. “Miller, you go with Brown and make sure he makes that meeting with the ADA.”

“I’ll get him there, Captain.”

“No fuck ups. Eyes are on this case,” McGregor barked. He held out his clipboard. I scratched the captain’s name and badge number on the chain of custody evidence form. I was fucked if I was taking any responsibility for this dung heap.

Outside the mob had doubled, distending into the street, blocking traffic. Car horns blared and drivers bleated curses. The legion of miscreants was getting out of control. Patrol linked arms to push them back. But the miscreants weren’t having it. They pushed back against patrol. Wailing sirens of reinforcements came from across town.

A fan, apparently, of *Deep Throat* shouted out, “We want head! We want head!” That caught and the whole mob, and some of the newspapermen covering the raid, chanted, “We want head! We want head! We want head!”

The patrolmen carrying the film cans quickly marched to a parked unit, opened its trunk, and dropped in their loads. I jumped around the front end and landed in the passenger seat. One uniform got in behind the wheel. He gave me a dirty look. The other stopped outside my door. He gave me a dirty look, too. Then he got in back. Ed Miller got in back, too.

The driver flipped on the siren and started forward, but the crowd wouldn't budge. They chanted their slogan, drowning out the siren. A sergeant mustered his squad and placed them in front of the car. They drew their batons and roughly opened a hole. A deluge of hands pressed against the side windows as we inched through the mob. The police car rocked. After a few cracks from police batons we got clear and u-turned. Lights flashing and siren wailing we blasted down the center line of the street. Frustrated drivers wrenched their trapped vehicles aside for us. Then the mob broke and ran wild, turning trash cans, breaking windows, robbing men, and molesting women, up and down the dirty Deuce.

ADA Adam Fishman spoke to reporters on the first, low step up to the County of New York Supreme Court building on Centre Street in lower Manhattan. He was slight, balding, wore

wire-rimmed glasses, and had a pug nose. He wore a dark wool suit in the summer heat, with a vest and a bow tie. A Phi Beta Kappa key dangled from his watch pocket.

“You could have dressed better, Detective,” he said as he pulled me to his side. “Shoot him shoulders up, would you, Ralph?” One of the newsmen dutifully lifted his Pentax to his face and framed a close-up of me and Fishman. I’d rather have been shot in the head.

“You have a reputation for being liked by juries, Detective. Let’s hope that is so,” said ADA Fishman. He started up low-rise, grimy marble steps, motioning Ed and I to follow. “This case is very important. The Mayor and the District Attorney are highly motivated by the citizen outcry to take on and defeat this pornographic filth business.”

Ed grinned at me.

Fishman continued, “You may know, the film in question has had an obscenity trial in New York State already; a jury in upstate Bennington found that it had some redeeming value. I can’t imagine.”

“Isn’t that what you attorneys call a precedent?” said Ed.

We had reached the top of the stairs and stood next to the fake Doric columns by the courthouse entrance. Fishman turned to Ed.

“The community standards ruling by the United States Supreme Court allows no precedents. What may be passable as a work of expression in one community may be banned as pornographic by the next.” Fishman paused in his courtroom technique to drive home his next point. “You are here to help me. Do good and there are rewards.”

Ed stuck a toothpick into his mouth and chewed. “We’re with you, counselor.”

Fishman’s eyes darted rapidly between Ed and myself, assessing just how much we’d be with him. Finally, he said, “Let’s get to the details. Today is the arraignment of the individuals arrested at the World Theater as well as the theater owner, Mr. Jerry Delamo, who was taken into custody last night at his Westchester home. We have a *prima facie* case so this isn’t complicated. I don’t need you today; I will when I take it to the grand jury. That term begins on September 10. At that time, Brown, you will testify. I’ll question you and I’ll set up a few softball questions from jury members. You’ll not...”

“I know how it works, Adam.”

“Don’t interrupt and you may call me Counselor or Mr. Fishman. When called, you will describe events exactly as they were supposed to have occurred. You will describe how you responded to a complaint by Miss Trixie Deluxe of 488 West 46th Street that the film showing at the World Theater in Times Square was pornographic in nature. You will state that you entered the theater and purchased a ticket, you witnessed the depiction of fellatio and fornication on the screen, you contacted Captain McGregor, he arrived with a squad of men from the 45th precinct,

the business was shut down, arrests were made, money and records were impounded. However, you will not testify that the actual film was physically removed from the premises. There can be no presumption as to the obscenity of the work in question. It's a minor nuisance and we needn't bother about it. Can you do that? Is that all clear?"

Yeh, it was all clear. Someone had fucked up and I was going to have to cover the Fishman's ass. I didn't care; my testimony would be all perjury. Plans for the raid were well under way when I was attached to McGregor's squad. I never bought a ticket and I never called the Captain. I hadn't even seen the piece of filth the hoopla was about. And the complainant, Trixie Deluxe, had been arrested for blowing a businessman in view of a bus load of tourists on their way to see the revival of *Man of La Mancha*. Her testimony was a deal to drop prostitution charges.

"We're good," I said to the ADA.

Fishman cracked a thin-lipped smile. "We'll be working closely on this. We've got to build up trust." He backed away from us until he was out of reach; then he turned. That left Ed and I looking down onto hazy Centre Street and the scurrying courthouse stooges.

Ed shook his head. "Partner, this isn't gonna fly. That dirty movie is a cash cow. I know. Jack Nance and I have been grinding through the pornography business for months and we got the slam-dunk motherfucker of a racketeering case that'll shake up the Deuce forever. But we get nothing from downtown. Not a word, not even a meeting with the DA's office. Then Jack has a

heart attack, Fishman gets a headliner, and here I am holding your hat. Maybe you'd better cover your ass."

"What do you want, Ed?"

Ed's eyes gleamed with ambition or maybe greed. "I want to make that other case. It's a career-maker and it's honest. I'll be a lieutenant in a year after it's wrapped. All I need is a witness."

He needed muscle. He needed me to terrorize some shitheel into cooperating. It had appeal.

Ed said, "Promised you a spot in the DA's detective squad, didn't they? Okay, so you'll get your picture in the paper and Fishman will kiss your ass. But he's got to lose. He's going to lose. There's millions on the line here. You could end up the sap. Help me find a witness to make my case and you've got all the juice you need for whatever you want, no matter what happens with *Deep Throat*."

I gave Ed marks for smarts. He got me where I live, but this assignment came from on high so there was no way I was getting hung out to dry. I had to dismiss him.

"I'm hands off; I've seen too much of these assholes already."

