

THE COUNTERFEIT MILLIONAIRE

Written, Designed & Produced
By
Wayne Victor Dennis

"The Counterfeit Millionaire." All rights are reserved. No portion of this material shall be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or reproduced by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without the express written authorization of the copyright owner and author, Wayne Victor Dennis. Copyright 1999 & 2005. Printed in the United States of America.

The names: (Wayne, Jason, Mitzi, Barbara, Gary, Sonja, Jordan, Ethan, Eric & Bertha Dennis), Bella Rosenbaum, (John, John III, Jeffrey, Carol & Tammy Robison), Andrew Jackson, Benjamin Siegel, Al Capone, Clyde Barrow, John Dillinger, Stephen A. Wynn, Benny Binion, Sammy Davis, Jr., Manuel Noriega, and Jerry Adler are the *only non-fictitious* names in this true-crime adventure. *All other last names* have been altered slightly to avoid lawsuits instituted by individuals involved herein. Some dates and times have been approximated.

IN FOND MEMORY OF:

My grandmothers Bella Rosenbaum and Bertha Dennis: my best friend Jeffrey Robison, and Alexia's lovely mother, Ruth.

WARNING !!!

Counterfeiting is a serious crime throughout the world. If you participate in this criminal misconduct and United States Currency is involved, you will face *Long Term Imprisonment* if you are caught: especially within the United States and/or its territories.

Counterfeiting is a *Federal Crime*. Under the guidelines of United States Code (U.S.C.) a federal prisoner must serve at least eighty-five percent (85%) of his/her total sentence before they can be considered for release from imprisonment.

The act of *Counterfeiting* carries up to three (3) separate charges; each allowing for the maximum of terms as stated herein. The following punishments have been set-forth by the U.S. Sentencing Commission and approved by the U.S. Attorney General. They are strictly enforced by the sovereign powers of the United States of America.

**PENALTIES FOR
COUNTERFEITING U.S. CURRENCY:**

Conspiracy To Counterfeit U.S. Currency:

Title 18, U.S.C., Section 371: Class "D" felony.
Punishment: 0-5 years imprisonment.
\$250,000.00 fine.

Manufacture Of Counterfeit U.S. Currency:

Title 18, U.S.C., Section 471: Class "C" felony.
Punishment: 0-5 years imprisonment.
\$250,000.00 fine.

Possess/Passing Counterfeit U.S. Currency:

Title 18, U.S.C., Section 471: Class "C" felony.
Punishment: 0-15 years imprisonment.
\$750,000.00 fine.

Max Sentence Allowed Under Title 18, U.S.C.:

Punishment: 0-25 years imprisonment.
\$1,250,000.00 fine.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE A COUNTERFEIT BILL / NOTE

If your position of employment requires you to handle cash, and you suspect a bill is counterfeit, it is in your best interest and for your safety, that you do not alert or spook the passer of that bill/note.

The United States Secret Service suggests that you make mental reference of their appearance, i.e., facial hair, scars, tattoos, eye color, clothes, etc. Then, once the passer has left the establishment, notify your local police and/or Secret Service field office.

If your establishment has its own security personnel, they can use their discretion on whether or not to apprehend the passer of a suspect/definitive counterfeit bill.

It is important *not* to handle the suspect/definitive counterfeit bill. The more it is handled, the better the chance there is of mixing and destroying any identifying finger prints which could lead the Secret Service to the passer and/or printer.

PREFACE

To print my fortune I worked meticulously and methodically. My covert operation would have impressed even the U.S. Navy Seals.

During this tenure of illegal activity, I took back only a fractional amount of the fortunes that casinos unscrupulously acquire from ordinary people everyday.

For additional payback, I exchanged my counterfeit at fast food and alcohol establishments, who unfortunately exchange their so-called food products and drinks for peoples' health. And they, too, do it without a hint of remorse.

People say that what I did was a crime against the United States. However, I consider the pitiful squandering of *billions* in taxpayer dollars a most serious unconscionable crime in itself. And furthermore, I consider it an all-time heinous crime against the *world* that many of our governmental politicians allow companies to poison the air, land and water, and then turn their cowardly backs while their secret bank accounts continue to grow.

As a means to an end, the millions of dollars that I printed would have ultimately resulted in funding towards my energy-saving inventions of solar power technology, and electric powered automobiles that recharge themselves, and use no pollution-causing fuels. The money, by whichever means gained, *would* be well spent.

CONTENTS

1.	A Gangster And A Millionaire.....	1
2.	Let Your Fingers Do The Legwork.....	73
3.	Lights... Camera... Currency.....	115
4.	Getting The Right Paper.....	143
5.	Cutting... Counting... Ageing.....	189
6.	Hidden Treasure In Florida's Tropics....	227
7.	Money To Burn... Literally.....	237
8.	The Counterfeit Cashing Tour.....	249
9.	Tragedy Averted.....	271
10.	The Beginning To An End.....	297
11.	Father And Son Strike It Rich.....	343
12.	Courtroom Lies... Truths... Revenge....	355
13.	"Club-Fed"... Your Tax Dollars Spent....	424
14.	The Counterfeit Millionaire's Legacy.....	444

CHAPTER ONE

“ A Gangster And A Millionaire ”



April 20, 1992 - 7:45 pm (Las Vegas, NV)

The day has ended as the sun sinks beyond the horizon of the Mojave Desert. Darkness sets in. Electricity races to ignite the exotic gases of the magnificent neon signs. They come alive with colors of light that pierce the blackened sky of this cool spring night.

Each of the theme-oriented hotel and casinos are spectacular in every imaginable way. From a great distance it's easy to see their names: MGM, Luxor, Mirage, Caesar's Palace, Excalibur, Stardust, Dunes, Treasure Island, Hilton, and Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel's hotel that started it all—the infamous, Flamingo.

There's only one place like this on earth. It is here where Lady Luck casts her smile on some with rewards of jackpots and riches, yet frowns upon others as they lose their paychecks, rent money, and life savings.

Millions of people from all walks of life trek to this high-desert valley in their quest for that illusive fortune which awaits them in the exciting casinos. They're drawn in by every conceivable comfort and enticement.

In a casino, no clocks or windows can be found. Water fountains are scarce. Alcohol is always free as long as you gamble. The alcohol-induced buzz helps you to judge your betterment... uh, better your judgment. Then you ask yourself if you should bet your mortgage payment on this one last *lucky hand*?

It's drink, gamble and be happy. Leave your worries *and* your money, far, far behind. Allow us to build thine castles and pyramids high unto thy heavens with all thou's losses thine leavith unto.

Although people are treated like royalty here, money is the true *King*. Once you lose it all, and your credit cards are maxed out, and your ATM account is drained like a Florida swamp, it's then time to walk. For cash is the life-blood of the casino—and without it's flow, life here becomes non-existent. A billion dollar mega-resort can only be built and sustained by the "House" winnings. You do the math.

This is a city of entertainment that was once a barren desert valley. It is now an oasis of lights, concrete and ten-thousand-dollar palm trees. This is... *Las Vegas!*

• • • •

For 27 years I've resided in this place they call "*The City of Sin.*" It's no secret that in Las Vegas, one lives their life in the fast lane. I lived a few years, however, in Miami, and I actually love that city of sub-tropical allure. Miami offers a more mellow, colorful, and natural lifestyle.

What best suits my needs at this time, though, is the fact that money changes hands at a break-neck pace in these dimly lit casinos. I've always been fascinated by the vast amounts of money which flows here twenty-four-seven.

In Vegas, people treat money with nonchalance. Let me tell you this... while standing at a casino cashier's cage a short time ago, the attendant left behind two twenty-five thousand dollar bundles on the counter, an arms' distance away from me. She did this with her back towards me while she counted coins through their high-volume counter.

Does *that* not astonish you the way it did me? *Fifty-grand* in genuine cash, two feet away: seemingly with nobody watching. It's at the tables, in the machines, behind the cashier's cage, and within the vaulted walls of the hard/soft-count rooms. Money, money, and more money... everywhere! Cold hard cash, just waiting to be extracted both legally and illegally.

I often wonder, though, if Las Vegas is in fact the wisest place to exchange my counterfeit for genuine?

Each of the persons who know of my purpose here seems to have their own opinion. However, until they've experienced the activity, the fever, and the somewhat relaxed currency-authenticating atmosphere of the casinos for as long as I have, I feel that any negative assessment regarding my actions and reasons will be most unfounded and subject to argument.

My life has been wonderful, yet somewhat unbelievable in many ways. Like scenes dreamt-up in Hollywood, there's never a dull moment. I've always escaped trouble at every twist and bend. But that was then, and this is now. Unfortunately, I've found inescapable trouble.

• • • •

**Allow me to explain this
story from the beginning...
I mean from the *very* beginning.**

• • • •

At the age of five it's easy to love everything about my grandmother, Bella Rosenbaum. She's my mother's mother. I respect her greatly. Bella is a wonderful woman of old world Jewish heritage. Her figure is short and a little wide. Her long black hair has a strong tint of red throughout.

She always gives me these great-big grandmother-type kisses immediately after applying a huge quantity of brightly colored lipstick.

I have a choice of where I want the kiss to land, depending upon which direction I turn my face at the precise moment before impact.

It's either an ear... or an eye. So it seems as if she's trying to deafen me or blind me with this tremendous suction... but in a loving sort of way.

She means no harm, nor inflicts any as well. However, I go through quite a batch of soap in my efforts to remove the colored greasy lip prints, yet I still love her just the same.

She speaks with a heavy Hebrew accent and compliments everything I do, like most grandmothers seem to effect. There is something very different in Bella, though.

It happens to be a particular phrase, which she speaks in that accent, bound in the words of her old Jewish wisdom. She whispers it to me frequently in a fashion as if she has a sixth sense... a premonition.

With a loving smile and her plump, soft hands pressing against the cheeks on each side of my mouth, while she contorts my lips into a puff of cauliflower, she looks me directly in the eyes and speaks softly. It's a phrase I'll never forget as long as I live...

"Vanehala (my Hebrew name of loving endearment), someday you're going to be a *gangster* or a *millionaire*. I just know it. I've got this strange feeling." She says this with such intense sincerity; then she pinches my cheeks and kisses me again.

• • • •

There's something else peculiar which is said about me during this young age, yet I have no knowledge that it's being told to my father by *his* mother—my other grandmother—Bertha Dennis, who has a premonition as well.

She's a good woman and a nice person. Though I don't know her as well as I know Bella, she does apparently know me.

She tells my father something in confidence, away from the listening ears of my family, including myself.

"Jason," she says, "if there is ever a problem between you and Mitzi, and you have to choose between Barbara, Gary and Wayne, make sure you choose Wayne... I see something different in him: something special. Remember this, Jason."

From what my father tells me about her, she is very serious.

• • • •

At the young age of five, money, at this time, isn't much of an important aspect in my life. My enjoyment comes from beating-up the other boys my age—and occasionally an older one. But they're older by no more than a year or so. It's a good challenge. They receive a beating basically only when they deserve it, though.

Their problems with me begin when they are disrespectful to girls, or if they pick on other boys whom are less able to defend themselves.

And the beating is more severe if the person inflicts pain or injury upon a defenseless animal. I seldom lose a bout.

It's not that I'm big, because I'm merely average in size. It's speed, strength, and dog-determination that are my greatest assets towards my many victories.

Physical punishment against boys is all right in my books—as long as they deserve it. And never do I cause physical pain to a female even when they *do* deserve it.

My mother and grandmother always know what to expect when someone's parent comes pounding their fist against the door of our Southern California, Simi Valley home. And it sure isn't to solicit the sale of Scout™ cookies. It generally means that their precious little son got a well-deserved beating.

This vigilante terrorism of mine persists year after year. Later we move to the San Fernando Valley just on the edge of Hollywood, in the heart of Los Angeles.

It is at this point in time when money becomes important to me. At the age of eight I'm paying for my own skateboards, movies and snacks, along with other desires.

Every Sunday, my brother Gary and I ride our custom-designed skateboards miles upon miles throughout the valley. The smooth cement sidewalks seem to never end.

Sometimes we skateboard to the point of no return. In other words... we end up so far from home, it becomes very dark and late by the time we arrive back.

Dinner is beyond cold; it's virtually non-existent. And we're somewhat punished for our tardiness.

Weekends mean more skateboarding, and movies. This Sunday, the new movie—early enough to be filmed in black and white—is “Night of the Living Dead.”

As tough as I think I am, the skateboard ride home this evening in the eerie darkness, is absolutely terrifying to me.

These days, movies are only a mere twenty-five cents. However, replacing skateboard wheels, sodas and other goodies begin to add up. When my brother is not around me at school, I'm able to extort money from kids whom I'm not too keen on.

I don't take their lunch money; hell, lunch is only thirty-cents. No, I make them heist money from their mother's pocketbook that night and bring it to me the following day, or “don't come back to school” is their directive and ultimatum.

This thug-like enterprise earns me about five dollars a week. This is a decent sum of money for an eight year old in 1967. My brother rarely questions where I get the money. But when he does, of course, I lie through my teeth. I have to lie because my brother has always been an honest guy.

• • • •

On my ninth birthday our family decides to pick-up and move to beautiful, sunny Miami, Florida. During the long drive along the southern route "Interstate 10" from Los Angeles to Miami, I continually voice my fear of hurricanes and tornadoes. It is because of this fear that I don't want to move to Florida in the first place.

My mother constantly denies Florida's frequent hurricanes and tornadoes every time I bring the subject to light. Be it insight or coincidence; on the fourth day into our new settlement, at 5:59 am, a tornado tears through *our neighborhood only!* It does quite a bit of damage as well. Nearly all the windows of the neighbor's autos, including our own, are shattered and blown inward into the interior compartment.

Everyone's storage sheds are shredded and tossed into the surrounding neighborhoods. Many major stores have lost their roofs to the furious winds. The only good to come from this disaster is that we now have a massive supply of fresh coconuts without having to climb the palm trees for a while.

With our new life here in Florida, my brother and I are sent to hell; an elementary school, which can be easily passed off as a children's Nazi Camp for corporal punishment. It has a very pleasant name for such a horrendous institution. It's cordially titled "Sable Palms."

Isn't that a nice name?

We're so fucking miserable that I beat kids just for looking at me wrong. I hate this place so much that I lose my sense of morals. At this school there's very little money to be earned in the extortion racket. Now I am forced to earn my spending money by alternative means.

It's a mere pittance for the dirty deed of beating a fellow student at recreation time or after school; paid for by another... that poor souls' enemy.

And as for the girls at this school... let's just say that there are none I'd consider regardless of *any* standards: and I like girls already.

The teachers must be leftovers imported from East Berlin's "Stalag 13." They carry out strict discipline every day. It's worse than the tales of terror one hears about from a Catholic school. I really do hate this school.

• • • •

Our neighborhood is located on 27th Avenue at N.W. 22nd Place. This is located roughly five hundred feet north of where the future site of Joe Robbie (Pro Player) Stadium is to be built.

In this cow pasture my brother and I hunt deadly coral snakes. Their red and black color bands tell us that they're indeed coral snakes. The white stripes between bands assure us that they are very much so poisonous. The colors make them easy to find in the thick green pasture grasses. We run away from more of these snakes than we ever manage to catch.

Yes, I certainly *do* fear death.

There is a neighborhood watering hole called "Lake Lucerne." At this recreation area one can find quicksand, snapping turtles, coral snakes, water moccasins, alligators, Brahma bulls, and other dangerous elements.

The lakebed is engrossed with weeds that often entangle the feet of an unsuspecting swimmer and drowns them just four feet below the waters' surface.

My father forbids my sister, brother and myself from even-so-much-as *thinking* of playing in this area. However, as soon as he heads off to work, it becomes a frenzy of fishing, swimming and all the danger we can survive.

We finally get caught at Lake Lucerne when my father comes home early. My rear-end sure hurts for hours after contacting his rocky knuckles and leather belt.

• • • •

Feb 10, 1971 - 5:59 am (Los Angeles, CA)

I'm thrown from my bed and slammed to the hard floor. A major earthquake rocks the Los Angeles area and surrounding suburbs, causing severe damage. The quake registers a powerful "7.1" on the Richter scale. The quakes' damage is mostly due to its lapsed time of motion. Two full minutes of nature's awesome power and fury is unleashed.

What really makes this a strange occurrence is the *time of day* in which it begins, and the *duration of its motion...* 5:59 a.m. until 6:01 a.m.

Remember the tornado in Florida? *It* touched it's funnel on the ground at 5:59 a.m., and lifted back to the sky at 6:01 a.m. Both natural disasters occurred at the *same time* in the morning and dispensed their devastation for the *same duration* of time.

• • • •

At any rate, the earthquake is enough of an excuse for my family to get the hell out Los Angeles and move to Las Vegas. My parents have wanted to move to the "City of Sin" for quite some time now, and I'm certainly happy we're moving from this smog and traffic gridlock in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles.

• • • •

Feb 15, 1971 - 9:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

At this point in time I'm almost twelve years of age. I have given-up the thug-like style of fighting as I now begin my instruction in Martial Arts.

In a short period of time I've become quite proficient in my fighting technique, however, and for the better, I've become more responsible and well disciplined in the process.

Because of this new outlook, the young men now have to give me a damned good reason before they have the misfortune of their unwelcomed beating.

Shortly after moving to Las Vegas, I meet my new friends, John and Jeff Robison. This bond starts-off negatively from the very moment they disobey my request to stop riding their bicycles up into our moving van—via the metal ramp. They seem to do this in defiance, almost as if to test me: this new kid on their block.

They're tough guys with whom I'm glad to be an ally. Though it begins angrily, I sense a lifetime of friendship will ensue.

A "Trio-of-terror" and criminal enterprise now begins. Our bond cannot be broken. Outrageous events will soon strengthen our memories.

• • • •

We each have our share of pretty girls in our youth. We also earn more money than anyone our age, with the exception of drug dealers.

We don't have to engage in such activity; our minds are sharp and always thinking of better ventures towards financial growth.

During this time we also have our share of trouble as well. It can be said that—in general—during our bus rides to school, John and I are fair in dealing with egotistical young men who occasionally occupy our reserved seats. We always give them a warning to vacate our seats and find themselves another.

If they're stupid enough to refuse our initial request, we extend to them a second and final opportunity. If they still refuse... then they receive a real pounding right in front of their shocked schoolmates.

Now, Jeff, on the other hand, gives them only one warning. Pain, coupled with humiliation, is not a good combination for these kids. Needless to say, we are left to ride our bicycles to school a good deal of the year.

The Las Vegas winter cold and summer heat is quite unbearable: as is the ever-present wind, which seems to always shift its direction, relentlessly pounding us head-on. We never suffer alone though. If one gets banned from the bus, we all pedal the many miles to school regardless of the inclement weather.

John, however, spends most of his time struggling as Jeff and I grab a free ride hanging onto his carry-rack mounted to the rear of his bicycle. We sit on our bikes while John stands to pedal power-strokes on his Schwinn™.

He drags us up hills and into gusting winds. He tries to thwart our efforts with vulgar words and thrown-short punches. We laugh as he continues his struggle. Sometimes he'll just jump off his bike and quickly chase us on foot. Our parents don't seem to know of our bus evictions; they just think we enjoy the exercise.

• • • •

My first *legitimate* money making enterprise earns me somewhere in the neighborhood of ten dollars a week. For a fourteen year old in 1973, this can be considered a decent sum of income for a mere half hour total in work.

Here's how it went... for my birthday, I asketh and did receiveth, a boa constrictor snake. Now you're probably wondering how the hell can a young man earn ten dollars for a half hours' work with a pea-brained snake?

Quite simple. It's all in the presentation and marketing strategy.

The snake has to eat his live-mouse-meal once a week. His meal costs fifty cents. The neighborhood punks seem to be fascinated with this large reptile. What mesmerizes them even more so, is to watch him eat.

But as the saying goes... "There are no free meals."

Every Saturday, right at noontime, about ten of these youngsters appear at my home just like clockwork. They each carry with them, one dollar. The money goes towards admission to watch "Sabbath" track, bite, wrap himself around, and crush the mouse. He proceeds to eat the mouse, head first.

As a bonus, they also get to hold the snake for a timed-minute. I always make them wash their hands first. There's no way I'll allow these snot-nosed-punks to touch my clean reptile with their filthy hands.

To make things a little more enticing, each of their names are written on a scratch piece of paper; after which I draw one name from a bowl. The winner gets to toss the mouse to its death into the large wood and wire cage. The winning individual is explicitly not permitted to torment the mouse or he gets punched rather hard.

You see, I've always loved animals, and unnecessary torment of any animal in my presence is grounds for punishment. As for the impending death of the little mouse... well... it is nature's way: the food chain, a cycle of life and death.

What a sad sight to see though.

These sadistic little punks love to look-on. And they do pay money for the privilege. The moment the mouse hits the deck inside the cage, its nose twitches as it catches the scent of its enormous predator.

There's a scared look on the mouse's face as the snake slithers closer, smelling with his flickering forked tongue. In an instant, he strikes. Using his fangs, he pulls the mouse in close; then he wraps his muscular body around the little furry victim.

The mouse's sad beady eyes bulge as the snake applies his deadly constrictive pressure. The mouse's eyes nearly pop from their sockets as its tiny bones are being crushed and its last breath of air is being slowly squeezed away. Little pink fingers reach straight outwards as if they're pleading for mercy... begging for help.

I suppose I never gave much thought to the snake's eating process before asking for the reptile as my birthday gift. I did not realize the cruelty behind it all. Now the blood of the mouse, so to speak, is on *their* hands—these punks who come to participate.

• • • •

Unlike Al Capone, Clyde Barrow, John Dillinger and even Benjamin Siegel, I care about the feelings of most living creatures: humans and animals alike.

Sometimes though, it seems I have more of a heart for animals. At least animals are unconditionally loyal... and they certainly don't cheat and lie. These are two traits, which are commonly found in humans.

I've always had this motto that I strictly live by and abide. Someday, I may even die by it just as likely. And you can believe me; I lose hours of sleep as I plan my secret vengeance when someone breaks the law of "my" constitution, which follows.

This law goes towards everyone in my life...

"I will be as honest and helpful to any individual as best as I'm able. I will help them within my powers and ability in their time of need. But cross me—whether purposely or by mistake—then make no apologies or efforts to make good on that mistake, and I will fuck-you-over much, much more tragically... guaranteed."

The vindications *never* entail murder, but vindications *will* happen in some way, shape or form—regardless.

I'll admit that I hold grudges indefinitely. And I never forget. I have a mental list regarding the persons I condemned to my wrath of whatever I choose as a punishing vengeance. Remember my motto as this story progresses. *It is very important.*

• • • •

We decide to drop this venture after a full year of good earnings. This is done immediately after we discover a much better, less laborious means of obtaining our spending money.

One night, we're at this arcade, which our friend's father owns. We frequent it often as we play foosball. This game is basically tabletop soccer: our favorite game. And we're quite good at it. We seldom lose. I must say that we're lightning fast. We sucker people into playing us: then we smoke 'em 10-1 or 11-0. They don't really stand much of a chance.

So tonight we're playing, and one of the plastic men breaks. Greg, the owner's son who runs the place, takes John and myself into the back room to get tools and a new man.

As I wait for Greg, I notice a rather large key ring with more than two-dozen keys attached to it. I have a strong hunch that these keys will fit most arcade game's front and rear doors. They may as well be the keys to the U.S. Mint.

Wow!

So quickly and quietly I remove the key ring from its place, and into my jacket pocket it goes. I am forced to walk slowly and deliberately.

John sees what I've got and he instinctively covers for me by keeping Greg busy with horseplay and talk as we all walk from the backroom.

John, Jeff, Danny (Danny is mostly Jeff's friend) and I are all excited as we think of the new prospective wealth we're about to obtain at arcades from all around the Las Vegas valley. Our *Coin Removal Service* is about to begin.

Every Friday and Saturday evening, our plan is to hitchhike (this is still safe to do) to these arcades and clean out mostly pinball machines. Video games are new and scarce these days. They are still in development.

There is one video game, however; "Pong." It is quite popular. It's always being played. But it makes no difference to us because we can still clean out its coin drawer while the unsuspecting players play.

One of our keys opens the rear door of the machine. There are only two components in this big yellow game: the coin box and the television monitor/computer motherboard that controls the game.

John talks to the players while he stands lookout. Jeff also stands lookout while I'm at the rear of the machine filling my pockets with quarters. Once I'm finished filling up, it's John's turn, then Jeff, then Danny, then the machine is empty.

Let me tell you something; quarters add up very quickly. And in Vegas there are many casinos with high-speed coin counters to tally our cache. The change persons at the cage never seem to question where us teenagers obtained a hundred or two in quarters. We tip the cashiers well, and that's all they care about.

Then we get greedy.

We have so many quarters we're forced to stash them in hiding spots buried in the desert. Coffee cans from our parent's house work fine as mini burial vaults.

Luckily, Las Vegas has so many casinos, we never have to visit the same ones too often to cash-in our treasure of coins.

We always consider every angle... every aspect of our criminal enterprises. We keep to our motto, which someone else coined, "*It's always better to be safe than sorry.*"

• • • •

Since we haven't a job, we never buy material possessions, nor do we open savings accounts at the local bank. So we continue to hide our loot. We don't have time to cash all the quarters and the bags of coin are heavy. And it's also hard to transport on bicycles.

We use our money for entertainment purposes mostly. Our friends and acquaintances are treated regularly to movies, go-carts, horseback riding, restaurants, etc.

At school our popularity is nearly that of celebrity status as the word gets around regarding our generosity. We enjoy the limelight. No one knows of our scheme except the four of us. At restaurants we always leave substantial gratuities when and *only* when the food server deserves it.

• • • •

After three months' time, the arcade owners figure out how their money is being extracted and they begin to install sturdy metal hasps and heavy duty padlocks on both the front and rear openings of the machines.

• • • •

At this point, Jeff, the younger of the Robison brothers, decides to hang around with Danny more often, and less with John and I. Maybe we're not a good influence on him. Do you think John and I care? Hell no! Now we have only to make a two-way split on any future earnings.

Well, this is better anyway because we discover a new income-earning business, which is basically a two-man operation. And the pay is astonishing.

It seems that this older girl—a gas station attendant named, let's say, Gayle, is infatuated with John. She is at least five years older than him, but that's fine in his book-of-standards.

However, the only thing John ever does with her is clean her out... money wise... with my help of course.

We're seniors at Chaparral High. The year is 1976. We ride top-of-the-line bicycles to school, which is a mere three miles from home. Every other day, after school, at two p.m., we ride by the gas station where Gayle works, and she invites the two of us into the small cashier's booth of this bustling fuel stop.

John talks to Gayle while I checkout the female patrons as they drive up to the booth to pay for their fuel purchase. I never stare. I'm very casual. I don't like to make the girls feel uncomfortable. I must be a born gentleman.

Today, in my state of boredom, I glance down at the floor. In a moment of profound destiny, I notice that Gayle hasn't fully pushed her money-drop packet into the slotted opening of the floor safe.

There it is; a little yellow manila envelope stuffed with at least \$200-\$300 in cash. I know this because *now* I begin to watch her as she casually stuffs each envelope with cash from the money drawer.

These days we carry hair combs in our pockets. Gel has not yet been popularized. As Gayle exits the booth to collect her customer's cash, I quickly and quietly extract the envelope using my comb as a gripping device.

If only she had pushed the envelope downward just a quarter inch further, it would have dropped completely into the safe and out of my reach. However, she never does... ever. And because of this we become independently wealthy.

After I extract the envelope, John waits until the next time Gayle exits the booth. Then with lightning speed and lots of determination, he actually erases the entry from the "Cash Deposit Logbook." We take one or two envelopes per day during each day we are there. This adds-up real fast! We're ecstatic and loaded with cash: not coins this time.

• • • •

After only two months of operation in our professional *Envelope Removal Service*, Gayle gets fired. I cannot imagine why? The authorities can't accuse us of any wrongdoing due to the fact that non-employees are banned from entering the booth in the first place. So, officially, we were never there. And video cameras have not yet made their debut.

Gayle accuses John in a face-to-face confrontation. They call each other a few bad names and we walk away... never to look back. Our coffee-can savings accounts runeth over.

• • • •

From 1972 to 1977 we are a three-man-mafia (including Jeff's *part-time* assistance)... and no one dares to question us.

Sometimes John and I pay Jeff and Danny thirty or forty dollars just to prepare us breakfast. It's our way of making them earn their own spending money, rather than mooching our money, which John and I worked so cleverly and hard to obtain.

• • • •

The final illicit enterprise of my youth is rather interesting, as well as profitable...

Today I secured a job as a busboy at a high-priced coffee shop on the Las Vegas Strip (the main boulevard where all the famous hotels and casinos are located).

This fancy establishment is positioned directly across the street from the Stardust Hotel and Casino. Many tourists come to this restaurant for a quick and inexpensive Vegas meal. They open the menu with a smile... then they see the prices and their smiles turn to frowns.

Once the shock dissipates and their knees become steady enough to stand, the couple, or family, gets up from the table and walks out the front door, passing the cashier without comment. The cashiers say nothing in return.

Because of this ever-so-common occurrence, the management and cashiers have grown accustomed to seeing the would-be-patrons walk out without stopping at the cashier's counter. This can be confusing to management regarding patrons who have just finished their meal and left the check with money at the table.

A fortunate occurrence for me.

I have organized my bus-cart precisely so that the gray plastic garbage tray is positioned in the center slot of my wheeled disposal-mobile: which incidentally, the center plastic tray is at the same height as the table's top.

It takes just two seconds to sweep the check —along with the cash—into the garbage tray. I quickly mix the check and the money with the lettuce and other leftovers. I reach into my left pocket and pull out a clean five-dollar bill as a tip for the waitress.

I'm very expedient at this process from start to finish. The other customers have no clue as I shuffle in and out of the booth, quickly moving, cleaning and disposing.

My hands move like those of a magician. It helps that the restaurant is set up with semi-secluded booths and that the customers are too damned busy watching the goddess-like waitresses prance by in their short skirts and revealing shirts.

No haggards work here.

Needless to say: this enterprise earns me more money than a valet parking attendant or bellman at the ritzy Caesar's Palace.

During this stint I work alone. Also, I save my money under the carpet in my bedroom at home. No buried coffee cans this time.

• • • •

Tonight is an important turning point in my life. For tonight I make a decision to leave this job... and the desert.

Though the money is tremendous, I still have standards. And the ugly orange busboy uniform—complete with its Farmer John style brown *vinyl* apron—is just too damned embarrassing. It's time for the sun and fun of Miami: only this time as an adult.

• • • •

Oct 28, 1977 - 1:30 am (Las Vegas, NV)

It's late at night and I don't want to wake anyone to say goodbye. I'm very spontaneous. I've packed two small suitcases, retrieved a full, one-gallon gasoline container, made a blanket roll, and gathered my cash from under the carpet in my bedroom. I attach the suitcases and the gasoline container to the sides of my motorcycle. The blanket attaches on the back.

This is no ordinary motorcycle. And, it's definitely *not* a touring bike. The comfort level is at an all-time low. This crotch-rocket is a 1974 Kawasaki™ 500cc drag-racing motorcycle. It's just barely street legal.

For those who may know mechanics, this particular motorcycle is a three cylinder/piston, two-stroke, high compression, full-lay-down café racer. One hundred percent drag strip ready. Top speed, 145 miles per hour (MPH).

This speed takes a mere 9.1 seconds to achieve... from a dead stop... in just one-quarter of a mile.

Due to the fact that it's a high-performance machine, its gas mileage is piss-poor. And the U.S. map shows great distances between cities mostly in the west. It is because of this that I'm forced to carry the extra supply of gasoline in an old-fashioned metal can.

The only location to mount the gas can is atop one of the three expansion-chamber-type exhaust pipes.

Within minutes, the fire-breathing exhaust pipes become hot enough to heat the metal gasoline container, thus expanding the volume of petro in the limited-area container.

As you might imagine, before I even leave my neighborhood, I watch in fear as the gas can bulges, ready to explode at any moment. The petro pours out of the can's vent-hole and I wait for it to burst into flames. It's as if I'm carrying a huge Molotov cocktail that I never intend on tossing: and no clue of when it's going to explode.

To add to this danger, as I cross over Hoover Dam from the Nevada side, eastbound into Arizona, the late-night sky lights-up with spooky, brilliant flashes of lightning.

I can easily hear the thunder's boom over the loud high-pitched whine of the two-stroke engine as it screams through the empty, dark, stormy desert.

It begins to rain. The droplets feel like buckshot from a 12-gauge shotgun blast as I cruise at a constant speed of 130 mph. There are few vehicles at this time of night on these desolate Arizona highways. I fear a kamikaze coyote will soon dart into the road and leave me with no time for evasive maneuvering.

The situation takes a turn for the *unbelievable*.

The rain becomes a downpour and the lightning bolts begin to strike dangerously close. I'm scared shitless as I realize that I'm not in an automobile safely protected from the harsh elements.

I'm freezing cold, wet, alone, and in genuine danger from hypothermia, electrocution, and extreme bodily trauma.

And what's really sad, is, I never said my final goodbyes. Hell, I didn't even leave a note. I'm sure for the next three days, until I call home, everyone will be worried sick. And I suppose I should have checked the national weather forecast for conditions prior to this trip. It's still Hurricane Season.

• • • •

Oct 30, 1977 - 3:15 pm (West of Houston, TX)

This is a four-lane stretch of pure desolation. I'm on the southernmost coast-to-coast interstate highway "10". I'm running the motorcycle's engine at a smooth 8500 rotations per minute (RPM). My speed is still a constant 130 mph. To my left I take notice of an out-of-place mound of dirt, which is about ten feet in height by twenty feet in length.

As I pass it by, I catch a glimpse of a large white object through the drenching downpour of rain. Instantly, I lock my eyesight into my left rearview mirror, and there he is, a Texas Ranger... Highway Patrol.

"Dammit!" I say out loud with no one except myself to hear this shout of grief. Continuing to watch my mirror intensely, I notice that he doesn't move an inch, nor does he give chase.

I know what I've just seen is not a wood cutout painted to resemble a patrol car. It was real. "Oh please, don't let him come after me," I mumble under my breath. "Son of a bitch," I smile. "I've finally got some luck on my side. Alright... cool." I know that any speed over a hundred is certain jail time.

Maybe he's sleeping, and with the rain pounding on the roof of his car he cannot hear my engine enough to awaken him. Or, maybe he figures I'll probably kill myself soon anyway.

For a brief period of time I have to remove my water-soaked gloves because my hands feel strange. They now resemble wrinkled white prunes with fingers. After a day and a half of wetness, my hands need to breath air, whether or not it's raining on me.

Well damn my luck! I'm moving along at this high rate of speed, still a little anxious from the Ranger ordeal... and... baaaaaam! A large, Texas-sized, black and yellow striped bumblebee slams itself head first into my right hand. The impact forces half its body under my skin into the soft tissue area between my thumb and forefinger.

Wow! Does this hurt!

My hand goes into immediate shock. I involuntarily release the throttle grip; then instantly, I deliberately pull in the clutch lever. This action disengages the transmission from the engine, and I coast to the side of the road.

I see that the blood has been wind-blown up into my shirt's sleeve. It's somewhat diluted by the rainwater and the wet sleeve itself, so it doesn't look too gruesome from what would normally be the deep red color of pure blood.

I calmly use my left forefinger and thumb to force the mostly-disintegrated bumblebee from under my skin and out of my hand. There are still small fragments left inside that I just cannot extract.

The bleeding stops after about ten minutes. Unfortunately, I continue to feel the misery of stinging pain, coupled with coldness, wetness, and exhaustion. My only luck is that the bee was facing me head first at the time of impact.

One hour later and one hundred-thirty miles further, I gaze at the darkening sky. Nightfall is just a few minutes away. I can see the lights of Houston reflecting off the low altitude rain clouds. The Houston skyline disappears into the low-hung cloud cover. It's time to find a restaurant for my evening meal, and to cleanse my new wound.

At the restaurant I use the washbasin in the men's room to clean the nasty gash. I inspect the torn tissue of my hand. The hostess gives me a few bandages from their first aid kit. She expresses her sympathy in a sincere manner.

After a wonderful meal in a dry environment, I head back to the restroom to brush my teeth. Now that I'm finished brushing, I walk towards the door and out into the cool nighttime drizzle coming up from the Gulf of Mexico.

The drizzle once again turns into a downpour. Frigid water gushes down my helmet and finds its way into my shirt. As the rain splatters onto my helmet's wind visor, it becomes nearly impossible to see the road ahead of me, yet I'm still able to find a gas station to refill the fuel tank.

As the tank slowly fills, I check the two different oil levels; then head for the "10 East" on-ramp. With the traffics' pace of 80 mph... in the rain, no less... I'm absolutely amazed that there are cars blowing past me doing maybe 100 mph plus!

• • • •

Oct 31, 1977 - 2:30 am (Hammond, LA)

The weather becomes absolutely torrential without a hint of warning. There's a driving rain, which releases enough water to drown a fish. Not only does my new raincoat prove worthless as the rainwater pours down my neck and back, but the plastic-piece-of-shit rips to shreds once I top 80 mph. I seem to hydroplane constantly on this river called "I-10 East."

I find a KOA™ campground. The manager explains that I'd be safest to sleep in the cement-walled men's room because the Severe Weather Information Center has just issued tornado warnings and has recently reported twelve tornadoes in the Hammond area thus far, tonight.

