

January 21: Montecito California

Junior Assistant DA F.B. McAlister saw the gray sedan parked about fifty yards in front of him. He had never seen this automobile before on his daily run in a secluded part of the city. He picked this part of town because of the large Eucalyptus trees that lined the lazy streets. He could not yet see the face of the driver, but there was definitely someone in the front seat. The driver's door opened when he was fifteen yards away. His FBI training had him on the opposite side of the street.

"F.B. It's been a long time." It was a familiar voice.

"Not long enough." He smelled stale cigarettes. He did not know why this man was here, now.

The man was unshaven and dirty. He was average height in a cheap jacket and wrinkled pants. He looked like he had been awake for days. Serious stench. He wore a shiny badge on his belt. "I need your help."

F.B. was poised. He absorbed the statement as a lawyer would; calm, discerning. He had struggled through the academy, much less a physical presence than the rest. He made it with his wits, not his fists. The ordeal was like a game to him. He had relished watching the others fall behind in a game of catch-up they would never win. He was too good. His superiors knew it, too. Not even the director could have held him back. And when he left the Bureau to work for Pat Moreau in the cushy Santa Barbara DA's office, they were all too pleased. He represented a new breed of lawman that the good old boys were not yet ready to contend with. They would be sorry six years later when the biggest sex scandal to hit the FBI nearly put the Bureau on planet nowhere. Now he was here, in paradise,

and he was staring at an enemy far worse than any puissant rogue from the Bureau. Seth Macy stared back brutish.

Macy thought that F.B. looked smaller, diminutive. He wore steel rimmed glasses that made his face look cold, uncaring. He had always been good at covering his emotions, even in school. But he looked fragile, now. As if age near forty had already caught up with him, and was making him an old man. Macy thought that if he wanted to, he could pull each arm from F.B.'s sockets and drag him down the street by his ankles. He was wearing expensive running shoes, blue athletic shorts, and a sweat-soaked Notre Dame t-shirt. Macy lit a cigarette.

"Old habits die hard, eh Macy?" He exhaled into the Junior Executive DA's face. The smaller, wiry lawyer stood fixed on Macy, not letting him know that cigarette smoke bothered him immensely.

"Cut the shit, counsel. There is no taking back what happened between you, Kay and I. There isn't even a reason to bring it up. What's done is done. You made your choices, I made mine. That's not why I'm here."

"What, do you need to borrow more money that you'll never pay back." Macy clinched his fists and felt the fire burn up his back. He did not move.

"That's enough, F.B. I would hate for you to have to run back home with all of your ribs broken and you kneecaps backwards."

"Is that a threat, Sergeant?"

"Detective Sergeant. I think you are smart enough to know what a threat is."

"I just hope that you are." The two men stood staring a short while longer. Macy dropped the butt and slowly

stamped it out on the ground. The gravel made sharp, crunching sounds under the soles of his shoes.

"Meet me at Mac's in one hour."

"It's a little early for Mac's, isn't it Detective Sergeant?"

"Unfortunately, it might be too late." Macy sped off and F.B. finished the last quarter mile with a nagging stomach cramp.

Mac's Bar, Downtown Santa Barbara

It was not a happy place. Men came here, bad men, to drink, disintegrate themselves into the rough texture of the oak bar. Sad souls, begging for one more on the cuff. The light slinks inside when Macy opens the door.

"Morning, Seth." Mac was a friend of Macy's father, before some junkie fuckwad dumped him into the slough behind the zoo. "What tells?"

"Mac, I need to use the back for awhile. I've got to meet with some people."

"Sure thing, Seth. Who with?"

"Mr. Junior D.A. Pissant."

"Mr. for a change. I like that Macy." F.B.'s voice was harsh. Grating. "You had better not be playing games with me here, Macy. I am not to be fucked with. You muscle head beat cops don't mean a goddamn thing to me." He was serious. Conviction.

"I'll need an hour, Mac."

The staircase was built in the 20's, designed for quick getaways, when Mac's had seen less legitimate days. The dark hallway was lined with familiar photos, some of Macy's father. Seth Sr. was one of the greatest middle-heavyweights to ever fight in Southern California. He

busted so many jaws in his time, that his knuckles had become an unguent mass under his splotched skin. Some Italian from Inglewood ended his career when he decided to hit after the bell--with a steel folding chair.

Macy carried with him a worn, chestnut leather case, and the idea that this son-of-a-bitching lawyer could possibly help him in some way or another. He lit a cigarette.

"Your old man is in some of these," he glossed the photos casually.

"Cut the shit, F.B. This is no time for small talk." He leaned heavily against an iron door, as it opened slowly into a small, but tidy square room. The room did not smell but of old cigars. There was a table and four small chairs in the center. A single fixture hung over the middle of the room, and when illuminated, showed the tired, peeling paint of an indiscernible color. Several old-time movie posters clung to the walls. Macy dropped the leather case forcefully onto the wooden table. His eyes were worried.