I left him scowling, staring up at the grime-caked, illegible relief motto adorning the courthouse entrance.

After that squalid day, I headed to the elegance of my girlfriend's place on the Upper East Side. At 79th Street and Park Avenue I parked at a bus stop. The Police Department sign went on the dashboard to ward off summons and the bullets got dumped out of my new .44 revolver. Five went into the ashtray; one went back into the gun.

At a bank of pay phones I found one that worked, dropped a dime, and dialed Park 9-1255. That was my lady's number and she liked it when I talked all fancy like that. Her mother answered.

"Hello, Mrs. Vanderwegh," For being descended from Peter Stuyvesant and the Dutch colonials, she demanded everyone call her Mrs. Vanderwegh.

"Mr. Brown." She pushed her tits into my face very chance she got so I knew she liked me. Still, she couldn't come to terms with her daughter seeing an Irish cop.

"Is Coco at home?" How does she always makes me into a twelve-year-old holding his peepee?

"Coco is here."

There was silence. I supposed the ball was in my court but I just let it dribble.

“We’re having guests this evening…”

“Hello, Mr. Brown,” Coco’s voice was catnip to me. “Mother and I were just having cocktails. How long until you can get up here?”

“I’m on the corner. Tell that fucking doorman not to keep me waiting in the lobby.”

“Mmmrrrrr,” purred my Park Avenue kitten.

I hoofed it to number 795 Park. The fucking doorman with his epaulets and ever-present shit-eating grin did his job.

“Go right up,” he said jovially.

I took the large, marbled lobby in five long strides. My gumshoes squeaked against the buffed marble floor. The lion’s-face sconce on either side of the elevator door egged me on to turn and fire the slug in my gun into the sardine eater. He’d dated Coco twice and wasn’t going to let me forget it. I’d already found his pad in Astoria and had a plan to torch it.

Fortunately, the elevator door opened and a petrified bag with huge hair and a decrepit Yorkie fluttered out. She looked at me and sniffed. She did that every time she saw me. I sniffed back at her and got a heavy dose of Chanel No. 5. On the elevator was Riley, an old Irishman who'd worked the building since Mayor William O'Dwyer. He stood five foot, two inches with shocking-white hair combed over his bald crown and a ruddy, whiskey complexion.

“Ah, Detective Sergeant Brown. How are you, lad?”

“Not bad, Riley; what's the news?”

Riley closed the steel cage door and pushed the hand lever forward. The elevator made a swift ascent.

“His Honor, the Mayor, is visiting tonight. I believe he'll be running for a second term.”

“Siding with the teachers in Bed-Stuy would have made him a shoo-in.”

“He did the right thing.”

“The Mayor of New York shouldn't ever do that. This city can't bear the right thing.”

Riley howled and slowed the elevator to a gentle stop perfectly level to the landing on floor twelve. He collapsed the gate to let me out.

“Your mother’s been wanting to see you, lad.”

“In time, Riley.”

On the landing there were two choices: Apartment A and Apartment B. My honey was behind door letter “A.” Behind door letter “B” was an older German couple. He was a fugitive Nazi banker, I was sure. He wouldn’t want to see me so I choose door “A.” Besides, it was ajar.

“Helloooooo, Mr. Brown,” Mrs. Vanderwegh greeted.

I ignored her and went straight for the glass-and-brass booze cart. There was a pitcher of chilled martinis. I poured some into a rocks glass.

Mrs. Vanderwegh scurried after me.

“Please, please, Mr. Brown, let me take you into the den. We’re having guests in shortly and Bridget just cleaned. We’ll take the bar with us.”

Mrs. Vanderwegh got behind the wheel of the movable bar and used it to drive me from the living room into the so-called den—which was bigger than my twenty-desk squad room. We settled into awkward poses.

“Coco tells me you’re tasked to the sterilization of Times Square. That would be marvelous. We did see, Mr. Vanderwegh and myself, *South Pacific* in 1953. He had had a wartime commission in the Navy, so we felt it acceptable.”

“I’m here, Mother.”

Coco looked really good. She had on an all-white jumpsuit. It plunged low in front and rode high in back. It had diamond-shaped cutouts on either side at the waist, revealing the tops of her sexy hips. And twenty thousand dollars of diamonds hung around her neck and an emerald the size of a walnut adorned her middle finger. And she had turned from brunette to blonde.

“The almost sophisticated policeman, Sergeant B. K. Brown. Let me help you with that.”

She took the glass from my hand and poured its contents in a high arc into the correct flared stemware. Then she produced an olive from somewhere and dropped it into the elixir, making everything proper.

“Mr. Brown was just telling me how the Police Department is siccing him on all the filth in Times Square. How a decent person could be expected to go near such unseemly district is unfathomable. Oh, It was fashionable at a time. When Barrymore played his Hamlet. And very long ago it was all stables, so I suppose it was bound to return to its pedigree.”

While Mrs. Vanderwegh tittered at her own witticism, Coco guided us across the polished parquet floor and settled us onto the perfectly positioned, double-wide, twelve-foot-long, white sofa. I managed it without spilling a drop of my cocktail.

“How exactly are you fighting the filth, Detective Brown?” asked Coco.

“I’ll be testifying before the grand jury of what I witnessed regarding the exhibition of a certain dirty movie.”

“You saw *Deep Throat*?” Coco’s voice deepened in tone.

“Coco!” exclaimed Madam Vanderwegh.

“It’s really groovy, Mother. Jackie Onassis has seen it.”

“Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis does not reside in my home and I’ll not permit any such vulgarities. So stop it. And don’t say groovy either! Now, I’ve got to speak to the caterer. Enjoy your drink, Mr. Brown. And exit, please, through the kitchen. Coco, you promised me you would make an appearance. Do not disappoint me.”

“Yes, Mother.”

From far away the doorbell chimed.

“Oh! Guests are here. Oh! And I haven’t heard the musicians yet. Oh!”

Mrs. Vanderwegh flew from the room quicker than I would have thought possible. That left Coco and me holding hands on the expansive couch. We listened a bit to the sounds of greetings as Mama played hostess.

“Lindsay will be here,” I said.

“Fuck him. Aren’t you glad to see me?”

“Mmm. Blonde,” I said.

“Do you like it?” Coco shook her head from side to side, then gave me a little shimmy and planted the tiniest kiss on my cheek. She ran her long hand over my chest and the gun I had under my suit coat.

“We are extra large today.”

From the next room a string trio started up and voices of greeting and exaltations grew. The party was starting fast.

Coco eyes grew to their biggest and brownest. “Can I see it?”