"I won't charge you, young man," he says. "Just go take shelter... hurry. Go! The restrooms are about five hundred feet thata-way," he's now shouting instructions as he points straight ahead into the fierce storm.

Lightning flashes constantly and thunder booms menacingly.

"Go...Hurry!" he yells again before I can get out the door.

"Thank you, sir!"

There are downed trees and pieces of aluminum sheeting lying in my pathway. I have to run over a few, and I hope there are no nails or screws to puncture and flatten my tires.

Some of the pieces of aluminum blow around recklessly. It looks like a war zone. Broken tree branches litter the ground. I quickly find the brick shit-house and park my motorcycle halfway inside, leaning it against the heavy steel doorframe.

I'm forced to sit in the dark, in water six inches deep, while the wind howls like a ghost trying to kill me.

All I can do is watch the lightning, listen to the thunder, wait and hope. For obvious reasons I cannot sleep.

I love bad weather, but I enjoy it more from the comfort of a dry, warm, sturdy home. Tornadoes are very dangerous and unforgiving. Death is out there in the dark violent night.

• • • •

As day breaks, I can see the surrounding landscape. It's still raining relentlessly. The ground looks like a giant lake. While I drive, I have to guess where the roadway is under the water. I hope that I don't ride off into some canal I cannot see under the rain-water-lake. My front tire creates a continuous onward moving wave as it plows through the water.

Once I reach "I-10 East," I feel a tremendous relief from deep inside. Although the ride is made easier by the light of day, I still have a potentially dangerous, possibly fatal ride ahead of me.

I notice off to the right side of the roadway, there is a path of stripped grass, probably torn away by a tornado. It ends at the highway's pavement and continues again on the other side. It's an eerie sight to see when one realizes what caused the stripped-away grass. Looking around at the gloomy skies, I wonder what the hell could happen next?

• • • •

The final stretch of highway before leaving the stormy Louisiana vicinity is a nineteen-mile bridge, which crosses over a vast expanse of the seemingly endless bayou/swamp.

There are two connected lanes eastbound and two lanes westbound. In between the bi-directional roadway is an opening which runs parallel... a sort of barrier/divider.

This makes it impossible to turn back should an emergency arise. The bridge is elevated, twenty, maybe thirty feet above the alligator, leach, and poisonous-snake-infested swamp. This beautiful, yet deadly wasteland seems to never end regardless of which direction I peer.

There are riser ladders every mile or so leading up from this watery wasteland. But they seem so useless. If a person were unfortunate enough to go over the side, I seriously doubt that they'd make it to a ladder before being bitten by a poisonous snake or getting eaten by a gator, regardless.

• • • •

The weather becomes more violent than I've seen to this point of my venture. This one's name is "Babe." I'm caught in the battering edge of her northern wall. As the hurricane passes over the southernmost portion of Louisiana, she weakens. However, her northern wall is still a powerful fury.

Within minutes the wind begins to blow large pieces of treetops onto the bridge. The pounding rain is being driven at what I estimate to be 75-85 mph... sustained.

I have no choice but to pull over to a full stop and hang on to the sides of the solid cement retainer walls. *There's nothing to hold on to!* The swamp looks even scarier, more deadly now.

By my calculation I must be about midway on the span of the bridge. This is a nineteen-mile bridge.

There is no way to proceed forward, and no hopes for turning back. I can't even make it to the next riser ladder where I'll be able to wrap my arms around something attached; and the cement retaining walls are too damned wide.

I begin to cry as pieces of trees and large bugs pelt me at high velocities. Fortunately I have my helmet on, but my arms and legs are exposed. It's not so much the pain from the hard-hitting flying branches, but the realistic prospect of being blown over the side... and dying in some swamp.

This is the most horrific way for an ending to my life.

After roughly an hour of shear terror, the sustained winds subside to a lesser velocity of 40 mph. I can make it now. I kick-start my motorcycle and haul-ass off this bridge as fast as I can. Hydroplaning means nothing to me at this point. My main concern is looking out for debris on the roadway.

• • • •

The bay of Mobile, Alabama has a lengthy bridge that crosses this bay over open-ocean. I notice there are bunches of seaweed on the roadway! This means that the ocean waves must have been crashing over the retaining walls of the low-lying causeway bridge.

The driving rain distorts my view. The ocean swells continue to pour over the bridge. Deep inside, I truly feel that at any moment I'm about to get washed over the side... gone forever.

• • • •

I finally reach Florida's state line. The big colorful sign reads: "*Welcome to Florida. The Sunshine State. Arrive Alive!*"

It's rather odd. Because after two thousand miles of rain, lightning, thunder, tornadoes, a hurricane, rough seas, and a grueling ride in the open environment, the rain has suddenly stopped, the weather is clear, there's plenty of sunshine, and I have indeed, *arrived alive*.

I feel totally elated. At this point, I gather my wet blanket, which I haven't used, as well as my useless raincoat, and I discard them both into the garbage bin at the rest area. I remove my wet socks and roll up my wet pant legs.

As I ride onward, continuing easterly on the lush, greenery-lined highway of Florida's Panhandle, I begin to dry out. It's such a good feeling that I hoot and holler for miles. Only the grazing cows can hear me as they look on curiously.

I'm sure when the passing motorists catch a glimpse of my Nevada license plate, they likely think that I am crazy to have ridden this drag-racing motorcycle such a tremendous distance... and in such foul weather.

• • • •

It's warm and dry as I travel south on "I-75, Florida's Turnpike." There are so many State Troopers, that for once I ride at the speed limit.

All is going great. However, as I reach Palm Beach County, I can't help but notice this is the height of "Love Bug" season. These little black bugs fly in pairs and swarm in the millions.

I quickly roll down my pant legs and pull on my shirt as soon as the onslaught begins. Within minutes the front sides of my clothes, helmet visor and motorcycle are covered entirely with an eighth inch layer of smashed bugs and bugettes.

As their squished bodies pile up on my helmet visor I have to pull to the side of the road to clean them off in order to see my way. This becomes necessary every fifteen minutes or so. Disgustingly, at this point, my clothes become very heavy as the layer of smashed bugs thickens with every continuing mile.

• • • •

One of the first symbolic signs a person encounters upon arriving in Miami is the world famous "Coppertone™" billboard.

This is the sign where the little black mutt-of-a-dog is tugging at the bikini bottom that the young girl is trying to keep on her now-exposed bare bottom. Her Coppertone™ suntan completes the message.

It's a landmark that tells me I've reached my destination. A simple conclusion to a pilgrimage, which could rival any bad luck movie that even Hollywood would be hard-pressed to create.

It's been an adventure of intense danger and extreme challenge. Two thousand six hundred and sixty-five miles without sleep; not even a wink. I have crossed America, non-stop, on a race-built motorcycle.

There were a few mechanical problems which I'd encountered, yet had fixed along the way. I was very fortunate to have found the replacement parts as well. The nightmare is finally over. I'm glad to be here.

Miami is sun, fun, and excitement.

• • • •

Nov 1, 1977 - 3:45 pm (N. Miami, FL)

The telephone rings at least six times before someone picks it up and answers...

"Hellllo," a familiar woman's voice speaks.

"Aunt Esther?" I ask. But, I know it's her anyway. I recognize her voice. She's my mother's sister. She is a wonderful woman. Always happy: totally faithful and devoted to her husband, my uncle Dave.

She's short and plump. Her cheeks are big, firm, and blushed. They bulge under her dark, sad looking eyes.

She wears 1950's-style horn-rimmed glasses. Her curly hair is thick and black. It has a remarkable sheen to it.

This woman makes it a point to be seen in some type of bright floral dress on a regular basis; maybe shorts every so often. And like my grandmother Bella, Esther also wears a thick layer of bright lipstick. My aunt Esther is such a wonderful person.

"Who is this, please?" she asks politely.

"It's your nephew, Wayne," I answer in a cheery voice.

"Wayne? Ohhhhhh, Vanehala. Where are you, dear?"

"I'm at the Howard Johnson' on One Sixty-seventh and the Cloverleaf."

"Here in Miami?"

No, I'm at the Howard Johnson' on a similar One Sixty-seventh and the Cloverleaf in fucking Moscow.

"Yes, aunt Esther. I just got here. I drove my motorcycle all the way from Las Vegas... non-stop!"

"Ohhhh myyyy. Hold on, dear. Don't go anywhere. Let me get your uncle Dave on the phone."

I hear only silence for thirty seconds.

"Vanehala!" this booming voice shouts into the receiver. This is followed by a hearty laugh. "How the hell are you, my boy? Es says you're at the Howard Johnson' right here."

"Yeah. I'll tell you all about my trip as soon as I see you, uncle Dave."

"Well, wait right there, my boy. I'll drive over now, and you can follow me back to our new home on Golden Beach—"

"Wow!" I interrupt excitedly. "Golden Beach?"

"Yes. That's right! Wait'll you see it, Vanehala. It's beautiful. Stay right there. I'm coming to get you as soon as we hang up."

He hangs up the phone before I can say, "drive safe."

My uncle Dave is a caring, giving and happy individual. He's somewhat wealthy. Let's just say he's well off to do... sort of. I'd estimate his wealth at \$1.5 to \$2 mil on paper. Not too much is *cash available*.

His new home is on a stretch of a very exclusive beach in North Miami, just south of the Broward County line. His home is actually in Dade County, though. It's worth about \$850,000. The value is due more to its location.

It's still a very nice home: built-in pool and marble floors: white paint inside and out. It has all the luxuries for this period.

• • • •

He shows up at the exact time that he said he would. I like that in a person. It's a very good quality. I have a standard rule in which I live by in a strict manner. And I expect the same of those I deal with on both levels whether it's business or pleasure...

"I'm a patient person in so many ways. However, in dealing with timeliness, you'd better keep your word of punctuality, or else!"

Women are given some latitude though, I must admit. And any girl in my life is merely griped at. But when it comes to dealing with all other situations of timeliness, I'm very serious.

• • • •

So now I enjoy a long shower in the beautifully tiled enclosure. This home is magnificent.

After three washes, my clothes are somewhat wearable, but they're still ruined; stained black and torn in some spots. I'll have to wear my cousin's clothes for the time being.

It's now dinnertime at the Goldmenn residence. My aunt prepares course upon course of tasteful Jewish dishes. She always uses fresh, quality ingredients.

There is the usual salad, followed by Matzo Ball soup. She serves cold whitefish with horseradish. We feast on roast chicken, quartered roasted potatoes and Borscht (cold beet soup). And to wash it all down, a frosted Doctor Brown's™ Cream Soda. The desert is an assortment of fresh fruit.

After dinner I thank them for everything, give my aunt and uncle a peck on the cheek, then brush me teeth and plop onto my awaiting bed in the guest room.

• • • •

The sun's light awakens me as its rays pour into my room. It's time for me to get out of bed and tend to my motorcycle. I need to clean it, ASAP.

This task should take more than two hours. Afterwards, I'll check it maintenance-wise, then cruise it down to the 167th Street Mall to purchase a new wardrobe.

With my new clothes and shaven face, I drive a few miles to visit my grandmother, Bella Rosenbaum.

Within a few days I begin to keep a residence at her condo. It seems that everyone' got a grandmother with a condo in Miami.

She moved here from our California home in 1967. And now she's happy to have her "Little Vanehala" staying with her. I keep her company and entertain her with comedy and wit during her final years.

Bella cooks for me every day. She prepares a tasty breakfast, lunch, and dinner of many courses. All she asks in return is a thank you and a kiss on her soft aged cheek. A hug is always my pleasure to give her as well. She deserves it. I really do love her.

• • • •

Dec 18, 1977 - 11:30 am (N. Miami, FL)

"How are you doing, young man?" he smiles. He firmly shakes my hand; then motions me to sit down across from him. I sit uncomfortably next to his big, ugly gray metal desk. "I'm Petty Officer First Class Donald Connelly. I understand you're thinking of joining the Navy today, is that right?" he asks in a very authoritative manner.

"Yes, sir!" I return enthusiastically; then I ask, "Could you tell me a few things about getting to work on fighter aircraft and building jet engines? I'm a great mechanic. I can fix anything!"

An hour later I'm signed-up and due at the Naval Boot Camp in Orlando, Florida, on the tenth of January, less than a month away.

Damn my luck again! I've enlisted myself in the U.S. Navy, and tonight, only *hours* after signing my four-year enlistment, I meet and fall in love with the most gorgeous Italian girl, Vicki Catinni.

Her hair is long and wavy. Her beautiful locks are mostly sun-bleached blonde, with a hint of brown. She has big brown eyes, dark olive skin, and a smile that could be used in an advertisement. She is seventeen years old. It's easy to imagine her young, perfect figure; still unspoiled by fast foods, and not too much wear and tear, thus far.

Tonight, after we confess to each other our "love-at-first-sight" meeting, I tell her of my enlistment. Although we'd met only a few short hours earlier, this news makes her cry. I'm quite sad myself, but more disappointed. I know at this very moment, what I'll be missing when I set out to sail the high seas.

• • • •

I'm on a plane headed to Naval Boot Camp three hundred miles from home. The flight lasts only an hour, yet it seems to take me years away. I'll probably never see Vicki again.

• • • •

Boot Camp is easy. I don't know if it's my physical condition or my strong desire to win in competition. The guys in my training unit don't stand a chance in our performance competition.

On smoke breaks, which is every few hours, some guys, actually smoke two cigarettes at the same damn time! I am *not* exaggerating.

• • • •

Boot camp is finally finished. I'm being sent to Millington, Tennessee. This is a suburb just north of Memphis. The Jet Engine Repair & Rebuild School is located here. Once I graduate, I'm informed I'll be given two years of shore duty: which is fine with me.

• • • •

Point Mugu Naval Air Station & Pacific Missile Test Center is situated on the beautiful California coast just fifty miles north of Los Angeles. Two thousand feet above the ocean, high atop the steep neighboring mountains, is the Pacific Satellite Tracking Station. These sister facilities are beautifully manicured and maintained.

The Naval Air Station has a private beach with sand dollars lacing its seldom-walked-upon shoreline. And because it has California's most west-facing beach, we have generous six to eight foot waves on a regular basis. Surfing here is like, totally awesome... dude.

Also, located within this facility are large lagoons, tide-pools, marshes, and rocky areas in which to view natures' beautiful sunsets.

I frequently take races along Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) at high speeds, headed south towards Sunset Boulevard and Los Angeles. The winding road feels good as my car hugs the wide ocean-side curves. This I do, of course, after my tough workday ends.

Situated on the base is an enormous coed barracks... our only living quarters. The upper two floors of this 600 person "free hotel" are for the Squids: male personnel, and the entire first floor is occupied by the Waves: females.

There's a recreation room where huge stakes are bet on billiard games and ping-pong matches. This place is like a house of sin and skin. There are vending machines for *beer* next to the soda machines. I do enjoy every moment stationed here at Point Mugu Naval Air Station on the beautiful California coast.

• • • •

Nov 9, 1980 - 10:00 am (San Diego, CA)

Before I set sail for the South Pacific, I must forget my past girlfriends and family, and concentrate on the dangerous, yet thrilling adventure I'm about to experience.

• • • •

"Permission to come aboard, *sir!*" I call out while I display a perfect salute.

The officer on the gangplank returns only an acceptable salute, "Permission granted, sailor. Welcome aboard."

"Thank you, *sir!*"

What I've just embarked upon is the United States Warship, U.S.S. Kittyhawk (CV-63) Aircraft Carrier. This great ship is the main reason I joined the Navy in the first place. It's a colossal 1,050 feet in length (longer than three football fields) and displaces approximately 88,000 tons of water.

It's a floating city, which carries an average of 70 aircraft (fighters, bombers, attack, early warning, etc.) A crew of 5,700 sailors inhabit this ship for our Western Pacific cruise. They keep tight operations of the two restaurants, bank, hospital, grocery store, brig (jail), aircraft component repair shops, and much more.

The ship can cruise at 40 knots, plus. There are four engines (conventional diesel, non-nuclear) that churn out roughly 225,000 horsepower, *each*.

Combined, they create *one million* horsepower! Each engine turns a propeller (screw), which is 21 feet in diameter; two stories tall.

Our skilled crew can launch three aircraft simultaneously, but we can recover only one at a time. This is at the rate of about one every sixty seconds.

The pilots need only half the flight deck in which to land their aircraft. Their runway is in the middle of the ocean, and it's moving forward at 40-knots, *aaaand* it's pitching side-to-side, as well as up and down. These superb pilots generally need only one opportunity.

Naval Aviators are the best in the world. When launched by the catapult, along with full-throttled engines, they must endure take-off speeds of 0-160 mph in a quick 1.8 seconds.

And they must catch the wire (arresting cable) and stop at a speed of 140-0 mph at an even quicker 1.6 seconds. It's absolutely fascinating.

• • • •

When I'm not repairing the engines of F-14 Tomcats or A-6 Intruders, I'm on the flight deck assisting in day and night flight operations (flight ops). When I do get a break from my twelve-on, twelve-off, seven-days-a-week work schedule, I'm taking astonishing photographs from Vultures Row, seven stories above the flight deck. Between flight ops, ocean sunsets, and raging storms, this is a photographic opportunity extraordinaire.

My job is rated the second most dangerous job in the world! The first most dangerous is extinguishing oil-well fires with Nitroglycerine.

"Where there's danger... there's excitement."

It's an awesome feeling, especially when you survive daily. Not everyone comes back from this eight-month cruise. Unfortunately, there are about six crewmembers whom are lost during this adventure... permanently.

May they rest in peace.

• • • •

Today, the captain decides to park the aircraft carrier, which is absolutely unheard of, over the famous Mariana's Trench.

This area is just north of the Philippine Island group. The water over this trench is known to be 37,000 feet in depth: the deepest ocean in the world.

We are given the entire day off to have fun as we jump from both the hanger bay elevator platform (45 feet above the water) and the flight deck (90 feet above the water), into the warm tropical South Pacific. After the breath-taking jump, we climb a nylon cargo net attached to the ship's starboard platform elevator.

We're *somewhat* safe as a small flotilla of four boats carrying armed Marines protects us. They carry a stockpile of M-16 high-power semi-automatic rifles and 12-gauge pump shotguns. Their purpose, *shark patrol*.

One must consider that we're swimming in the South Pacific, and the Great White sharks would surely enjoy feasting on any of the hundreds of jumpers and swimmers. We're merely snacks for a 15' Great White. This is a rare, once-in-a-lifetime thrill.

• • • •

After eight months, it's time to go home. Rather than catch a ride on the aircraft carrier, I choose to fly on an Air Force C-141 Jet Transport.

I have been flying now for six hours of a scheduled sixteen-hour flight. I'm the only person on board, with the exception of the flight crew and the pilots. Oh yes, there *is* one other person...

I sit here peacefully and quiet upon my nylon-mesh seat, with my feet propped onto a seven-foot long aluminum cargo container. It comes complete with a bright orange "packing list" sticker attached to its side. As far as I know, it must contain one or two Stinger missiles.

"Sir." The enlisted flight crewman politely speaks, "Could you please remove your feet from atop that casket? There's someone inside."

"Whoa," I quickly blurt out. "I'm so sorry. I didn't know."

"That's alright. I understand," he replies.

I mumble inside my thoughts, "Sorry, fella. I honestly didn't know." My deepest respects and apologies go towards the person in front of me.

• • • •

The flight stops for a few hours in Hawaii. It's perfect timing to photograph the Hawaiian sunrise. After two hours of resting my feet on the earth, I re-board the jet and we fly directly to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada.

• • • •

Oct 20, 1981 - 11:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

My best friend John (Do you remember John and Jeff from my teenage years?) has recently ended his Naval enlistment. He joined a year after me, but enlisted for three, rather than four years as I did.

His younger brother, Jeff, now age twenty-one, is still living at home, as John is while he awaits his new place of residence to become available for move in. John's wife, Carol, and their newborn son, John B. Robison III, are there as well.

For a week we hang out reliving some of our old times together. Jeff has this beautiful girlfriend whose name is Ronnie. She has red hair and a perfect figure: a *seemingly* nice girl. When they first met, both Jeff and Ronnie were virgins and fell deeply in love.

Well, Jeff, this six-foot, blonde haired, young man with a superhero chiseled muscular physique, drinks a few too many beers, on weekends only. Ronnie doesn't like it and insists that the two of them end their relationship.

Now, Jeff has a harem of girls on a waiting list: all of who constantly telephone him and send him gifts of lure.

His mother says she feels like a dammed secretary. She complains aloud... but she must feel proud deep down inside.

• • • •

Oct 28, 1981 - 10:55 pm (Las Vegas, NV)

John, Jeff and I have just arrived back at their parent's home where I'm invited to stay during my two-week leave (military-vacation).

While we were out tonight playing foosball—our favorite game, Jeff had a few beers; and at this point now, is feeling very sad and disturbed over Ronnie's demand to end their relationship.

I sit at the opposite corner from Jeff on the large bed in his room. This room is located at the end of the hall at the back of the house.

His father is in the next room sound asleep. His mother and John are sitting in the living room at the front of the house, watching television. His sister, Tammy, and John's wife, Carol, are in another room sleeping.

I watch as Jeff keeps staring at this poster-sized photograph of Ronnie. He repeatedly says aloud; "The only girl I love... the only person who means anything to me... and she doesn't love me anymore."

Tears start to roll from his eyes as he sits on the edge of his bed, shirtless, as sad as humanly possible.

"Come on, Jeff," I plead. "You know there's at least a dozen girls out there you can have at the snap of your fingers... tomorrow. Hell, they buy you gifts and—"

He interrupts, "But I don't love them!" he says crying heavily now. "I love *her!*"

He's just staring at the poster in a daze as he cries.

“Jeff, listen to me. You’ll either have a new girlfriend in one day, or Ronnie will change her mind. You’ll see. If she doesn’t change her mind... well then, *fuck her!* There are a million fishes in the ocean. Come on. Go to sleep and forget about it... really. Come on, Jeff, it’ll be okay. You’ll see.”

I continue to plead as he picks up his rifle with his left hand. It’s very strange. At no point do I have the slightest fear for my own life, as he may shoot me for being so insistent in my pleas to him... or for just *being* there and being the unlucky person to be around someone with alcohol-induced thoughts and a loaded rifle.

And I honestly never think to fear for *his* life either. Jeff would never do something so crazy. Jeff, as handsome as he is, with all his family and friends’ loving support, and his ability to go so far, would *never* jeopardize *anything!*

So my main concern now is to just talk to him and convince him to stop acting so silly and get some sleep.

Although he indeed has a loaded rifle in his hand, I still cannot conceive him doing anything rash. And yet for some reason, moments later, I’m now beginning to worry.

After what seems like an eternity, (but was only about thirty minutes of trying my best to convince him) he quickly (before I can react in time because of my distance), uses his right thumb to pull the trigger.

The .22 caliber projectile pierces his heart.

The last I see of my best friend, Jeffrey David Robison, is he himself laying backwards from a sitting position, with a small hole in his chest. The blood has not yet begun to flow.

A dose of adrenalin speeds into my veins. My reaction time now is more instant, yet too late to help. I grab the rifle and go running down the darkened hallway into the lighted living room...

In shock I yell, "Call an ambulance! Jeff shot himself!"

I try many times to; then successfully break the rifle over my leg. Everyone is so panicked that I end-up being the one who calls for an ambulance.

Meanwhile, John, who's trained in CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), plugs the hole in his brother's chest with his trembling finger (bless his courage), while he performs life-saving procedures, fruitlessly, as his brother's life slips slowly away.

I'll never forget this moment, *ever!* John tried... he really did. But there's nothing he could have done. That little fragment of lead pierced Jeffrey's heart. So I wonder... where's the fairness in life? *Can someone please tell me?*

• • • •

Oct 30, 1981 - 1:00 pm (Las Vegas, NV)

Paradise Memorial Gardens is a simple cemetery. It's located right across from McCarran International Airport.

Soon, the jetliners will be landing directly over my best friend's eternal resting place. He liked watching the aircraft land on Friday and Saturday night.

Jeffrey always liked the look of my old-style Cracker Jacks Naval Dress Blues. Today I wear dark-blue wool, thirteen-button bell-bottomed pants, rear-bibbed-collared shirt, and a white Dixie-cup hat, tilted slightly to my right, one fingers' distance above my eyebrow.

This sharp looking uniform I wear proudly for Jeffrey at his funeral. I put some money in his casket so he'll never be broke. I cry over him as I whisper my final goodbyes. With my hand on his, I kiss his forehead... "Goodbye, Jeff. I love you, my friend. I'll miss you *forever*."

John, myself, and four others carry Jeffrey's casket to its earthbound destination. I stand here offering my *utmost* perfect salute, watching as they lower him into the earth.

Tears flow like a gentle summer rain.

• • • •

Oct 31, 1981 - 3:40 pm (Nellis AFB, NV)

I'm standing in the middle of nowhere, next to a small empty metal shack at the side of the main north-south runway.

At any moment now my ride will arrive. I'm waiting to board an Air Force C-130 Hercules Transport. It has four small jet engines, which drive large variable-pitch aluminum propellers.

It can carry a couple of Army tanks and/or a small helicopter in its cargo bay. Although it's a large aircraft, it's still much smaller than the C-141 I'd flown in just recently from the Philippines.

Again, besides the pilots and small flight crew, I'll be the only passenger on board. I'm headed back to my duty station at Whidbey Island, Washington.

While waiting on the flight-line on this cool Las Vegas day, as nightfall approaches, a small African American man dressed in a dark green flight suit ("G" suit), comes walking around the corner of the shack. He has a big smile and he walks with a bounce of exhilaration.

"Is that who I think it—" I say aloud. "It's Sammy Davis, Jr."

I greet him with an extended hand, "Hi, Sammy."

"How ya do'in, young man? Sharp suit you're wearing there," he says, referring to my Cracker Jacks Dress Blues, as he firmly shakes my hand.

"Thanks; I have to wear 'em to get a HOP with the Air Force." Then with a smile, "But I'd rather be wearing your suit. You must be going up in a fighter jet."

Sammy smiles back, "Yep; an F-15 Eagle. Go'in up for an hour or so."

"Damn. Those things can climb straight up to fifty thousand feet without using their afterburners," I inform him.

"You know about them?" he asks.

"Oh sure. I know about a lot of aircraft. I'm a jet engine mechanic... Navy, of course."

"Cool, babe. Right on."

"Hey, Sammy... I'm Jewish too."

"Oh yeah?" He reaches out to do a complicated handshake, "Shalom, my brother."

"You are soooo lucky, Sammy; to get to go for a ride in an F-15. Daaamn. If I could go with you, hell, I'd be happy just to get to ride while holding onto the wing."

He laughs and smiles again, "You'd get pretty cold, man."

After about twenty minutes of small talk with Mr. Sammy Davis, Jr., a gun-metal-gray F-15 fighter jet taxis up fifty feet from where we stand and it stops. The canopy (windshield) slowly opens. Sammy walks over very coolly, to the waiting aircraft.

A ground crewman drives up in a tow-tractor, removes his latter and hooks it to the side of the aircraft, then helps Sammy into the cockpit.

Once he's seated, the crewman connects his safety belts and pulls his ejection-seat locking pins. Him and Sammy count the pins together: the same way I do with my F-14 and A-6 pilots.

I wave goodbye, then salute them. They give me a return salute. Thirty minutes later my ride arrives.

What a clunker in comparison. These Hercules are ugly. They look like a jalopy in comparison to the F-15 Eagle.

As we climb high into the cold, darkening sky, the brilliantly colored lights of Las Vegas sparkle and glisten. I think of Jeffery one more time and cry... again. I look around and wonder what it's all about.

Make the best of every moment while we're alive. Life is a precious, unpredictable, short adventure.

• • • •

Oct 31, 1981 - 9:15 pm (Tacoma, WA)

The older Air Force woman growls with a scowling face, "The bus to Whidbey Island doesn't leave until 10:00 am tomorrow morning."

"Okay, thanks," I reply smugly, then grab my Sea-bag (large duffle bag) and start walking.

"Fuck this," I grumble to myself. "I'll walk to the mother-fucking island. I'm not waiting till the morning."

I suppose I didn't realize that the island is such a great distance away. Maybe I'll hitchhike. But before I try my luck hitchhiking, I'll stop to get something to eat... relax my propeller-reverberated bones.

The only restaurant I can find close by is a Denny's. Well, at least my waitress is cute: a petite brunette. The uniform she wears does her no justice, but it's revealing enough for me to know better.

"Good evening, Sailor," she smiles. "That's a great Halloween costume. What'll you have this evening?"

“Well, actually,” I tell her politely. “It’s not a Halloween costume. I really *am* a sailor. I’m headed to Whidbey Island Naval Air Station”.

“Where?” she interrupts. Her expression is one of confusion, yet her eyebrows rise in a display of interest as well.

“According to the old man at the end of the counter over there, it’s about sixty miles northwest of here. A bus heads that way tomorrow morning at ten. I was gonna to walk there tonight but it’s way too far.”

“HmMMMM,” she hesitates, “never heard of this... Whidbey Island. But that’s a nice uniform. You look dashing.”

“Thank you,” I smile. As I look at her, she blushes slightly.

“Okay. So what’ll you have?” she persists.

“I’ll have a big salad with every vegetable you have available in your kitchen. Aaaaand... a plain grilled chicken breast, please. And do you have some Balsamic vinegar and fresh lemon slices for my salad ...or extra virgin olive oil would be even better.”

“No olive oil,” she pouts cutely.

“Damn. Well, the vinegar and lemon will be fine then; thanks.”

“Would you like anything to drink? Coffee? Soda? Tea?”

“No. Water’ll be fine. Could you bring me slices of lime too, *if* you have them?”

“Sure. I think I can rustle some up. Is that it tonight?”

“Yes,” I smile at her.

“Thanks, cutie pie,” she says; then walks away. Her hair whips to the side as she turns back around while she continues to walk, turning, looking back again—smiling.

I’ve been here for hours now. I eat and eat. I endure dozens of customer comments regarding my sailor-style Halloween costume. I have to explain the truth time after time. On a couple of occasions I actually have to show my military identification to get them to believe me.

At this point, late at night, my waitress invites me to spend the night at her apartment. She ensures me that she’ll get me to the bus station on time in the morning.

I sleep in the same bed with her. However, out of trying to be respectful, I never make a move on her, and she never tries either. I suppose that maybe she invited me over for a one-night stand. But I’m not a hundred percent certain if that is what she’s truly after, so I play it safe *and* respectful. Boy, oh boy, can I be dumb and naïve sometimes.

• • • •

Jan 8, 1982 - 9:00 am (Whidbey Island, WA)

It’s early here in the disbursing office. I’m first in line. As a matter of fact, I’m the *only* person in line. I collect my \$945.00 in travel pay and another \$750.00 in pro-rated pay, then, I thank the officer behind the glass.

“It’s been real fun. I actually enjoyed every minute of my enlistment,” I tell him.

"You sure you don't want to re-up?" he asks sincerely. "The bonus is tax free. Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money."

"To you maybe. I've got other ideas. Big plans. Thanks anyway."

I head to my packed and waiting car. I'll drive "Interstate 5" to Point Mugu, thirteen hundred miles south. The weather forecast shows intense blizzard conditions all the way through Washington and Oregon.

My ex-girlfriend, Nellie, a beautiful Hawaiian splendor, is still stationed at Mugu, and she asked me to come visit her there. Driving through the blizzard will be worth the effort and the danger.

I'm so happy to be on my way to see Nellie again. The drive should take thirty-one hours non-stop.

• • • •

When I finally arrive at Point Mugu, I find Nellie. She has gained about an extra hundred or two. *Ohhhh my God!* I give her the three-dozen roses I bought for her, but I keep safely hidden, the one ounce silver bar I had engraved that reads: "Wayne loves Nellie."

I don't want to lead her on. And I don't want anything from her either. She has lost her sexiness. She is now the female version of an NFL™ Linebacker. However, I must say that Nellie has, or had, the softest lips I'd ever kissed.

• • • •

Shortly after my return to Las Vegas, I take off again for a couple of months. I drive throughout Nevada, Arizona and California in my quest for gold. I've always loved to prospect. One never knows what one may find.

I'm impatient. I seldom stay in one area for too long. If it doesn't pan out golden wealth immediately, my inclination is to move on. So my luck moved on as well.

• • • •

April 3, 1985 - 8:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

I drive my black Porsche convertible to the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino and secure a fulltime job as a valet parking attendant. This is the classiest establishment in all of the downtown Las Vegas area.

These jobs are virtually impossible to acquire, yet somehow I'm able to talk my way into a full time position while bypassing the "extra board" altogether.

It is at this point in my life where I've met and became friends with Mr. Stephen A. Wynn. He is, of course, Jewish and dashing. He is also a gentleman of pure class and a genius when it comes to being an innovator and a dreamer of grandeur. He is a pioneer in shaping Las Vegas. His mega-resort themed hotels will set the standard of excellence in modern Las Vegas.

His wisdom dictates, "Build them unique, elaborate, magical and magnificent... and they will come."

Mr. Wynn also happens to be a very caring and considerate boss to all of his employees at each of his hotels. He's as cordial to the housekeepers as he is to his executives.

Someone has informed me that Mr. Wynn is a health fanatic such as myself, so I give him two of the first books I've authored, *Great Taste In Natural Foods* and *Great Taste In Natural Desserts*. They're natural foods recipe books.

A few days later, as I sit with my feet in the hotel's swimming pool during my lunch break, I hear my name being paged to pick-up the house phone. Just when I think I'm in trouble, it happens to be Mr. Wynn inviting me to his eighteenth-floor penthouse office to talk.

After thanking me for the books and talking about health for a short period of time, he accompanies me downstairs, with his arm around my shoulder like an uncle proud of his nephew; then takes me to show me off to my co-workers...

"You see this young man?" he proudly proclaims. "He's going to be someone famous and big someday, and you guys will still be parking cars."

He winks at them, winks at me, shakes my hand, thanks me for the books again; then he walks away. The ten or so valet parking attendants just look at me. They question the hell out of me, regarding what Mr. Wynn was talking about.

Four problems arise, though, that keep me from enjoying this as much as I'd like to. One... I'm always too damned busy to enjoy any of it. Two... Adriana insists that I spend more time with her and our recreational fun. Three... I cannot keep up with her demand for large amounts of money, which she needs to live on. And four... I'm not a damned magician to make such miracles happen.

• • • •

Feb 12, 1989 - 9:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

Due to a lie and her infidelity, I promptly drive Adriana from Miami to Las Vegas where I turn her over to her parents.

"Here!" I boldly tell them. "She's safe and secure back in your possession. I've had enough. She's a no-good-liar!"

"I am not!" she interrupts in a scream.

"Anyway," I tell her parents, "I brought her back to you safely. She's your responsibility again. We're finished."

"Adrika!" they yell at her in their heavy Hungarian accents. "How could you do dat to Vane? Vats rrong vit jou?" They are angry as hell with her.

After a short stay in Las Vegas, it's time to go back to Miami.

• • • •

Feb 28, 1989 - 12:01 am (N. Miami, FL)

There's that Coppertone billboard again. I'm back where my heart belongs... solo this time. It's back to business.

I operate the company in a very similar fashion to the previous, with the exception to the fact that I concentrate mostly on the art segment. As always with inflation, my prices go up as well.

For a Signature Engraved & Numbered raised plaster-relief piece of lighted art (two feet by three feet in size), costs generally average \$350.00 to \$500.00.

This is considered a very good price according to my customers. Some buy four and five different pieces at a time. Things are going well.

• • • •

My cousin Joseph Goldmenn, the grandson of my uncle Dave, eagerly becomes my newest partner in the business... and my new friend.

• • • •

Dec 12, 1990 - 9:00 am (Hollywood, FL)

As I pull into the small litter-ridden parking lot of my uncle Dave's Dental & Medical Towel & Linen Supply Company, I wonder how such a scummy, run-down business could earn such a good income.

Recently I've found out a few of the reasons regarding his dealings, which, basically, makes him—a *criminal*.

First of all, he pays his Haitian slave-workers half the Federal Minimum Wage requirement, in cash, every Friday. He then makes false claims to the Internal Revenue Service, stating that he paid them double and triple these wages.

These poor employees have worked for him for many years and they still have to walk to work and wear rags for clothes. He calls them derogatory names in Yiddish right to their faces. He's a real piece of work, huh? But, I put up with him because he's related. Although it's only maternal, he's always been nice to me. And, he may soon be the financier of my new venture regarding my recent invention.

Now back to uncle Dave's ethics. He actually brags how he saves money by cleaning his customer's dental and medical linens in cold water, but adds bleach for that fresh sanitary scent. Hot water, to him, is too damned expensive. *Cold water!* Not good... not fair.

His delivery step-vans are beat-up old clunkers, and his delivery drivers (both men and women) look as though they've been dragged away from a drunken stupor, torn from their cardboard home under a bridge.

The few decaying teeth, which still remain in their bacterial-infested oral cavity, are discolored and disintegrated. The majority of teeth that should still be there have long since rotted away.

The remaining teeth barely hang on to the bleeding, diseased gums by their retched deformed roots.

Now each breath that they exhale passes outward with a stench of foul smelling putridness that could kill a fly from ten feet away.

I suppose these people think of this as some sort of blessing in such a way that they too, save money in not having to put forth a single cent toward oral hygiene products.