Her naughty-girl play always got me going, so I reached under my suit coat and, after making her wait a moment, I drew the gun out and held it straight up. The refracted light off the chandelier made the chrome gleam. It was new and it looked pretty good.

“Wow,” breathed Coco.

She ran her long fingers up and down the barrel. She caressed the thick barrel and the revolving cylinder. She pinched the hammer between her thumb and forefinger. Her tongue licked her red lips. I knew where this was going and wasn't complaining.

“Is the bullet in it?”

I broke the breech and showed Coco the one shot left in the cylinder. I closed it again and spun it several rotations.

Mama Vanderwegh's voice rang out: “Welcome, Mr. Mayor.” And there was a round of applause. Coco's body slid close and went languid.

“Are you going to let me hold it?”

I'd be afraid the day Coco got her hand on a weapon that shot bullets. “Not tonight, baby.”

Coco put on a pouty smile and then dove head first into me. I pressed the big gun across her ass. She let go a gagged cry of joy and her mouth got hot. From the next room Hizzoner speechified about his campaign against filth and the rehabilitating of 42nd Street, starting with today's seizure of a notorious pornographic film. His audience roundly applauded. I'd have laughed if I could've. The dirty Deuce was swallowing my life whole.

NEW YORK STAR-TRIBUNE

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KNAPP ZEROS IN ON DIRTY COPS

The Commission to Investigate Alleged Police Corruption, chaired by Whitman Knapp, ended the public phase of its investigation yesterday. Months of riveting testimony, often televised live, revealed systemic and epidemic corruption in the New York City Police Department. Lead by star lamplighter witnesses Sgt. Frank Serpico and Lt. David Durk, the panel heard scores of firsthand accounts of alleged police misconduct.

“Meat eaters beware” is the shorthand for what is coming to the department. A meat eater is a police officer engaged in “premeditated and aggressive acts of corruption,” as

opposed to a grass eater, who might demand a free lunch from a local restaurant. Brass inside police HQ are scrambling to secure their positions, as wholesale shakeups are expected. New Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy said, “Let every man in the department be on notice; there will be no more business as usual..

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Deep Throat was yesterday’s news and the department was in the shits about Knapp’s investigations. All around the Four-Five precinct house, nervous uniforms kept their heads down and detectives cupped their mouths talking on their phones trying to figure how to work their payoffs with the Knapp axe circling overhead. I was mostly honest in the department so I didn’t sweat it. But a week on the dirty Morals Squad was five days too many. *Deep Throat* was glory, but I longed for the fresh-squeezed juice of Major Case Squad. And Ed’s prophesy that the *Deep Throat* obscenity trial was a sure loser haunted me. It had raked in a lot of dough and could rake in lots more. It may be this was all because the right someone wasn’t getting his cut. For assurance, I called my patron in the department, Inspector Earl Warens.

“How goes policing the jerk offs and dickie waggers, Sergeant Brown?” he asked.

“It doesn’t go. How do I get out of this?”

“You don’t. Chief of Detectives requisitioned you personally for this assignment.” Then he hung up in my ear.

That was bad news. The C of D wouldn’t do me any favors. I was maybe on the ropes here. Maybe being hung out to dry. I busied myself shagging calls and checking summary boards and warrants posters. The bookmakers and numbers guys got passes because they paid off well. That left lewdness reports, skanky hookers, and pimps. This was beyond the scum of the city. It was the scum of the scum. This was a one-way ticket to Dirtsville. DA’s squad or no, I had to get out of here.

Ed showed after lunch spit-shined in a lightweight summer suit. He kept cool even in the stagnant air of the dirty squad room. I bounced around in my chair until he looked at me.

“What’s up, Brown?”

“What’s with this epic pornography case of yours?”

He sat stick up like I’d offered him a lay with my hot cousin. He blew air through the even ends of his big mustache, then bent over behind his desk and reappeared with a file binder three inches thick. He passed it across the double desk.

I opened it and carefully flipped the loose pages. It was field reports, investigation summaries, and interview transcriptions.. It was organizational charts and accounting reports. It was many man-hours. It was blood, sweat, and tears. It was very impressive. I couldn't make heads or tails of it.

“This is good.” I bluffed.

“What I need is a cooperating witness. Someone that's getting squeezed with a lot to lose.”

“Got a pigeon in mind?”

He shook his head and said, “I'm thinking we reinterview all shitheels. Perps and purveyors. You bring pressure. I offer a way out.”

I rifled the file with my thumb. “That's a long haul.”

“That's what we call 'methodical.'”

He was the detective and I was the head banger, so I played my part. I sealed it when I said, “I got a guy on the Deuce that can get us a name.”

So I walked eyes open into the sewer late that afternoon. My prey was there. He wouldn't want to see me so I'd have to slog through pond scum to find him. Two short blocks from the Four-Five, the Deuce was uninhibited. Times Square maintained a front of righteous legit theaters and first-run movie houses, but the Deuce stood naked in its embrace of the sordid. Pimps, whores, shit-kickers, miscreants, hustlers, and pushers covered every square foot of sidewalk. Two mounted policemen trotted their steeds down the center of the four-lane road to keep a lid on the most vicious eruptions.

"Girls, Girls, Girls" beckoned neon signs in store windows. "Live Sex Acts" were promised and delivered. Head shops sold dope paraphernalia. Twenty-four-hour grind houses featured double and triple bills of black exploitation or martial arts marathons or straight-out XXX fare. That oddly placed sporting goods store where Jacques Cousteau bought his spear guns broke up the perversions.

Negro whores in harem outfits worked everything they had. White whores worked their skin color. Black pimps wore muscle shirts, showed their gold chains and gold front teeth; white pimps wore skinny T-shirts, moustaches, and sideburns. They all signaled their pigs to leave me be. I might as well have "law" stamped on my forehead. A barely legal girl wearing pink hot pants and a loose, glittery halter top sidled up along me. She had to be a renegade. The pros grinned ear to ear at her rookie move.

"I just love big men," the girl purred up at me. "They get me sooooo horny."

She was using for sure, ten pounds underweight and pinned eyes. No needle marks evident so she was shooting her toes or snorting. She had good features, wide eyes and high cheekbones. She should be in college fucking linebackers instead of beating her head against the hipbones to score a fix.

“What do you say, stud?” my new paramour said, pulling down one corner of her halter, revealing an emaciated tit. “PD” was all I had to say and she took off like a shot. She had legs. Maybe she’d had dance training.

The New World Theater had reopened *Deep Throat* and the line was down the block. Judge J. J. Tyler issued the order allowing the exhibition pending trial. The marquee that had nearly decapitated me was back and bolder than ever. New one-sheets with an open-mouthed Linda Lovelace and a smiling Harry Reems filled the glass exhibition cases’ street side. They may well have been hawking a romance novel.

Opposite, over a dirty bookshop, was the mistakenly venerable Times Square Gym. Barely a thousand square feet with a cheap fifteen by fifteen-foot ring and sweat-stained windows, it was a place of boxing legends but hadn’t ever produced a champ. I trained there early, thinking I’d get noticed.

Nothing here was the same from those days playing hooky, seeking fake IDs, and dodging beat cops and truant officers. The penny arcade halfway below street level on the stairs to subway had

been entombed in cement. The Victory Theater, where a look down Deanna Darbus' cleavage in black and white was a thrill, now showed a masterpiece called *The Filthy Five*.

Over Eighth Avenue, along the north side of the mammoth Port Authority Bus Terminal, hawkers were lined up selling fake designer jeans and handbags from blankets on the sidewalk. The turn onto Ninth Avenue became Transvestite Alley. She/male hookers with broad shoulders, slim hips, and big wigs looked sexy for traffic slowing or stopping for the Lincoln Tunnel approach. The girl/boys would shake, shimmy, and roll for the gape-jawed suburbanites pretending not to look while driving with one hand.

In the window of a butcher shop two men in rain gear were going at a whole lamb carcass with big knives. One man was decapitating it while the other sawed through its legs at the joints.

“Like fresh meat, honey?” A sultry voice spoke. A tall black boy with bright red lipstick, Afro wig, and a half-pound of mascara posed hip out for me. His purple Spandex dress was cinched too high. I beat it out of there.

“Let me be your shoulder holster, Officer Honeybun.” The falsetto drifted after me over the crossroads of the world.

Around the corner on the Forty-first Street cut-through I spied him, Jimmy Card. He had a briefcase of knockoff Rolexes open to a fat shmoe in a business suit. He saw me coming and tried to hoof it. But he'd lost a kneecap to the NYPD wrecking crew last year so he was just too

slow. I grabbed him and pressed him against the brick of the monolithic building. He dropped the briefcase and the shmoe hoofed it for him. Other suburbanites, hustling for the safety of their Grey Line buses, gave us a wide berth with blinders.

I leaned in on him. “I hear you’re behind on your rent, Jimmy. I can help.”

Jimmy stopped squirming and he looked me in the eye. He bit his lip, then said, “You want to make me snitch.”

I shook my head and said, “I need a weak link in the porn biz that’s getting squeezed. Get me a name.”

Jimmy’s eyes darted back and forth looking for an angle. “I can’t be registered at the Four-Five.”

I lied to his face. “I’m working for the DA’s office. I have all the priority I want.”

Card held his breath back and nodded, “O.K., I’ll get you a name. But you’ve got to get me some relief from Jimmy Caarlucci. He wants his rent, and since them Jamaicans ripped me off I...”

I put my forearm against the slob’s throat and leaned my weight into it. I shouted in his face. “Don’t you get uppity with me, you degenerate shitheel. You just get me the fucking name, get it?”

Card lets loose a gurgle and danced a two-step under the leverage. His eyes bugged out and he smelled of fear.

“I’ll call on Caarlucci. Get me a fucking name.”

He nodded in submission and I dropped him. Gathering his fallen merchandise Card hobbled away. I went inside the bus house to a men’s room to wash the stain off my hands. There was a fat man ass-fucking a pimple-faced boy. I kicked the bugger in the nuts from behind. He keeled with a yelp. The kid grabbed the john’s wallet out of his pants and fled.

Rose of Killarney wasn’t a cop bar; it was a longshoreman swill hole. It sat at the far west end of the Deuce by the Hudson River past the No-Man’s-Land desolation of Tenth Avenue, where cargo ships no longer made port. It stank of stale beer and unemployment. Behind a ten-foot counter a fat man with thick whiskers and red suspenders pumped out four-bit drafts. For those that wanted to step out, on the back shelf were five bottles with various Irish whiskey labels all containing the same too-dark Four Roses hooch. Next to them was a single, framed photograph of Jimmy “the Bergen Bulldog” Braddock crouched in a fighter’s stance. He was a hero to longshoremen everywhere—even if he was from Jersey.

I was jammed at the end of the bar with Four-Five Narcotics Lieutenant Detective James Caarlucci and a gorilla from some Queens district named Al Leiter. Shitheel Jimmy Card had

come through with the name, Martin Hodas, that Ed Miller gave that the nod to, so I put a call in to Carlucci. He signed off on giving Card absolution until New Year's but in exchange I had to help him tonight. He was shorthanded. I wasn't liking it; Caarlucci had a reputation as the original snake.

He set the job. "A couple of yahoos from Jersey City have set themselves up in business dealing smack right here in my part of town. No tribute. Not even a courtesy call. I don't like it."

"And Mickey Featherstone doesn't like it." I offered.

Caarlucci gave me the evil eye. "Business is business."

If Leiter took any exception to my insubordination he gave no sign.

"This isn't a disposal job. We just want to direct them back in to the Jersey cunthole they crawled out of and make them have no desire to come back. We go in the front door. Push them around a little and show them the wisdom of doing it our way. That's it."

"How many are we looking at?"

"Two known."

"You don't need me."

“Maybe there’s more. Maybe they’re cowboys.”

This was sounding like a chance to fuck up big time.

“We legal?”

“I can cover it after the fact.”

“Signed by a living judge?”

“I’m not shucking oysters here, Brown. We’re covered. This is fast in-fast out. Nobody goes to St. Luke’s.”

Leiter farted so I was voted down two to one.

Just then the whole bar broke out in song about dear old mother McCree and her silver hair; we split as a team.

Wild-eyed Caarlucci brought us in front of a tenement on Eleventh Avenue. It was desolate and isolated; it was the worst of the worst. The front door hung open at a weird angle. A big rat looked at the three of us and decided whether to make a stand. He scurried off. Inside the vestibule it stank of layers of junkie urine. These Jersey shitheels sure picked a loser hole-up.

Nobody was risking three big men on the dismal, sloping tenement staircase. After jockeying around I got Caarkucci and Leiter to take the lead. They didn't really mind. Why would I shoot them in the back yet? When the two closed in on the second floor I went up and found them waiting pressed against the peeling paint wall just down from another off-kilter door. Light seeped through the seams. Someone was home.

"We should have shotguns," I thought.

"We should have shotguns," were the first words Leiter muttered.

"We won't need them. This is pussy."