Here's a real winner: my uncle's son, (Joey's Father) Larry, or Marvin, or Fuzzy, or whatever-the-fuck name he's going by this week, carries a bottle of mouthwash with him in a fruitless attempt to freshen his disgusting breath just before he greets new prospective clients for his father's business.

It's a wonder that when he spits the remnants of his used mouthwash onto the ground a pothole doesn't develop in the asphalt, where it smolders from its depths. He then walks away thinking his mouth is fresh.

I always try to counsel these maternal relatives regarding the aspects of proper hygiene and nutrition. However, their ignorance and laziness always prevail.

• • • •

The meeting with my uncle begins ten minutes after I arrive. I open the little black plastic gun-carrying case, and there it sits on the bump-laden black foam padding; my newest invention prototype...

“It’s a VCR Lock, uncle Dave,” I explain to him with a big smile. “Go ahead, try it in your VCR over there.”

“You try it, Vanehala,” he says. “I’ll watch.”

So I remove one of his many pornographic videotapes this seventy-nine year old watches, and I insert my VCR Lock™. He’s impressed on how easily it fits and how perfectly it performs—just as I said it would.

This new child safety device, which I hand-tooled the working prototype, does its job protecting infants and children from getting cut or electrocuted due to the insertion of their hand or foreign objects into the front-slot-opening of the VCR machine.

It also protects the machine from damage due to children inserting food or toys within. And it guards children and teenagers from watching adult xxx movies while their parents are away.

• • • •

Within four months’ time, and with my uncle’s brother’s \$100K in financing capital, and my marketing skills, I have the VCR Lock selling in fifty-five stores internationally.

I’ve even managed to get the VCR Lock an appearance on the nationally televised morning show, “Good Morning America.” This was accomplished on a shoestring budget.

I now have a deal set-up with Radio Shack™ for an initial of 25,000 units, payable in advance. This joint venture will surely boost the VCR Lock's sales and popularity. I also have seven investors from New York City who are asking to purchase one-third of the newly formed company for \$4 million. A potential \$370 million can be legitimately earned through proper marketing and sales.

• • • •

Today I've found out that good 'ol uncle Dave has ruined my deal with Radio Shack™. He's also ruined the deal with the investors in New York. As CEO/President, and the holder of the patent, I should axe the uncle and go with the investors and Radio Shack™.

However, I still love my uncle for all his past goodness, and, at this point in time, family love is more important than money. I must be a fool: and even more of a fool to have picked such a dumb bastard as a business partner to begin with.

• • • •

Within months the uncle loots every penny of the corporate funds so he can use them for attorney fees to fight his legal battles he caused by cheating his partners in other businesses. This causes a severe downward spiral of my company's ability to remain sovereign.

“They say that when people are ready to buy, they turn to the Yellow Pages™. In this case, these pages prove to be the most invaluable facilitator to the act of counterfeiting.”

CHAPTER TWO

“ Let Your Fingers Do The Legwork ”



Nov 2, 1991 – 1:55 pm (Coral Springs, FL)

It was long drive north on the Sawgrass Expressway. I would have taken I-95 up from North Miami, but there was a chance of a traffic jam, especially with this heavy rain. I don't want to be so much as a minute late. I have this one opportunity to save the new company I've started with my piece-of-shit, lying, cheating, conniving uncle.

• • • •

The packager of my VCR Lock, Al Martina, tells me earlier today that this guy, David Spillman, is trying to market a remote control & television guide holder that sits upon a table's top. David is young and independently wealthy from an electronic parts sales business he started a few years ago.

“Drives a nice Porsche Carrera Two,” Al says. “He's maybe a couple of years younger than you. I suppose you could market your inventions together, huh? That would be nice. I'll package 'em both. We'll all get rich and richer... together.”

"Yeah? He's got investment money?" I ask.

"Oh yes. Plenty of it." Al replies. "He'll be there waiting. He's expecting you at two p.m. today. I took the liberty to set it up. I felt certain that you'd appreciate it and take advantage."

"Thanks, Al. That's very considerate... and smart of you. I'll let you know how it turns out." I shake his dark-skinned old-Cuban hand; then walk out of the warehouse.

• • • •

Now here I am in Coral Springs. Everywhere I look is middle to upper class: the businesses, homes and automobiles. I see David's Porsche. It's a sporty vehicle that's easy to notice. He parks it as close to the front door as one could park without actually driving on the sidewalk itself. "Convertible Porsche... Hmmmm... Maybe we'll have a lot in common."

• • • •

"Hello," I greet the pretty secretary. She's young and petite. "I'm here to see David Spillman. We have an appointment for two p.m."

"Yes. Mister Dennis, right?"

"That's correct."

"If you'd like to have a seat, Mister Dennis, I'll buzz him up front."

"Thank you."

"You're quite welcome." She looks in my direction and stares just long enough to make me a little embarrassed.

As I glance around, I'm definitely impressed by his company's neatness, organization, equipment, professionalism, and choice of secretary.

I sit back in my chair and notice a man who must be David walking towards me. He extends his open hand with a grin. I clasp his hand with a firm shake.

"Mister Dennis?" he asks.

"That's right. But you can call me Wayne."

"Nice to meet you, Wayne. Why don't you follow me to my office."

It's more of a directive than a question. But, after all, this *is* his company and I'm seeking *his* help. He knows nothing yet of my company's dire straights.

His office is plush: very executive in style. I'd estimate that the saltwater aquarium is one hundred and fifty gallons. His computer system is elaborate. The furniture is all leather. He sits confidently behind an expensive desk, which is crafted of exotic woods.

Yes—I'd say that he's got a good business mind and he knows success. It wouldn't hurt to have his assistance.

• • • •

After an hour of talking, he lets his guard down a bit. He reaches into his desk drawer and picks out his gold hoop earring, then places it into the hole in his left ear. He slackens his tie and I do the same. I display my marketing plans, where my company' been, and where I want it to go ultimately.

He seems to be impressed. He shows me his newly *purchased* invention, which he'd basically stolen from some inventor for a mere few thousand bucks.

He quickly discounts *his* invention as he compares it to mine, thus proclaiming my VCR Lock to be a much better idea, and one that will bring us a great deal of wealth *without* his even being in the picture.

This insight by David, and his confidence in my invention elates me. I sit here proud, excited, and full of eagerness to get started creating and building my new future wealth.

I listen to his every word. He boasts a promise to sell at least one million VCR Locks each year for my company while utilizing his vast international network of distributors and agent representatives.

That's two million dollars a year in profits for my company. Not bad for a new venture. One drawback; and there usually is. David wants a worldwide exclusive on my VCR Lock.

So he questions me, "How'd you get your VCR Lock on Good Morning America?"

"Well, I just made a phone call. I know some people."

He sits back and folds his hands together, "I'd like you to be in on the marketing. I'll set you up with an office here. You'll have full use of my staff in any capacity you need. Equipment, too."

“I love marketing.” I smile and lean forward towards his desk. “I like to think of marketing as my specialty. You know, David, within a matter of only four months, my VCR Lock is being sold in fifty-five stores in three countries: and all on a very thin shoestring budget. We only spent a few thousand so far on marketing”

“Hey, you don’t have to sell me,” he chimes in quickly. “I’m absolutely impressed. I want to get started today!”

We work together on the plans for the rest of the day and into the night. We gather information and figure cost-factors regarding both of our products on each of the home shopping networks, and on ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX.

The prices, however, are much more than he and I anticipated: Outrageously expensive. In fact, much more than he could, or even wanted to budget for. To make matters worse, we’re both very impatient. Not a good quality when dealing in the business world. We want our riches... *now!*

I can see the distress in David’s eyes. His high hopes spiraling downward: just as mine are. The legal legitimate road is fast becoming littered with potholes and landmines.

And what the fuck happened to his vast network of distributors and representatives? You don’t need marketing dollars for that? Is he on the up and up regarding the enormity of his business’ reach?

At this point, my desire to do things legitimately is beginning to take a back seat to my strong desire for wealth. I want to enjoy the luxuries of such wealth before I become too old to be able to do anything with it.

• • • •

In the past I've always had this desire to test a particular scheme I've long had in mind. An unknown skill I swore that someday I'd develop and put to the test. One big, illegal venture that my cousin Joey and I dreamt of sometime ago; and now I may have found someone with the capital to invest... and the greed factor as well.

Funding would be about \$50,000.00. A relatively modest amount compared to the necessary cash needed to market both of our inventions as discussed earlier. This scheming idea promises a quick and fruitful return of say—\$15,000,000.00 in U.S. currency.

Now I've got to test David and find out where his mind is, and where it could be. By this time I already know that he enjoys champagne and expensive exotic strip clubs, and who knows what else? I'd imagine he likes everything that takes a lot of money to partake in.

"David, do you like movies?"

"Sure," he says. "I go with my wife all the time."

"Same here. My girlfriend Alexia and I go as often as we can. Sometimes a double feature if it looks good on the previews. After the show we walk the beach."

"Sounds cool," he says.

"Yeah it is. You know, the beach is right behind the theater complex... the one down south on Hollywood Boulevard and AIA. Do you know the one I'm talking about?"

"Yeah, but it's too far for us to go from here."

"But, you've got the Porsche. Cruise it down one night with the top down... warm tropical air blowing through your hair. Your wife will love it. Trust me. It's very enjoyable."

"Yeah. Maybe next week."

In a nonchalant manner I ask, "Hey, David, you ever see the movie *To Live and Die in L.A.*?"

"Sure," he says. "That's a good one."

"If you had all that counterfeit," I stare at him very seriously, "and it was of great quality, and it passed hands without a second glance, and you could cash it at convenience stores, casinos... hell, anywhere! Anytime! Would you want a few million?"

"Sheeet yeah!" he smiles. "Why? You got some?"

"Well, I could make some."

"You know how?" he asks. His eyes are wide and he looks entirely interested. His eyebrows are almost touching his hairline. A smile from ear to ear appears on his face.

"I could teach myself in a couple of weeks if I had the equipment. I would also need a secret place to experiment and print it all."

My reply catches his attention so much so that he gets up and locks the door.

He whispers although no one can hear him, "You can do that?"

"A person can do anything they put their mind to, David. You see the prototype of my VCR Lock and the completed units made by the machine engineer... not much difference, huh? It took me a hellava lot of tedious work."

I keep him going with enthusiasm...

"I can make anything! Those pictures you've seen of *my* Porsche in the magazines? I built all the custom parts: the interior, the exterior. If I can do all that, I'm quite damned sure that with the time and money and effort... and equipment, of course, I could make us millions and millions."

"How many millions?" he asks.

"Oh, I guess, maybe, fifteen million: seven and a half million each. With the learning process there'll be losses though. I'll likely ruin a million or two... maybe four. I'm not sure exactly. But that'll still leave us with quite a few million each when it's all done."

"And the quality?"

"Hmm" I laugh with confidence, "I'll work on it efficiently and learn everything I need to know. I'll experiment until it's *absolutely* fucking perfect. I guarantee this; even if it takes me a solid year."

"Speaking of which, how long *would* it take?" he asks. "When could you get it all done completely... ready to spend?"

“Well,” I speak to him with my left fingers and thumb touching my chin; the *Thinking Mans*’ pose; “I’d estimate... now remember... I’ve never done this before... but I’m relentless and a hard worker, so I’d say a week to purchase all the equipment, and, a rough guess of forty thousand, maybe fifty thousand dollars, tops, for equipment and supplies. I’ll find all the necessary prices and information by calling businesses in the Yellow Pages.”

“And you think you can *really* do it?”

“Oh, hell yes! I’ll be working off pure adrenaline flowing I my blood: maybe three months? Give or take a month or two. However, I’ll need to pay my utilities and food and gas while I do all this. Soooo, it’ll have to come from the initial funding because I won’t be able to work and devote myself fully all at the same time. And remember, David, I eat only natural foods. They’re very expensive. Alexia and I spend about—“

“Don’t worry about the nickel and dime stuff,” he insists excitedly. “When can you begin?”

“Tomorrow. And you’ll get a receipt for every penny I spend. I’m very meticulous in my record keeping. I always—“

He interrupts, “Don’t sweat it, brother. I don’t want to know any details. Just get it done. Come by my office tomorrow morning at ten. I’ll have ten thousand in cash to get you started. Okay? Deal?”

"You got it," I smile. "We'll go over more details tomorrow." I head towards the door. I turn back around and shake his hand.

"You look happy, Mister Dennis," the secretary blurts out with a smile.

"Very much so," I smile. I pull the door open and walk out into the bright South Florida sunshine. The air is cool for November, but it's still a little humid. Nothing at all like the air-conditioning of David's plush office.

• • • •

Nov 3, 1991 - 11:45 am (N. Miami, FL)

I'd just driven from David's office for the second time. I've got the ten grand: a stack of hundreds. It's heavy for just being paper. The drive back to my home is uneventful.

They say, *when people are ready to buy, they turn to the Yellow Pages™*. Now I'm ready to buy. But what am I buying? I've never even seen a printing press... at least not in real life.

During the preliminary process of gathering information, and during the remainder of this operation, I must stick to the same story; the story I will tell the expert printers and suppliers I need to question. It goes something like this...

I want to do my own work on the reprint of a book I had written several years earlier, titled "Stop Smoking In 48 Hours." They'll believe me once they see my photograph on the back cover of the book I'll show them.

As for the people I'll talk to on the phone, it doesn't matter because they can't identify me, nor track me down to turn me in to the authorities should they not believe me... or figure out what I'm really doing.

I'll tell each person whom I deal with that I'm selling the book as a corporate program through the corporate medical directors (which I have names due to previous genuine negotiations from the past for this book). And now I want to print the book in a clinical format for reintroduction again. For this I'll need to print it, so on, so forth, and with very fine details of art depicting the human anatomy.

• • • •

Using the Greater Miami Yellow Pages™ directory sure beats all the driving in traffic and gas consumption and time I'd expend otherwise. I use this publication to find the answers to the dozens of questions that flood my mind.

• • • •

Okay... printing... printing... printing... hummmm. I've found something. Printers... printing equipment... printing supplies. Okay. I must be thinking aloud.

"Hello. Global Preenting Supply," the deep bassy, heavy-Spanish-accented voice answers. "Thies es Esteban Montoya. May I help jou?"

“Si, señor.” I add my rendition of Espanol. “I’m trying to find out some information regarding equipment I need to purchase so that I can print my stop-smoking book myself—“

“Ah, señor. To habla Espanol?” he asks.

“Sorry. Jo habla poqito Espanol”.

“Esokay. We talk English por jou.”

I say to myself. “Thanks. I mean, after all, this is America! Thanks for giving me the fucking courtesy of speaking the native language.”

“Hokay. Whus eet joy need to know?” he asks.

“Well, Esteban,” I speak as polite as possible while I explain. “I’m tired of other peoples’ false promises and failed deadlines for business I give them. You know what I mean?”

“Oh jes. Happens to me all de tine.”

“So I want to buy all the equipment and supplies and do it myself. Cut costs as well. To comprendo, señor?”

“Jes. Do jou have any formal training?” he asks sincerely. “Any sperience, señor?”

“No. But I’m a very fast learner. I’ll teach myself. Maybe I could give you a few hundred dollars and you could teach me some things to do to get me started... yes?”

“Ho boy. Es not dat easy, señor. Bot we geev eet a chot. When can jou com heer?”

“Right now if you have the equipment for sale.”

“Ho jure, señor, I have plenty ov equeepment. But jou most know dat eet takes two jeers of training to do dese.”

“Mister Montoya,” I interject. “I worked on jet engines without a repair manual. And I learned almost the entire system in less than a months’ time. This shouldn’t be much more difficult.”

“Des is based upon a teory of oil and water don meeks,” he adds. “Eet’s a difficult process—“

“Senor,” I start to lose my patience. “Are you trying to talk me *out* of buying my equipment from you? I mean... I *do* have cash.”

“Nooooo, senor, uh, Meester Dennis. Not at all. No no no no. Hokay. I’ve got everyting jou need. I’ll be heer ol day. So, let me geeve jou to my secretary. She geeve jou direcions. See jou soon. Gracious, senor.”

“Mucho gracious por todo, Senor Montoya.”

I listen to Spanish background music while I wait for the secretary.

• • • •

So I sit here faced with a promise, and a commitment to David to produce fifteen million in counterfeit, give or take a few million, and I’ve never even touched a printing press in my *life*.

Once I finish the building of my photographic darkroom and put together a soundproofed printing pressroom, I’ll move in all the equipment. Then I’ll be faced with the prospect of having to teach myself every single detail on my own: photography, developing, negative manipulation, plate making, and then the most technical skill, the printing itself. The cutting and counting should be easy.

If I happen to get dumbfounded regarding printing and all of the technical aspects, or the equipment needs repair, though, will I be able to hire a professional to come to my home and assist? Would they be suspicious? Call the authorities? Damn right they would. So now I'm completely on my own from here forward until it's completely finished.

I also have to inform the uncle that I won't be coming into the office anymore. He'll need to tell my aunt Esther some story regarding my absence. I know he'll have no problem lying to her. That's all he's done his entire life and history with her.

I will give him credit, though, for the idea of using his rental property, which I now occupy, for the counterfeiting operation. Joey and I had labored intensively to renovate this shit-hole slum, which was initially, *beyond condemned*.

Prior to uncle Dave's announcement of the availability of his rental house, he spoke against my earlier plans to rent a house on the outskirts of town, perhaps near the Everglades, because the landlord could stop by on a whim and surprise me. Or, if a waterline should break, or the wiring short circuit and cause a fire, we could get caught in the act. So he recommends—and I agree—that the operation take place at his rental property where I live now in North Miami.

• • • •

It's an old flattop Floridian home constructed of cement and cinder blocks on the exterior, with typical standard walling throughout the interior.

The windows are built of multiple glass panes, which are placed horizontally. They're called *Jalousie* windows: very typical in Florida. This type of design enables them to hold-up better when hurricanes or tornadoes blow strong wind or pound pebbles and tree parts against the window's panes. It's less expensive to replace one of the single four-inch panes of glass than the entire window itself.

The house is old-fashioned, but it's built like a fortress. Between the low-key neighborhood and the automobiles the neighbors drive, this is a perfect setting for what I'm about to embark upon.

• • • •

Nov 4, 1991 - 9:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

There's a knock at the door. As I look through the peek-hole I see nothing but blackness. Now I'm forced to look through the horizontal blind to identify my imposing guest. Looking through the blinds always seems suspicious. I don't like to have to do this. I haven't even started yet and I'm already paranoid.

As I fling the door open I shout...

“What the fuck? How many times have I told you not to cover the peek-hole, Joey?” I scold him while portraying a serious face. “From now on until we’re finished, no more covering the peek-hole, okay? You got it?”

“Yeah. Sorry, cous,” he looks at me with those sad dark eyes.

Joey is taller than me and outweighs me by far, but he knows I can beat him easily in a fight should I choose to.

“Joe, yesterday I worked it out with your grandfather to use this house for the entire operation. Oh yeah; and, from now on, don’t *ever* call it counterfeiting. Just call it, ‘*the operation*’. And most important; no matter how much, no matter how bad... and I mean no matter *how bad* you want to tell someone... even your best friend, I don’t give a fuck who it is, you cannot *ever* tell a soul. Do you one hundred percent, absolutely got that? No one...

You swear on your mother’s life, Joey, right now. I know what you think of your piece-of-shit dad, so swear on your mother’s life that you won’t tell *anyone!* We could get twenty years in prison if we’re caught. Do you understand, Joe?”

“Okay! Damn! I *do* understand. I swear on my mother’s life... Wayne... cous; I won’t tell anyone. We’re family. I would *never* do anything to hurt you or get us in trouble.”

“Okay.” I rest my case and lay off him. “Alexia!” I call to her now, “Joey and I are going to look at equipment in south Miami. We’ll be back in a while—“

“What, babe?” she steps into the room. “I didn’t hear you.”

I repeat what I just said to her then continue, “Here’s a hundred dollars. Could you go and get the three of us dinner from the Unicorn... please?”

She loves shopping at this natural foods store. It’s one of the, if not *the* largest and finest in the nation. It’s located on the bay just off the Intracoastal Waterway in Aventura: a very wealthy suburb at the north edge of Miami.

Yachts, as well as Cigarette boats and Sailboats dock outside its sister natural foods restaurant next door. You can drive there in a car as well. The huge parking lot is filled with BMW’s™, Porsches™, Mercedes™, Rolls™, and Ferrari™. Nearly each one is a convertible.

Inside the store you’ll find a full-service bakery, deli, juice bar, and sundry goods. You’ll find as well, organic produce and many quality prepackaged foods of every kind. We generally make up a variety meal from the deli and bakery and eat it outside at the umbrella café tables, or eat with full service at the restaurant, which serves mostly the same foods and more.

It’s an enjoyable pastime to sit outside and eat slowly while watching the beautiful, fine-figured girls walk by as they strut to and from the nations’ most exquisite health spa just next door.

And, for the women diners, they can watch as the athletic men walk by also. It’s truly a place to relax and enjoy the sights all day and into the night.

I'm confident that Alexia knows what to get Joey and I for our feast. She's quite familiar with our favorite dishes. And she always buys more than we could ever eat. It never goes to waste, though. We stuff ourselves beyond our capacity. What's left over we save for late-night snacks. The food is mostly non-fattening so there's no problem maintaining a trim thirty-inch waist.

"A hundred should cover it; don't you think, sweetie?"

"Sure, babe," she replies and looks at me with her big brown eyes and cover-girl smile—her chin tilted upward to kiss me goodbye. She gives Joey a peck on the cheek. "You guys be good today. And, be safe when you drive, okay, *Wayne?*"

I know she's serious when she uses my first name.

I give her a hug, "I love you too," I tell her sarcastically. Joey tells her the same, even more sarcastically, and yet she winks at him.

• • • •

It's still a little muggy outside at nine-thirty a.m. The ground is somewhat wet from the heavy rainstorms of yesterday and last night. I generally dress with light, airy clothes; but today we may be lifting some heavy equipment, so it's jeans and work-boots. It feels uncomfortable dressed like this. It's so constricting.

Joey and I climb into my Toyota™ truck. As we sit here with the air-conditioning blowing its frigid wind, dense fog vapors pour out from the vents like dry ice at a Halloween-haunted-house. It goes away in about a minute. This is a result of humid air being cooled and compressed. It's a southern U.S. phenomenon.

"God-damn-it!" I yell. "There's that fuck'in dog again. The little bastard!" I jump out of the truck and chase him away. I suppose he didn't know we were in the truck because he couldn't see through the dark tinted windows. I scared the *hell* out of him. His eyes looked as big as a pair of eight balls from a billiards table.

He yelps as he runs off. I'm not so concerned about him pissing on the trees atop the man-made island I built in the middle of the circular driveway; the rain will wash it away. I'm more concerned that he'll piss on one of the landscape lights, which is 110 volts (not the low voltage type.) If that happens he'll fry like a dog in a Texas prison electric chair.

I get back into the truck and Joey is laughing uncontrollably. "It's not funny, Joe!" I tell him seriously. "The dog could die doing that shit... the little bastard. Then I have to dispose of him. Unless you want to?" Silence looms. "Yeah; I didn't think you would."

I put the shifter handle in first gear and pull away with a little chirp from the tires. That chirp is symbolic to the starting signal of a very scary amusement park ride: one, which poor Joey is about to experience.

I hand Joey a bundle of hundreds, “Joe count this please, would you? It should be ninety-nine hundred... I’m pretty sure. At least that’s how much was there the last time I counted. I don’t know how much the press will be: hopefully less than ten-g’s...”

You do know I’m giving you a half a million for helping out with the errands and work around the house with this operation... right?”

“Yes. And I really appreciate that, cous,” he talks as he messes up the count of the cash.

“Aaaaand, if you cash yours successfully, I’ll give you more. Of course, I’ll get fifty percent of that back in genuine once you cash the second batch only; but that’s not bad money for an eighteen year old. It beats flipping dead ground-up animal patties on a hot grill. Then, someday, they’ll move you up to manager, and you can clear a whopping sixteen hundred a month. Shhhhit, I spend that much just for food. You—”

“Okay! Alright! Dammit! Shut up! I get the picture. I’m try’in to count!”

“Good. Now *you* shut up and don’t ever tell *me* to shut up.”

“Well, anyway, there’s ninety-nine hundred.”

“Okay. Hold on to it, and don’t spend it all at the Seven Eleven. Let’s get something to drink.”

“Right on, cous,” he smiles.

As we turn onto Hallandale Beach Boulevard, I put in a cassette with all my favorite classic rock and roll songs I recorded from my collection.

• • • •

“Get whatever you want, Joey, but hurry cause I told the guy I’ll be there in an hour, and you know I don’t like to be late.”

“Yeah, don’t I know,” he smirks back at me.

As I pull up to the store, I don’t stop until the very last second; then I yank the emergency brake handle just before hitting the cement curb-stop block. I always enjoy putting a little scare into Joey at least once a day... okay maybe three or four times. It keeps him alert.

“Jesus! Wayne! You fucker,” he screams out as he hits the dash with his chest. “Can’t you drive like a regular person... maybe just once?”

“Come on, holmes. Quit your cry’in or you’ll ride in the bed of the truck. Next time wear your seatbelt.”

We get out and head into the store.

I grab a bottle of water and Joey pours himself a liter-sized cup full of some frozen fluorescent drink. I toss a fiver on the counter and we walk straight out. The waiting time is not worth the two dollars change in this particular situation of timely departures and arrivals.

We make a right onto I-95 heading south towards Miami; then continue onwards to the southern section of Miami. The traffic on I-95 is somewhat heavy. But it’s no concern. I’ve always considered driving as fun. To me, the roads are a racetrack with no end and no one to tell me it’s time to pull over, unless it’s the police, of course.

Most people feel secure when driving with me. However, I still take pleasure in scaring the hell out of my younger passengers. I'll practically take the paint off another car's bumper as I speed past them changing three lanes while cutting through with close precision. But I know exactly what I'm doing and where I'm going, and how to get there by the fastest means possible.

As the traffic eases I speed up. Joey is hanging on for dear life. The rock and roll blasting his ears does nothing to help calm him. If he wasn't Jewish, he'd be doing the Holy Cross over his chest right about now.

"Come on, Wayne, man!" he screams as he braces himself furiously with his hands and feet. "Come on, Wayne!" He's screaming, almost in tears, definitely panicked. "Ohhhh man!"

"Joey," I yell over the music towards him, "bracing yourself isn't gonna help you if we crash, so calm down and relax. Have I ever got us into an accident before?"

"Come on, motherfucker! You're gonna kill us! Son-of-a... that's it! Let me out, now!" he's really screaming.

"Look! There's the exit. Hang on you fuck'in pussy."

I downshift frantically, slowing from seventy to sixty mph. Third gear; drop clutch, rear-end slides. Then fifty. Second gear; drop clutch, rear-end slides even more. Joey must be pissing himself right now. We come very close to the guardrail. I try to brake and keep control as we slide on the rain-slicked thirty-five-mile-an-hour off-ramp.

“Whoah! Yeah!” I yell at the top of my lungs.
“That was awesome! You see that handling?
Who’s the man, you snapperhead? *Yeah!*”

“You are one crazy, sick bastard. I *hate* you!”
he shouts, almost in tears.

“Awwww shut the hell up.” I yell back to him.
He smiles now, yet still shaken. “I knew that’d
bring a smile to your face, young Joseph.”

“Fuck you.”

“Oh, hey, look. Here’s some address
numbers. Keep your—”

Joe interrupts, “You *do* know you’re crazy...
right? Don’t you, Wayne? You really need to
seek help. I mean real professional help.”

“Hey, you’re alive aren’t you? Right? Right?
Right? Right? Right? Well... right? Right?” I
repeat this enough to drive him more crazy.

“Yeah!” he yells as he turns down the music.

“So shut-up and help me find the address.
We’ve got five minutes to get there.” I look over
at him and smile, “That driving was pretty
exciting, though, you gotta admit it, right? Right?
Right? Right—”

“Yes! Dammit... yes! There’s northeast,
eighty-third street. Okay, turn left.” The music is
now turned off. All is quiet except for the
splashing of water under my tires. The storms
here come and go in minutes. “Keep going
straight,” he says.

“Is that the twelve’, Joe?”

Well, so much for knowing exactly where I’m
going. But I’m not used to driving through the
industrial ghettos of *Little Havana*.

“Hmmm, twelve-oh-one. Twelve-oh-three... hmmm... we gotta turn back,” I mumble aloud.

We find the shop within minutes, and with three left to spare.

“Global Printing Supply,” I read aloud as I pull into their fenced parking lot. “What a shit-hole this is, Joe. You think they ever clean this place up? It reminds me of your grandfather’s linen company,” I laugh.

Not much parking here. I notice a forklift and a few pallets laying to the left of the old yellow machine. Its paint is peeling and its tires are nearly flat. A mass of cobwebs appear as if they secure the broken-down forklift to the ground. I doubt that they use it too often. They can’t even afford air for the tires? Hmmm. Not good.

I begin to wonder if this is the place where I want to shop for important equipment? As I open the door and step inside, a hefty woman about fortyish, with a pleasant voice offers her assistance.

“May I help you, sir?” The woman’s voice has a Cuban accent. That would be the norm considering where we are.

“Yes, ma’am. I have an appointment with Senor... uh... Mister Montoya.”

She smiles, “To habla Espanol, senor?”

“No. Jo habla poqito Espanol,” I reply.

“Ohhhh, bueno. That’s fine,” she gives a little smile then sits back down. “Your name, sir?”

“Wayne Dennis.”

“Thank you, Mister Dennis, I’ll be just a moment.”

I hate to give my real name, but what if I'm required to show some identification when purchasing a printing press? Like when an automobile is purchased. I don't know, so I give my real name just in case. No need to cause suspicion or any doubts with these two.

"Ahhhh, Meester Dennis," he smiles as he shakes my hand. "A real pleasure to meet jou, sir. Jou look so much junger than jou sound on de phun," he smiles with a handsome grin.

"It takes a lot of fruit and vegetables to stay young looking. I do thank you. I must say though, my Argentinean girlfriend drives me to look even older, if you know what I mean?"

He gives me his grin once again.

"Follow me, gentlemen."

We follow the short hefty Cuban man with the pinstriped suit and color-matched tie. He has rings on nearly every finger like a used car salesman. He turns around, "Who's eh, dese, may I ask?" as he gestures to Joey.

"This is my cousin, Joseph."

Joey shakes his hand, "Nice to meet you."

As we walk through the door into the interior of the warehouse, I'm totally surprised, "Wow! This is nice. A lot of new and used equipment."

"No, sir," he says. "Es all use. Es jus som peoples takes, eh, eh, goo care of eet. An also we clean an refurbish when es niece-e-sary."

I speak now with a certain excitement in my voice, "Hey, you've got a Toyota forklift in here. But the one outside is—"

“Oh jes,” he interrupts, “dat piece of chit? Eet keeps de bandals and tieves away. Dogs do no goo. Dey jus poison ‘em. So, to make theese place look less, how jou say, uh, desireabol, eet looks like chit outside. Jou know, while ago, twise, we had counterfeiters stealing euequipment. Dey couldn’t afford euequipment jus jet. Den, after dey make de moaney, dey opgrade and actually buy de euequipment.”

“Damn,” I say to myself. “I never thought about that. I could have gotten this equipment at a real *steal*.”

Joey and I just stare at each other and smile.

• • • •

“Meester Dennis, let me cho jou som euequipment.” Then he walks over to a small printing press. “Dese ees an AB Dick tree-seexty shane delivery preenting press. Eet’s a real workhorse. Veery dependable. Not too spensive eeder. Dese one in particular es in goo condition. And—“

I interrupt, “What’re the chances of this one breaking down on me? And are there parts readily available? And do standard printing plates and other supplies work with this make and model?”

“Well,” he says, “for so-one who knows no-thing about deese, jou ask so goo, jet, important quesions. Jour answers are no; dese won brek dun too mush. De parts are abailable; and jes, jou can fine anyting jou nee supply-wise...”

Dese es a common press which is jused stensively eendustry-wide. I thin jou fine eet esy to operate whanse jou figure eet out.”

“You ever sell used cars, Esteban?”

“Jes,” he says. “As matter of fac, I deed quie som jeers ago. Bot, I like preenting equeepment. Eet can be lucrative.”

“How lucrative will this press here be to you?”

“Dese press jour looking at es... ummmm... Feefty-five hundred.”

“Any guarantees or warranty?”

Oh, no, senior. I cannot warranty any use equeepment.”

“It uses just regular tools to fix it? No special wrenches or nothing?”

“Oh no. Jus regular tools.”

“Okay. I guess I’ll take my chances. Do you have any other equipment I’ll need to do this?”

“Well,” he says. “De plate-makers an cameras I have are all mush too beeg. However, I know a preenter in For Lauderdale. Jou know For Lauderdale, Senior Dennis?”

“Of course.”

“He’s closing hees chop. Has a Nu Arc Opright Stat camera and a Nu Arc Table Top plate-maker; all top-o-de-line equeepment. Perfect for wha jou’re trying to complish. He probably ask tree gran for bos. Very nise stoff. Seen dem last week. Jus like new. Jou’ll love ‘em... jes?”

“Yes,” I say with a smile, “I’m sure I will. And I really appreciate all your help. Can we run this press here? If everything’s alright, I’ll pay you and take it right now.”

“No problem. Let me get a stension chor and som paper.”

A half hour later I hand Mr. Montoya \$5,500.00 with an extra hundred thrown in as a tip for what appears to be a very good deal.

“Meester Dennis,” he insists. “Jost geev me de address I’m to deleeever to and we’ll be all set to go.”

“Oh no. I’m okay. I got my truck outside in your parking lot. My cousin Joey and I will lift it and be on our—”

“Haaa, ha,” he laughs deeply. “Dat press weighs seven hunred feefty pouns. I don sharge any deleevery fee. Eet wheel be at jour chop by—”

“Noooo. Really... Esteban. We’ll get it into the back of the truck. You got a dolly?”

“Miguel!” he yells. “Geet de forkleeft and help dese jounng men out. Dese press go into dere truck out fron.”

“Si, senior. Pronto.”

• • • •

It was a hell of a struggle, but it’s done. I tie it down thoroughly, making sure it’s real tight. I even throw in a few front kicks to ensure that it is as tight as it can be. Then I retighten the nylon straps once again. I hate the thought of off-loading this 750-pound monster of steel without the use of a forklift once I get it home. Then I’ll have it drag it across the grass and dirt of the back yard. It’s nothing to look forward to, that’s for sure.

“Meester Dennis,” Esteban shakes my hand, “Es been a pleasjre. Eef jou have any questions or have any froblems, geeve me a call. Heer’s my card, senior.”

“Mucho gusto, senior Montoya. Gracias por todo.” Which basically means: nice to meet you and thank you for everything.

I give Joey a hundred for his help and Esteban gave me the address for the printer in Fort Lauderdale. He calls the printer in front of us to inform him of our intentions and of our arrival time tomorrow. I’m quite sure Mr. Montoya is receiving a finder’s fee if we buy; which is all right by me—he’s a real nice guy.

• • • •

“Wayne, cous, my favorite cousin. Please drive safely on the way home.” He’s got a serious face and a deepened tone in his voice.

“Joe, I got the press in the back of the truck. And—”

“No!” he interrupts. “I saw how you tightened the straps extra-tight. You’re planning something.”

“Now you’re being silly, Joey. That press is too expensive to take any chances.”

“It ain’t your money.”

“True. But it’s our future, so just relax.”

• • • •

The drive home was uneventful. Alexia is sitting in a living-room chair and she’s smiling at us.

“What are you smiling about?” I ask.

“I didn’t bring home any dinner. I decided not to,” she replies.

“Why not? And why are you smiling? We’re hungry, right, Joe?”

“Yeah, Alexia!” he adds his two-cents worth. “We’re hungry. What’s up, woman?”

She quickly responds to us, “I thought that we’d sit out under the umbrella tables at the Unicorn while we eat dinner.”

“Good idea,” I say. “Let’s go.”

“What about the press?” Joe asks.

“No one will touch it, Joe. They couldn’t lift it even if they *did* want to steal it. Let’s put a tarp over the press. Come on. We’ll have to use your car to go to the store, Hoey... I mean Joey.”

• • • •

While we bask in the warm South Florida sun, the November air is, by Florida standards, a slightly cool, seventy-two. Birds, large and small, are actually walking on our table. It’s so funny. They’re eating whatever food we give them. The friendly resident squirrel eats as well. He’s been here for a couple of years. He’s a clever guy.

As the electric automatic door opens, he runs inside, grabs a small piece of produce, then runs back outside the next time the door opens as someone walks in; which is every fifteen seconds. This squirrel is cool. We can coerce him to eat right from our hands.

Though it's an enjoyable and relaxing atmosphere, I still get very irritated on occasions when the old Jewish ladies sit around and Kavetch about how the squirrel must have rabies.

"Oy vea," they speak I their heavy accents, "the leedle rrrhodent must have rrrrabies. Som one shud keel huem."

Alexia grabs me and quickly pulls me away from them as I begin to speak, "Someone should *keel* you! Send you to that bingo parlor in the sky."

"Babe!" Alexia scorns me. "You're so mean!"

The women look shocked and in disbelief. Joey chuckles and slaps me on the back. I snarl and give the old ladies a mean look over my shoulder, as I'm being pulled frantically away. I don't care if they *are* my fellow Jews: I'm only cruel to the deserving.