I'd started hatching my plan to take out Caarlucci. The snub in my ankle holster would have to do as the throw down piece. Maybe even as the murder weapon. But I might have to kill Leiter, too. That would make it hard to stage if this crew were really asshole amateurs.

Caarlucci waved me to the far side of the door for added coverage. When I got positioned, he used his fingers to count down: three, two, one.

The Narc rapped hard on the flimsy barrier. There was scuffling and murmured shouts, followed by cabinet doors banging, and then the toilet flushing. Caarlucci clenched his fist at me and pulled it sharply down. I stepped in front of the door just enough to get leverage and put

my size twelve Stride Rite flat-soled shoe just below the door handle. The worm-eaten door jamb splintered and the door flew wide open. Then I leaned back out of the opening.

I'll give Caarlucci credit for balls. He was the first one through with his badge and his service revolver out in front of him. But he should have brought a shotgun. He was sliced to ribbons by cross fire. Explosions of red blood filled the view I had of him. It was like fireworks in all red. He must have caught at least ten shots. Before he went down I had dropped to the floor and looked around the door frame. Two dirty, unshaven Jersey Negroes were gleefully gunning down a NYPD lieutenant. It was definitely the last fun they were going to have on this earth.

"Two," I said and pointed my cannon at one. My single shot threw the fool back to a dirty wall. It nearly ripped him in two. I saw his guts coming out of his skin.

Above me Leiter had taken aim at the other fool. He rapid-fired by holding his .38 in his right hand and fanning the hammer with his left hand. I'd only seen that in movies; it was damn effective. His target danced a retarded two-step as the slender caliber pills entered his body. Pinpoint geysers of lifeblood sprayed thin arcs into the squalid air.

With both men down I got up and entered the scene of carnage. I tried to find a spot on Caarlucci that wasn't bloody to check his pulse but there wasn't one. He was face down in a widening pool of his own gore. He was done. I turned to see Leiter dumping the spent shells out of his gun. He used a speed clip to reload. I could read his mind and I leveled my cannon at his heart. He pointed his at mine. Last man standing might just walk away from this mess.

There was a bump from behind a door in the far corner of the room. It figured to be the toilet. Leiter and I were partners again. I walked gingerly up along the wall next to the door. Leiter took a vantage point and a two-handed shooting stance. I reached across and flipped the door open. Inside was a black kid seated on the toilet. He had greasy hair on his head and peach fuzz on his chin. He was shaking like a leaf and pointing the smallest revolver I'd ever seen. I stepped slightly to one side.

“Fire it,” I commanded.

The kid looked at me as if I was from Mars.

“Fire it,” I screamed at the Jersey boy.

The kid crapped his pants and pulled the trigger wildly. He kept pulling until the cylinders were empty and all I could hear was the click, click, click. Leiter took a step in and put a bullet dead center of the kid's forehead. There was little blood. There was just some seepage around the entrance. The kid let out an exhausted breath and slumped back against the toilet back. His weight triggered the handle, causing a rush of water under his corpse.

Even in this part of town that much gunfire would bring a big response. We had to find the drugs. We both knew it. We didn't have to say it. Leiter went into the kitchen; I headed to the adjoining room. It was a bedroom. I tossed it fast. I turned over the mattress and shook

up the bed frame. I rifled the drawers in an old dresser. There was a freestanding wardrobe. It held a few shirts and empty hangers. I turned it up and searched along the baseboards. I tapped around the floor looking for loose planks and a hidey-hole. Nothing.

There was another room past this one. It was dark. I drew my gun and went in. I tried the light switch. No good. From the light that spilled in from the first room I could make out a small bed. And there was somebody on the bed.

I aimed at the body and barked, "Don't move. I'll blow your fucking brains out."

There was no movement. In the half-light the body looked small. And it had long blonde hair. It was motionless but I could hear a low, gurgling breath. I stepped into the small room. When my eyes adjusted for the filtered light I saw it was indeed a girl. Her eyes were closed and she nodded. Her face was childlike but her body was growing up fast. She wore a blue, buttoned blouse that was open, revealing her grown-up tits. Lower down she had a glittery G-string favored by strippers. I prodded her with the gun. There was no response. She was definitely on the dragon's tail. I touched her neck and felt for a pulse. It was slow but strong. Her flesh, though, was cold and clammy.

Next to the bed was a tall cardboard box that served as a table. A set of works--a hypodermic needle; a long, narrow rubber tube; a spoon with its stem bent to an extreme angle; and a doused candle sat on top. There was also a small piece of plastic wrap. I snatched it by one corner and

held it against the light from the other room. There were traces of powder residue on the scrap of wrap. The little junkie girl was maybe going to save me a lot of grief.

Then the whole building started shaking and I figured at least a herd of cops were making tracks up the old staircase. I holstered my weapon. For the girl I pulled the blouse over her exposed breasts and buttoned one button. I took a close look at her face. Maybe she'd make fifteen someday.

Starting back to where the action was, I took out my badge and held it as far out in front of me as I could.

I heard voices shout out cop commands like: "Freeze," "don't move," and "I'll blow you to hell, faggot."

I moved through the center room silently. Before entering the main room I called out, "Police officer. Coming out."

A staccato mix of: "Slow," and, "slowly," and "Goddam slow, faggot," responded. That made me sweat. Nobody was in charge. Some jumpy rookie could get an itch and give me a transfer to the big squadroom in the sky.

I tried extending the hand holding the button another foot but managed only an inch. As slowly as I could I went forward. In the room with the three dead men were five uniforms. All

of them had non-regulation long hair and mustaches. Not one was over twenty years old. They all had their service .38 long barrels turned on me. There was no sergeant there.

I had to keep them calm but I had to take charge. Pushing my badge out another inch I said, “Detective Sergeant Brown. That’s Detective Leiter. That man at your feet is Detective Lieutenant James Caarlucci.”

One of the kid kops looked down at the prostrate narc and let out a low whistle. “That’s Jimmy Caarlucci.”

I lowered my hands and pinned my tin star to my lapel. “Where’s your sergeant?”

“Keep your hands up,” said the youngest and most ambitious of the bunch.

“Shut up,” I ordered. “Where’s your sergeant?”

Another kid kop managed to squeak out, “There’s no sergeant on duty. The department’s sending one over from the Two-Two.”

The ambitious one decided he was going to be chief someday. “Let’s see that badge again.”

“Fuck you! You!” I pointed at the whistler, “Get on the air horn. First call your precinct; tell them to send more blue suits for crowd control. Second, call central. Tell them to send

Forensics and the meat wagon. Tell them to send a chief and a matron. This is bigger than anything you'll ever see again, kid, so don't screw up."