• • • •

Nov 4, 1991 - 6:00 pm (N. Miami, FL)

"Steve," I say to the big-man on the phone. "I took apart my fence on the side-yard, scraped my truck on the wall, and we can't get the printing press off the damn truck without damaging it. I know it's a long drive from Plantation, but we need you quick. Can you—"

"Say no more. Consider it dun," he speaks in his thick, New York-mobster accent, "I'm out da door now. Be dere in a haf owa."

"Thanks, Steve. Don't get a ticket rushing down here."

“Ayyyy! Yu know me,” he laughs with his deep, bassy voice.

This beast is crazy. But he’s a gentle giant. He’s a genuine nice guy. While I wait for Steve to arrive, I take some protruding levers and knobs from the sides of the press so it’ll fit through the door into the soon-to-be-soundproofed room.

Tomorrow I’ll go get the camera, plate-maker and dense rubber gym floor padding. The padding will be placed on the cement ground beneath the printing press. This thick tuff rubber pad will serve as a sound and vibration suppressor for the noisy machine.

• • • •

An hour later, after the three of us, Joey, Steve and myself, strained to move the press into the secret room, we sit around relaxing for a few moments to rest our muscles.

Our clothes are torn and wet with sweat. Our hands are sore, dirty and bleeding. But the printing press is now safely in place. Alexia offers Steve some food. He consumes it as fast as a starved madman lost for years in the Sahara Desert.

“Well,” in a tone which implies, see you guys later, I say, “thanks, guys; Joe, Steve. Hey, tell David the good news, okay? I really do appreciate you coming all the way down here, Steve. Thanks a lot. I couldn’t have done it without you.”

“You got it, pal.”

Alexia asks, "You want some food for the road trip home, Steve?"

Sure. Why not?" he smiles.

"Joey," I look over to him. "See you in the morning at nine. That's nine a.m., right?"

"Yep. Nine a.m. See you, cous. Thanks for all the food," he grins and rubs his belly.

"No problem. My pleasure. See you in the morning."

Alexia and I take a warm bubble bath as my cocoa-colored Himalayan cat (Zorro) sits on the carpeted toilet seat cover and stares at us through his enormous, beautiful blue eyes. His mouth has a shape that makes him look as if he's got an upside-down smile. His flat face is so cute. He closes his eyes off-and-on drowsily as he listens to the subtle music of Kenny G.

• • • •

Nov 5, 1991 - 9:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

There's a knock at my door. Although I'm quite certain it's Joey, I still feel compelled to look out the peek-hole. Just as I suspect, it's Joey. And he didn't cover the hole this time, as I warned him not to.

"Come on in, Joey baby. Are you hungry?"

"Hell yeah. Whadaya got ta eat?"

"Check the kitchen. You know where everything is. Whatever you want."

While Joey stuffs himself in the kitchen, I say my goodbyes to Alexia who's still sleeping in the bedroom.

A few hugs, a few kisses, then I head out the door. I start the truck and check to ensure I've got the tie-down straps.

I grab the waterproof tarp and double-check my cash supply. Down to three grand. Damn! I'll have to call David and tell him that we're headed to Coral Springs to get another ten k.

• • • •

"I'll have it ready by the time you get here," he says with an overtone of excitement in his voice.

"Thanks, David. See you in an hour."

I quickly hang up the phone and notify Joey to hurry.

"Come'on, Joey. Take your food with. We're leaving now. Let's go!"

"Wait!" Alexia yells out from the bedroom. Give me some money and I'll get lunch for you guys. And I need to go shopping at the mall too." She walks into the living room and asks, "Whatta you guys wanna eat?"

"Just get us a buffet' worth of everything good. You know what to pick." I give her a strong hug, "I love you, sweetie. The money is on the table. Bye."

"Drive safe," she says as we walk out the front door.

"Yeah right," I say under my breath.

Joey comments once we're outside, "At least the truck is still here."

I speak as I look around in suspicion, "Really. That's amazing. Especially in this fuck'in neighborhood,"

• • • •

We head east once again on Hallandale Beach Boulevard towards I-95.

“Seven Eleven, Joe?”

“Sure!”

This time Joey gets a Super Big Gulp Slurpee™; one of those giant drinks. I give the lady her money and collect my change. I'm so used to throwing the change into the slot machine like we do in Las Vegas, but there are none here so I just drop it into the *Jerry's Kids* container.

As we barrel-down the road eastward, Joey is hanging on and bracing himself as usual. I wait until he's got a mouthful of that artificial frozen stuff...

“Joey, if that drink' not big enough, maybe next time we'll see if they can sell you one in a fifty-five gallon drum!”

Just as I say this, he spits the frozen drink out from his mouth and nostrils. Sticky, cold, wet *stuff* lands on his lap, while the bulk of it covers the right side of my truck's dashboard.

“What the fuck did you do that for, you ass?” he screams while laughing and choking both at the same time. He's a little angry. He has to be.

“Whaaaaat?” I ask innocently.

“You know. You Bastard! You deliberately waited until I had a mouthful and—“

I look over at him and smile. “Joey, look under the seat and see if there's any napkins.”

He looks, yet does not find.

“There's none.”

“Well you’d better find something! Clean off my dash. Use your shirt!”

“Screw you!” he snaps back.

In the end, we both watch as the sugar-laden frozen concoction dries onto my nice dashboard. He’ll clean it once we return home a little later. This he’ll do before he eats even one morsel of food... I guarantee.

• • • •

As we near the Fort Lauderdale airport, I veer west from I-95 north, onto the Sawgrass Expressway’s long winding on-ramp. The air-conditioning is freezing and the music is soft today: Kitaro, Oasis.

I suppose you could classify it as Metaphysical music; harps, piano, gentle guitar, xylophone, chimes, and angelic-sounding voices that make it beautiful and soothing.

• • • •

Once we pick-up the money from David and he signs my ledger, I thank him and we head south again to Fort Lauderdale. Commercial Boulevard at U.S. 1 is so close to the ocean we can see the blue water and the bright colored sails of a few boats. It must be warm enough to sunbathe because there are a number of bikini-clad-babes everywhere we look. They’re walking towards the sun-drenched sandy beach. I can smell the ocean-fresh air as the trade-winds blow from the east to our western location.

"Make a right!" Joey shouts. "There's the store. I can see the sign from here. Broward Printworks, right?" he asks in a tone of excitement.

"That's it! Boy that was easy, huh? Thanks, Joe."

I throw the gear shifter into neutral...

"No! Wayne, not here!" he warns me. "The guy'll see you. It won't look good."

"I wasn't going to do anything, Joe. I was just putting it in neutral. Daaaamn. What's your prob—"

"I don't trust you. You're too crazy."

• • • •

Joey and I work diligently at getting the equipment tied down. When we're finished, Joey looks over at me, and smiles. He shows me the cashier's telephone number. And why shouldn't he get the girl's number... he's a handsome guy.

• • • •

When we pull into the driveway of my home, I see that damned dog again. I honk the horn before jumping from the truck. As I leap towards the dog, I yell, "Hey! Get the hell outta here, shit-head!"

Joey laughs his stupid laugh, "Let's hang him!"

"Shut-up, Joe! You know I don't hurt animals. And if I ever catch you doing... well you know what happened when you hurt that frog."

• • • •

The equipment fits easily through the front door. We move it directly into the soon-to-be darkroom. Tomorrow every door in this house will be equipped with a pickproof dead-bolt lock. It should take me an hour or two to install them all.

The final item needed is the large foam sheeting that I'll use for soundproofing material in the pressroom.

It's absolutely essential in keeping my nosy neighbors from hearing the press run all day and through the night.

It's time to let my fingers do some more legwork, again. "Alexia," I call out to her, "could you bring me the Yellow Pages™ from the office please?"

"Sure, babe. Just give me a sec, okay?"

As I comb the thick book, I look for any foam manufacturer or distributor that is close to my area. "Fire extinguishing equip... fixtures... foam supplies. Davie Foam Suppliers, Inc."

Cool.

• • • •

I walk into my pressroom and double check my measurements before purchasing the foam. Tomorrow we'll be gluing the foam to the doors, walls and ceiling. Yes, even the ceiling. Remember... better safe than sorry.

"Alex, you wanna eat at the Unicorn restaurant instead of the market?"

"Okay, babe."

“We’ll watch the boats cruise by. Listen to the rustle of the palm leaves, and relax; then we can get some desserts to take to the movie. You can smuggle them inside your purse, please. Alright?”

“It sounds great.”

“When we’re done with the movie we can—”

She interrupts in an excited tone, “Make love on Golden Beach?”

“In November?”

“You think it’ll be too cold?” she asks.

“Probably.” I kiss her. “We’ll have to wait till we get home. I’m sorry.”

“Okay,” she frowns.

“I gotta call Joey real quick. I’ll be right with you, sweetie.”

• • • •

“Hello,” the tired, groggy voice answers.

“Jooooey baabee!”

“Hey, what’s up, cous?” he moans in an extra tired voice.

“I need you here tomorrow at eight a.m., sharp. We have to—”

“Ohhh I have a date with this bitch. She’s—”

“Joe. Why are you going out with her if she’s a bitch?”

“Well, you know what I mean,” he replies in a more alert voice. “I’ll be out till late tonight—”

“So will Alexia and I. Aaaand, soooo, your point is?”

“Well, I just—”

“Joe, is this *bitch* giving you half a million dollars, bro?”

“Well, no,” he’s still moaning and groaning.

“I didn’t think so. See you at eight a.m. *Do not* be late! Have a good time, my cousin.”

“Yeah, I’ll try.”

“And, Joey. Don’t blow your entire hundred on her. See ya.” I hang up with my last words lingering in his tired mind. And what the hell is he doing sleeping this time of day anyway?

• • • •

Nov 6, 1991 - 8:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

She looks so beautiful as she sleeps. Very reluctantly, I get out of bed and get ready for my busy day. After consuming mega-amounts of various fresh fruits, I brush and floss, then brush again. (*I learned to floss in the Navy. I’ll never miss a day from here on*).

By now, Joey is in the kitchen doing an *inventory reduction* job on my food supplies.

“The traffic’ll be getting heavy soon, Joey. So we need to be getting underway now. You gotta hurry the fuck up, hoseph.”

I like to start in on him bright and early.

“Shut up. I’m eat’n,” he snaps back.

“Take it with you, dickhead. Let’s go!”

Alexia is still asleep, so I give her a gentle kiss on her cheek. Then Joey and I walk out the door. Whenever I leave the house without Alexia, I always say, “I love you” to her, because with my crazy driving, I may never make it home again.

• • • •

We stop at Seven Eleven on the way. There's a rush of morning coffee-drinkers at the checkout line. So as usual, I point out our two drinks to the cashier, and drop a five-spot on the counter; then we walk straight out.

"Sir!" she yells. "Sir! Your change!"

"Yeah, whatever."

I keep walking.

• • • •

As we pull into the industrial park, I immediately notice a square mountain of yellow foam rubber. It seems to glow in the morning sun, even at a distance.

"Wow!" Joey says out loud.

"*Wow* is right. I hope that's not all ours. We'll have to make two trips."

Well, it *is* all ours. However, with a little ingenuity, and an abundance of tie-down straps, we're able to load and transport the entire mountain in one trip. This is something I'd better get used to real quick... moving mountains.

“By the mere placement of genuine currency onto a stat camera’s glass surface, with the intent to counterfeit, ones’ freedom becomes jeopardized greatly; as he, or she, has committed the major federal offense of ‘*Conspiracy To Counterfeit.*’ This is punishable by at least five years of imprisonment and large monetary fines.”

CHAPTER THREE

“ Lights... Camera... Currency ”



Nov 8, 1991 - 9:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

Allow me to ask you a question. Have you ever performed photographic development work, or set-up a complete darkroom? Yes? No? Well, if you've *not* had the pleasure, you're not alone, because neither have I.

So far, it seems to be a monumental task. But I can assure you, from what I've been through thus far, this'll be nothing compared to what lies ahead. Not having even the least bit of knowledge (only having seen printing in movies and how it might look) I now set out to get the first step of this operation going in full force.

With my trustworthy assistant, Joey, we drive about a quarter mile to our friendly neighborhood Home Depot™ store. This home-products supply center has virtually everything one would need to build a home, an office, and even a darkroom.

• • • •

I cut three pieces of plywood to a size that is four inches larger than the window frames bordering the darkroom's interior.

I carefully apply white paint to one side on each of the pieces of wood. The painted surfaces will eventually face outwards towards the street. This provides cosmetic continuity with the home's white exterior paint.

I glue long strips of 2" x 2" x 8' black foam rubber to the perimeter of the wood after the white paint dries. Now, as I screw the painted wood panels onto the window frames, the black foam compresses between the wood and the window frame, thus sealing out any light that could and would leak in.

The doorway leading into this darkroom from the living room gets a narrower strip of the black foam to border the door's perimeter. This addition will disallow any light leakage from the door's edges as well.

Everything is sealed, so I cut the power to the lights. Joey and Alexia get busy with black-pigmented G.E. Silicone™ sealer/adhesive, filling-in leftover pinholes of white light that shines through anywhere we notice.

I stand still in the dark, searching and seeking-out the tiny specs of light that have an appearance of stars on a clear desert night. There are approximately fifty stars out tonight.

Within minutes, however, they're snuffed. The magical twinkles disappear as the G.E. Silicone™ does its job perfectly. "Do you see any more pinholes?" I ask.

"No. No," the two of them answer a few seconds apart from one another. Dead silence prevails. Alexia's voice breaks the silence...

"I can't see my hands or anything; and my eyes have already adjusted for a minute now."

"Then, that just about does it for this portion."

"Yep," Joey adds. "This is about as dark as it gets."

"Wayne, sweetheart," Alexia speaks as we stand here in absolute blackness, "I don't think it actually has to be this dark. I'm pretty sure that the term *darkroom* is just that... a term."

"Hey," I tell them as I feel my way to a light switch. "If I'm gonna make this money perfect, I need a work environment that is to *my* liking... not yours; but *my* liking."

I continue on while looking at them as we squint from the overhead white light, "If I leave out even one tiny detail, and the money turns out poorly, we'll never know exactly what caused the problem and I'd have to start from scratch to try and correct the problem. So I can't leave out any details. Does that make sense to you guys?"

"Yeah. Yes," they answer in a not-so-nice tone.

"Okay, then, don't bug me again when you see I'm doing things to what you two think is an extreme."

"Alright! We get it!" Alexia screeches. "Now leave us alone and let's finish what we have to do. Whadaya want us to do next?"

“Nothing. We should go to the Unicorn and get something to eat. And we’ll pick-up something for dinner too, so we don’t have to go back again and waste time. We have a lot of stuff to do before I can get to the most important part of this all.”

“Hey,” Joey adds. “I have a thought.”

“Yeah, what?”

“Well, my friend who grows pot has this special paint that reflects the heat back from his grow lights so the police helicopters can’t use their infrared detectors to see what he’s doing. We should do the same for the hot lights on the camera. Those four lights must put out some hellacious heat; don’t you think?”

“It seems to make some sense. We can never be *too* safe. You know our saying, “Better safe—”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.”

“Okay. So we’ll have to find some of this special paint somewhere and get it done as soon as possible. Even before I start practicing on the photography.”

“Oh! One more thing,” Joey speaks-up again. “My friend says that sometimes the power company keeps tabs on excessive power use. I wonder if they’ll notice a big increase when you start burning plates and printing?”

“Well, there’s nothing I can do about that. We’ll have to take a chance or come up with some good excuse. All right. Let’s go. After lunch we’ll stop at Home Depot again and look for your special paint...”

I'm sure they must sell heat-reflective paint here in southern Florida. We'll buy some rollers and a ladder."

Joey volunteers, "I'll paint the roof while you finish the safe-lighting in the darkroom."

"Thanks, Joe."

• • • •

"So how's the food you guys?" I ask Alexia and Joey as they sit here, happy looking faces, eating their buffet of healthy eatables.

"Excellent," they say in unison. They even chose the same word of description. These two crack me up.

I whisper over to them and point gently, "There's the squirrel."

He scampers over to Alexia so she can feed him. He seems to forget that I even exist: the little bastard rodent. Ahhhh, he's probably got rabies anyway.

• • • •

"Alexia," I tell her nicely as we stand out in front of the flat-top house, "You're gonna have to go on top of the roof with Joey and use this shovel to remove all those white rocks. Or Joey can do it while you do the painting. It really doesn't matter to me, but you guys better get started; it'll be getting dark soon."

This special, dense, reflective paint cost eighty dollars for a five-gallon bucket! Two containers should cover the small rooftop. I sure hope it does its job.

I yell to them, now on the roof, “ten gallons should do it, you guys! So spread it thick. It’ll be more than enough.”

Alexia yells back down to me as she stands at attention with one arm to her side and the other in a salute, “Sir yes Sir!”

“Alright. At ease. And no horseplay up there. I don’t need either of you fall’in.”

• • • •

Inside the darkroom sits a separate closet space. I’ll use this small area to store my light-sensitive printing plates and negatives. With the bright white lights on, I step into the closet and shut the door to check for any visual leaks of white light. Good. I see only one at the bottom... an easy fix.

It takes me an hour to mount the red safelights and run the wires. I install two 200 watt white floor lamps to ensure that I’ll have an adequate supply of light for completing non-light-sensitive work, which will still take place in the darkroom.

I slide the camera into its designated area; then adjust it so it stands perfectly level. This baby is five-feet tall and two-feet wide. It has four intensely bright halogen lights that shine onto the glass where the four twenties will be placed for photographing. The vacuum machine that holds the large photonegative in place is positioned on the floor next to the camera.

I unfold a six-foot-long utility table and place three gray plastic chemical trays side-by-side. These trays bring back a brief reminder of the bus trays at the restaurant in Las Vegas where I used to dump the customer's cash. I smile as I reminisce.

Alright... so far so good.

Next, I place the tabletop plate-maker on the utility table next to the plastic trays. I plug it in and test it for power. I test the camera and its vacuum as well.

Very good! It's almost a go, Houston.

The last and final construction step in the darkroom, before I purchase the chemicals, plates and negatives, is to hang five clothesline strings across the narrow width of the room. I position them just above the chemical trays. Later, I'll need to use wood clothespin clips to hang the negatives from these strings and allow them to drip dry. This procedure will be done in the atmosphere of the red safety lights. Once the negatives are dipped in the stop-bath solution, it will be safe to examine them under the bright white floodlights.

• • • •

Although it's nine p.m., Joey continues to assist me in gluing the soundproofing foam onto the walls and ceiling of the pressroom that's located next to the darkroom. The door, which leads into the pressroom, is alarmed in such a manner that the emergency sound is heard only within the confines of this house.

With the thick foam covering the inside of the door as well as the walls and ceiling of the small pressroom, it has the dead-sound acoustics of a bank vault.

By four a.m. the entire mountain of foam is glued into place. And, although we surely benefit by using four canister-filters attached to each respirator-mask, the glue's fumes still overwhelm us and make us extremely high. We kept having to work for a half hour, then break for fifteen.

"Joey," I tell him, "you're probably as tired as I am. Why don't you go home and get some sleep. Matter of fact, sleep in."

"I am tired," he says with his eyes drooping. That big smile now dissipated.

"I'll see you at two p.m. tomorrow afternoon. We'll workout for a few hours, then eat at the Unicorn; watch the girls walk by. I'll have Alexia get printing supplies in the morning while you and I are sleeping. Thanks for all your help." I smile and shake his hand.

"No problem, cous," he smiles back. He must have found some lingering energy from within.

"One last thing, Joey."

"What?"

"Doesn't it sound awfully quiet in here?"

He looks a little bewildered. "Yeah. You could kill someone in here," he raises his eyebrows, "and no one would hear it at all."

"You sure could, Joe," I add my thoughts. "You could even torture 'em real good and still, no one would hear their screams."

Joey is all excited: a little bit hyper now. A big smile grows on his face, "You could blow someone away with a Desert Eagle forty-four Magnum and no one'd hear!" He starts to get even more excited, "You could even take a girl and—"

"Alright, Joe. I get the picture. Now let's try one last thing before you head home. Go outside and listen to me yell from in here. Then, one minute after you've been outside, I'll turn on the press, full throttle, and you tell me if you hear anything at all."

Two minutes later, Joey reports back to me with his observations and the findings to our test. He cannot hear even the slightest sound of my screaming or the noisy printing press. I do the same test as him. I'm fully satisfied with the room's soundproof worthiness.

• • • •

Today is a day off from the operation, so we exercise at Bally's Fitness. I practice an hour of Martial Arts in the aerobic room. Afterwards, I do hundreds of crunches for my abs. Next, the three of us eat lunch at... where else... the Unicorn.

Once we finish, I take Joey back to his house and drop him off. Then I head home for a soothing shower. In one hour I'll cruise over and pick-up Joey. He'll accompany Alexia and I to an enjoyable evening at Miami's *Bayside* open-air, seaside mall located right on the edge of Miami's main seaport.

This seaport is where the cruise ships dock prior to leaving or returning from the beautiful Caribbean. After a fresh-catch dinner, we take in a movie at an ocean-side theater nearby.

Tomorrow will be a busy day.

• • • •

Nov 12, 1991 - 10:00 am (Aventura, FL)

Aventura is the Palm Beach or Beverly Hills of North Miami. Every tenth automobile is a Mercedes Benz 500 SL convertible or a BMW™ of some sort. Everywhere we look we see lush landscape and water. It's a nice place to live and shop. This tropical area is where the Unicorn and my health spa are located.

Today my shopping is basically quite simple. This afternoon I'll shop alone. My attire will consist of baggy linen slacks, leather slip-on boat shoes (sans the socks of course), a linen no-collar shirt, and my diamond-bezel gold watch.

I may look like many of the residents from around here, but I'm shopping for something that is very different and unusual—twenty-dollar bills. I'm seeking new ones that are perfect in every aspect. I need bills that have been touched by the hands of only four humans: the cutter and the counter at the Federal Printing Facility, the bank teller's hands, and mine.

• • • •

“Good morning, sir,” the mid-forties Latino woman smiles. “Can I help you today?”

I smile at her casually. “It’s my niece’s birthday in a couple of days and I want to give her a few brand-new twenty-dollar bills as a gift. Do you have any that I can purchase?”

“No problem. Let me check in the vault.” She locks, then, pulls the key from her cash drawer. “I’ll be right back, sir.”

“Thank you very much.”

Two-minutes lapse. I begin to wonder if they do this in order to get someone on video: then turn it over to the Secret Service. I don’t know if I’m being paranoid, cautious, or just thinking ahead: planning, yet dissecting all scenarios and possibilities.

“Here you go, sir,” she smiles and hands me a specially printed birthday envelope. “Check it and make sure that all three twenties are inside and they’re what you want. I brought you the festive envelope as well. Tell your niece that I said happy birthday.”

“Well thank you. That’s very nice. I’ll tell her you said that.”

Boy do I feel like a heel.

I calmly remove the three twenties and give them a quick inspection. My heart patters as if I’m doing something illegal. Oh yes... I forgot... I *am*.

“Thank you very much, Carmen.”

“My pleasure. Thank you for visiting Barnett Bank.”

As I make tracks to the door I wonder to myself... what might she be thinking? Then I ponder positively. After all, she did give me a birthday envelope. Then I drift further into my thoughts... do I look like a counterfeiter? And just what *does* a counterfeiter look like? I suppose I need only look in a mirror.

• • • •

I have nine more banks to visit. You see; I could ask for more than three twenties at the same bank, however, when the teller removes too many bills from the block, or brick of new currency, I'd have a quantity of sequential, rather than varied serial numbers, and Federal Reserve identities.

So, I choose to receive only three new twenties from each bank. I want my counterfeit to span a more dissimilar identity.

In addition to *not* using the same Federal Reserve identities, I want to photograph only new, undamaged, perfect bills.

By using this method, I won't have to worry about printing counterfeits that'll have identifying nicks, specs, or wear marks, which could make singling out my bills much easier for the average person on the lookout.

And in doing things with this theory in mind, I believe that the Secret Service won't be able to issue an advance alert asking money-handlers to be on a look-out for the scratch on Jackson's left eye, or wear mark on the "E" of the word twenty, as an example, and so on, so forth.

Because of this theory, it seems most reasonable to choose (in the negative producing segment) only “perfect-condition bills.” My reasoning stands, and I stand by it.

Perfection is the key to success.

• • • •

Nov 12, 1991 - 3:10 pm (N. Miami, FL)

I pull into my driveway. The excitement builds within me as I rush towards Alexia and greet her with a quick, “Hi, sweetie, I’ll be right back!”

I rush by her once again from the darkroom with my magnifier headset in hand, and Alexia asks, “What are you so excited about that I don’t even get a real kiss hello?”

“You’ll see.” A big smile tears at my facial skin. I slow to a stop just long enough to speak, “Alex, have I told you lately that I love you?”

“Yes,” she says smiling. “You always tell me that, babe.”

I open the stuffed number-ten envelope and carefully remove the stack of perfect twenties. “Look at these,” I whisper; then hand the bills over to her to see. “They’re brand new... all of them. And now, they’re five-times-touched.”

“Whadaya mean?” she asks.

I briefly explain my theory and she accepts it with strong agreement.

Not knowing how many plates I may ruin in the learning process, I send Alexia to pick-up two boxes for a total of \$362.60.

Being that the plates are highly sensitive to light, they are placed unopened directly into the dark-*closet*. They'll sit in seclusion until after the twenties are photographed and the negatives are perfected. Then, and only then, will it be time to produce the all-mighty *plates*.

• • • •

Next, I speak to the same technician at Saxon. He advises me to use high-resolution film in order for the 3M™ H/R plates to be effective. It would be a waste of my money if I don't match resolution capabilities. This makes absolute sense.

He goes on to recommend Fuji™ as the film of choice when such a high resolution is required. Again, the 10"x12" film sheets come in quantities of "100" per box. While considering waste for this project I determine that it may be wise to purchase two boxes of film also. Total cost; \$385.15.

• • • •

I still need chemicals, inks and paper... thousands of dollars worth.

The chemicals are easy. There's developer to develop the exposed negatives, and stop-bath to stop the development process (a chemical reaction). Then plain water is used to rinse the stop-bath from the negatives.

Sometimes learning all this from scratch without help from a trade journal or instruction manual is very stressful. I often wonder how, or even *if*, I will eventually figure it out in the end.

Does this get any easier?

Not really. As Alexia, Joey and myself stand here in the darkroom under the eerie ambiance of the red safety lights, I test photo after photo, exposure time after exposure time, f-stops upon f-stops, and many various lighting angles in my attempt to get this right.

I dip the exposed photographic film negative into the developer. An image of the four United States Federal Reserve twenty-dollar notes appears. Then, the images disappear as fast as they came. *What the hell?*

• • • •

They say, when all else fails, read the instructions. At this point, it seems, that I need to read the instructions on the label of the developer-chemical container.

It reads... "Mix 50/50 with water."

Ah ha! Pretty simple. Once I have my new, proper mixture of this important chemical, it's back to the camera again.

There they sit; those four beautiful twenty-dollar bills under the bright halogen camera lights. The bottom horizontal edge of bill number one is placed in such a manner that it touches the top horizontal edge of bill number two. And two's edge touches three's and so on to bill number four.

I place the bills to be photographed in this perfected manner strictly because I know that the plate will mirror the negative *exactly*, and the finished printed sheet will mirror the plate, *exactly*.

This is an important step because later, when it's time to cut the bills away into their individuality, I'll need only use a solitary cut to separate each bill horizontally without leaving a space of unused blank paper between each bill; otherwise making it necessary to cut additional horizontal separations.

It would be a waste of time and effort.

• • • •

The camera lights shine brilliantly for fourteen seconds. Their intensity drowns out the red glow of the safety lights. The camera's film-suction-vacuum whines loudly. We all stare, speechless in anticipation, attracted by circumstance—a feeling of awe.

The timer clicks and the bright white camera lights go dim. The red glow fills the room once again. I shut down the vacuum. It winds down. Silence again. I submerge the newly exposed film negative into the chemical developer. Joey and Alexia look on.

"There they are," I say.

"That's amazing," Alexia speaks-up.

"Whooooow," Joey comments quietly.

The images of the four twenties stays this time. They do not disappear as they did previously. Into the stop-bath they go. Thirty seconds. I rinse them in the fresh water that occupies plastic pan number three.

“Joey, hang this on the line, please.”

“Cool. Fuck’in cool, man”

“Alexia, could you kill the red safety lights, please?”

“Sure, babe.”

Our eyes squint tightly as I flick the switch that illuminates the bright white floodlights.

“I need to see the negative,” I speak in a low tone of voice as I am totally focused in my concentration. My mind races while it calculates and dissects the information that I have just learned and memorized.

Alexia and Joey watch my every move. They’re silent. They remind me of curious puppy dog’s eyes watching their food dish being moved about in a teasing manner back and forth and up and down. Their eyes and heads move wherever my hands do. They watch the negative as if it’s a gleaming gold bar. Hell, it’s actually worth more in reality.

With my headset holding the 50x magnification lenses directly in front of my eyes, I inspect each bill poised on the blackish ten by twelve negative. After fifteen minutes of careful inspection and overwhelming tension...

“Well,” Joey asks, “how does it look?”

“Good. They look pretty damned good... except riiight... here. One solitary hair is blacked-out on Andrew Jackson’s head. It’s opaque rather than the clear it’s supposed to be. This particular blackened hair (line) would ultimately become a white hair (line), creating a white space on the finished bill.”

I point to the flaw with a pencil’s tip, showing it to my two interested students. “This would not only throw-off the perfect print of my counterfeits, but it would also become a fingerprint that could, and would, identify my counterfeits through a flaw.”

I give them my usual long-winded explanation; then follow with a, “Does that make sense to you guys?”

“Well... yeah,” Alexia answers in a not-so-sure tone. “But you may also want to try different settings,” she suggests.

“I will. Just give me a minute, okay?” I try to sound nice and stay as mellow as I can under such an intense and stressful circumstance.

• • • •

Ten hours later, after Joey has gone home and Alexia has been long asleep, I’m in the darkroom, *still!* During my obsession with finding the perfect camera setting and chemical baths, I’ve gone through one hundred and fifty-eight photographs of my beautiful twenty-dollar bills. Fortunately I have two packages of one hundred photonegatives.

The bills have rested there patiently the entire time under the pressing glass. They were trapped: sweating under the harsh, bright, hot, high-intensity lights of the camera.

Okay, so maybe they didn't actually sweat. However, I've finally made at least a dozen perfect negatives that are ready to chop, crop and manipulate until I have a finished set of three negatives.

Each ten by twelve-inch negative will have the following images as described herein—of course—once I am finished:

Negative Number One: will show only the frontal art. Everything you see which is printed in black on the front of the twenty, minus the green colored serial numbers and treasury seal.

Negative Number Two: will show only serial numbers and treasury seals. It'll look strange because they'll be in their perspective place, yet the rest of the negative will be completely black/opaque in color. The serial numbers and treasury seal will be transparent, naked and alone out there on that big, vast arena of black celluloid.

Negative Number Three: will show only the back, rear-side art in its entirety. This will be everything you see printed in olive green.

Later, once every detail is perfect, I'll make/burn printing-plates, which depicts the art of each negative in complete, exacting measure: right down to the most miniscule dot and line of detail. And I mean... *miniscule*.

a) Negative number one will produce a plate, which will later be coated in black ink, thus producing an image in black: the front side of the twenty dollar bill.

b) Negative number two will produce a plate, which will later be coated in emerald green ink, thus producing an image in emerald green: the serial numbers and treasury seal.

c) Negative number three will produce a plate, which will later be coated in olive green ink, thus producing an image in olive green: the back side of the twenty dollar bill.

• • • •

The past two days have seemed like a week. My desire and determination have finally surrendered to exhaustion. I head for the shower, then onto a deep, well-deserved six-hour sleep.

As tired as I am, it's difficult to sleep while a thousand visions dance across my brain. They're thoughts and scenes of tasks, which I have never before undertaken; pure speculation, hope and desire. I've got to make this work perfectly. I'm in too deep at this point: both mentally and financially... with someone else's money to boot.

• • • •

Hunched over the 12"x12" light box, I've got to constantly remind myself to blink my eyelids. When I do blink (because of the absence of blinking in the past few minutes) my eyes sting terribly.

"My neck hurts," I tell Alexia as she walks past me while going about her household chores. "And my eyes sting."

"Why don't you take a break, babe? Let me massage your neck and shoulders. When I'm finished I'll make you something to eat."

"Okay. Thanks, I'd really appreciate that."

My counterfeiting obsession definitely takes a back seat to her cooking and her touch. Before I start again with the negatives on the light-box, we make love for an hour.

I feel much better now.

• • • •

The opaque ink pen that I work with to blackout the treasury seals and serial numbers on negative number one was very difficult to track down. In addition, it's very difficult to work with as well.

The pen is called a Refograph pen. It lays down a line of ink that is .32 of a *millimeter!* This is roughly the thickness of a human hair.

It would take a book just to describe what is entailed in manipulating the negatives in order to produce the perfect printing plates, so I'll keep it short and to the point.

I cut, tape, scratch, pen, brush, opaque, trim and glue an assortment of negatives, and crop pieces until I'm left with the three negatives which I'll ultimately use to create my plates.

I hunch over my light table day after day for at least ten hours at a time (excluding restroom and food breaks, only). I do this same routine for a total of *fourteen days!* Again: no exaggerating here.

Several problems arise. One major problem is that the green of the serial numbers and treasury seal do not photograph as needed: and, well, I'm forced to hand-draw/create onto the negative, four separate treasury seals in their original size and in exacting detail using my fine-lined Refograph pen and patience.

Scratch, draw, inspect. Scratch, draw, inspect, correct, compare, scratch, draw, and on and on and on. Many days later, this segment of the negative manipulation is complete.

• • • •

I take what I believe are perfect negatives and walk to the plate maker. Of course Joey and Alexia want to be present to see the process while I try to figure it out myself. I place the negative onto an unexposed light sensitive printing plate. This is all done while under the glow of the red safety lights.

I apply a small piece of black graphics tape to hold the negative in place. I now set the plate on the rubber bed of the vacuum table under the glass hold-down lid of the plate-maker.

I close the hinged glass-lid atop the plate maker and turn on the vacuum's suction force. We watch in fascination, as the negative gets sucked-up against the plate and the glass itself.

These plates are coated with a thin, smooth, even layer of turquoise emulsion (a light-sensitive chemical). The negative's opaque areas will not allow the light from the plate maker to strike the sensitive coating of the plate, thus allowing the light to strike only the coating as it passes through the clear (image area) of the negative; thus, in turn, hardening the emulsion (image area) on the plate.

The image area on the plate ultimately becomes the area in which the ink (regardless of color) sticks; then lays onto the paper to be printed. Or, as in my case, *counterfeited*.



Wherever you see black artwork on the front of a twenty-dollar bill, the corresponding details of art will appear as a transparent detail on the negative first and foremost.

The same details become the hardened (image areas) on the plate; which ultimately become the black details of art you see on the front of a twenty-dollar bill.

Does this make sense thus far? Are you still with me? Imagine if you will, I have to figure this out by the process of experimentation and guess work.

After all, whom am I going to call to my home to help me in my need of technical advice or assistance? An enormous amount of thought goes into this entire process.

• • • •

We all watch as the vacuum gauge on the plate maker shows that the negative is indeed being sucked-up against the plate. But, then, who needs the gauge? It's all too plain to see.

Nevertheless, I notice the gauge is at 25 psi (pounds per square inch). Dammit, those lights are bright. Fifteen seconds of intense light bombards my nocturnal eyes. The red light was so soothing, and now...

Thirty seconds pass. The plate maker's digital circuitry tells the machine to turn its lights off. As they dim-out to darkness, the red eeriness once again takes over the ambiance of the room.

I release the vacuum pressure, lift the hinged glass and remove my negative and plate from the machine. Still under the red lighting, like a nuclear submarine at war, deep under the ocean's surface, I remove my negative from atop the now-hardened/exposed plate. I do this as gently as if removing the detonator from a plutonium-enriched nuclear warhead.

"Hmmm, nothing," I mumble to Joey and Alexia as they look on.

I bring the plate to the developing table where the gray plastic trays once sat. I place the plate down flat and proceed to open the container of red colored plate developer.

This chemical is of a thick consistency: slightly denser than dish soap. I slowly rub the red chemical in a circular motion as described on the label's *instructions*. Yes I now read instructions.

I use a soft sheepskin glove to apply this toxic chemical. The three of us hoot and holler as the images of the four twenties appear. It's such an awe-inspiring feeling to hold in my hands, a printing plate worth, literally millions of dollars.

Now that the plate has been developed and hardened by the chemical, it's no longer light sensitive, so I rinse the plate clean and turn on the bright white lights. I inspect it under the scrutiny of my 50x magnifier headset and a perfectionists' eye.

A few hours more of experimentation with exposure times of the lights of the plate-maker nets my first working printing plate. It takes a couple of days to check and re-check, then compare the details of my plate against the details of the new genuine twenties.

I make all the necessary corrections to the plate by changing/correcting the *negative*. Once this is complete, I burn/make another plate, then inspect. I do this over and over and over and over, until I'm one hundred percent, fully satisfied.

It takes me another twenty-four hours to create at least ten each of the three necessary printing plates: fronts, backs, and serials & treasury seals. I burn 'em, ink 'em, test 'em, and run 'em on the press.