Leiter lingered quietly in the corner. Good move for him.

"You two. On the street.. Nobody enters without a badge. You and you. Keep the neighbors out of here."

When the kiddy kops had stomped out of the room sulking, I talked quietly to Leiter. Even a crooked dead police lieutenant was a big problem.

"There's a girl in the back room. She's doped up and under age. She's our ticket. Caarlucci got a report of a juvenile in immediate danger. We were around. He asked us to assist."

Fast enough the tenement dump was filled with police brass. There was a chief, a captain, an inspector, and three blue-suit sergeants. Once Forensics showed and started with their flash photos there wasn't room enough to swing a dead junkie whore, so the party adjourned to the street. It wasn't much less crowded there. There were a dozen police vehicles and two ambulances parked haphazardly, jamming up the once-lonesome block. Maybe a hundred onlookers gawked, craning their necks for any visual excitement. They were held in check by a squad of uniforms. I kept well away from Al Leiter.

While the brass had a conference, the press showed up and started popping their own flashbulbs. I turned towards the building to make sure they got my good side. A police matron escorted the girl from the back room out of the building into an ambulance. She was wrapped in a blanket and confused, but was motoring pretty well. I was glad to see that.

The brass meeting broke. The chief went in front of the hyena pack of journalists who started howling questions at him. A captain came my way. He was polite.

“You’re going downtown to see Division of Investigation. A cruiser will drive you directly there. That one (he pointed to Leiter) will ride separately. I’d be calling my rabbi.”

Then the captain ran from me like I had pus-oozing sores on my face.

The Department of Investigation, the department that policed the police, kept me incommunicado in a bullpen at HQ for five hours. This was internal so I had no rights. I had a table, two chairs, and a telephone that didn’t work. Every thirty minutes a flunky would come in and offer me cigarettes and coffee. The coffee figured to be laced with Pentothal, so I took the cigarettes. Then they’d ask me what happened. I stuck with the story:

“I’d stopped at my desk late to get some Field Investigation cards for the next day. Lieutenant Caarlucci asked me for help. He’d gotten a tip a minor female was being held against her will at a Hell’s Kitchen address. Her abductors were stringing her out and she was in imminent danger.

I agreed to back him up. I don't know what Al Leiter was doing at the Four-Five but he came along as well. When we identified ourselves at the apartment door we heard cries for help. We used necessary force to enter the apartment. Gunfire broke out immediately and Caarlucci went down. Leiter and I killed the assailants. Then I discovered the minor female in the rear bedroom. Patrol then showed up and here we are now."

Then I asked for two fried eggs on a roll from Sammy's Deli. I wasn't too worried; the perps were shitheels and my star was on the rise in the department.

Then the big dog came in. He was short and fat and wore a red plaid suit with a fat red tie. He gave the impression of being a walking meatball sandwich. Or maybe I was really hungry. He carried two brown paper bags, one in each hand. A Manila folder was tucked under his left arm.

He tossed me one paper bag. He set the other on the metal table. I opened mine, expecting perhaps a human body part. In it was an aluminum-foil-wrapped object that was hot. It could only be my fried egg sandwich. I opened it. This I didn't worry about; no cop would dope up a Sammy's egg sandwich.

"Thanks."

Then my benefactor pulled two cardboard coffee cups from the bag set on the table. He studied the white plastic lids of each. Then he passed one to me. I looked at the lid. "M 2S" was scrawled across the top.

“That’s in my file?”

He grinned. He eased the lid off his cup. Steam rose from the black liquid. He raise the cup to his lips and took a loud sip.

“Gah,” he gagged to soften the blow from the scalding coffee. “Just how I like it.”

He parked his stout body in the chair opposite me and opened the Manila folder. He read carefully. His lips moved as he read and sometimes he whispered what he was reading. He read through five pages while I was eating. Finally, he finished and closed the folder. He leaned back in his chair and stared at me.

“Brown.”

“Yeh.”

“Tell it to me again.”

I gave it to him. I’d memorized the few details.

“This is dirty.”

I shrugged.

“Caarlucci was dirty. Leiter is dirty. I’m willing to believe you’re dirty, too. I live to bust up dirty cops. They make me sick.”

“Why haven’t I seen my union attorney?”

He snickered. “It seems he went to the wrong address. Sign your statement and you’re released.”

He passed over the top two sheets from the folder and a pen he pulled from his suit coat.

I shook my head “no.” Then my union attorney, Grossman, burst into the room. He weighed three hundred pounds and wore stained suits. He was a sniveling bastard and was as good as it gets. The question would be, “Who was he working for?” He sat down on my side of the table.

We didn’t talk. I ate my sandwich.

He got to it. “Leiter’s going down; I have glossies of him taking payoffs from the numbers racket bag man in Queens. He’s fingering you in exchange for a reduced sentence.” Norton paused and stared at me.

I didn’t stop eating to contemplate the implications this could have on my career on the force. I was much too hungry.

“He’ll confess you and he were Caarlucci’s shakedown team and you knew full well there was to be an unwarranted entry into the apartment. That, along with three dead men, means hard time for you, Brown.”

Being leaned on by this meatball in red sauce made me even hungrier. No doubt he’s already told or will shortly tell Leiter I’m giving him up. Whose head would Norton rather have?

The meatball read my mind. He was smart.

“I don’t enjoy busting cops. Just dirty cops. And I don’t take many risks. Leiter is a slam dunk. You’re messy and a lot of extra work. But I will crucify at least one of you.”

I picked some egg out of my teeth with the nail of my pinky finger.

“The girl was in the apartment of her own volition and she never cried for help. And she turned eighteen three days ago, so forget about that story.”

He had the girl in his pocket already. Had he talked to Fishman?

My inquisitor continued: “The DA’s office would rather keep their star witness clean. That’s a point in your favor. They can, of course, substitute your detective partner should you become tainted.”

It was conceded I had some juice. And the invisible hand of Earl Warens has yet to be felt.

“But I answer only to the police commissioner.”

The air got a little less fresh and the walls closed in just a little closer. I had to stall. The girl could change her mind. Drugs could turn up at the apartment. Leiter could disappear. George McGovern could win the presidency on a recount.

“Like I said. Leiter’s a slam dunk.”

“I keep my badge?”

The little fucking meatball lied to me. “Sure. You’ll have to do penance but you’ll skate.”

“And the Shooting Review Board?”

His eyes gleamed like a wolf’s going in for the kill.

“Not my department.”

I looked to Grossman. Without moving a muscle, he gave me a “yes.”