Their results are inspected and deemed very impressive in every respect. Now, I clean each plate and coat them for protection against corrosion. I store them in a very secret and safe hiding place.

• • • •

As part of a celebration to thank the God of Counterfeiting for helping me to overcome such obstacles, we take three days off to relax.

As part of our relaxation program I buy us all a pair of the finest inline skates money can buy. Then, we plan a three-day getaway.

Inline skating on South Florida's smooth bikeways, through the many miles of scenic areas is simply wonderful and enchanting. It's somewhat indescribable.

We spend a portion of these three days snorkeling amongst the reefs and marine life in the warm tropical waters around the islands called the *Florida Keys*.

The sun seems to re-energize us. The three days of sun, fun and relaxation, along with our future wealth coming along full steam ahead, makes for a memorable vacation. It's time to get back to work. I still have quite a bit to tackle and complete.

It's an uphill battle that I want to *win*.

“To manufacture high quality counterfeit currency I must use an offset lithographic printing press. Computers and laser printers will not allow the same quality. Every detail must be exact if I am to manufacture counterfeit bills which can be spent anywhere, anytime, day or night, without attracting so much as a second glance... and without getting me arrested.”

CHAPTER FOUR

“ Getting The Right Paper ”



Dec 3, 1991 - 9:10 am (N. Miami, FL)

Absolutely not! There is no way I'm going to carry a twenty dollar bill into a paper supply warehouse or store and hold it next to a paper sample to see if the color-base is close... or even a match.

The way I see it, I'll have to disfigure a few genuine bills to make my color sample swatch. By selecting the proper paper color at the supplier, I won't have to face the harsh reality of coating the entire surface area of the paper with ink in order to match the color tone of genuine treasury paper.

I'll be hard-pressed to find a method in which to color the paper using chemicals or inks on the finished counterfeit once it's complete; so this process must be accomplished *first*.

To make myself a color swatch that I'll bring along to supply stores, I start by cutting the borders from fives and tens. I only cut the top and bottom borders, not the sides.

The disfigured bills will appear to look rather strange. I'll use them individually at different stores for purchases, due to the fact that they'll still spend because they *are* genuine. The store *has* to accept them.

So I cut the bills using a straight edge and a new Exacto™ razor blade. Off comes the top borders from specially selected bills, and the bottom horizontal borders of others. This procedure nets me twenty strips of currency paper measuring $6 \frac{3}{16}$ in length by $\frac{1}{8}$ in width.

At this point I lay a four inch wide piece of clear packing tape flat on my table (sticky side up). I lay the strips in such a manner so that they touch horizontal edge to horizontal edge. I now have a piece of unmarked treasury paper that measures $6 \frac{3}{16}$ in length by $2 \frac{1}{2}$ in width.

I place a like-sized piece of clear tape over the exposed treasury paper to seal it. The edges get neatly trimmed. This sample is the same length as a genuine bill and nearly the same width. It suits me fine for what I need at this time.

By having the sample this size and not the exact size of the bill, no one should be able to link it to what it really is; for I'll be holding the sample in my hand while I search and compare the colors of paper I'll need to complete my counterfeiting operation.

• • • •

Now to assess the thickness and texture of the genuine currency paper based on the dissection of a genuine bill.

Another one ruined.

With my magnifier headset in place, I peer through the powerful lenses as I tear the corner from the twenty. I examine the threads and pulp of this top-secret paper, which has eluded counterfeiters since its first production more than one hundred years ago.

As I noted earlier, genuine treasury paper is designed and produced explicitly for use in U.S. currency and it's not of typical weight or design by any standard whatsoever. However, the fibers I see under magnification appear to swirl and bend in the same direction as the common papers that I have already dissected and analyzed for comparison thus far.

This is definitely a plus, one less obstacle for me to overcome later. All right, all is good on the horizon. The thickness of the paper I'll use will be considered later when I get to that point of need-to-know.

It's wise to think that it would behoove me to consider searching out a quality made (20 lb) paper rather than a (24 lb) paper.

My thought is brought on by the fact that it'll be easier to bulk up a (20 lb) paper, thus turning it into a (22 lb) paper, as genuine currency paper *appears* to be, than to attempt to reduce the thickness of a (24 lb) paper.

This will be a more simplified process. Am I still making sense? I surely hope so, because here's where it gets good... rrrreal good.

• • • •

So the search for colored twenty-pound paper begins. But what'll I seek out, considering genuine treasury paper is composed of cotton and linen? Shall I seek linen or cotton or maybe a bond? A classic or plain? An executive linen? Or recycled cotton? And on and on and on.

It seems that my best bet will be to drive to supply stores in Miami, South Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Pompano Beach and Boca Raton during my search. While in the stores I'll seek-out what I believe is the best candidate for my paper needs. Then, I'll take the sample home for a closer inspection and analysis.

The first process I'll have to do to get an accurate example of my chosen papers would be to cut several 6 3/16" by 2 5/8" sections from each full sheet sample I bring home. This of course, is the same dimension as a genuine bill; therefore, netting me an accurate account of the paper I'll be considering as my choice of choices.

As I cut each piece I'll mark it with its corresponding identifying name and type of paper. Once I complete my barrage of tests, I'll be able to identify the paper, which I'll ultimately use.

When I'm confident about the type of paper I'll use, I'll blind-test Joey and Alexia by directing them to hold one of the cut samples and a genuine bill behind their back and feel the paper by weight, density, thickness and texture.

For days and days I've added starches and various brands of clear protective coatings to the dozens of samples, to increase their weight. After extensive testing, sampling and scrutinizing, I've settled with... are you ready for this?

Plain 'ol white typing paper! I know... I know. But you see, all of the specialty papers carry in them, *watermarks*.

This little brand-identifying mark is a thorn in the soft tissue of a counterfeiter's hand. It's an obstacle that will end up costing me millions of dollars in lost profits *if* I go with a specialty paper, for the following reasons:

As I said earlier, no matter what configuration I try, I can only fit four bills onto a single sheet of 8 ½" x 11" paper, regardless of any layout design I attempt. And, this watermark is not in the same location on each sheet, so it will ruin one or two bills on each sheet by its intrusion amongst and within the printed counterfeit.

Then, to add a major burden, I'd be forced to inspect each individual bill of the "600,000" finished bills in order to remove all bills which have the intruding, noticeable unwanted watermarks. It turns out that plain, twenty-pound white typing paper is the only paper on the market with no watermarks emblazoned within it.

After several days of searching, testing and analyzing, it's time to make many trips to the Office Depot™ supply stores around my area to buy-up nearly their entire stock of twenty-pound typing paper.

I need at least “400 reams.” At five hundred sheets per ream, this amounts to a sum of “200,000 sheets of paper.” At \$80 per sheet, this is a total of \$16,000,000.00: minus a few million due to waste through experimentation.

To keep from raising suspicion during this covert operation of purchasing all their paper, we set out to purchase only fifty reams at each store within a twenty-mile radius of my home in North Miami. It takes a full day to find it all and transport the mountain of paper back home. Four hundred reams is a hell of a lot more paper and weight than I have ever imagined. It's a full pallet measuring 3' x 3' x 7' tall. This totals more than a ton of paper. “2,332 pounds.”

Fortunately, I have a Toyota™ truck.

Unfortunately for me, I'll have to eventually feed this tremendous amount of paper through the rickety 'ol printing press of mine, a total of “five separate times!” I just hope this dinosaur machine holds together with only a minimal of mechanical malfunctions.

• • • •

“Alexia,” I ask her, “could you go to the Unicorn and get us dinner while Joey and I dismantle the darkroom? Its usefulness is finished now. I wanna tear it down. So, could you go, please, while we do this?”

The darkroom becomes the paper storage room until the printing is complete. Then it'll become the cutting and counting room.

Quite the universal room.

“Sure, babe. Let me get a pencil and paper to take your never-ending food order.” She smiles then asks, “What would you like?”

“Joey can go first.”

From Joey: “I’ll have the biggest grilled tuna steak they have, made into a sandwich with sprouts on sprouted bread and tomato, with a little bit of Miso dressing on the side.”

“Slow down, Joey,” she snaps. “I’m not a goddamned waitress.”

“Well, you should be,” he laughs.

She gives him the finger in return.

“Go on, Joe, you bastard.”

“Okay. Where was I? Oh, ummmm... a medium container of coleslaw, a baked, breaded Italian chicken breast, a potato Kanish, a California peach tart; you know the one with the granola crust? Two of ‘em!”

“Uh, huh,” she mumbles in disgust. She can picture his belly growing, not from fattening foods, but from the sheer large quantity being stuffed into it. Soon it’ll be the size of his father’.

“And a strawberry, blueberry, apple smoothie. Aaaand... that’s all.”

“That’s it? She sarcastically attacks Joey. “Nothing more? Maybe a pound of turkey meatloaf: Half a pound of... no a twenty pound turkey? Some veggie Lasagna, and—”

“No. I don’t want all that extra, stupid. I can’t help it; I’m hungry. I only want what I ordered.”

She shakes her head from left to right as she snickers. “Okay. Now you wanna order, babe?”

“Sure. I’ll have what Joeys’ hav’in, except no chicken breast, and only one tart. Everything else sounds good to me. And could you please get a little piece of tuna for Zorro?”

The huge feline looks up at me when he hears his name. Then he gets up and walks to me for some attention.

“You guys are damn pigs! I don’t see where you put away all this food. How could you eat so—”

“We’re growing young men,” Joey interrupts.

“Shut-up, Joey,” she barks back.

I reach out my hand. “Here’s a hundred sweetie. Thank you.” I kiss her. “Drive safe.”

• • • •

By the time Alexia gets home with the food, we have the darkroom completely dismantled. The camera and the plate maker get moved into the spare bedroom, and everything else gets cleaned.

The safelights and hanging chords are removed as well. Only the tables and the bright overhead lights remain. Within a few days I’ll place an advertisement to sell both the camera and plate-maker for \$2,500.00. It’s such a good deal I’m sure someone will buy it immediately.

• • • •

As I predicted, the two items get sold in a very short period of time. However, instead of pocketing the twenty-five C-notes, Alexia has, what she thinks, is a better idea of what to do with the money.

She buys the two of us roundtrip tickets to Buenos Aires, Argentina. It's her homeland. We'll fly on a United Airlines' 747 Jumbo Jet. The trip takes place a few months from now. We'll depart Miami International Airport on April the second.

"I want you to meet my father and my grandmothers, and see the sights." She's excited and smiling. "You'll love it so much, babe. I swear!"

"Alex," I gently tell her my thoughts and anxieties, "it's a third-world country. I'll have to bring enough bottled water to last us the entire two weeks we're there! And where do we shower? In an outhouse using wooden buckets with holes in the bottom?"

I smile and she just smacks my arm pretty damned hard.

"You're so stupid sometimes. It's a modern city with more than ten million people. But there's nice restaurants, and a science museum; it's the largest in the world; at least that's what my father tells me. Besides, it's too late. The tickets are non-refundable. Oh, and we'll fly over the Amazon Rain Forest, babe. You can bring your camera. And—"

"Okay. Okay. But promise that you'll interpret their Spanish for me. You know I'm limited."

"Of course, babe. You know I will. This is great. I'll call my father and tell him the good news. You'll love *all* my relatives."

Her smile and the warm look of love in her eyes tells me I probably will.

• • • •

My next, and quite possibly the most difficult obstacle to overcome, is coloring the paper to match the identical color of genuine treasury paper. At this point, the only paper I can use is white typing paper.

No company manufactures a plain twenty-pound colored paper that matches the color of genuine currency. Because of this dilemma, it becomes quite clear that I must now ink the outer surface of all my paper—the front side as well as its backside—entirely.

What a laborious, nightmarish thought.

• • • •

At the Home Depot™ store the clerk tries innocently to take the swatch of genuine currency paper from my hand. He reaches out to grab it for a closer examination, “Okay, lemme see whatcha got?”

I pull back politely, “It’s just a piece of the wallpaper from my den... well, office.”

“Okay, that’s fine.”

He pulls his hand back slowly. “So you just want me to color match some paint to your sample?”

“Yes. That’s it.”

“How much do you want afterwards?”

“Well let me try a quart to start. I’ll keep the code numbers, and if it looks close—”

“Close? It’ll be exxxxact!”

“Really?”

“Oh yeah. This computer,” he proudly proclaims, “can divide a hue of color into a hundred layers and the machine will mix the paint precisely and perfectly.”

“Godaaaamn. That’s too cool. You mean *exact, exactly?*”

“That’s right. In fact, you hold that little piece of paper you got there in front of this lens,” he points to a glass window which is approximately the diameter of a dime, located in the side of some computer casing. “When you hear the beep, you’re done! Then I’ll mix you a quart right now... on the spot!”

“Well, alright! This is too cool. Thank you.”

While he mixes the paint, I pick up a few black foam-rubber sharp-edged paint applicators to help spread the paint evenly onto my plain white paper at home.

“You sure look happy,” the cashier says as I hand her a new hundred.

“Well, you guys are the greatest! You always have what I need here. This store is the best.”

“Okay, sir. That’ll be twelve-dollars and forty-two cents.” Silence. “You’re using... cash,” she says as she quickly examines the big bill.

More silence. She gathers my change. “Okay, that’s eighty-seven dollars and fifty-eight cents change, sir. Thank you for shopping at Home Depot.”

“No. Thank you!” I smile at her and hurry home.

• • • •

I pry the lid from the quart-sized can of paint. It's easy to recognize the color as a perfect match. Excitedly, I dip a foam applicator into the paint. I wipe it, remove it, and gently glide it across the white surface of the typing paper.

Being the impatient person that I am, I use the hot air from my blow dryer to expedite the drying process. Its little electric motor whines in that familiar high-pitched sound. Alexia and I stare intensely. We could burn holes into the paper with our powerful concentration.

The paint dries to what I had planned, hoped, and dreamt it would look like in my mind. A perfect: flawless, absofuckinglutely wonderful, awe-inspiring match.

"Oh my God, babe, that's it!" she nearly screams while trying to contain her emotions. She jumps up and down. "That's it! You did it! It looks so rrrreal!" She grabs me by the cheeks and kisses me with all her strength. "You're a genius."

I just smile.

• • • •

With a hissing burst from the aerosol can of spray glue, I lightly coat the backside of a genuine twenty. A thin layer of this sticky, spider-webish substance should do the trick. I lay the twenty, glue-side down onto the painted sheet of paper.

With a six-inch paint roller, I apply the glued twenty, smoothly, flatly, perfectly in place at the center of the 8 ½ " x 11" paper.

Outside we go.

By now, Joey has shown-up and he's equally as excited, smiling and pleading to get a closer look. We stand here in the front yard, not too concerned with our neighbors. The three of us are awestruck beyond belief.

The paper lays flat on the cement: very odd in a way. Strange in the sense that one must be here to grasp the concept and the power of what lays on the ground in front of me.

Here, in the bright South Florida sun, lies an eight and a half by eleven-inch piece of substrate with such an exacting hue of genuine treasury paper; that the twenty-dollar bill, which is glued to it, appears to have enormous borders surrounding its frontal art.

One and a half inches of border to the left and right sides, and four and a quarter inches of border to the top and bottom, respectively.

It appears as if a solitary twenty-dollar bill has been printed upon a sheet of genuine treasury paper measuring eight and a half by eleven inches in size. Very odd looking indeed.

No matter how concentrated we look; no matter how close we scrutinize; we cannot differentiate between the borders where the genuine bill ends and where the painted paper begins. It's amazingly strange... in a good way.

“That’s it! Yes!” I quietly express my excitement. “Yes, we’re getting there. We’re getting there.” I carry the sheet of paper back inside. I hold onto it as if it’s twenty-four karat pure gold.

• • • •

“We need to buy a black light. You know, like the ones they use at nightclubs? I’m pretty sure they sell ‘em at Spencer’s in the mall. Let’s go check it out. Then we’ll stop at Home Depot and pick-up a blue light, a green, a yellow, a red, and a fluorescent light. We’ll need fixtures...

While we’re at Spencer’s, one of you guys remind me to get a telephone with neon on it; one of those modern ones. I need the neon to see how the money looks under that kind of light too, as well as the other colors of light...

When we get back I’ll hang ‘em all and hook ‘em together with a couple of buss-bars. This step is very important,” I continue on. “I’ll need to determine how the paper’s hue will appear under the frequency rays of various lights in casinos, nightclubs, stores, restaurants, etcetera. This way, no matter where we cash the counterfeit, we know we’ll have no surprises due to some strange lighting. Sound reasonable to you guys?”

“Yeah. Uh huh,” they say in a now-semi-angered voice tone. “Sure. Exactly!” Now sarcastically.

“Don’t fuck with me, you guys! This is serious,” I stare at them without blinking an eye. “Do you, or do you *not* understand?”

“Yes! Dammit! Jeeezus. We fucking understand, Wayne! Now leave us alone. What do we need to know about this technical stuff for anyways?” Joey asks.

They both look angry now.

“Because, you should know what you’re watching, or don’t even bother watching at all. That’s why, fuckhead.”

“Okay. Sorry,”

“Well, now that that’s settled, let’s get going. We’ll get supplies first; then we’ll have a nice dinner, huh, Joey? You got any money for dinner?”

“Whaaa...” his eyes get real big and his smile now disappears.

“Just joking, snapperpussy. You know I always buy. Come on, let’s go.”

• • • •

Dec 8, 1991 - 8:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I have risen an hour earlier than my usual time because I’m too damned anxious to see the paint results once again. It’s that phenomenon where one must double check something on a fresh new day to see if the results are still the same.

A couple of thumb tacks hold the sheet of paper against the wall directly beneath where the colored lights hang.

Off with the bright floor lamps, and on with the colored-light evaluation: Neon, nice match with no discoloration in the paper. It continues to look exactly the same color as the twenty-dollar bill glued to the painted piece of paper. Tone. Color. It's good.

Off with the neon: and on with the black light. Both the painted sheet and the bill turn brown. Excellent! That's what I was hoping for. The painted paper doesn't take on that strange bluish glow. This means my paper is of the correct color. It will not allow light to penetrate: a most important accomplishment and obstacle to have overcome.

I'm tickled at this point because most bars and nightclubs have these black lights for the purpose of discovering counterfeit currency.

I can only imagine that counterfeiters print without thought and regards to opaque qualities and shine-through. This could have been a devastating disqualification. However, it passed the test easily... perfectly.

In the end, none of the lights have a negative effect on my color applied to the paper. During the interim of the test, I still could not distinguish the border of my paper and the genuine bill I had affixed earlier.

• • • •

I place five reams of the plain white paper onto the front-end loading tray situated between the guides at the front of the press.

Adjusting all settings, I begin a dry run with no ink; only paper is being processed through the press.

A flip of the little switch on the side of the press and I hear that strange sound which I've grown accustomed to hearing during the experimental stage last week.

It was during this time that I taught myself how the press actually operates. I'd flipped switches and moved levers while watching; taking hundreds of mental notes, as its gears, rollers and cylinders did their thing.

Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka... a very mechanical sound made by the press at intervals of about twice per second as two of its three cylinders rotate in their clockwise and counter-clockwise direction.

I flip the switch that operates a noisy vacuum, which allocates an adjustable strength of suction-air through the rubber tipped paper-pick-up- tubes. These tubes are two-inches in length and are made of stainless steel. They're fitted with replaceable rubber boots that press lightly against the top sheet of paper on the fully stacked loading tray.

In a constant mechanical motion, these pick-up tubes, spanning the sheet of paper, move forward and down, then back up and in, in one smooth movement.

When they make contact they suck the top sheet of paper against the rubber boots and draw it inwards toward the gripper fingers built into the twelve-inch diameter stainless steel cylinder.

This action allows the grippers to pull the paper into the realm of the printing press. Once the paper is fed between two of the three cylinders, the transfer of inked image is made, (when ink is present on the printing plate).

As I watch the paper sheets pass through the cylinders (where they're then gripped by the chain-mounted-and-driven rear delivery, metal gripper-fingers), I'm quite amazed at how each sheet stacks up neatly upon the rear-delivery tray. This tray device is weight activated.

The weight of each sheet of paper, as they accumulate, pushes the tray downward, allowing at least five thousand sheets to be stacked one-by-one. The weight of the paper ultimately bears itself upon the tray, thus forcing it downward.

This printing press is actually a marvelous and well thought out piece of machinery. It was probably even a better machine in its days of youth when it was new.

• • • •

Thinking I'll save the time and hassle of obtaining treasury-paper-colored ink, as well as the dangerous risks involved in purchasing such a specialized ink color, I carefully, yet foolishly load a large quantity of my custom-colored *paint* into the ink fountain/tray.

Well, I suppose this act is against the Laws of Offset Lithographic Printing. One should *never* substitute ink with paint.

And because if this foolish act, I calculate that it will take me a minimum of three full days to clean the paint from my expensive machine.

The paint is everywhere it *shouldn't* be!

• • • •

Okay, so now I know that I can never get away with using paint as a substitute for ink in which to color my plain white paper to treasury-paper-color specifications.

I definitely have to use ink. So, it is my only option to have to send a painted sheet of paper to the VanSon Ink Company in Mineola, New York. My request will be for them to send me a quart of custom mixed ink to match the enclosed sample, which I'll send by overnight express. I want to send it quickly in both directions.

According to the woman on the telephone, the cost will be eighty-seven dollars total, to include shipping. I'll have it in two days.

• • • •

Two days later I receive my ink as promised. They even sent me the color-formula-combination in the event that I choose to mix my own in the future: a very calculated procedure.

How thoughtful.

Working quickly in anticipation, I fill the ink fountain/tray with *ink* this time. The printing plate is already in its place wrapped around the top cylinder. The entire surface area of the plate that I'm using at this point is burned/produced-into image-area-blue.

The ink will now adhere to the *full surface area* of the plate; then, it will transfer to the surface area of the vulcanized rubber blanket wrapped around cylinder number two, which is directly below number one.

Cylinder number three, which is located below number two, applies an even amount/layer of pressure against the surface area of cylinder number two, which has the inked blanket that applies the inked image.

In this case, I'll be printing just a thin, even, solid layer of (Treasury Paper Green Ink) that will cover the sheet from edge to edge, top to bottom.

There is one problem though. While the color is absolutely, flawlessly perfect in matching treasury paper, this enormous amount of coated surface area is very tacky. Because of this, every fifth sheet of paper wraps itself around the inked, blanketed cylinder number two.

This problem forces the complete shutdown of the printing press. Each time I must carefully, physically, and painstakingly remove the wrapped-up paper (which did not get sent through) from the number-two cylinder. And sometimes, if I don't catch it in time, I must remove the pulp (once the paper is destroyed) by the cylinders and rollers.

Afterwards, I have to dismantle and thoroughly clean all systems; then re-ink, re-wet, and re-start all over again.

I contemplate long and hard while I curse aloud... "At this rate (having to color-coat both sides of 200,000 sheets of paper), if I'm damned lucky, I'll be finished somewhere around... ohhhh... 2025. I hate this *fucking* machine. What a piece of shit."

• • • •

I consider thinning the ink with alcohol. Behold the magic! The alcohol works. Hallelujah! Now the blanketed cylinder wraps-up only on every tenth: maybe fiftieth sheet. I keep thinning until it wraps up about every hundredth sheet; which is acceptable. Though, now I'll have to baby-sit the machine during this phase of the operation.

• • • •

One week later, after working eighteen-hour days, all 200,000 sheets look very, very similar to genuine treasury paper. Of course, there were a few hundred sheets wasted during the interim due to wrap-around. But all in all, it has been a tremendously successful undertaking.

While the stacks of paper dry in quantities of 5,000 sheets, Alexia and I hang around the gym, the beach, and the Unicorn Natural Foods Marketplace.

• • • •

Dec 21, 1991 - 7:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I wake-up even earlier still, as my desire to see a printed counterfeit outweighs my need for sleep. I enter the cashier's check to VanSon Ink for \$3,750.00 into my ledger/logbook, then, carefully bag and conceal the now empty cans from the ink they'd sent me earlier.

Once I'm certain I no longer need ink from them, it's time to close the book on VanSon Ink, Mineola, New York.

My reason for bagging the empty ink cans in such a meticulous manner and in keeping them so secret? The dried ink! Well it is the color of United States Treasury Paper. The last thing I need is for someone to find the cans and discover what I'm doing.

Sometimes I wonder why VanSon made this ink for me? Did they already give my name and address to the Secret Service? I don't know. And I hope I never find out the hard way.

• • • •

Gloves: first and foremost, I'm obsessed with not leaving fingerprints. Second, is to keep my hands clean and free of ink. During the coloring process of the paper, I use nearly a hundred pairs of surgeons' gloves. My hands stay clean and the paper is colored without any hidden or forgotten fingerprints.

Joey heads to a supply store in Fort Lauderdale to pick up a stock-load of at least 1,000 pairs more.

I never sweat the small stuff. And worrying about gloves being too dirty or torn, and trying to stretch their individual life for usage is a waste of brain energy. So I purchase an awful large store of the much needed, very useful gloves—size small. I like a tight fit for the intricate work, which still lies ahead of me.

• • • •

As I grab approximately five hundred sheets from a nearby, newly-colored/inked stack of paper, a saddening shock of reality strikes a hard blow to my gut.

It seems that the ink had not quite enough time to dry before the gripper fingers delivered the individual sheets to the top of the stack, atop the previous ones that had just been coated with ink. Now, *all* are stuck together.

However, I need only to hold about a half reams' worth with one hand, then flutter the other end with my free hand; thus separating the sheets once again into individuality.

I continue this process until I have a stack of about five thousand sheets loaded perfectly onto the front-end loading tray. The stack is so neatly aligned, it looks as if it's one big solid block of *something* the same color as treasury paper.

• • • •

The excitement builds as I remove plate number one from the dark closet. Remember plate number one? The frontal art to be printed in black.

I use a special chemical that removes the clear protective anti-corrosion coating, which I had applied earlier to the plate

At this point, I have already purchased the blackest of black inks. Now, you're probably wondering, or at least thinking, that black is, well, *black*. You're wrong. It's not!

Black is *not* black. There are different shades. So last week I'd purchased the most densely pigmented black ink available. This will give me the best quality reproduction.

I attach the plate that bears the four twenties etched with blue image area, to the connecting pins in the slot in the cylinder. I use the hand-crank-wheel to manually turn the cylinder while the plate wraps itself around neatly, tightly. I snug it further and re-check it for proper installation.

With a straight-blade screwdriver I pry the lid from one of the five-pound cans of black ink. This phase will utilize less ink than that which I used coloring the paper itself, initially.

This particular black ink is so dense that it's comparable to the consistency of wheel bearing grease, so I must use a putty knife to scoop enough ink to fill the "V-shaped" groove of the ink fountain/tray. I check the Ph (Potential Hydrogen) balance of the water in the fountain bottle. It's good, and the water bottle is full. I wet the printing plate with a stream of water from the squirt bottle, which is filled with the same solution as the press' water fountain.

Wetting the plate prior to ink dispersing disallows the ink to coat the entire plate, *only the image area*. As Senor Montoya taught me: water repels ink, except for the hardened image area.

With the pull of a lever, the ink-coated roller makes one hundred percent contact with the plate. The blue image area now turns black. Fuuucking cool! The twenties look even more realistic now.

I pull the same lever again further down one click, and the ink from the inked plate transfers to the rubber blanket wrapped around cylinder number two.

I turn on the vacuum's suction, pull another lever, and the paper begins to feed through the machine. The blanket presses a beautiful, magnificent impression of the four U.S. Twenty Dollar Federal Reserve Notes (less the treasury seals and serial numbers) onto the sheets of paper. Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka: that wonderful sound. Every *che-ka* represents eighty dollars... cash... tax-free.

My hands constantly move over the press from front to rear, rear to front. I make adjustments with screws and by turning knobs. I ensure that the exact amount of water is being dispensed across the plate's surface. I do the same procedure with the ink. Not too thick, nor too thin.

While the press runs slowly, at about 4,500 sheets per hour, the press makes one che-ka per second.

I run and get Alexia from the kitchen.

“Come on!” I shout excitedly. With her loud classical music and the running sink water, she must not have heard me coming from behind, because I scare the living hell out of her—accidentally. It’s easy to know this because she jumps straight up several inches and screams very loudly.

“Hurry!” I yell again, “You gotta see this! Come on!”

“This better be good.”

She turns the water off and follows me while drying her hands along the way. She feasts her eyes upon the paper being sucked in and currency being spit out. Her smile is as wide as her face allows.

“Call Joey, babe.”

“You call him, please. I gotta keep an eye on the machine to make sure nothing goes wrong.”

“Okay. I’ll be right back.”

She calls Joey and comes running back into the small, soundproofed pressroom. I turn the speed handle and the press works faster still. Alexia installs a pair of earplugs to help muffle the noise from the press. Joey will use the door key I gave him to allow himself in.

Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka... the speed is now two che-kas per second. It’s running at near to top speed. This machine is zooming! The currency being printed is spit out the back at a blurring speed. I slow it down and allow the press to print all five thousand sheets: about \$400,000.00 worth of counterfeit.

• • • •

Joey makes it over in time to witness the second stack of five thousand sheets being printed. At this point, though, the machine begins to mis-feed while sucking the paper in.

It *mis-grips* as well while delivering the finished sheets that did not get *mis-fed*. As the mis-gripping occurs, the paper at the delivery tray begins to grossly *mis-stack* and makes an awful mess at the rear of the press. The floor is littered with wasted counterfeit rubbish. It's sad; loads of useless currency that will never be spent. I'll have to destroy it completely. No evidence is allowed.

• • • •

During the times that the press operates without mis-feeding, we're all quite amazed. We're full of smiles and cheers, oh's and ah's.

Their cheers turn to jeers as I inform them that they'll be responsible for separating the sheets of colored paper, which are stuck together with ink. They stare at the mountain of stacked paper in the now-vacated darkroom.

"Someone needs to do it, you guys, while I print," I tell them in a demanding tone. "It's not as difficult as you think it is. You can sit down and listen to music while you do it. The job is not really work, it's just time consuming, that's all."

"Daaaamn, we'll be here for days," Joey whines. Alexia says nothing.

“Joey, it’ll only take about twelve hours if you don’t fuck around. Alexia, here’s a hundred; could you please go get us lunch? You know what? You’d better get us dinner as well. Here’s another hundred. Just pick up a little of everything. Use your best judgment.”

“No problem, sir. Gimme the keys to the truck; Joey, is there anything you want special before I go? I don’t wanna hear you bitch and moan if I miss something you want.”

“Just the usual is fine, Alexia. Thanks.”

I can see he’s happy thinking of the food to come. He quickly busies himself in his work of separating the stuck-together paper.

“Don’t worry, Joe, she’ll help when she gets back. She’s not getting out of it at all. Okay?”

He smiles then nods his head in agreement.

• • • •

The fumes from the printing chemicals, mainly the cleaners, are really beginning to daze and dizzy me, so I have to interrupt Joe. I give him a sample of the canisters filled with the charcoal elements that filter the deadly fumes.

These particular respirator canisters can be purchased at the Sears™ store in the nearby Aventura Mall. The canisters are terribly expensive but well worth it. They turn poisoned air into purified air.

By the time I’d printed the second stack of five thousand sheets I’ve actually become proficient at this printing stuff. The bills are really looking great now.

• • • •

Alexia returns with the food. She has brought back a feast to end all feasts. Joey returns shortly thereafter with the canister filters.

I shut off the press and open the door between the pressroom and the ex-darkroom where the two of them sit working on the stacks of paper. I forget that I've got earplugs in as I yell to them, "Hey!" They both jump with a surprised look. Joey's look resembles guilt. "Come're, you guys. You gotta see this!"

They get up and quickly walk over to where I'm standing in the doorway holding a sheet of printed twenties. "Check out this sheet and tell me if you find any flaws... *any at all*. Go ahead! I know you won't."

Following twenty minutes of their scrutinizing inspection, they declare each of the four printed twenties to be perfect.

"Fucking perfect, huh?" I ask with a smile.

"Perfect, bro," Joey pats me on the shoulder.

"This is beautiful, babe," Alexia kisses me.

• • • •

After lunch Joey and Alexia wander into the pressroom, and that's when it finally dawns on the two of them. They see the \$400,000.00 in twenties half printed... Joey yells, "We're rich! We're fucking rich! Wait till David and my grandfather see this!" His eyes are big. He can't stop smiling. He's dancing all around in circles.

• • • •

Dec 30, 1991 - 1:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I have finally finished printing the frontal art of the twenties. By my calculation, I'd say I have lost about a million, maybe a mil-and-a-half, thus far.

After four, eighteen-hour days of solid print-work, filled with frustrations from un-jamming twisted, disintegrated paper; then cleaning, followed by break down after break down, repair after repair, swearing, cursing the machine, damning the world and everything else, I realize that I need another short break. So I figure, I'm finished with the frontal art, and it looks absolutely fantastic, I deserve a reward of relaxation.

• • • •

I catch a few hours of sleep. Then, myself, Alexia, and Robert Yarken (a buddy that hangs out with Alexia and I at some dinners and movies, etc.) all head to Rickenbacker Causeway Bridge; which links Key Biscayne to the mainland. This is in South Miami.

We all use the inline skates I bought a few months earlier. I also bought a pair for Robert as well.

Robert is a wimp in most cases. He's also ignorant, disrespectful, and has zero manners. The hair on his chest, back and arms is so thick I call it a pelt. It really pisses him off when I call him Gorilla Boy or Pelt Meister.

What can he do about it? I'd kick his ass in about fifteen seconds and he knows it. If he wasn't so selfish and rude, I'd be a little nicer. Alexia often wonders why I even hang out with him. I believe it's because he's entertaining, due to the comical value of seeing such diverse bad human behavior from one disturbed individual. *He's just wrong.*

The view from the top of the bridge makes this ride we're about to take look steep and dangerous. And that's basically... *because it is!*

"I'm getting scared, babe," Alexia whines with the distinct sound of fear in her voice. But I know she's brave and she'll try it anyway.

We keep pace with the speeding cars to our left; which are only five or six feet away. They're driving along at an average of fifty miles an hour and more. The people scream and give us thumbs-up as they buzz next to us.

Robert the wimp just sidesteps the entire length of the bridge's roadway. We have to wait for him at the finish line of our terrifying, yet fun ride from hell.

What was a thirty-second high-speed rush, seemed like an hour. It was better than drugs (not that I know about drugs). It was almost as exciting as sex, (*that* I do know about). For Alexia and I, it was a true dare devil stunt.

After a seventeen-mile skate ride to Lighthouse Point on beautiful Key Biscayne, we do the same stunt on the same bridge, only this time we're heading west.

Robert sidesteps *again*.

• • • •

It's been a few hours since our skating excursion from earlier today. Alexia and I decide to ride our skates over to Joey's home just a couple of miles away.

It's dark now and the streetlights do nothing to illuminate the sidewalks because of the dense cover of trees, which line these narrow cement byways between our homes.

I'm the debris scout, so Alexia generally trails behind me when we skate. We make it to Joey's home in Miramar, twenty minutes later. He's surprised to see us. We hang out for ten minutes or so, then head home.

We stop at this hillside park on the way back. The steep hills and sharp curves offer a wild ride on skates, day or night. I take the run a few times in order to demonstrate to Alexia that it's somewhat safe. Then I convince her to try it next to me.

Once we're rolling down the truly unsafe hills, holding hands nonetheless, I try to maintain our balance as she collides her skate into mine. We make it unscathed. Catching our breath, we sit under the trees and relax.

There are a multitude of colored Christmas lights illuminating the many trees that surround us. It's very romantic here under the warm glow of the holiday lights. We cuddle closely. I give her the mystical silver ring I bought from the metaphysical store, which is situated next to the Unicorn.

The ring is emblazoned with natural crystals and semi-precious polished stones, very medieval and entrancing.

I tell her how much I love her as I hold her hand and slip on the ring. We exchange vows, as soul mates *she* says, and that our love for each other will never die.

• • • •

Dec 31, 1991 - 11:59 pm (South Beach, FL)

We celebrate New Years Eve by the entertainment of walking on Miami's trendy South Beach. It's a "Carnival-like" atmosphere that's fun and exciting. There's plenty to admire for both genders. Afterwards, we make love in the warm comfort of our waterbed, to the sounds of Yanni. I feel as if I'm in some romantic movie; the drama of the music is powerful.

• • • •

Jan 1, 1992 - Noon (N. Miami, FL)

Happy New Year! For me, it should be; but it's time to begin the task of printing the treasury seals and serial numbers.

I'm finished completely with the number one plate. Now Robert will toss it over the William Lehman Causeway Bridge into the destructive salty-depths of the Intra-coastal Waterway.

This tremendous water passageway flows through Aventura—spoiled little Robert's home territory. Between his nasally laugh and spitting food while eats and talks, even *I'm beginning to* wonder why I hang out with him?

• • • •

The emerald green ink I'll use during this phase of printing is not quite a perfect match, so I must experiment with several new mixing techniques.

After a few hundred thousand more dollars in waste, I discover the perfect color and density settings.

Believe it or not, I should need only five pounds of this ink to print the entire leftover millions in counterfeit. The reason is the size of the image area to be inked. Less image area to take on ink equates to less ink utilized: pretty basic stuff.

Things seem to be running smoothly because of the fact that the image area on the plate is fairly small in size (serial numbers and treasury seals); therefore, there's not as much tackiness to contend with. Of course you remember that it was tackiness, which caused the paper to wrap around the plate.