I swallowed hard.

“O.K. I’ll do it.”

I had three months, tops. My *Deep Throat* testimony would have to come first. Then this guy. He’d coax along Leiter and me. If I backed out, he’d have Leiter against me. If I went against Leiter, he would fuck Leiter, and then he’d fuck me. That’s the way these untouchable types worked.

“Stay home this week. Report to the Four-Five on Monday. No weapon. Desk duty.”

The big dog and his flunky left. Grossman and I huddled; he whispered.

“That’s Michael Norton. He’s the new Wolfhound in DOI and he likes red meat. Maybe he’ll settle for Leiter. Maybe he won’t. Play along. It all depends on the girl. I’ll check her out. Her name is Maureen Whitaker.”

NEW YORK STAR-TRIBUNE

September 1, 1972

MASSACRE IN ON 42nd STREET

4 Dead, 1 Police Lieutenant

A wild shoot-out in a far West 42nd Street tenement left a NYPD lieutenant and three drug traffickers dead late last night. James J. Caarlucci, 14-year police veteran and senior man on the local Narcotics Squad, was pronounced dead at the scene at 11:08pm. Three suspects were also pronounced dead at the scene. An unidentified female was taken to Bellevue Hospital. She is listed in guarded condition. Two NYPD officers, Detective Sergeants Bartley Kieran Brown and Alan A. Leiter, are on modified duty pending review of the incident.

Police spokesman Peter Barnett said, “These New York Police Department officers are heroes. One of them laid down his life to foil a burgeoning narcotics ring.”

Raymond T. Green, Maurice Coates of Patterson ,New Jersey, and Roland P. Charles of Rutherford, New Jersey had rented the Hell’s Kitchen apartment and had moved in with a plan, according to Burnett, was to move the low-grade heroin to cash in on the “late-summer drought” in illicit drugs...

I kept out of sight in my pad in Greenwich Village. In the morning, I drank coffee and watched *Dialing for Dollars*. Afternoon, I packed a bag and hit the slimy city sweat rooms on Carmine

Street. I pounded the tired old heavy bag and punched the speed bag flat, skipped rope, and finished with free weights. It felt good and I got the occasional call to spar or help showcase a young fighter. Word had got around because on Friday the place was filled with men and I was the center attraction. I gave them a thrill by double-timing my routine and making loud grunts lifting weights. I ended to a round of applause and girlish shrieks. At least someone appeared to like me.

On the phone, I lied to Coco, “It’ll play out O.K. They were armed, black, and they killed a cop.” I didn’t mention guillotine Norton. I promised to see her her soon. Next it was Fishman’s secretary. We set a meeting for next week. Then came Earl Warens. He said that Norton was making a name as a Torquemada of the department. “Be a good lad and I’ll work on it.”

Finally, Ed Miller called. “I got a line on Martin Hodas, right now.”

I kept my mouth zippered.

“You coming to work or what?”

I was fucked if I was letting the shit come down on me. “I’m coming.”

“The Garden of Eden. 425 on the Deuce.”

It was a dirty bookshop and, from the outside, it looked low key. The display windows were stacked with novels by Hemingway and Dickens and a set of Shakespeare. A sign on the door stated "18 and Over, Please." Inside, the four front aisles held neatly arranged hardcover books. In the back the low-key lighting gave way to crass fluorescent bulbs and the soft wood floor became cracked red tiling. A crowd of men perused shelves of lewd magazines. Nobody paid us much mind until an old man with a skullcap and ringlets of dangling hair standing at an old wooden register spotted us and started to speak. Ed Miller waved him off. Then the customers noticed that we weren't here for smutty pleasures and scurried out of sight.

At the back wall was a row of arcade-style machines. They were five feet high and two feet square. A built-in viewer like a set of goggles topped the thing, and a coin slot on the right side looked plenty used. The name Panaram in chrome relief was visible just below the money taker. One by one the peepers noticed Ed and me staring at them and evaporated. The farthest machine had been turned ninety degrees and its back was opened. A thick man with big shoulders was kneeling before it. His head was half concealed inside the beast looking upward. He was probing the innards with a screwdriver.

Ed looked to me to start the heat. I snarled, "Hodas."

Hodas started and banged his head on the sharp rim of the opened machine. He exclaimed, "Fucking A." And slapped his free hand to the impact spot like he was swatting a mosquito. He dropped the tool out of his working hand and it fell with a clatter inside the machine.

“Fucking A,” reasserted Hodas as he turned from the porno peeper. He took his hand from the back of his head and examined it. There was a smear of blood on it.

“Fucking A.” He stood and wasn’t much taller than when kneeling. But he was big across the chest and shoulders with thick mauling arms and ham hocks for hands. His red-tinged hair was curly and unruly. It matched his full beard and mustache. He was thirty-five and had eyes that said “Don’t fuck with me.”

“I gave at the office.”

“We aren’t bagmen,” said Ed.

“So what do you want?”

Ed left a void. I was the strong-arm. I had the price on my head. I stepped up.

“You own these machines You supply this and other bookstores with machines and pornographic films”

“The Supreme Court says I got a right.” Hodas took a rag out of his back pocket and pressed it against the head cut.

“You got problems; we can help.”

Hodas’ wheels turned inside his head. “Shlomo,” he spoke gently to the old man behind the old register. “We need your office.”

Shlomo took a key from his vest and laid it on the Formica countertop. With short, quick strides Hodas scooped up the key and waved us to follow him. We pushed through some curtains to a small back hallway with three doors. Hodas unlocked door number one.

The three of us filled the small office entirely. Hodas sat on an old, green metal swivel chair. I sat on top of a short filing cabinet. Ed leaned against the wall by the door. On the wall beside the desk was an autographed photo of Muhammad Ali and a girlie pinup calendar from 1961 featuring a lithe blonde in a blue negligée frolicking with an inflated balloon shaped like a dolphin.

Hodas said, “Don’t get any ideas; that’s Shlomo’s wife. And she still looks exactly like that.”

Hodas grinned, revealing perfectly straight white teeth.

“Shut the door,” he said.

Ed said, “No.”

“O.K. O.K. So you know who I am; who are you?”

“Brown and Miller.”

“You’re Brown? You killed those three spades down the street?”

I kept silent.

“How come you’re working?”

I didn’t speak.

Hodas looked me up and down. “There was a heavyweight named Brown that became a cop. He was a Great White Hope. He went down in an elimination bout against a tomato can.”

“He wasn’t no tomato can.”

“Frazier kicked his butt.”

“Frazier would have kicked mine.”