So, in light of this, not much can go wrong... right? Or at least, not much *should* go wrong. As it happens though...

I load-up a fresh stack of five thousand sheets that already have the frontal art printed upon it. It sits on the press nicely aligned. I'm seconds away from adding the seals and serials. Shortly, I'll have the front sides complete in full exacting color.

The ink is topped-off and Ph of the water is perfect. Plates are clean and wetted. The ink upon the plate looks beautiful; everything is ready to roll. Let the presswork begin!

I start the machine... che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka... that lovely sound. Slow speed; one che-ka per second; forty-five hundred sheets per hour; \$360,000.00 total in counterfeit currency.

I flip the vacuum switch. The hiss is loud. With earplugs in it's quieter now. I adjust the vacuum's suction and feel the rubber tips to ensure that they're still soft and still in tact. Clean... soft... working... okay.

Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka. It becomes hypnotizing. I move a lever and the paper begins to feed.

It still amazes me just how real these sheets of twenty-dollar bills look as they exit the rear of the machine.

Alexia yells to me as she enters the room, "Babe, I have a salad ready for you at the table. It's got *fifteen* different vegetables in it."

She's so exacting in her details, that she reminds me of... well... *me*.

"One of your special red salads?" I ask. She can barely see my smile from behind the respirator's rubber mask.

"Yes, Wayne. Come eat!"

Her salads are made red by the fresh beets and beet dressing.

I'll admit that the press has run beautifully for the past few hours. It's speed now operating at somewhere near 6,500 sheets per hour (SPH). The old worn machine is miraculously feeding and delivering perfectly.

I'll leave it unmanned for the first time *ever*, while I go eat. At this speed of 6,500 sph, I'd say that I have roughly forty minutes to relax before this \$400,000.00 batch is finished and delivered to the rear tray.

• • • •

"The salad' great, sweetheart," I look up from my plate while facing Alexia, who's cheeks are so stuffed with salad, she looks like a chipmunk with sprouts hanging from the sides of its mouth. "I love you *and* your salads, sweetie."

Her face changes from a look of caught-in-the-act-surprise to a look of happiness brushed with a smile.

Once she's finished chewing she tells me I'm welcome, then comments on how fast I ate my salad. Hey, I couldn't help it, I was hungry and salads are easy to eat. So now I'll just sit here and watch her as *she* eats.

"So how's it going, babe?" she asks.

"Fine. The serials and seals are somewhat simple. They're easy to print because of the low tackiness factor, *and*, they use so much less ink. About one one-hundredth of what it took to print the fronts. And the press even seems to be running great. As a matter of fact, it's printing now, by itself."

I tell her this proudly with a smile. "The bills look so authentic... so beautiful with the green seals and serials printed on 'em."

Before she can comment I pull a twenty from my pocket; one that I had printed at the start of the seals and serials run. I cut it from the sheet. Then cut it vertically right through the center of the treasury seal. After which, I glued it atop a genuine bill so that it was aligned in a visual continuation...

"Oh, I forgot to show you this, Alex. Look at it carefully," I tell her as she takes it from my extended hand. "Look at where the treasury seal on the genuine meets the seal midway on my counterfeit."

"Yeah," she comments in a blasé type of answer.

"That's right. You can't tell where they meet, can you? The size? Color? Clarity? Perfect, huh?"

"I gotta say, Wayne; it's perfect."

It must be good because she's serious enough to address me by my first name again.

"Well, sweetie, I've gotta go finish my work." I lean across the table and kiss her. "That was a great salad. Thank you so very much."

She smiles again, "Keep up the good work, babe."

"Thanks. Gotta get back."

As I approach within two feet of the pressroom, I hear nothing. No sound. Not even a vibration comes from the *Monster-From-Hell*.

I open the door cautiously. For a moment I feel contentment that all is going well.

"Oh... my... God! Ohhhh man! Alexia! Come're!" I yell as loud as I can, "Alexia! Hurry!"

She comes running into the room in a panic. "What's wrong?" she screams with a tone of concern and panicked worry. Then she sees the disaster, "Oh my God!" she's laughing now.

The entire floor, wall to wall, end to end, is filled two feet deep in semi-ruffled sheets of twenty-dollar bills. I quickly shut down the press, which has ceased taking in paper and stopped printing while still running on. However, now, I have about 4,500 sheets, \$360,000.00, strewn about in knee-deep waste on the floor of my pressroom.

There's no way I'm going to take the time to sort through and straighten all these sheets. The fronts have all been printed perfectly, though. However, there's not an inked-up back on them yet.

I must make a decision. Done! It'll take too much time to sort it all out, so it'll be destroyed; and believe me, it hurts too.

Alexia and I spend about a half hour, with gloves on of course, stuffing \$360,000.00 into several three-layer-thick garbage bags. "We've got to destroy this later, you know," I tell her.

"What a waste, Wayne. I'm soooo sorry."

"Ah, don't worry about it. We've still got about thirteen million left."

Once it's cleaned-up, I investigate to find out what happened. Looking into the delivery tray, I estimate there are five hundred undamaged finished sheets.

So, what must have happened, judging by the evidence at hand, is, sheet number five hundred had jammed itself and blocked the area slightly below where the finished sheets exit the cylinders and get grabbed by the delivery gripper fingers. The gripper fingers are supposed to deliver each sheet and drop it off atop the rear stack of finished sheets.

What happened next is, sheets number *five-o-one*, and the remaining *four-thousand-plus* comes out from the cylinder's realm, and the edge of the paper that gets grabbed by the gripper fingers gets diverted slightly upwards and shoots out of the machine, one after another, after another, after another, until all the printed sheets lay useless on the floor.

I only wish that I had a photograph of this chaos; however, I'm too afraid of the photograph being discovered later, and, at which time, could be used as evidence to link me as the printer, should we ever get caught in the future.

The sight I've seen here today; will forever be etched into the depths of my memory.

• • • •

Jan 12, 1992 - 7:45 pm (N. Miami, FL)

The treasury seals and serial numbers are completely printed in all their glory. Everything is beautiful.

Joey still drops by each day to run a few errands due to the constant need of supplies. It's odd, yet predictable, but Joey seems to show-up just before lunch and dinner. The bastard sometimes comes over to blatantly mooch breakfast as well. If Alexia and I feel like being alone, we leave shortly before his usual arrival time.

• • • •

Now, hours later, after dinner, I work off the calories by getting back to the printing operation and its hard labors. It's ten p.m. and Robert shows up at the house. He claims to be interested in seeing the results thus far. At this time we're still friends. We still go to outdoor festivals and skate the beachside streets. We still take-in a few movies, go to the gym, and do a few lunches.

So by eleven, when he's ready to leave for home, I hand him most of the ready-for-use backup printing plates I never had a need for. I instruct him to dispose of them as required previously, in the Intracoastal Waterway. This will be his second covert disposal mission.

As usual, the plates have been bent into four folds: a massive clump of fortune in waste. They were perfectly capable of performing their actual job in manufacturing more than a *billion* dollars in counterfeit (all plates combined), that is, up until a minute ago when I folded them into oblivion.

One crease right up the middle and they become a useless scrap heap of aluminum foil.

• • • •

Jan 16, 1992 - Noon (N. Miami, FL)

I've reached another milestone. After finishing the seals and serials phase with tremendous success, it's break-time again.

For a full day we relax at the beach and photograph the beautiful sunset before heading home. It's now time to work with renewed vitality. I feel energized. I love the sun. It seems to have magical powers.

The sun is the provider of life to all living things on earth: plants, insects, animals and humans. Without its mystical radioactive waves bombarding our planet, everything dies... even dreams.

So with this new energy charging my brain and body, I retrieve the first box of semi-finished counterfeits. During this final printing phase I'll apply the reverse-side art in an olive-green-colored-ink. Again, there's no perfect color matches for this ink in a ready-to-use formula, so I must waste more would-be-money in the process of experimentation.

I cannot practice on plain white paper because the white will give me a false image of color hue due to the absence of treasury-paper-colored background, which I'm to actually print on. It's not white. It's a beige/green blend: you know, the color of money.

This phase should suck-up about *two hundred and fifty pounds* of ink. The reverse side will utilize more ink than the front side due to the fact that there is more image area (detailed art) on the reverse-side of a twenty.

I mix, run and test. Then cut, paste and examine. When I can no longer distinguish where the cut-and-glued genuine bill leaves-off, and my counterfeit begins, then I'll know it is time for the final stretch of the printing tri-fecta.

• • • •

Because there is more ink on the reverse side, there will be more ink on the plate, which ultimately means more tackiness, followed by wraparounds, jam-ups, clean-ups, etc; you now know the drill.

I sit here and think, "What the hell could go wrong next? The machine catches fire? It disintegrates into a million pieces? Demons fly out its ass-end instead of counterfeit money?"

At this point I must make the press print some very fine-lined details, which are not showing-up on the reverse-side artwork. Once I increase the ink-flow to make the details appear, the adjustment will make the rest of the artwork darken as well.

Not a good thing for the perfectionist in me. I must avoid this dilemma at all costs. What's happening is, once printed in all its glory of olive green ink; the fine-lined airy clouds above the White House are missing a line or two, giving the appearance of a cloudless day in D.C.

And by the same token, the gun turrets atop the roof of the President's residence are not quite perfect either.

Also, the Stars and Stripes, a symbol of our great nation, seem to lack a little luster as the flag billows in the wind high atop our Commanding Chief's home and office.

So, I'm stuck. With my camera and plate maker gone, I cannot make new plates. And I'm not sure that I'd even want to! After all, how many people scrutinize the reverse-side of a bill if the front looks great and it feels good too?

My decision... run 'em as is. They're perfect enough for the untrained eye. And, by the time a trained eye gets a look at it, I'll be long gone.

• • • •

Jan 28, 1992 - 6:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I force myself to stay up a final seventy-two hour stretch just to complete this final phase of printing. I want it over with.

"I... hate... this... fucking... piece... of... shit... machine!" I yell loudly to no one but myself in this soundproofed pressroom."

I don't mind... well, allow me to rephrase that. I can handle staying awake this many hours when: (a) there's something well worth my staying up for, i.e., a woman or money, or (b) if it's entirely, absolutely, definitely necessary, or (c) to challenge myself.

In this case it's *most* of the above.

• • • •

“Wow! I can’t believe it. I am... finally... finished... with... this... goddamned... piece of... fucking... shit... machine!” I yell to myself again.

I watch as the rubber-booted suction fingers pick-up and deliver the absolute, final, very last sheet of paper. “I can’t believe it! The nightmare’s over!” I can’t stop yelling, shouting, hollering, and dancing every silly dance move I can think of.

“The fucking nightmare is over!”

• • • •

Feb 1, 1992 - 6:10 am (Heaven)

I’m finished! Finito! El Completo! ...whatever. No more printing press; no more headaches. No more pains tearing at the insides of my stomach. No more punching the foam-padded soundproofed walls. And; no more shouting my obscenities and hatred towards this goddamned machine!

I have to awaken Alexia to tell her the good news, which elates me as I dance about the room. Before I do, I shut-off the vacuum switch one last time. I shut-off the power switch one last time. Then in a smooth motion, I bend over just enough to lean my face near the machine....

Close... closer... even closer still. I pucker my lips and touch them to the printing press’ cold, gray steel embodiment, then kiss it, while I mutter my final thoughts aloud...

“Thank you printing-press-from-hell. You served me well. I honestly do thank you for all your labors, and indeed, for all this *money!*” Then I peer at the finished stack of \$400,000.00, and over at the finished boxes piled neatly in the ex-darkroom...

“I sincerely thank you for sticking with me and working so hard.”

I say no more as I rub my hands over it, caressing the steel, which once seemed to pulse fiercely with life, while it pumped-out what I calculate to be a final \$12,500,000.00.

I can't believe that I'm finished with it! No more. All done. “Goodbye my friend. *You fucking piece of shit!* May you rot to a bucket of rust in Davy Jones' Locker deep in the Atlantic... ah ha, ha, ha, haaaaaa!”

I must be going crazy! Yes... yes... oh yes... yeeeeessss! Craaaazy! but not crazy enough to be able to walk calmly from the pressroom to my bedroom without pulling my hair out.

I'm certainly too tired to shower, but not too tired to tell Alexia the good news.

“It would be insane to think that the cutting and counting this \$12,500,000.00 will not be nearly as difficult, tedious and painstaking as what I’d just been through printing it. Then, I glance over at the mountain of boxes filled with money and cringe.”

CHAPTER FIVE

“ Cutting... Counting... Ageing ”



Feb 16, 1992 - 9:00 am (Palm Beach, FL)

We're midway through the month of February and I feel as if I'm behind schedule. Of course, with all the breaks I've taken; but my mind needed the time to think and recuperate.

David Spillman is not impatient, nor does he put any demands on me, time-wise. This feeling of lagging behind is my own insight. Now, with some intense thinking, I'm on my way to securing all that is necessary to complete the final phase of this operation.

Tremendous progress has been made, thus far. We're all about to become rich. We want to get spending as soon as possible.

• • • •

Feb 18, 1992 - 9:15 am (N. Miami, FL)

I'm once again venturing through the Yellow Pages™ in my pursuit of equipment, i.e., a top-quality electric paper cutter and a high-speed currency counter.

So, just what category does one search through to find a currency counter? Fifteen minutes and ten categories later, I find currency counters right here in Banking Supplies.

After eight rings of the telephone, I think they're closed. Just as I'm about to hang-up...

"Good morning," the out-of-breath man's voice greets me, "Southeast Office Equipment. This is Sam; can I help you?"

"I sure hope you can," I answer in a polite response. "... well, my wife and I are starting a mail order business, and we'll be selling a product that will bring in hundreds of letters each day with five or ten... maybe fifteen dollars in cash, per envelope."

I continue in a convincing manner...

"We think that it'll be wise to have a currency counter to save us time—"

"Sorry to interrupt, Mister?"

"Dennis. Wayne Dennis."

His concerned voice continues, "Without even knowing your response rate yet, are you sure you want to invest in a counter? They're quite expensive. They start out at about five hundred, and work their way up to, oh, about fifteen hundred... used that is. And then there's the Brandt™ eight thousand model. It's the finest one available today. Mostly only the biggest banks use them. They start off at about twenty-five hundred... used..."

Now don't get me wrong," he continues, "I'll sell you whatever you want, but are you sure you want to invest just yet?" He asks again with genuine sincerity. He sounds like an honest good-hearted person.

“Well, Sam, we have a large startup budget that her parents gave us, and we’re both confident that we’ll be successful; so if you wouldn’t mind, I’d like to drive down there and see the Brandt eight thousand. That *is* the best and fastest, right?”

“Oh, yes. Nothing’s finer. Come on down. I’ll be in the back room cleaning and checking equipment. Do you know where we’re located?”

“Well— “

“Do you need directions?”

“Well, kinda. I know where One-thirty-fifth and Miami Avenue is. Could you just give me a landmark?”

“Sure thing. We’re on the southeast corner. Right next to the trophy store; can’t miss us.”

“Okay. Thank you. I’ll be there in about an hour.”

“Sounds good. Ring the bell on the countertop. I’ll see you then.”

He hangs-up the telephone and I do the same.

• • • •

Joey’s new Teal-colored, convertible Camaro is parked out front in his driveway, so, I know he’s home.

My uncle, his grandfather, Dave, bought the car for Joey. I’m sure the spoiled brat is still sleeping. His brother and sister should be home, too.

I kick and pound the front door as I yell, "Police! Open up, now! You've got ten seconds until we come in! You're completely surrounded!"

I see the curtain open just a slit. Then the door cracks open afterwards, "You're an asshole, Wayne!" his voluptuous sister yells at me as I push my way in through the half-opened doorway, "I'm not dressed!" she screeches as she tries to hide herself; but she doesn't try too dammed hard.

"Looks like a bikini to me," I laugh. "A see-through one."

"You're a pig bastard. The other pig is in his room."

As I slowly turn the handle, I kick the door hard to make noise, but it slips my grasp and slams open, knocking a small hole in the drywall. The banging noise is enough to awaken Joey in a scared panic. He almost pisses himself. He jumps a vertical foot underneath his blanket.

"Damn you, Wayne!" he screams in a very angry and definitely shaken voice. "What the hell's wrong with you, motherfucker? You scared the shit out of me! What the *fuck*?"

I guess he's really mad.

I laugh, "Joey... you're so verbally abusive to me. Don't be so mad. I scared Michelle too. Do her nipples get that way when she's frightened, or is it just cold in here? You know, she's got a nice body, Joe."

"She's your cousin, bro," he reminds me.

“Joey, she’s not reeeeeeally my cousin.” We laugh together. It’s an old standing joke between the three of us... “Come on! You got ten minutes to get ready and go with me into Miami. The longer you take to get ready, the faster I drive. I told this guy I’d be there in an hour, so hurry your ass up, boy!”

“Damn, man,” he whines. “Okay! Lem’me get dressed. Go mess with Michelle.”

• • • •

“You must be Mister Dennis, I’ll assume. Right on time. Was the place difficult to find?”

“Actually, no,” I speak as we shake hands. “I didn’t see any parking—”

He interrupts, “It’s around back. An entire lot.”

“Damn. Oh well. Can I see the Brandt eight thousand?”

“Sure, young fella. Follow me.”

He leads me to a workshop behind the showroom’s wall. Country music plays sad songs in the background. The music makes me want to slit my wrists and end all the pain and suffering. Just kidding. I don’t like the smell or choking sensation of cigarette smoke, but the scent of the tobacco from his Scandinavian-styled pipe smells very sweet and aromatic.

There are at least twenty currency counters here in the room. They’re being cleaned and checked mechanically.

“The drug and counterfeiting business must be booming in South Florida,” I say to myself.

“Here it is, young fella; the Brandt eight thousand,” he has a big smile. “The best! Not too large either. Counts fifteen hundred bills a minute: fully digital. Push the button here,” as he points to a keypad on the front, “CDA; it’s for weeding-out counterfeit currency. Works like a charm. This machine will even count checks. But it’s mostly designed and built to count currency...

It’s easy. Just punch-in two... fifty... and it’ll count you a perfect two hundred and fifty bills. Aaaand, you can stop the counting process either manually, or automatically. Just leave it on auto, and it’ll start counting again all by itself again after you remove the counted bundle from the delivery tray. Pretty nice, huh?” He lifts his eyebrows and holds them in the position while he awaits my answer.

“Very nice,” I smile and try not to look too excited. “I always say that you might as well buy the best first, or you’ll always desire it, and never be satisfied until you get it.”

Now his face becomes serious, “I agree. This’n here is fifteen-hundred dollars, plus tax.”

I remove twelve one hundred dollar bills from my pocket, “If you’ll take twelve hundred, cash, tax included, you’ve got a deal right now.”

He shakes my hand and asks if I need a receipt. I give him the twelve one hundreds and he sends them through my newly acquired Brand™ 8000. He depresses the CDA button, and it counts the genuine hundreds.

Yes indeed... works like a charm.

"If'n you have any problems or questions, which I doubt you will, just give me a call. Here's my card."

"Thank you so very much," I take his card and shake his hand. "I hope my new business is as successful as I project."

"I'm sure it will be," he says.

I pick up the compact machine and walk out. It measures sixteen inches in width by fifteen inches in height, and ten inches in depth; a rather nicely designed quality piece of equipment.

I'm not really too keen on the idea of standing on a corner in Miami holding a currency counter, so I head towards the parking lot. Joey is sitting in the truck waiting to drive around the block on his timed five-minute intervals. I could easily scare him by sneaking up on him while the music drowns out my footsteps, but what the hell, one scare a day is sufficient.

The currency counter gets placed on the floor of the passenger side. Joey admires it in awe...

"This is like the one they used in the movie *Scarface*. Remember when they were counting the money in the basement?"

"Sure, Joe. Whatever you say. You ready for lunch?"

"Always. You know that."

• • • •

Alexia's car is here; she must home early. Joey carries the currency counter while I carry the food.

"I bought you a lot to eat, Alexia. I hope you like it. Would you take a little piece of the salmon and wash off the curry and give it to Zorro, please?"

To be perfectly honest, his legal registered name is Zorro V. Dennis. However, most of the time I call him, "Itty." This is his nickname, which stands for, "Itty-bitty-wittle-kitty." I know... it's a real manly name. It still sticks with him even though he's now a giant.

Alexia kisses me on the lips for a brief moment or two and replies, "Sure, babe." (Do I ever get tired of her calling me babe? Not really). She looks astonished at the wealth of food, which sits in front of her. "You don't expect me to eat all this, do you?"

"Whatever you don't eat we'll finish later on. Joey can take a little home if he wants. You want some, Joe?"

"Nah. I appreciate it, but I gotta date with this girl later."

"Well, I'm glad this time it's a girl and not a bitch."

"Ha, ha, Wayne."

"Do you need some money?"

"Sure," he smiles. "We're go'in to dinner, then a movie."

"Oh, that's a real unique plan for a date. How long did it take you to come up with that?"

"You're such a comedian."

"Thanks. I like to think so. When I'm on stage do'in stand-up, they can call me the Smart-ass Jew. Anyway, here's a hundred. Bring back the change."

"Thanks, cous."

"So, is she fine? What's her name?"

"I swear to God, Wayne, man... I forgot it," he holds his arms in the air.

"You are so, so fucking stupid, Joey. Ask her if she has a nickname you could call her. She should tell you. Then she'll probably tell you that she prefers her real name though. You better hope she says her real name too. Or you can just call her 'Hey You' all night."

"Thanks a lot. You're no help."

"You're so fuck'in stupid sometimes, I wonder how we're related."

"It's maternal."

"Thank God for *that*. Well, you could ask her if she has one of those new laser holographic photo driver's licenses?"

"What laser... ohhhh; good idea. Thanks," he shakes my hand. "Thanks for the hundred too."

"No problem. See you at ten a.m., Joey. We'll go get the paper cutter."

"*Ten*? How about noon?" he tries me on in a negotiation.

"Ten thirty," I rebut.

"Eleven."

"Deal."

He's happy.

"Don't forget tomorrow!" I yell. "Don't make me kick your door in again!"

Alexia questions me once Joey leaves out the front door, "Why do you torment him so much, babe?"

"He likes it... really. He thinks I'm funny."

“Well, so do I. But you *really* need to stop torturing him so much.”

“Honestly; if he didn’t like it he wouldn’t hang around me. We were like this way before the prospect of millions came along.”

“So!” she smacks my arm. “Thanks for the food,” she hugs me and kisses me too.

• • • •

Feb 19, 1992 - 11:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

Joey is right on time. I hear the knock, double-check my watch: then look through the peek-hole. Alexia is still in morning slumber. She needs no preparation time in getting herself together, as she wears no makeup, yet she’s still gorgeous.

I love that in a woman.

Instead of perfume she wears natural oils such as; Rose, Gardenia, Tangerine, and Primrose oil... mmmmmm.

“Alex, Joey and I gotta drive to David’s office in Coral Springs to get more money and show him a finished sample. Then we’ve got to pick-up the paper cutter. Can you meet us here about three?”

“Sure. Is there anything you need me to do today while you’re out?”

“Yes, in fact there is,” I hand her three hundred dollars. “I’m not sure this’ll cover it, but I need at least twelve hundred and fifty freezer strength zip-lock bags for the counterfeit bundles.”

Soon I'll need to fit two, five-thousand-dollar bundles into each of the bags. I should have roughly 2,500 bundles total...

"If you have to go to ten stores; whatever it takes, I need you to buy 'em out." Then I emphasize, "Freezer strength! Remember—"

"Okay!" she interrupts. "I got it!" She starts to get angry so I don't reiterate it to her, or antagonize her. I thank and kiss her goodbye.

"Come on, Joe, let's get going."

"Bye, Alexia," he hugs her a quick one.

• • • •

Joey and I walk through the front door of David's office and the receptionist recognizes me right away...

"Mister Dennis. Mister Spillman is waiting for you. I'll take you back to his office."

We follow her. She taps lightly on his door.

"Come in!" he calls from behind the door. She peeks her head in, then ushers us in quickly and smoothly.

"Thank you," I tell her as she winks, then shuts the door. David stands up from his executive chair and extends his hand to greet me. He then turns to Joey.

"Who's this?" he asks politely, yet with a strong hint of anxiety in his slightly trembling voice.

"This is my cousin Joseph. I've told you all about him. His grandfather owns the home we're using for the operation. Joe has helped me out since the beginning with moving equipment and running errands."

I pull my wallet out and extract a few of the counterfeit twenties. They were hand-cut earlier using my Xacto™ blade and a ruler. Then I mixed them with the same genuine twenties I used to photograph and print these counterfeits I now hold in my hand.

And, since I haven't yet discovered the ageing process I'll use, it makes the most sense to mix newly printed counterfeit with newly printed genuine for the comparison.

I lay them on his desk and watch as his eyes light up with excitement.

"Wow!" he says as he reaches out to touch them. "These are counterfeits?"

"They sure are. Check 'em out... front and back." Then I reach into my pocket and withdraw a jeweler's magnifier. "I even brought this magnifier so you could see all the detailed quality... see where your investment went. They turned out nice, huh?"

"Ohhhh, yes."

"I had to show you them in person. I knew... or at least I hoped you'd be this happy."

"Happy?" he shouts. "Happy?" He raves on as he touches each of the bills. "These are fucking perfect! I can't tell the difference. I just can't tell. You are the man!" He keeps staring at them in awe. "These are ggggreat! Wow! I can't believe it. I just can't—"

"They're completely finished as well. All of it: exactly as I promised. But there's only about twelve million. I won't know until it's all counted. I saved all the waste to show you how—"

“Who the fuck cares? Twelve million, smelve million, who cares? I don’t need to see any waste. I trust you. Anyone who delivers like this, I believe. This is great!”

He hugs me, then, steps back to shake my hand quite vigorously. “You are not only a man of your word, but you are a fucking genius! Ohhhh man. Look at these. Oh... my God! It’s real money? This is so... *real!*”

“David, there’s four genuine’ mixed in with four counterfeits.”

“What?” he mouths’ this word, while his jaw hangs open in amazement. “This is unreal. Look at these! Look! I— “

He hands them to me as if I’ve never seen them before. “I know, I know. When I make a promise, I keep it. So anyway, there you are. Just give me the four genuine twenties back and you keep the rest as a souvenir—”

“No. No. You take ‘em,” he insists boldly. “I’ll wait until it’s all cut and counted and I get my share.”

“I have a new idea to add, David. I thought about making my own bank stamps with these do-it-yourself rubber stamp kits. Plus, I’m gonna browse the Office Depot supply stores and look for pre-made stamps; see if there’s anything interesting enough that catches my eye. Something with an authentic look when we stamp the bills in different colored inks. And we can use magic markers to ink the upper corners like you see where the banks dye the bundles.”

Now I have his total, undivided, and complete attention. He's speechless and in awe while his mind races. I continue on...

"When people see the stamp on the bill, even if it's not perfectly marked, they'll think it's a genuine that's already been checked-out at some bank... you know what I mean? A stamp that says Barnett, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, First Interstate, etcetera. They'll never know. No one'll ever be able to tell."

"That is totally ingenious! How'd you think of that?" his voice is high pitched. He's all excited once again.

"Oh it just came to me."

"It just came to you? Stuff... things... ideas like this, don't just come to you. They don't just *appear out of the blue*. This is great! This is fucking great! Let's have lunch, the three of us. It's on me. Anything you wanna eat. Anything!"

"Of course," he says as he hands me the cordless handset. "I still can't believe how perfect these bills look. If they were already aged, we'd use 'em for lunch. We could—"

"No!" I quickly interrupt, "We should never, ever, spend any of these in Florida... *ever!*"

"Why not?"

"It's too close to home. I've got a plan for cashing it. I'll tell you about it while we eat."

Joey sits on the leather sofa looking as if he's salivating just thinking about the offer of anything he wants to eat... his usual hungry animal look.

• • • •

As we eat David asks me questions...

“Any ideas for ageing the money?”

“Sort of. I think it may take a week or so to figure it out, though. I have a few good ideas, but I can’t substantiate ‘em till I test ‘em all. It’s probably a varied mixture of juices that will bulk up the paper around two additional pound weights more. It needs to be thicker, but juuuust slightly...

I also need a method to wear it down. It’s too new looking. So I was thinking about buying two clothes dryers and some pieces of PVC pipe, charcoal, wood chips, pebbles, sand paper... something... anything. I’ll test it all.”

As we eat, we discuss how the last remaining few thousand dollars will be spent. I tell David that he’ll get his share within the next one to two weeks if all goes as planned.

David asks about the plans for cashing it in, or exchanging the counterfeit, especially my share, to ensure that our paths don’t cross throughout the country.

I tell him that I have a plan that I dubbed the “Counterfeit Cashing Tour.” This I tell him up close in a guarded whispered voice.

Aside from the cashing plan (exchanging the counterfeit for genuine), the most important phase at this point is for me to discover through experimentation, the easiest most practical, sure-fire, least laborious method for ageing the money.

“So,” David asks, “where’s all the money? Is it safe? That’s a lot of cash to leave lying around. What if someone discovers it?”

He begins to sound paranoid.

“Don’t worry, David; the money’ safe inside my home. I even have the best pick-proof locks on all the doors.”

“I put signs up all around the house that say ‘Beware of Dog’—and the doors are internally alarmed. It’s very safe, David. As for the money: you should see it all... There’s a *pallet* full of cash. It’s a three-foot by three foot wide by seven-foot tall stack of new money: Twelve million fucking dollars. Now *that* is a lot of cash.”

“I know,” he says. “That’s what worries me.”

“As soon as it’s cut and counted, we’ll divide it.”

I try to assure and comfort him.

“How long till that’s done?” he asks.

“Well, as I said, about one to two weeks... tops. Hell, maybe even less time if all goes well and we work our butts off. And if I’m gonna get started, we’d better get going right after this meal.”

• • • •

Feb 21, 1992 - 9:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I practice cutting the counterfeit with only four or five sheets at a time. I make marks on the paper cutter itself. These I’ll use for reference points in aligning the stacks of counterfeit to ensure a perfect cut every time.

After an hour I've finally got it down to a science. I must show Alexia the winning strategy to making this work with the least amount of effort and wasted time.

With this method there'll be no wasted counterfeit and no loss of time in doing it right. It's all ready to go, and there's a long road ahead.

I've sent Joey out to do a days' worth of errands. He's on a mission to purchase many varieties fruits, motor oils, brands of spray starches, salt, food oils, spray cans of lacquers, enamels & shellacs, decorative bark, sandpapers, PVC pieces, rolls of different denomination coins, poker chips, charcoal chunks, food colorings, etc. The list is a detailed *full page* of items.

There are more than fifty items, which he is required to search out and purchase. I'll need all this for the discoloration and ageing experimentation process as I've discussed earlier.

• • • •

"Alexia, lemme show you how this should be done," I explain all of it to her as she sits in front of the cutter. I show her all the safety features and grind her on their importance until she begins to get angry.

"Now, if you can find a better way, my dear, let me know. But if not, well, then stay with the way I've just shown you, okay?"

"Uh huh."

“You should cut only a quarter of the ream at any given time. This way, if you misalign any cut, there’ll be only a minimum of waste. If you’re cutting half the ream, and you make a misaligned cut, you’ll waste thousands. Sound reasonable, sweetie?”

“Sure, babe,” she smiles.

It would suck to have this beautiful, sexy girl by my side, and look down at her hand, only to see a stump with all her fingers missing. So I must hammer the safety issue home.

More intensely, I go through the instructions of the two-button blade activating system once more...

“By having to push *both* these buttons at the same time when you want to bring down the blade and make the cut, you can never have one of your hands or any fingers in the pathway of the blade. It’ll take ‘em off in a split second! I guaran-fuck’in-tee this. It’s so sharp you’ll only feel the heat of the stinging sensation. Sting... heat... all gone... *baaaam!*”

I emphasize the “Baaaam!” loudly to scare her into understanding the dangers of inattentiveness and the importance of safety.

“So don’t *even* think of having Joey help you at the same time. Two hands at a time, only! I want you and him to take turns so that you don’t get fatigued. We’ll work together. It’ll be fun. We’ll listen to music. You can even choose what you’d like to hear the entire time. Alright?”

“Sounds good. Got it.”

"I'm not screwing around, Alexia; this is very serious. I know you're extremely smart, but your safety is—"

"Okay!" she interrupts. "I'm not stupid! Leave me alone!"

"I know you're not stupid. That's why I ssssaid... you're *extremely* smart. I didn't say you're *somewhat* smart. I said you are *extremely* smart. I'm only concerned about your safety and nothing else..."

A lot of people lose body parts in work-related accidents, and they're not stupid... It just happens in that moment of carelessness. So, all I'm trying to say is to be careful, because I love you, and I care about you."

"Yessss! Now leave me alone, Wayne. Will you let me do this?" She's getting louder so I'd better leave her alone. I'm quite sure she understands my message by now.

She pulls her seat closer to the table and adjusts the lighting above her head. She grabs a stack of finished counterfeit sheets, which sits in a box at her feet. She places the counterfeit on the table to her left. I watch the now-angry Argentinean get serious. She opens the hard case, which protects her reading glasses. She carefully uses a soft cloth to wipe them clean. This young woman looks so sexy, I've just got to comment; see if I can get a smile from her.

"Alex?"

"Yes."

“With those round wire-framed glasses and the lighting shining down on you, you look like a sexy secretary or biochemist right from the pages of Playboy magazine.”

“Thanks, babe,” she pulls me close enough to give me a hug and a brief kiss. “Now leave me alone and you get to work.”

I arrange the boxes so they’ll be near to her and she won’t have to struggle with them. They’re placed like jet aircraft lined-up on a taxiway waiting to take-off. She looks so studious as she begins her task.

Alexia has some perfectionist qualities in her so I know she’ll do a good job. The borders will be precisely measured. Even though I marked the machine’s metal frame, I’m sure she’ll double-check my markings. I feel that she’ll waste very little. What’s that old-time proverb? “Waste not, because I want a lot.”

• • • •

As she cuts the individual counterfeit bills away from their sheets, stack after stack, I pile them onto the currency counter’s loading tray.

It’s not the best design I’ve seen in currency counters (especially since I’ve seen none before), I still feel compelled to develop a new design modification to this counter.

I must increase the volume of currency the loading tray can hold. At present it holds only \$25,000.00 in twenties, which counts out the entire quantity in a matter of thirty seconds.

With *their* design I'm forced to reload too often. So, with three pieces of Lexan™ (unbreakable plastic), and some aluminum, I build a loading tray extension, which now holds \$125,000.00.

Because of this machine's high-speed ability, the entire stack of money is completely counted into twenty-five neat bundles of \$5,000.00 in a matter of a few minutes.

• • • •

Being slightly on the compulsive side, I decide that all the rubber bands (which hold together the individual \$5,000.00 bundles) should match in both color and size.

Less than a mile away from my home is a friendly neighborhood Office Depot™ supply store. I'll purchase at least three thousand extra-thick rubber bands; preferably blue.

By the time I return home, Alexia has become a counterfeit cutting expert; a real plus on her resume' should she ever need a job once all the money is spent and gone.

She has tall stacks of money at her workstation, which is now ready for me to count and bundle. Each stack represents roughly \$50,000.00. There are eight thus far. I have to play catch-up on my counting and bundling task.

With the machine's digital face reading "250," and the "CDA" displaying "OFF," and my newly redesigned loading tray full to the brim, I begin my game of catch-up.

At the push of a button, the fluttering sound of a hundred birds wings fills the room as the twenties are counted in a blur of speed. It's an amazing, over-powering, awe-inspiring sight and feeling to be in this room at the present time... oh yes, indeed.

Once the counterfeit is counted into a five thousand dollar bundle, the machine stops automatically. As I remove each bundle from the delivery tray, the machine begins to count again.

I pile two bundles side by side and inch apart from one another; then I pile two more atop the other two, yet in opposite directions, which now yields a crisscross pattern.

As the stack of bundles reaches a height of approximately twelve inches, I push it to the side and start over. Once I accumulate two tall stacks (which amount to \$480,000.00), Joey then bands each bundle and places them on the shelves in Federal Reserve order.

The shelves I built line three full walls of the room. There are four rows atop one another, twelve inches apart... beginning just below waist level; then rise upward.

On the first shelf, Joey places all the bundles, which consist of one particular Federal Reserve series (L). On the second shelf he places series (B). Series (G) is placed on the third: and series (E) on the fourth shelf respectively.

This is a sight that must definitely be seen in person. I basically have my own personal bank vault filled to capacity with \$12,500,000.00 in beautiful United States currency.

• • • •

For several days the three of us cut, count, band and shelve the counterfeit. We make a great team.

Later, I decide that even the scraps that have been cut away from the sheets of paper are to be considered as dangerous evidence. Because of this dilemma, the scraps will be bagged; then destined for destruction by shredder and fire. From there, they'll be buried deep in a landfill: a secret grave, hidden away forever.

We now take aim at all the supplies Joey secured. The two clothes dryers are brand new. Electric. 110 volt. I have no need for 220-volt dryers because I do not need the heat factor. I'll use it more as a giant tumbler for the new, soon-to-be-aged counterfeits.

Once again: more experimentation... trial and error.

• • • •

The cutting and counting begins to drag into monotonous boredom, so Alexia and I go out to nightly dinners, movies, and walks along the beautiful beaches.

Meanwhile, Joey goes and does his thing with his friends. This works out fine for Alexia and I, as we enjoy our privacy together.

Keeping in mind that nothing is impenetrable, for the most part, I often worry when the house is left unattended while we're out.

Because of this, I have nightmares, daymares, and disturbing thoughts of various scenarios every time we leave the house. One particular scenario goes like this...

A solitary burglar, or even a pair working together, happen down my street and see a halfway decent home (comparatively), and decide to burglarize it. Maybe they envision a good television, stereo, VCR, or possibly a few hundred in cash.

However, what they wouldn't expect to find, would be \$12,500,000.00 in cash, staring them directly in the eyes. Now, either they'd die a death from heart failure, or, they'd kill one another in a fight for the sole ownership of this amazing discovery.

So there they lay, dead on my floor; still warm and a little bloated as dead people do get. Maybe their eyes are still open, and have that look of shock they obtained from the discovery that eventually killed them... a permanent look they'd take to their grave for eternity.

And what the fuck would I get from this whole mishap? I'd be faced with the grisly, gruesome, mentally draining task of cutting them into little tidbits and burying them. Of course, I'd rather be *safe than sorry*, so I'd cut them into un-identifiable, extra-small pieces, and bury them deep where they'd never be discovered.

Would I call the police and report the break-in and death(s)? Hell no! What could I do with the printing press and all the evidence in such short notice? Nothing: that's what.

• • • •

March 4, 1992 - 12:15 pm (N. Miami, FL)

The cutting and counting is finally finished. The bundles are banded and I've made sure that there are two in each baggie: \$10,000.00 per.

• • • •

**Ultimately, the final count is "2,500"
five-thousand-dollar bundles
of nearly perfect counterfeit:
a massive \$12,500,000.00.**

• • • •

During the printing process I'd ruined only \$3,500,000.00. Not bad considering the varieties of obstacles I had to overcome, and the odds against me as a first-time printer with no assistance from an educator.

At this point, I need to completely dismantle the currency counter to ensure there are no remnants of counterfeit, which could have made their way inside where they shouldn't be.

I also must ensure that there are no *internal counting devices* (similar to copier machines for maintenance accounting) that could alert the store's owner of its heavy usage in the past week or so.

I'm confident that he'll accept my offer to buy back the currency counter at a fifty percent discount. That is, *after* I explain to him the unfortunate closure of my newly formed mail order business.

In the end though, he'll earn a good profit of \$750.00.00 for "renting" the machine to me for such a short period of time. Who could turn down such an offer? And as I had imagined, he doesn't refuse. The \$750.00 refund will be used for food and entertainment.

• • • •

The clothes dryers are in place side by side in the spare room at the front of the house. After two days of testing (by way of tumbling) nothing seems to work like in the movies. It never does, does it?

This is all a big waste of time, effort and money. Each of the various inserted tumbling materials: bark, charcoal, PVC, sand paper, chips, etc., becomes a big disappointment.

Unfortunately, now that the dryers (tumbling action for ageing counterfeit) are no longer part of the ageing process, I have to continue my attempts in discovering a sure-fire process of ageing the newly printed counterfeit.

I spend the next seven days working ten hours each day, blending oils, food colors, and lacquers, starches, etc.: which Joey purchased as mentioned earlier.

My sole mission is to make the color of this unwrinkled, newly printed money look aged. This is a crucial step in making it look authentically genuine.

Nothing thus far seems to be perfect enough to suit my perfectionist character. I'm starting to get disappointed.

It's time for a trip to Home Depot™ to purchase three pieces of genuine marble floor tiles; twelve by twelve inches square.

Afterwards, I walk next door to Service Merchandise and purchase three steam-emitting clothes irons.

Now, you're probably wondering, what the hell am I going to do with these items? Well, hang tight.

A quick trip to Publix grocery store nets me a pound of Columbian coffee and more spray starch. Speeding home, I'm barely able to contain my excitement in hopes that this new idea works just as I envision.

• • • •

Alexia greets me at the door when she hears my truck pull up in the driveway. "Hi, babe. Whatcha got there?"

She's smiling for some unknown reason. It's a smile that just won't go away. I find out the reason in the next few minutes. She literally drags me into the bedroom for an afternoon of wild sex. She does a striptease act, revealing to me her bikini-model body.

I watch with intense enthusiasm. I can't enjoy it fully as much as I'd like to, though, because my thoughts are lost on my new idea for ageing the counterfeit.

However, as she touches me with her warm soft body, pressing her perfectly shaped breasts against my face, I gently wrap my arms around her waist; then move my hands slowly down the

subtle curves of her tiny butt. It's firm, yet her skin is silky soft.

I kiss her entire front side as delicately as she can stand; then I kiss harder as her moans become louder, more erotic. I lift her onto the bed and Zorro realizes he's about to be crushed if he doesn't get the hell out of the way.

Zorro the voyeur sits on the rock-bed under the plaster and metal palm tree as he watches us. We make passionate love for an hour. I'm soaked in sweat. I've got to take a shower before I get back to work.

"Thank you, babe," she says with a glow on her face and those eyes that could melt polar ice. "That was *very* nice."

"No, thank *you!*" I'm floating with pleasure still as I take my goodies from the shopping bags.

I go to the kitchen and remove a nine by fourteen-inch glass baking dish from the cupboard and fill it with half a gallon of tap water. Then I add two tablespoons of the Columbian coffee.

Next, I spray the entire contents from the two cans of starch into the mixture. Alexia brings me a banded bundle of twenties, which I place in front of me.

Within a few seconds the iron achieves its maximum heat capacity. I slide a pair of latex gloves onto my almost-trembling hands.

The counterfeit bill is placed flatly onto the center of the marble tile's smooth surface. I place all my fingers on the bill's perimeter edges.

With a light downward pressure I crumple the bill towards its own center, thus making a small wad (or ball) of paper half the size of a golf ball.

Now, because this is ordinary paper, it stays crumpled into this wad. It does not unfold itself as a genuine bill would. As soon as I have ten bills wadded-up, I begin to unfold them and flatten them moderately.

The next step is to dip the wrinkled bills into the solution, which is now thoroughly mixed in the glass pan. After ten seconds I remove the saturated bills. One at a time I place them onto the marble tile and sweep the hot iron once across the backside and once across the front.

This method leaves the bill thoroughly dried, flat again, and somewhat worn looking. The wrinkles have become permanent. And it's because of these wrinkles that it is now very difficult to detect the absence of raised ink, which doesn't exist as it would on a genuine bill.

Just as I expected, the starch seems to thicken and stiffen the paper. Though *stiffening* is an unwanted byproduct of thickening the twenty-pound paper, I'll have to live with it for now.

To take away some of the stiffness: and give the bill more of a genuine feel, I have to drag the bill across the sharp edge of my marble slab: front side as well as the reverse of the bill.

The final phase of my ageing process is also a discovery through the process of experimentation. I take a bundle, which has already been wrinkled, dipped, ironed, and

edge-dragged; then toss them into a very large clear plastic container with an airtight lid.

But, before I seal its top into place, I sprinkle two tablespoons of talcum powder inside the container. While shaking this see-through processing plant, side-to-side, up-and-down, I watch as the talcum powder fills the pores of the paper and dissipates as the paper absorbs nearly the entire two tablespoons worth. It turns each bill slightly white.

Next, I take the bills out and remove the excess powder by means of whacking ten or twenty of them at a time against my denim pant legs. This entire process works impeccably.

When blind-feel-testing, Alexia, myself, Joey and David, we're all hard-pressed to distinguish the counterfeits from the genuines. The feel of the bill is perfect.

And by sight... that's a winner too!

Now that I've discovered the winning process, I make a mental note of the formula. Afterwards, I throw out all the oils, lacquers and other crap that Joey had purchased earlier. I have no need for them now.

• • • •

March 6, 1992 - 10:40 am (Hollywood, FL)

Alexia, Joey and myself drive east on Hollywood Boulevard past the mall towards the beach. We turn north on Dixie Highway, then I look for the scroungy, dilapidated white building which houses my uncle's linen cleaning business.

You remember; the same business that's honest with its customers, is always up to code, abides all laws and regulations, employs hygiene-oriented delivery drivers, and doesn't cheat the I.R.S. out of large quantities of tax dollars? Yeah that business... sarcastically speaking.

As we pull into the litter-covered parking lot, I spot his pimp-mobile (which you'll learn about later), so I know he's here. We walk through the door and I notice my mother and aunt Esther are busy filing papers. Larry... Marvin... Fuzzy... whatever his alias is this time; is stuffing so-called-food into his infected, retched mouth.

The three of us each peck my aunt and mother on the cheek as we say hello. Larry just gawks at Alexia.

"Ohhhh... and what do we owe this pleasure?" my aunt says in an honest and surprisingly happy voice. My mother just looks us up and down then smiles.

"We're here to say hello since we were in the neighborhood. Is uncle Dave around?"

"Yes," aunt Esther speaks as she files, not looking up. "He's upstairs taking his nap."

"Another nap? This early?" I kiss her cheek again. Then Joey and I head upstairs while Alexia stays in the office for a patronizing visit.

Uncle Dave's office was built by his eldest son; Irving. Irv is a master electrician, craftsman... hell, *everything!* He's also the only honest one of the Goldmenn clan, besides my aunt.

This office is walled in rich oak paneling. It has a white paneled ceiling, complete with oak carved trim around the perimeter, and oak trimmed light fixtures. The restroom is complete with shower, oak toilet seat, gold plated fixtures, expensive tile, etc.

It “was” a very handsome, ritzy office, created as a separate loft; built solely by Irving; and now, just a few months later, it should be slated for demolition. Rats gag, and then turn away in full sprint. Cockroaches cringe as they enter, look around; then grow weak from disgust, hoping only for a quick death should they become trapped within the realm of this nasty shit-hole of an office.

In all its filth and disgust, my uncle still lays here during his afternoon naps. Joey and I are reluctant to enter for fear of picking up some strange disease. But we must make this quick, for we have a full day’ itinerary ahead.

“Uncle Dave,” I whisper as I gently tap him on the shoulder. I surely don’t want to startle him into a cardiac seizure. After all, he’s eighty years old, and has clogged arteries served-up nicely with obesity.

He’s a walking time bomb: sudden death just waiting to happen. “Uncle Dave,” I call a little louder now. “Fuuuuck, Joey... I think... he’s... *dead.*” I look very seriously at Joey as I try to scare him.

“Shut up, you idiot. He’s not dead.”

“I don’t know, Joe. His skin is awfully cold. It’s all... clammy.”

Joey stands in front of me with a terrible look of worry.

“Come feel it, Joe. Wow. He’s frigid.”

I wait till Joey is about to cry, then I smile and giggle as I nudge uncle Dave hard enough this time to awaken his fat ass.

“Uncle Dave. Wake up. It’s Wayne.”

The old bastard awakens and clears his throat. He sits up and stares straight ahead looking confused, like he just woke-up from his own viewing at the funeral home.

I hand him three counterfeits. He smiles for one solid minute as he inspects them carefully. He’s totally captivated. As I look at the money in his hands I realize that he’s *got* to be impressed.

“Well?” I ask.

“Wooooow! Jesus. I can’t believe it!” he smiles real big while he talks. “Whoooooly shit, Vanehala. These are fabulous! How’d you do this?”

“It’s a long story, uncle Dave. I guess you approve then?” I mention as he’s trying to pocket the counterfeits, “I’ll need those back, uncle Dave.”

“Oh sure.”

“Uncle Dave. You know, you’ve always been good to me in the past, and I love you for it. So, I wanna give you some money in return for how nice you’ve been. I’m gonna give you half a million dollars in genuine cash. I’ll have to exchange the counterfeit for genuine, so it’ll take a few months, but you’ll get it.”

He smiles, "Sure, Vanehala. I could really use that now; especially since our business is go'in downhill lately," he tells me quietly.

I say to myself, "Gee, I wonder why the business is going down hill?" I think of the atrocities he inflicts upon his customers, and his piss-poor customer service. I mean... seriously... you don't tell a dentist whose pleading over the telephone to bring him linen supplies on Friday because of his heavy client-load during the weekend; then promise that he'll have it by three-thirty; then hang-up and tell your co-owner-son Larry... Marvin... Fuzzy... whatever...

"Fuck him. He'll have to wait til Monday."

His stupid son also agrees and gives the same response. Businesses don't stay in business and/or prosper for too long with that kind of customer service... *helllllow!*

• • • •

We summons Alexia, say our goodbyes, then, we drive towards Route 441. This is a main road, which takes the traveler north or south nearly the entire length of the state. Both sides of the four-lane thoroughfare are lined with business after business. There are stores and shops for everything imaginable.

We're looking for pawnshops. I'm trying to locate and purchase old used home stereo hi-fi-speakers. At this point I'm getting a little aggravated trying to find old speakers, which will hold and conceal half a million in twenties.

And, if we do find the right size, the store's owner generally argues that he wants new-speaker-prices because they *sound so good*.

The Pakistani is very insistent...

"Let me demonstrate their nice sound quality. It's so good," his accent sends his voice into varied inflections.

"Mahock, I don't really care about the sound quality... honestly. I just want the cabinet!"

"But, the sound is so nice, and they're only—"

"Mister Mahockbad, I—"

"Vhat did you just say?" he interrupts in an old crusty angry voice. "Get out! I don't need your b-b-business." He's furious now.

"You may not need my business, Mahockbad," I shout as I head for the door with Joey laughing in front of me, "But you'll need a locksmith to change your locks when you find 'em filled with silicone rubber!"

I slowly walk with my back to the door as I persist in verbal harassment. He picks-up the telephone and pushes the keypad's buttons, so I leave at an accelerated pace. Now I'm more angered than frustrated. Joey is still laughing as he stands next to the truck.

At the next store, I find what I'm searching for. The price is right so I pay the man without haggling. Joey throws the speakers into the back of the truck. I then fill Joey's request to drive to the military surplus store.

He chooses a green, metal, airtight, waterproof ammunition container. It's roughly twelve by twelve by eighteen inches in size. The man behind the counter wants ten bucks. Deal.

• • • •

Once home, we carry the speakers into the count room. I take a claw hammer, along with a few cans of spray paint, and begin to physically abuse the speaker's cabinets and cloth grills. They now look absolutely terrible and decrepit.

Hopefully, no one in their right mind would steal anything that looks so despicable... so atrocious. They'll be the worst looking piece of trash amongst the other items I'll store in the air-conditioned, alarmed, high security storage room. It's on the third floor of this modern facility on Route 441.

• • • •

Sometimes Joey is not the most brilliant of diamonds, but he does know one thing, and one thing for sure; he is now an eighteen-year-old youth with a newly attained net worth of \$500,000.00 in cash, tax-free!

Joey starts to pack his ammo box. He has fifty-Zip-Lock™ baggies filled with \$10,000.00 in each. I just happen to look over and notice that he's not wearing gloves...

"Joey!" I yell loud enough to scare the hell out of him and scold him hard. "Un-pack the damn thing, put on gloves, wipe off the bags thoroughly with rubbing alcohol: then repack it the way you *should* have done it the first time?"

"But *wwwwhy?*" he stupidly asks.

"Finger prints, Joey. You idiot! What if someone finds your box someday and turns it in? Your prints are all over the bags *and* the box. Don't be so damned stupid."

“Yeah. You’re right,” he surrenders in agreement. “Sorry.”

I’m able to fit a half million of my counterfeit into each of the two larger speaker cabinets. The actual speaker itself takes away much-valued space within the cabinet/box. But the speaker has to stay. The entire unit has to look authentic for it to serve its purpose of concealment and deceit.

Within a couple of hours my counterfeit is packed into the speakers. I set aside a hundred and some-odd thousand dollars, which the three of us will age before beginning the “Counterfeit Cashing Tour.”

I pack David’s \$7,000,000.00 into fourteen separate cardboard boxes: each containing a half million. They’re finally ready for him to pick up. I sure as hell am not driving all the way to Coral Springs with seven million dollars worth of counterfeit currency in *my* vehicle. I have too much bad luck with getting pulled over by the cops: especially now... I think not!

“My millions should be safely protected by cement, steel, electronics, plastic, earth, and mosquitoes. However, nothing can keep this fortune safe from the lucky one(s) that may stumble across portions of it while it rests in the many secret hiding spots I’ve chosen... a constant worry in the depths of my mind.”

CHAPTER SIX

“ Hidden Treasure In The Floridian Tropics ”



March 9, 1992 - 12:30 pm (N. Miami, FL)

We're finished ageing only half of the hundred thousand. The video movies we'd watched during the boring ageing process were enjoyable. *Scarface* is always a family favorite: a great value in entertainment... "Say hello to my leetle friend."

• • • •

Joey and I load the speaker cabinets filled with three million dollars into the truck. We head for the storage facility with the cargo of treasure banging around in the bed of the truck. Alexia begs her way into going along with us. Her excuse in coming along is to assist in carrying the containers to the third floor room.

I sometimes question her desire for going with us. Is it because she wants to ensure that the millions she has a stake in is indeed being taken to the agreed upon place? This is a good play on her behalf. I have no animosity toward her action. I would certainly do the same if I were in her shoes.

There are other household goods loaded in with the cargo here today. This makes it look more legitimate. Nothing appears to be of much value. I believe this to be a very good method of deterring a burglar.

I take a final look at the abused speakers as I close the steel door and clamp my sturdy “American Lock™” onto the heavy latch. This is one of, if not *the* best, most indestructible locks ever built. You can sense this just by holding it, then clamping it shut. Bolt cutters won’t even scratch it: as you’ll soon find out.

• • • •

An hour later, we’re back at home. I take extra efforts and precautions in wrapping my last remaining speaker that is filled with \$500,000.00. This will be my rainy day cash.

To accomplish this, I use about eight layers of heavy-duty black garbage bags. These are wrapped with four bands of layer-upon-layer, silver colored, super-strength duct tape. The neat layers of tape resemble heavy steel straps you would see on an Old West storage trunk.

This one speaker, along with Joey’s steel ammo box—a total of \$1,000,000.00—will be buried for an undetermined amount of time in the earth; secluded by the fenced, private alleyway behind my Uncle Dave’s dump of a linen company.

Joey tells me that uncle Dave had already given him the keys to the front gate and office door in order for us to gain access to the burial spot.

• • • •

March 10, 1992 - 12:15 am (Hollywood, FL)

It's late here at the linen company. I drove the semi-deserted roads at the speed limit. And why not drive the speed limit: I have a million dollars worth of counterfeit twenties in the bed of my truck.

I suppose the large wrapped package could be mistaken for a bundle of cocaine or marijuana that may have been found drifting onto the Florida coastline, which is not unusual.

Joey jumps out of the truck as soon as I come to a stop in front of the chain link fence that surrounds the littered parking lot. The headlights illuminate the padlock while Joey fumbles; then succeeds to open it. He slides the gate to the side and I drive in. He then slides and locks it behind us.

We don't need nosy cops checking the happenings in or around an open gate, although I doubt anyone is bold enough to patrol this seedy area at night anyway.

Once the office door is open, we walk back to the truck side by side to retrieve our fortunes and carry them through the building's innards. We negotiate a pathway around the machinery by means of a solitary dim light that barely illuminates our surroundings. In the darkness, we're forced to dodge wheeled laundry baskets and stray buckets filled with soap.

It's eerily quiet. Not even the sounds of a scurrying cockroach can be heard. As I carry my heavy container toward the rear door leading to the alleyway, I remember the commercial scale for weighing linen. It stands to my right.

"Joey!" I call out. "Hold on, I wanna weigh this."

As I set the money down on the big flat surface of the scale, the needle darts to *126 pounds*. Allowing twenty-five pounds for the speaker cabinet, I'd estimate that my half million weighs one hundred and one pounds. I pass the giant washers and dryers, *and* Joey, as he heads back to weigh *his* money... of course.

Once we gain access to the darkened alleyway, we find our burial spot with the use of a lantern-type flashlight. We set the containers down on the soft sand and head back to the truck to grab our shovels, and a miner's pick, just in case.

Minutes later, I start digging on pure adrenaline. Within a half hours' time, my pit is already at a depth of five feet. Joey's is at three. No need to rush, though, we've got until six a.m.

"Damn, Joseph, I feel like some fucking pirate over here burying my treasure."

I can see him digging a few feet away as I peer across the sandy floor, now at eye level. He just laughs while he continues to dig.

My pit is roughly the diameter of the speaker, so I have no room to move. It's a good idea to use those short military field shovels in situations like this. I only wish I had one now.

And making it more difficult is the task of throwing the shovels-full of sand up and out of this deep narrow pit in the earth.

Joey sounds busy. He's huffing and puffing. But the task is entirely necessary, and the future reward makes this pain and struggle well worth the effort.

"Mine' deep enough," I tell him. "Help me out of this hole, would you, Joe? Pull me up!" Once I'm out, I shine the flashlight's bright beam into the pit. "Well, Joey," I look in his direction for a moment to ensure that he's watching when I drop my container into its subterranean resting place.

"Hold this flashlight while I drop the money in. Here it goes. Bon voyage!"

"Sayonara!" he laughs, then, blurts out, "Mazeltov! Shalom!"

In a fleeting moment, my one hundred and twenty-six pound, half-million dollar treasure is dropped into the Floridian earth.

At this point I must ask you if you know and understand "*The Elevator Effect?*" Whether you answer yes or no, I'm still compelled to explain it to you regardless. Why? Because as I drop this large, heavy, treasure-laden container into the pit, this principle of *air-displacement* affects me through a series of painful events...

As the container plummets downward at a high rate of velocity, its snug fit in conjunction with the diameter of the pit, allows this plunging container to displace the trapped air beneath it and force that same air upwards in my direction;

also at a high rate of velocity; thus carrying with this rushing air and *sand*.

I have no time to react in such an instant demand. My watching delicate eyes are sandblasted into an agonizing pain that is beyond any description.

“Ahhhh!” I scream into the silent darkness. Stepping forward with both hands clutched tightly against my eyelids, I try to overcome the impulse to rub the pain away.

While blind and screaming, I step forward onto the elevated metal scoop of my long-handled shovel... and *baaaam!* The wood handle knocks me right between the eyes.

I’m whacked senseless.

Before I feel the blood flow, I fall to my knees. On the way down I slam my right shin into a large “I” beam steel girder that easily tears my pants and the skin from the bone.

It all happens within a few-second sequence. I’d imagine that a spectator would get a good laugh. I wish this could have been caught on video, for it would win thousands of dollars in prize money as the funniest video of the year.

I lay here on my side, on the sand, in the dark, barely lit by the flashlight, grabbing my torn leg with one hand, and bleeding forehead with the other. I’m sobbing and breathing hard. Joey stands over me, laughing himself to tears while asking, “You alright, Wayne? You okay?” he’s still laughing.

“No, *fuckhead!* Can’t you see? Owwww... fuck! Owwww... owwww... God... dammit!”

“Sorry, cous,” he whispers, as he now tries to console me. “Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Noooo. Just leave me alone for a minute. I’ll be okay. I can’t wipe my forehead; my hands are dirty. How does the wound look, Joe?”

“It’s bleeding.”

“No fuck’in shit, dumb ass.”

“Well—”

“Well, is the skin torn open bad?”

“I can’t tell because of the blood.”

I lay here for five minutes while Joey gets me a supposedly-clean wet rag from the linen stockpile.

Once I’m sure the bleeding has stopped, we continue to bury our treasure.

The task is complete so we spread the excess sand far away from the freshly covered holes. Then we try to make it look natural by sprinkling twigs and leaves around the area.

It’s a perfect job... well done.

• • • •

March 10, 1992 - 9:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

I wake up and clean my wounds. There’s a bruise and a knot on my forehead. A little cut is apparent on the knot itself. My eyeballs still hurt from the sandblasting.

Alexia mixes a batch of freshly pressed garlic and aloe vera gel; one of my recipes for healing. She applies the poultice to my wounds. Then with a smile and a laugh, she tells me how great it would be to have been there to witness our late-night antics.

• • • •

Joey and I stop at the Home Depot™ store once again to purchase a barbeque, a one-gallon D.O.T. approved gasoline container (*because anything less than D.O.T. approved is against the law*); and a box of long wooden stick matches.

After the Depot stop we cruise to a convenience store/gas station around the corner from my house. Joey pays inside while I fill the container with eighty-seven-octane. I have a crazy plan for destroying the not-so-perfect counterfeit. It's time for a roasting ceremony.

“If faced with the necessary task of definitively destroying \$2,500,000.00 of counterfeit evidence, without getting caught, and while leaving not a trace, which procedure would you choose... besides the safest means possible?”

CHAPTER SEVEN

“ Money To Burn... Literally ”



March 12, 1992 – 1:30 pm (N. Miami, FL)

I don't like the idea of burning money at night for fear that the police helicopter, or a neighbor might report a fire in my backyard. I don't need the fire department to coming to the rescue.

Burning money in the light of day is equally worrisome because any of my neighbors can look through the slats of my wood fence and witness us dumping handfuls of twenty-dollar bills into a raging barbeque inferno.

Or, maybe the power company's meter reader will happen by unexpectedly and catch us in the act. But I don't have much of a choice. I'm forced to make a decision: day or night?

And so be it. We get started right away before darkness sets in...

“Spread the bundles out, Joey. Disperse ‘em so air can get in between the bills, or they’ll never burn. Pour a cup of gas all over it and let it soak in while I walk the fence perimeter to make sure that no ones’ watching, okay?”

“Sure; like this?” he says. It *sounds* as if he's following my directions. I don't really watch him. I do my security check and get the water hose ready.

“It's a little breezy, huh, Joe?”

“Yeah. No big deal, though.”

“Well, stand to my left while I light it so the heat doesn’t roast you. Boy, that gasoline sure smells strong! Whoooooah.”

I attempt to open the little round sliding door on the big, heavy, domed lid atop the barbeque base. Unfortunately, I suppose the rapidly expanding gasoline fumes had enough time to do their stuff while I continue my struggle to pry open the little vent.

“Okay. Here goes nothing,” I strike the match, then, drop it into the open vent hole.

Well, damn, that was a great understatement on my behalf, because it was most definitely *something!* The heavy lid blows off and soars high into the air directly above our heads.

The percussion of the explosion nearly deafens us. It sounded like a powerful cannon being fired. The neighbors had to have heard the boom. We both duck for cover as the lid plummets downwards towards us and slams straight onto the barbeque, knocking it over and blasting the burning money everywhere.

The money that didn’t burn before the explosion (approximately a hundred thousand dollars worth) flies through the air, caught in the Miami breeze.

We’re shocked of course. Totally surprised at the enormity of what just happened. Now the fear factor kicks in. Unburned money, as well as money on fire is blowing into the surrounding backyards.

Though my own yard is heavily littered with counterfeit, I'm much more concerned about the money in my neighbors backyards. I'm not sure just who's home, or who has a dog? But regardless, I've got to retrieve every last bill—and *right now!*

"Oh man! Ooooh maaaaan! Hooooly shit!" I yell as I run to turn on the water hose. I guess dip-shit Joey never learned how to measure. He must have been too damned busy forgetting girls names in school.

When I go to move the gasoline container further away from the blazing inferno, I realize that the can is nearly empty. The stupid bastard poured on a half gallon of highly flammable explosive gasoline! I can't use the water hose.

Frantically I yell to Joey, "I gotta get all the money from the neighbors yards! You stay here and collect all you can... all of it, Joe! And don't let the flames get too close to the house!"

"Hurry, Wayne!" he yells in a fearful trembling voice. "Hurry, man!"

Joey is running in a zigzag pattern picking up money, and some that is on fire as well. I quickly sprint into the house to recruit Alexia for assistance.

"Alexia! Alexia! Hurry!" I'm yelling at the top of my lungs.

"What's wrong? Are you okay?" she looks terrified.

"No. I'm not okay! The money blasted all over the yard and some went into the neighbors backyards... hurry!"

“Okay! Okay! Let me get my shoes on,” she pleads and runs into the bedroom.

“Hurry!” I yell as I run back outside without waiting for her. I sure hope the neighbors don’t have any mean dogs in their yards. I’d really never paid attention before now. But I don’t have the time to worry. Anyway: what’s a few dog bites compared to years of prison?

Over the fences I go. Three different yards, one at a time. First to the left: then over the right. I jump the fence and checkout the yard directly behind me as well. I gather about fifty bills that are not burnt, and about fifteen that are partially burnt.

It takes approximately one hour to clean the mess completely. We gather all the counterfeit and stuff it back into the heavily layered garbage bags. So much for the seventy dollar barbeque, and my great idea. I doubt that Home Depot™ will take back a warped-dome and scratched-all-to-hell-with-scorched-off-paint barbeque.

I have one last idea.

• • • •

March 12, 1992 - 4:15 pm (N. Miami, FL)

The telephone rings twice, then it’s answered by a woman with a sexy, yet professional sounding voice, “D.L.S. Enterprises, may I help you?”

“Hello, is David in?”

“Whom may I ask is calling?”

“Tell him it’s, Wayne, please.”

“Oh, Mister Dennis. Stay right there. One second, please.”

“Thank you.”

A cheerful man's voice speaks into the receiver, "Hi, Wayne. What's up?"

"I need to use your fireplace as soon as possible. I tried everything I could to get rid of the you-know-what. It all failed miserably. So Joey and I need it tonight. It's *super* important. You're my only hope, David... my last chance."

"Not tonight, my wife is home. Tomorrow though, she goes to school. You'll have from six till nine. No later, okay? Is that enough time for you to do it all?"

"Yeah. Sounds good, David. Thanks a million... or two," I laugh. "You're a real life saver. See you tomorrow at six exactly."

• • • •

March 13, 1992 - 8:30 am (N. Miami, FL)

I look over at Joey who has already arrived and is trying to mooch some breakfast. "It's all set for six tonight. Help me gather and account for every scrap and bill that's to be burned. Let's put it all in triple garbage bags to make it sturdy... three bags minimum. Come on, you'll eat later."

We have roughly three-and-a-half-million stuffed in the extra large garbage bags, and they must be one-hundred-percent secure. Once we're finished, we'll wait around until six p.m. To help ease the tension of waiting, the three of us head to the gym, then lunch, followed by the a few hours at the beach.

• • • •

There's reggae music playing. It sounds so cool and tropical. In addition, rock n' roll is playing from another's portable CD player fifteen feet away. The palms blow gently in the breeze. It's just enough to cool us while we lie here basking in the sun.

Joey and I decide to bodysurf the enormous *two-foot* waves. They'd be a joke in California. A two-footer here is still a joke to me, but it's something to do since I sure-as-hell can't checkout the bikini-clad women while Alexia is around.

It's too late in the day to snorkel for seashells because the breaking waves have stirred the water at the shore's edge to zero visibility.

Occasionally, in the deeper, clearer water, we see various-sized turtles swimming by our feet. There are many porcupine puffer fish that hang out in the clumps of seaweed. They eat the tiny shrimp that attach themselves to the floating vegetation.

It's really quite a treat to come to the beach. There's always something to see or do. Nature is abundant. This enjoyment never seems to grow old.

We have just enough time to grab some dinner and a shower. Afterwards, Joe and I will head north for the burning. I'm certain that fear will twist my insides as I drive with millions of dollars of counterfeit in the bed of my truck.

• • • •

March 15, 1992 - 6:00 pm (Coral Springs, FL)

The ride up the Sawgrass Expressway was uneventful. For once there was not a State Trooper in sight. What a relief.

As I pull into the driveway of David's beautiful lakeside home, he's waiting outside to greet us.

"Hey, David," I shake his hand as he stands at my truck's door. "Is she gone already?"

"Yeah. How long do you think this'll take?" he asks nervously.

"An hour... maybe... I suppose. I'm not a hundred percent certain."

"Boy, I hope she don't come home early," he speaks as his eyes dart up and down the empty cul-de-sac.

"Yeah, we'd be majorly fucked. You should call her cellular phone and ask a genuine question. Does she want something to eat when she gets home? Will it be the usual time? Make sure she's there to stay."

"Good think'in."

We unload the bags of cash and set them on the carpet in the living room. I glance over at the white baby grand piano, which David let me play for his family at this past Thanksgiving dinner. It's a wonderfully crafted, beautiful sounding Yamaha™. Perfectly tuned. The keystrokes are so smooth. They strike softly for those subtle tones that imply tranquility and purity of song... of beauty... of peace.

• • • •

This time we'll use charcoal lighting fluid rather than highly explosive gasoline. His neighbors should be finished with dinner just about now and they'll be hunkered down in front of their big-screen televisions.

I hope that no one sees the smoke billowing from the chimney of his South Florida home... in the middle of *March!* That would be just a little suspicious, huh?

The nighttime darkness is closing in. We pile dozens of bundles of counterfeit into the fireplace. I use the metal poker to stir the bundles loose.

"Joey, I'll pour the flammable on this time. You'll need to step back, son."

The fire is going okay, but the money is still not burning thoroughly or fast enough yet. I stir it and add a few more squirts of the flammable.

More cash ignites.

It's roaring now. In fact, it's burning much too hot. The fire is now basically burning out of control. In addition to this problem, there are six more bags left to burn, and time is getting tight.

David keeps a close eye on his three-year-old daughter as she gazes at the inferno—oblivious to the stark reality of the situation.

I need to stir the fire more, but it's too damned hot to get close. Within three seconds of stepping just a foot away, I must back off enough to allow my skin to cool, and keep my clothes from igniting.

“David, this poker’ too hot to hold. It’s burning my skin. I need something longer to stir this fire... hurry!”

I’m in somewhat of a panic due to the time constraints placed upon us, and the fact that his house could catch fire at any second. I don’t think his wife, nor his insurance company would appreciate us destroying their home.

David comes running back into the house with an eight-foot aluminum handle from his pool cleaning net. As I poke at the blazing fire, the pole melts almost as fast as I can feed it into the crackling flames. A slight blackness starts to accumulate on the wall above the fireplace mantle. Flames begin to lick the mantle itself.

Joey grabs the melted pole and goes out back to hurdle it into the lake as far as he can fling it. David runs into the house again, this time from the garage, with a few of his wife’s *Ping™* golf clubs. Dammmmn, that’s gotta suck.

I don’t know if they’re six or ten irons, or what the fuck! But I do know that Pings are one of the best; and they’re expensive; and they too, are melting in the heat of the inferno. They *were* a part of her custom made collection: but not anymore. They’re fish-living-room décor now.

I bark out an order, “Somebody *better* get some water to cool this fire down or we’re in real trouble here! Go, *now*, you guys!”

“You need to get a hold of yourself, David. I’m sure the neighbors can hear you yelling. Go hide the rest of the money somewhere... anywhere. *I’d* put it in the attic. This house has one, right?”

“Yeah. The door’ above the garage.”

“Okay then. You go hide the money before your wife finds it. I’ll try to get the fire under control. Come on, man, let’s go!”

The rising heat from the inferno carries burning money up the fireplace chimney flue, and is now being distributed amongst the neighbor’s yards and roofs. It’s actually raining *money on fire*.

I gather handfuls of counterfeit from the ground and stuff it into my pockets. I don’t have time to try and extinguish them. This stuff is *hot!*

Once back inside I’m treated to yet another surprise. The fire has been extinguished. Yeaay! However, Joey has poured about three *gallons* of water into the fireplace. There is no drain. And it all poured back out onto David’s beautiful light-peach colored wool carpet. And yes, as you might imagine, the water carried with it the black soot from the burnt money and wood logs.

To make matters just a little fuck’in worse, David’s wife pulls into the driveway. Luckily enough, though, there’s no pieces of counterfeit large enough for her to identify.

But she sure freaks out as she catches a glimpse of the carpet and the blackened wall above the fireplace. She immediately begins questioning the mess in a most frantic way.

While David is getting interrogated and reamed by the commander and chief of the household, I resign my ill thoughts to the scenario of seagulls flying around with pieces of twenty-dollar bills in their beaks.

I think of a dog bringing an identifiable piece of a counterfeit twenty to its owner, in its mouth, with drool on Andrew Jackson's face.

David tells his wife that we were burning some of my invention documents, and the fire somehow got out of control. She believes him. The naïve woman even helps clean while she downs a much-needed alcohol-laden beverage.

Joey sneaks out to gather more remnants of the counterfeit. Back inside, the carpet is ruined, the place smells like fire, and burned soggy paper litters the carpet. David's wife is furious inside, yet subdued on the outs.

David is trying to vacuum up the water and soot with none other than—a standard vacuum cleaner. Needless to say, this machine is now ruined. Certainly they'll have to repaint the wall above the fireplace. The wood mantle will need a coat or two as well.

An hour later we apologize to his wife in all sincerity. David is just happy that she didn't catch him in the act. And I'm sure he's equally happy that the house didn't burn to the ground tonight. It came awfully close though.

• • • •

Oh, one lucky thing does happen tonight. As Joey and I drive away, a dance of spectacular lightning bolts streak across the black night sky from the west over the Everglades. The thunder becomes music to my ears as I realize that a massive rainstorm is marching eastward. It *should* wash away most of the evidence from tonight's fiasco.

“Every criminal has their own distinctive mannerism in which they conduct their crime. This *pattern* is what generally gets them caught in the end. My thoughts in regards to exchanging my millions, is to zigzag every U.S. city, irregular to any pattern. The idea is to confuse the Secret Service and never leave a trail.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

“ The ‘Counterfeit Cashing Tour’ ”



March 19, 1992 – Noon (N. Miami, FL)

Over the next few days I spend countless hours cleaning the printing press top to bottom, inside and out. I have to insure that not even the most miniscule piece of evidence (in the form of counterfeit currency) is left behind in any hidden, un-cleaned portion of the equipment. It would not be a good thing if the next owner finds any illicit pieces/evidence unexpectedly.