Hodas smiled and gave a little impish laugh. He sounded like a squeeze toy.

“Didn’t want to risk losing your brains eh? I don’t blame you. Besides, I had the in; I bet against you. Made a tidy bundle. Still fight?”

“When the situation calls for it.”

“Like now? It’s close quarters. I might have the edge.”

“I’d bust you up.”

“O.K. O.K. You’re tough. So what do you want?”

“The mob,” said Ed.

Hodas got that someone’s-sticking-a-threaded-screw-in-my-ass look on his face. “You want a lot.”

“They been around?”

Hodas’ eyes darted back and forth.

“You’ve seen them?”

“Yeh. I seen them. They were perusing dirty books at Show World. It’s right down the street. Look for them there or on Mott Street. They ain’t here.”

Ed looked to me to take over. I’d be better at giving him a beating but I gave investigating a shot. I closed the gap between me and the fireplug.

“They’re interested in the pornography business.”

The screw turned again in Hodas’ ass. His face contorted in anguish.

“It’s a free country. They’re businessmen interested in the pornography business. That’s their business.”

“And when they get interested in your business?”

“I’m not worried.” His face twisted some more.

Ed cut in, “Work with us. We can make it right.”

Hodas’ eyes lit up with fire and he jumped from his seat. He shouted, “That’s it! That’s it! Interview over. You talk to my mouthpiece and he’ll set you straight. I’m in compliance with every Federal, State, and Municipal law and ordinance and I’m sick of bagmen coming in here looking for handouts or glory. Get rich or build your careers killing some fag junkies in

Harlem. Yeh. That's right. I've heard of you, too. Shotgun Ed Miller mowed down three nodding jigs. Well, fuck you both. Fuck your dogs. Fuck your mothers. Give me your best fucking shot."

He was in close so I sent an upper cut into his red bearded chin. It was just a tap but it straightened the little demon up. His face flushed red.

Ed gave me a wink. He smiled at Hodas. "Thanks for your time, Mr. Hodas. We'll meet again."

The porn promoter kept his badass glare as Ed and I left the little office. More customers had refilled the dirty bookstore. All the Panarams had perverts bent over them. Others waited their turn. The dawdlers saw us and left in a hurry.

We passed Shlomo at the counter. He said, "Good day. Come again. Maybe in the morning is better for you to visit."

Out on the street the Deuce was getting ready for a busy evening. The hookers, hustlers, and pushers were all settling their four feet of sidewalk territory.

"O.K., Brown, Your guy was right. Hodas is prime. He's tough but he's shaky. We keep the pressure on him. We drop in on him for chats. Get the Department of Health to visit locations with his peep machines. And we'll watch that kike behind the counter, too."

Ed took a small tool out and flicked it open. I expected a blade. It was a small comb. He ran it down each side of his thick mustache twice. “You write us up, O.K? I got business. Don’t worry. McGregor can’t do nothing to you. His hands are tied. Hey, Fishman called me to a meeting. He’s covering his ass with you. Don’t sweat it. You’re my partner and that counts. This department covers its own.”

I strolled into the squad room at the Four-Five and everybody pretended not to notice me. At my desk I pulled a Field Investigation report and jammed the triplicate form into the ancient Smith-Corona typewriter; I pecked away at the keys.

Peter Heinrich lurched by and pretended not to notice me. It was hard not to notice him. He was twice my size and always wore a bulletproof vest. I started looking for soft spots the day I met him. As yet, I hadn’t found any. He lurched on down the hall to the offices. I heard McGregor’s door open and close. Minutes later I heard the door open and close again. Heinrich lurched back past me. This time he was wearing a hat. He tipped it to me on his way out.

That night, a shady guy waited on the stoop to my building. I passed him a cigarette and he palmed me back a paper chit. Upstairs I opened it: “Thomas Costello, 341 Greenwich Avenue, 4J, \$457.57.” I changed clothes, grabbed **a plastic baggy filled with white powder**, and made my way to the West Village. It was a cool summer evening and Washington Square Park was

crowded with unwashed bohemians. I brushed past at least four Bob Dylan wannabees playing awful guitar and crossed Sixth Avenue.

At apartment 4J I pounded the door until it opened. Costello was old and turned white when I pulled out the baggie of what he took to be heroin. He never had a strong-arm with the threat of Rockefeller drug law arrest behind it. He easily gave over his rent money.

Back on the street I flipped the bag of powdered milk into the gutter and walked over to Molly McGee's pub on Cherry Street. The characters in the place took me in out of the corners of their eyes. To a man they fancied they were expatriates of the Irish Republican Army. To a man they were petty thieves and con men. Half were cops.

Stevie the bartender gave me a wave to the back with his index and middle fingers. He reached under the bar for the button to signal the boys in the back they were getting company. Two buzzes were for business. Three buzzes were for the law. One long buzz told Tom Dooley the wife was looking for him.

Through the somewhat hidden panel in the wall was the operations room of Dooley the bookmaker. An armed guard checked me out. There were four desks. Two were occupied by hard men on phones talking odds and point spreads. At the third desk seated with his back to me sat a fat man in striped shirt sleeves and a green visor. There were piles of cash in front of him. He was quickly sorting and counting bills and ratcheting up a mechanical accounting

machine. Tom Dooley occupied the last desk. He was smoking a thin cigar and reading an evening edition. He waved me in.

“Four fifty-seven, fifty-seven. So claims Mr. Costello.” I pulled the cash out of my pocket and clumped it down in front of Dooley. Then I scooped the loose change out and pooled that next to the cash. The fat man with the green visor appeared. With deft hands he separated the bills into denominations and the coins into size. He had it counted before I could take a seat.

“Four fifty-eight, fifty-seven,” the fat man announced.

Dooley said, “Costello gets one dollar credit. Mark it so, Lou.” The fat man nodded and scooped up most of the money. He left four twenties, a ten, a single, and a dime where they lay. I took the bills and folded them. I picked up the dime and flicked it into the air. Catching it with the other hand, I flipped it over on the back of the flipping hand.

“Heads.” called Dooley.

I lifted off the cover hand and examined the coin. It was heads. I flipped the coin to Dooley. He caught it like he had been doing that all his life. I turned to leave.

“Keeping your Park Avenue doll in diamonds, Brown?”

I don't answer lowlife bookmaking felons. Even ones I worked for. Hey, I might bust them for vagrancy next week. I was Detective Sergeant B.K. Brown of the New York Police Department and I used my badge to collect gambling debts. It was risky work with the DOI looking at me but Dooley was right. Coco didn't come cheap.