During the dozens of hours of cleaning, I continuously wrestle my thoughts of deep-sixing the press into the depths of the Atlantic, verses selling it through the classified ads of the Miami Herald newspaper.

I don't normally sell things through the classifieds, however, the camera, plate-maker, and all the darkroom supplies did sell rather promptly after their publication. Of course, the ridiculously low asking prices helped a lot. And quickly so shall this press go... if I decide to sell it off rather than deep-six the old junker.

The task of dismantling the wood window covers and returning the workspace back to living quarters was a hellava labor, but it's now finished.

We've taught Steve the art of ageing the counterfeit. And, as expected, David bought the idea to leave the job of ageing his own portion up to Steve. Any thoughts of asking me to help have vanished forever. Sorry Steve... have fun.

I explained to David how the equipment and supplies for ageing the counterfeit are portable, and that Steve could age the money on an as-needed basis, right in his motel room during his participation of a "Counterfeit Cashing Tour" for David.

Alexia and I will likely do the same, except we'll choose hotels (I like luxury) rather than motels. Practically every good hotel has cable television with pay-per-view movies, to again, stave-off the monotony of ageing the counterfeit.

With this taken care of, I deliver to Steve, a full set of rubber stamps, inkpads, utensils, and enough supplies to age a couple million. The rest they can figure out on their own.

• • • •

Sitting at the living-room table, Alexia and I confer between just the two of us. I don't know where Joey is, and frankly, who gives a fuck right now? It's time for Alexia and myself to spend a few days together, alone, without a good deal of mind-draining thoughts.

Once we plot our Counterfeit Cashing Tour routes and strategies, we take another relaxing break in the tropical Florida Keys. This time: mainly, Bahia Honda Key; the most picturesque of them all.

• • • •

The United States of America: land of the free, home of the brave. It's a great country. It's also very expansive in size. Forty-eight states located right in the middle of the North American Continent: Mexico to the south: Canada to the north.

We'll exchange the money only within U.S. territories. And although we never intend on getting caught, I still would not *ever consider* cashing it in a foreign country. I've seen the movie "Midnight Express." No foreign countries. Not me... no thanks!

• • • •

We sit here looking into the colorful pages of our giant-sized, ultra-modern Rand McNally™ Road Atlas...

New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Phoenix, San Francisco, Denver, Boston, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Diego, Houston, New Orleans, Las Vegas, Kansas City, St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit... well, you get the picture. There are literally thousands of cities, large and small, throughout the United States.

As for fast food establishments where we'll exchange the counterfeit; if my memory serves me correct regarding the statistics from my business magazines, I would have to say that there are more than "6,500" McDonalds, *alone!*

There are “7,500” 7-11™ convenience stores and another “14,000” Citgo™ gas stations, which sport their own convenience store.

The list is tremendous. Then we begin to add up the many bars, taverns and nightclubs nationwide, and it’s unbelievably staggering! The possibilities are endless. There must be at least “50,000” fast food restaurants located near all the combined interstate off ramps from sea-to-shinning-sea.

The way I figure it... we’ll simply purchase the foodstuff or sundry; then leave it on the ground or atop a garbage bin where a needy person can find it, and it won’t go to waste.

Basically, my sole desire and reward is to receive cash, which results from the exchange of my counterfeit for their genuine.

Is that so much to ask?

Of course, we’ll just purchase the least expensive item(s), because it’ll be left behind anyways. This method will maximize our capital gains.

It’s quite a simple method... really. You don’t even have to be much of an actor, or actress, to make this a success. Try it. Repeat after me...

“Hi, I’ll have a small hamburger and ummmm, a small soda. Coke please.”

“That’ll be two dollars and twelve-cents.”

Now hand him, or her, the counterfeit twenty. Go ahead. Don’t worry. It’s only twenty-years in prison if you’re caught. Your life will be turned upside down...

Your friends and relatives will abandon you. You'll lose everything... but go ahead, give 'em the bill anyway, and hope for the best. Oh, and try not to look nervous or too suspicious. And try not to allow your hand to shake as you pass the counterfeit over the counter.

"Oooout of twenty?" They'll hesitate briefly as they eyeball the bill. You're not really sure if they're checking to see if it's counterfeit, yet the butterflies will still flutter around in your stomach. If you're already sporting an ulcer, it'll quickly commence to bleed. And if you *don't* have one yet, you'll soon develop one.

Now, they'll hurriedly reach inside the register and remove your change, but it'll seem like forever in the making. Remember to smile as they hand you the cash. *It's yours*. Tax- free!

Also, try to remember that these employees are almost always busy speeding through their work. And when they're not busy, they're being watched over by their highly paid, super-skilled manager.

They must be fast. After all, it's their job to take care of and please their customer. Their long-term career is on the line here. And, they don't want you going to their competitor. The customer is always right; and as far as they know, the money given to them should always be real.

"Oookay, your change is seventeen dollars and eighty-eight cents. And thank you for visiting our *garbage-food* establishment. Come back soon; your doctor needs the money."

Easy, huh? I told you so. Now imagine more than fifty thousand fast food establishments and convenience stores out there just waiting to get fucked. The same way they try to fuck their customers by selling them health-destroying poisonous food.

And the casinos don't give a crap who they bankrupt, or whose lives they destroy...

"Hi there. Can I have two rolls of quarters?"

Hand her the twenty. You'll need to worry a little here, though, because there are security guards with guns, as well as plainclothes security with guns.

"There you go, sir. Good luck," she smiles as she hands you the quarters.

"Thank you."

And now you're twenty dollars richer.

Or, here's a better idea with more profit in a shorter period of time...

"Hi, can I have two racks of dollar tokens, please?" Now hand her *ten* twenties. Make sure that you don't give her ten bills with all the identical serial numbers, and make sure that you don't give her ten counterfeits with the same bank authenticating stamp inked upon them.

Ten twenties: two hundred dollars... ohhhh... ahhhh... ooooo... more money... more money... more money.

"There you go, sir; good luck," she smiles.

"Thank ya. Thank ya very much," you say while including your best Elvis impersonation. There's nothing wrong with having a little fun at the same time, is there? And after-all, this *is* Las Vegas!

Now, take your two racks of tokens and dump them into the large plastic coin bucket, which the casinos so conveniently provide. Once you do this, take a stroll across the casino and play a few machines while you look for a new change person to dupe.

The casinos can be quite enjoyable as well as profitable. Literally thousands upon thousands per day can be exchanged if one is willing to work the long, hard, stressful ten-hour period it takes.

While casinos are truly enjoyable, I've never been too keen on the idea of surveillance cameras and armed guards who roam constantly... aimlessly. But nonetheless, they're open twenty-four-seven, and the change personnel switch shifts three times daily. Ummmm, ahhhhh. It's almost orgasmic.

• • • •

With calculator in hand, I try to figure and estimate just how much time it'll take for Alexia and I to exchange a mere fifty bills per day (twenty-five bills per person). It comes to an easy two-hour period.

Aaaand, if I calculate that by thirty days per month, I suppose one could say we'd earn thirty grand a month working only two hours daily. I can handle that.

Now, multiply this by twelve months annually, and we're talking a total of three hundred and sixty thousand dollars. I can handle that even better.

Finally, I divide five million by three hundred and sixty thousand: it'll take us *13.8 years* to cash it all! This is at the rate of "\$1,000.00 per day", tax free, every day of the year, for the next *fourteen years!*

But we now damn-well that we'll never work each and every day. We'll think of many excuses to take days off. Let's get real here.

And I'll never sell-off the counterfeit for percentage points. Someone could offer me a full fifty cents on the dollar, and I'd still never sell it. That's not my way of doing business. When *they* get caught, *I* get caught. It's as simple as that. No thank you.

So I suppose the money will stay hidden for quite some time. It'll be a slow process, yet an exciting experience. There'll be stress, I'm sure. Hell, I'll probably get butterflies every time I pass a bill.

There'll be long periods of time away from home, but we'll get to see the entire country... every square mile of the United States. And, I love to drive: especially rental cars.

Rentals seem to accelerate much faster, brake in less time, and take bumps at *any* speed. Also, you can use the reverse gear for a brake; and the tires seem to hug the asphalt wonderfully as the car speeds wildly around corners. Rentals magically go over curbs and race through the desert, or any other adverse terrain you can find. Aaaaand; a car wash or oil check? What the hell is a car wash? And oil? Is that in the engine? ...*I love driving rental cars.*

So Alexia and I have a few things here to consider. While we're making notes of the cities we'll visit (for cashing/exchanging purposes), I think of an idea of how to safely get the genuine cash back home while we're on the road. It's really quite simple; postal money orders. They never expire. And, there's a post office, or ten, in every city across the U.S. This is very convenient.

With this in mind, once we're finished cashing counterfeit in any given city, we'll take a thousand or two in genuine and purchase postal money orders.

Back in Miami we'll have a series of rented post office boxes, which will be paid for a year in advance. We'll have the address for each in the little black book I keep.

Envelopes containing our money orders will be sent back to these waiting P.O boxes. Upon our return home, after a few months of sightseeing within our beautiful country, we'll simply, slowly, exchange the money orders into genuine cash. And with this cash: income tax.

I must pay taxes for two reasons...

- 1) It's unlawful *not* to do so.
- 2) Once we begin purchasing expensive homes, autos, boats, etc., someone'll notice. There's no need to be investigated.

And how might I show these earnings to the Internal Revenue Service? This, my friend, is also quite simple. I have two ideas...

- 1) I place newspaper and magazine advertisements to sell some of my books or inventions, using the ad to show proof of intent and purpose. If the ads draw-in customers so, then; all the better; I'll make more money. On the other hand, if the ads don't draw, I can still claim that they did; mostly cash purchases of course; then I'd pay the necessary taxes on whatever I claim to earn. It's very difficult to refute claimed income when a mail order business sells small ticket items.

- 2) I purchase a small piece of land in California's Mother Lode/Gold Country... ensuring that there is a river or a large stream meandering through it. Then, with a trip to a well-known coin store in Las Vegas, or its sister store in Los Angeles, I can pick and purchase various-sized batches of gold nuggets, which have been dredged from western state's rivers. Once the nuggets (paid for in counterfeit-turned-to-genuine-cash) are in my possession, I'll take them to the property in California, seed the river in all the right places... then call a professional assayer to verify my claim of a richly endowed piece of property.

• • • •

The luggage we purchase will serve its purpose for both the upcoming two-week venture to Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the counterfeit-cashing trip to Las Vegas.

It's good luggage. They're crafted of black tweed material. I purchased them at a very reasonable cost. This suits me fine. I'm not into spending big bucks on expensive luggage so the disgruntled careless gorillas at the airport can play destruction derby with my luggage. High-end luggage is just an invitation for theft and looting as well.

I've already checked the cost of rental cars with unlimited mileage and their rates are entirely economical. The convenience and entertainment factor will be worth the expense.

When I further figure the costs we'll incur by lodging at somewhat nicer accommodations such as Hilton Hotels, Holiday Inn, and Radisson Suites, along with fuel, food, etc., the amount of counterfeit we exchange for genuine each day will still, far, *far* outweigh all the expenses incurred. And we'll have an enjoyable, most memorable experience all the same.

• • • •

There is an important consideration I'd thought of earlier regarding the patterns criminals frequently follow. I'm talking about certain mannerisms they, we, generally devise for ourselves as a means of self-protection.

In other words... a criminal will use their intellect and intuition to set-up, strategically plot, and fulfill the act of the crime in such a manner in which they, we, feel safest altogether.

This is what the criminologist and law enforcement officials utilize in catching criminals in the act. They follow, track and configure the criminals' next move.

It's as similar a situation as playing chess; only it's easier for the law enforcement officials to figure because there is generally a distinctive pattern. So, to avoid setting myself up for a fall by planning for what I think is best, I must think even further in advance of the knowledge I'm currently drawing upon in which to plan the "Counterfeit Cashing Tour."

Bear with me, please.

A counterfeiter, of *any* experience, is an artist in his, or her own right. I draw upon knowledge, ability, and creativity to produce the counterfeit.

The design and specifics of the counterfeit bill(s) thus becomes a "fingerprint" in which the Secret Service can use to track a counterfeiter in the future. This theory, or fact, is based upon the same thought processes a counterfeiter will utilize when determining how and where they (I) will exchange the counterfeit for genuine.

Consider this: I personally will only cash my counterfeit at nightclubs, casinos and fast food establishments.

I won't, however, cash my counterfeit at banks (too many cameras), nor at mom and pop operations (don't want to cheat them... morals, you know).

And I won't cash the counterfeit at gas stations (a license plate can be recorded), and surely not at a store where they sell health-oriented food. I have very specific guidelines regarding where I will and will not exchange my counterfeit... period!

I "will not" have a pattern whereas the Secret Service may try to track me once I start exchanging the counterfeit. They may even attempt to await my arrival at my next possible exchange stop; however, to throw them off, I thought of this fabulous idea. This one'll cost me a few extra dollars, but it will be well worth the cost for peace of mind and the safety factor.

Now, if an innocent citizen were to find one of my (sacrificial) counterfeit bills, yet had no knowledge to the fact that it is indeed a counterfeit, they will cash it at places I'd never consider doing; banks, grocery stores, clothes stores, gas stations, etc.

Not only would this throw the Secret Service off from any established pattern: but it would keep them busy in ways beyond their wildest belief, because, for each counterfeit bill, which is discovered, an Agent is generally dispatched to go to the establishment where the counterfeit is detected. Then, he, or she, must fill out a report regarding the counterfeit in question.

Imagine if you will, I secretly leave behind a twenty-dollar bill on the floor at the mall, grocery store, or bus stop. Now an innocent bystander finds it and cashes it where I wouldn't otherwise.

The Secret Service would be quite busy and disenchanted.

Or better still... un-band a bundle of two hundred and fifty bills and toss the bills out the window one at a time, one per block, on any street, in any city across the U.S. This would be done inconspicuously at nighttime.

Eventually, many different persons would find these counterfeits and most likely not know they're bogus. Now this is where the fun and the fireworks begin.

Again, they'd cash the counterfeit in all the places I'd never consider. Of course, none of the unsuspected would likely get in trouble by the Secret Service because they'd be caught with only one bill in their possession.

For this, I believe, they would *not* be considered a passer of counterfeit in the eyes of the authorities, unless they had a criminal past with similar illicit behavior. Other than that, they'd be considered an innocent victim of circumstance... an un-knowing citizen.

This is one of the best methods, I feel certain, of throwing the Secret Service off any patterned trail.

Does this make sense to you? I surely hope so, because it's one hell of a good method of confusing the authorities.

This plan was discussed and agreed upon by Alexia, who believes as I do, that the loss is well worth the gain. And so be it.

This plan will be implemented after our test of exchanging the counterfeit in Las Vegas. We don't want to seed the Vegas turf just yet.

For the tour, maybe we'll use a midsize luxury car: although I truly do love convertible sports cars. However, I must think *low key*. I don't seem to recollect State Troopers pulling over retired-persons-cars.

Can we agree thus far?

After Las Vegas, our first city to visit for sightseeing and exchanging will be Denver, Colorado. Following Denver, we'll visit Salt Lake City, Utah. Then: San Francisco, California, and onto Seattle, Washington.

Once we reach San Diego, California, we'll exchange counterfeit: then head north to Los Angeles: followed by Phoenix, Arizona. While in Arizona we'll pay a visit to Scottsdale. The Sonora Desert will be in full bloom. What a great photographic opportunity.

Next we'll head to Dallas, then Houston, and onto New Orleans. We'll halt the exchanging and casually drive home to Miami, with a three-day stop at Disney World... just for the fun of it.

• • • •

The counterfeit is completed, divided and concealed. Our transportation is planned for and reserved; likewise, the itinerary concerning the cities we'll visit. The rest, basically, will fall into place.

It's now time for a few days of relaxation and enjoyment as we'd planned for at Bahia Honda Key. The camera bag is well stocked with rolls of film and fresh batteries. My special lenses are all cleaned and accounted for. Bathing suits are packed. Suntan lotion (my creation of extra virgin olive oil blended with cocoa butter and aloe vera gel) is ready to go.

We'll bring along a bounty of my homemade, hand-selected, all natural, unsalted, raw trail mix and other healthy snacks. Inline skates, music, beach towels and drinks are packed and ready.

As Alexia and I head south on Florida's Turnpike towards the Keys, the towering white cotton-puff cumulus clouds float by from east to west. Their bases are not too dark, so there shouldn't be much of a threat for rain... for now. In Florida, one can never predict.

Everywhere I look, the scenery is green and lush. In the marshy waters off to the sides of the roadway, beautiful white Egrets walk the shallow water, seeming to tiptoe carefully between the flower-covered lily pads. Their heads jerk back and forth with each step.

Some of the larger trees are inundated with thirty, maybe forty of the big birds, who are taking a break from their hunt for the fish, which occupy the marsh. They know it's not safe in the water where the alligators lurk; waiting for an Egret snack.

As we travel more southerly, the marshes become vast expanses of the southeastern edge of Everglades National Park.

Occasionally, we get to see an alligator sunning itself on the roadside embankment, or swimming serenely by as they keep their eyes above the waterline; searching-out that tasty white-feathered *snack*.

As we approach Key Largo, the first island on the Key's chain, the sight we see is ocean on both sides of the roadway. The water is right up to the road's edge.

To the left is the Atlantic. To the right is Florida Bay. Here, the Florida Bay mixes with the Gulf of Mexico and the fresh water of the Everglades. This water becomes a brackish concoction of liquid-life for many creatures.

Here you'll find the large, yet gentle, endangered Manatee; also, known as a "Sea Cow." It is unlawful to touch Manatees unless *they* initiate contact.

Some years ago, my brother, Gary, his wife, the Hungarian ex-girlfriend Adriana and myself, had the opportunity to swim, play, caress and frolic with a family of Manatees on Key Largo's north side in a small bay.

This pleasure took place for a half hour while we waited for our snorkeling charter boat to take us out to the coral reefs of John Pennekamp Underwater State Park.

We took plenty of photographs to bear witness to this unheard of experience of ten lifetimes.

• • • •

Alexia looks to the left as she comments about the hoards of people lining the bridges between the islands. They all have fishing poles or Cuban reels. The five gallon buckets at their feet likely have fresh catches-of-the-day swimming around awaiting their unknown fate.

The water is so clear that it's easy to see the fish as it's about to take the bait from your hook. One needs only to snag the fish as they nibble the bait.

Please keep in mind that these are *not* the colorful tropical coral reef fish you'd see in an aquarium. Those reside at the reefs just a mile from the shoreline.

The ocean air feels good as it blows through the open windows of our vehicle. I can hardly wait to snorkel amongst the beautiful "reef" fish and other marine life. Alexia is anxious to sunbathe.

As we approach the entryway to Bahia Honda State Park, it's nearly impossible to overlook the deeply bent curved trunks of the coconut palm trees that line the shore. The water composing this postcard-like backdrop has got to be the most turquoise-blue water of either coast in southern Florida. It's absolutely picturesque.

We hold hands as we walk the soft sands on the shore. Our feet are splashed with warm tropical waters as the waves crash gently, quietly. We have little conversation so as not to disrupt the peace and tranquility, which exudes us.

This island is nearly empty because we're visiting on a weekday. The only sounds to our ears are the squeaks of seagulls, the wind, and surf. It's truly magnificent.

In the water, just touching the shore is a large, ancient looking tree, completely stripped of its bark. It's smooth and weathered in appearance: grayish tan in color. The tree lies on its side in three feet of water.

A person can climb the leafless, twig-less, bark-less branches, which extend up and out maybe ten to twelve feet. We sit on one of the smooth branches in silence, looking around and appreciating all the beauty, which surrounds us.

Alexia has an idea for me to photograph her topless, while she drapes her slender body seductively across the branches... or was it my idea? Well, regardless, she takes her position on the branch while I climb down into the crystal clear water.

I shoot-off a dozen or more photographs of her in different poses, while two males and a female watch from the shore. Typically I would be somewhat jealous of another man viewing my semi-nude girl, however, at this moment I'm rather proud and secure. I don't mind.

As I take a few steps backwards...

"Owwww! Son of a bitch!" A large crab takes a chunk of skin from my Achilles heel. His powerful pinchers effortlessly took away the skin. I must have unknowingly stepped on the poor guy.

I quickly attempt to photograph him as he sidesteps his way out of the danger zone. Then I walk at a fast pace to the shore before I can attract the more harmful bites from local Barracuda. The photo-shoot is officially over.

• • • •

I feel pain from the wound as the boot of the inline skate presses against its tenderness. But it's too nice a day to whimper and whine. Okay, so maybe I whimper a few times until I'm told by Alexia to shut-up and stop crying.

We witness the most gorgeous sunset, then drive an hour more to the island of Key West—the furthest south, and last socially inhabited island in the chain.

Alex and I enjoy a romantic dinner on the second story balcony of a lushly landscaped, downtown restaurant. The candlelight ambiance, wine, and Alexia make it enchanting. Alexia's beautiful face smiling over at me makes it seductive.

After dinner we walk amongst the tourists and do some window-shopping. I can't resist purchasing all kinds of large clam-type seashells and coral, which I'll use as a toothbrush holder, cotton swab holder, and soap dish for the vanity area of our bathroom at home.

I also purchase many pieces of Amethyst crystals, fossils and other natural rocks. She buys a new bathing suit, if you can call it that. It must be constructed of less than six square inches of material... total.

We finally finish shopping and head back to the hotel to share a nice shower together. Because of an exhausting day, we make love for maybe a half hour. But it's enjoyable enough. We'll sleep well.

• • • •

For the next couple of days the itinerary is basically the same. It's now time to head back to Miami. Once home, I check the answering machine and there are still no buyers for the printing press. It's the only item left that can implicate me as the printer of the counterfeit.

I don't like the idea of leaving it at home. I keep postponing my initial thoughts of dumping it into the depths of the Atlantic, but I'll explain that to you later.

“Through reading and studying, I know a little about a lot... yet I’ll never know it all. And I may not be as wise as Confucius, but I always try to follow my first intuition.”

CHAPTER NINE

“ Tragedy Averted ”



We're back in Miami after our two-week vacation to Argentina. Alexia and I await our trip to Las Vegas for a test run of the counterfeits. Our stress *and* excitement levels skyrocket. We leave tomorrow.

April 20, 1992 - 9:45 am (N. Miami, FL)

Goddamned idiots! I told them to be here no later than nine. They should have shown by now. This is *exactly* why I hate selling anything to people through the classified ads.

I'm so pissed off it's not even funny. Dammit! ...No, damn *them*. I've got to get rid of this printing press, now! I should have given it away, just to get it out of here before we leave. It's getting real late. We'll never make it on time. The plane leaves in two hours, we're not even packed, and the fucking press is still here. I can't just leave it behind. It's much too risky. I've got to figure out something... and fast!

"Alex!" I call out. Silence. "Alexia! Do you see any sign of those idiots?" Silence. "Alex... can you hear me?" This time I yell loudly across the interior of the house. As she approaches me, her beauty radiates. "Wow! You look gorgeous."

"Thanks, babe," she smiles and kisses me.

"Did you not hear me calling you?" I ask her very politely.

"No. I'm sorry. Wadaya need?"

"Could you check out the window and tell me if anyone has shown up yet? Maybe they're waiting by the door. They swore on their mother they'd be here on time. I've got a few things to clean before we go. Thanks, sweetie."

Well, it's getting much too close to departure time. Screw them. And screw this press. It's their fucking loss. Sometimes I just hate people. Can't count on *anyone* to keep their word. Couldn't they at least have called and said they changed their mind? Something! Damn them.

I really hate having to leave the press here, but I have no choice right now. I'm not missing this plane. I've got too much time and work into this operation, and I'm not going to miss my opportunity.

If only I had followed my first intuition... my original plan for ditching this stupid press. The plan was to rent a boat in Fort Lauderdale: a trawler type. Then, under the cover of a pitch-black, moonless night, Joey, Steve and myself would load the heavy machine onto the boat and haul it out to sea. Once we motor-out a mile or so eastward, the ocean's depth reaches roughly two hundred feet or more.

At that point we'd dump the piece-of-shit machine into the Atlantic. It was a great plan. Foolproof. Chances of getting caught... seemingly zero. And caught for what?

Then I began to think about the plan in more logical terms. The U.S. Coast Guard is out there continuously patrolling the waters of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

What if they were to stop us, for say, general purpose? They have the authority and firepower to do just about anything they want.

Their mighty forces confront an untold amount of watercraft each day. Their target? Mainly drug smugglers as they make their runs from South America, speeding their way around Cuba, headed to secret rendezvous points at various safe areas along South Florida's vast coastline. The Coast Guard never knows what to expect when they stop a boat. I can't take the chance of their curiosity.

What'll I tell them? The press is an old broken-down junker, beyond repair, and I'm bringing it out to the open sea because I thought it would make a great artificial reef?

Not too bad of a story though, huh? It sounds reasonable. But with Steve's crazed Mafioso appearance, and the fact that we're doing it suspiciously at night, the odds would be against us. A situation I'd rather not gamble on.

So I scratched that idea against my intuition and came up with this plan of selling the press through the classifieds. But people don't often call and it's always sketchy: while mostly disappointing.

Then, if they do call, they generally don't show. And if they do show, they try to cheat you during a situation of desperation, which they created by playing hard-to-get over the telephone in the first place! Bastards! This method of disposal is a lot of hassle. But, under the circumstances, in the end, I believe, this will be much safer... the classifieds.

• • • •

Great! Someone is actually here. They're terribly late, but they're here nonetheless. I can see one car with two occupants in suits as I peer through the pinhole opening where the string weaves its way through the window blind.

They don't look like printers. They're dressed much too inappropriately for that job. Maybe they're *owners* of a print shop? I hope this is the case.

As I'm about to open the door, a second car pulls into the circular driveway. There's a single occupant. A middle aged Hispanic gentleman. He's dressed, from what I can see of his top half, casually.

This is strange. First they're late, and now two cars pull-up at the same time? I don't like this one bit. I must think quickly. Maybe they're Secret Service Agents.

They could have been positioned close by, going over plans before their sting operation to bust me.

Should I tell them the press has been sold and not allow them into my home? Better safe than sorry.

I should follow my gut instinct, but I need this press out of here now. It's my last chance before we leave.

As I open the door I see the two men step from their car. They take a moment to adjust their suits. It must be humid as usual.

The Hispanic man sits there doing nothing but observe. Then a car drives slowly by looking at my house, does a u-turn and pulls into my driveway.

A man and a woman dressed professionally occupy the vehicle. At this point I feel that it's definitely over. It's all over well before it even gets started.

This three-car situation is much too coincidental. Paranoia grips me hard and sends knots twisting with pain deep into my stomach. It's too late now; they're here. I've got to do something.

If they're not Secret Service, and they *are* here for business, I wonder if they'll be suspicious of the place which is absent of so much that furnishes a home?

All five of them stroll past me one by one as they enter the void of the front room. I greet them with a, "Hello." My voice echoes off the polished cement Terrazzo floor.

A nerdy man from the third car questions the home's emptiness and asks if I'm moving? Which is great because it lends credibility to my story of selling everything cheap to raise money for my move: and the fact of the semi-empty home.

“Yep,” I nod and smile. “We’re head’in to California. That’s why I’m selling everything. I need the money to move and re-establish. Plus, having to drive cross-country with a big trailer? Done *that* too many times. I love California: mostly the mountains. The trees are beautiful and the ocean has waves... and foggy coastal days.” I sigh and try to look sad. Desperate for the scenery I’d just described.

“I know what you mean,” the nerd replies with a strong tone of agreement. A few heads nod in acceptance. I don’t like to lie unless it’s absolutely necessary. And right now it’s *absofuckinglutely* necessary!

I smile at them on the outside, but on the inside I’m raging in anger: totally disgruntled with their tardiness. I’ve got to control my temper, which has now seemed to take over in place of my paranoia.

Since the nerd spoke-up, I seem to have lost most of my worry. I feel more at ease. With my anger though, come wise-ass comments. These I must subdue and keep locked inside. I need to be nice to sell the press.

“Gentlemen... ma’am.” She looks very professional in her suit. But, then, don’t most Agents? “I’d like to thank you all for coming here today. I’ve got to show you the press rather quickly though, because it’s way past our nine o’clock agreement and I’ve got a business meeting in Lauderdale today starting at noon.”

I begin to sound confident. “You know... a little while longer and you’d have missed out on such a great deal entirely. I think you’ll agree when you see the press. But, at least you still have the opportunity now. So let’s get going, shall we? Any questions?” Some heads nod in the no gesture. “Good. Follow me.”

I’d offer them something to drink, or even act formal, buuuut, you know... fuck ‘em.

I lead the group to the spare room where the immaculate press waits. It looks impressive I must admit; spotlessly clean. This room is entirely empty, no furniture or even a speck of dust, anywhere. The press looks odd standing in the middle of the room with nothing else but bare walls.

The five strangers position themselves and stand around the press as if they’re interns about to watch the surgeon play God. One of the prospects—the short Cuban man who came here alone—steps forward to get a closer look. He’s dressed in expensive Levi’s™ Silver Tab™ denim jeans, Polo™ sport shirt, ostrich skin boots with a matching belt, and a nice gold watch.

As he touches the machine from end to end, his smile grows, “Mui bueno. Es nice. Lukes goud,” he spurts out in a broken English, heavy Cuban accent. Then he asks me, “Jou speaka de Spanish?”

“No. Jo habla pocito es Spanol.”

He pats me on the shoulder and smiles, “Ahh... es sokay,” he says. “Eh... how mush jou wan for des?”

“Three thousand five hundred in cash.”

As I finish my quote, another person, the lady, walks to me and gently places her business card into my hand.

“American Lithographic Supply, Inc.”

Whoooooly shit! What the hell is *she* doing here? My panic has returned. I’m once again terrified. And I’ve got a dammed good reason to be. This is the company where I had purchased a large amount of my printing supplies.

Usually, I sent Joey or Alexia to their store in Fort Lauderdale. However, one of the few times where I’d actually gone myself, a very bizarre scene had occurred. It was an experience I’ll never forget. I remember it all too well.

One day...

Some lady, a sales rep behind the counter, asked me in a tone which resembled more of a statement, “Why are you buying these particular colors of inks (emerald green and densely pigmented blacks) and high resolution printing plates?”

And while making that statement, in a joking-sort-of-way, she continued on, “Are you printing money or something?”

I was absolutely blown away. It was as if she knew. This could mean big-time trouble, I thought. I was in grave fear.

My thinking went into hyper-overdrive: is there some sort of pattern of buying, or certain types of supplies, or the fact that I was a new face, a new name, that she considered likely to be a counterfeiter?

Are there any particular types of purchases that are required to be discretely reported to the Secret Service? Turn the person in? Get a reward? They already have my name and address from previous purchases. And this was a very peculiar statement to make to a customer: especially, a new customer... and in the printing business *to ask such a question?*

During that moment of shock I had to maintain my composure and quickly come up with a convincing lie. I laughed with her and told her the same story I had told the other suppliers. But I don't know if she'd really bought it as she led me on to believe. So I was worried. However, the scene and the worry slowly faded from my short-term memory.

I hope that story months ago did the trick in alleviating any suspicion... or did it? Is the woman here today, who stands in front of me so professional in stature, genuinely representing American Litho, or is she working under alternative pretenses—maybe helping the Secret Service? I'll find the answers soon enough.

I'd really hate to get busted before I even have the opportunity to spend some of the counterfeit I worked so hard to produce. Well, at least everything is cleaned and the money is hidden.

There's nothing left behind to incriminate me now, just a clean printing press being stored in an empty room, waiting to be sold. Is that so illegal? No. But I'm still worried.

None of the people in my home at this moment could possibly know about the counterfeit, so why should I be so preoccupied with this unsettling fear? How about... twenty long years in prison with Rocco and Bubba and soap on a rope? No warm, soft, sensual women for the next two fucking decades!

Even though I've got this strange feeling inside, it's too late to turn back now. It is time to demonstrate the press. They seem eager to see it operate. All eyes are upon me. In a few seconds the machine should purr like a pussycat.

"Once again," I ask, "are there any questions? I won't be able to hear a thing while the press is running." I say this firmly, yet politely. Business first: anger second.

I mumble to myself, "No questions? Good... you fucking jerk-offs." I really don't like them mainly because of their blatant disregard towards my valued time, and their false promises to be here at nine. To be honest, I began to not like them at *nine-o-one* this morning!

• • • •

By turning the metal hand-crank wheel I raise the small stack with only five reams of new paper I'd purchased specifically for this demonstration.

I switch on the main motor and vacuum pump. Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka...

I remember that wonderful sound and what it meant just a few weeks earlier. The noise is at least five times louder in this room because there's no soundproofing on the walls, and it echoes off the Terrazzo floor as well.

Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka... it never stops making this sound until the press comes to a death-like stop. And now, it's alive again. Its flawed character is playing its part and teasing me... taunting me. That mean streak: the temper tantrums. It's all coming back to haunt me as I stand here anxiously.

Che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka, che-ka... the press is running perfectly, beautifully, now. Grrreat! I wish it worked this well when I needed it most... this piece of shit!

One of the prospects asks to see it operate even faster still. No problem. I turn the speed handle and—whooooosh! Not a single misfeed.

The noise in the room is unbearable. Quite deafening. Our ears cannot handle this much longer without ear protection, so I reverse the speed handle and wind down the press.

"What do you think, gentlemen... ma'am?" Before they can speak-up I answer my own question boldly, "Pretty nice, huh?" I say this with a big smile as the press runs much more quietly at idle speed. Just then...

"Son of a—" I say aloud, but stop myself from completing the statement. Jammed. What the fuck? I think this quietly inside.

Everything halts to that death-like stop: a printer's nightmare. Just like old times: a deal killing jam right in front of their watching eyes and money-filled wallets.

Not a good thing to happen. Not now: *I hate this machine*. I've always hated it. It has always hated me as well. Maybe the machine has got an honest character and it didn't like what I was using it for, so it made me suffer extra. Regardless, it's jammed and I've got to find the problem now, or, no sale today.

I start looking casually, yet quickly, hoping that it's a simple fix. If it's an easy fix they'll understand and we'll be looking food. I'll still have a chance for a sale. I don't seem to find the problem as fast as I want to. I look through the upper sections of the machine... and... nothing.

A quick check of the mid-section... and nothing again. Dammit! Just one or two unusual areas to check as a last-ditch effort... and... what the... nothing.

I'm beginning to stress to the max. I keep my home at sixty-four degrees, and it is definitely cold in this room, yet two drops of sweat fall from my forehead and land atop the stack of waiting paper. I hope none of them had seen that. They're standing here patiently.

Why doesn't this piece of shit feed anymore? It was just working perfectly. I curse it aloud with politically correct gentleman's words. No one suggests an answer, or even steps forward to assist.

I say to myself, "They don't help because they don't know how to help, because they're goddamned Agents."

Again, I'm getting paranoid.

Then with a shout of excitement, "Yes! Yes indeed! I see the problem, folks!" I turn to their watching faces and give them a smile. "It looks simple. It's just a small piece of something blocking the slotted opening where the paper feeds into the press. Alright!"

They all look on contently, and in total concentration as I lightly lift the thin metal flapped-edge and pull out the piece of... one of my counterfeit twenties. Oh... my... God! How can I have such bad luck?

Instantly, they all moan and groan, speaking in murmured tones. They seem to be in total shock as if they were the same interns who've just witnessed the surgeon toss the patient's heart into the waste basket and say, "Fuck'im; he doesn't need this anymore. Nurse, close for me while I smoke a stogy." Then the surgeon strikes a stick match on the patient's forehead and walks out of the room.

I mean... they're freaking out!

The grumbling and talking between them is very unsettling as they stare at each other in disbelief at what I just pulled from my press. Now they stare at *me* in disbelief.

I'm suddenly alienated as if I'm a well-known killer on the FBI's Most Wanted list and I'm brandishing a Hollywood-sized butcher knife.

They actually back away a foot or two when I open my mouth to speak. They continue to stare; now, unspeaking, unsmiling, confused. Their thoughts seem to be mixed with a large dose of horror. My acting better be an Oscar quality performance this time, if I'm going to convince them of my shock and my innocence as well.

"This is not from me," I pleasantly insist while gleaming an honest smile and nodding my head from side to side. "Certainly it must be from the previous owner."

The lady asks, "Then why didn't it jam until now?"

Good question, Bitch. I think to myself. The others just remain silent. Suddenly, the two men in suits leave while showing themselves out the door.

"Wow" I explain earnestly, quickly. "When I cleaned the machine I must have loosened the paper that may have been there for quite a while. Really. Come on now. Would I sell a printing press to strangers if I did something illegal with it, and then not clean it?"

The lady answers politely, "Well... no. I mean... I should hope not. You don't look like the type who'd do anything illegal."

"Thank you. And I wouldn't either."

The nerd and the Cuban agree as well.

Then we continue on. But I'm really worried about the two men who left—and if they're going to the police?

Deep inside I'm very angry with myself. How could I have been so fucking stupid? I swear to myself. How could I have been so careless? Thirty-plus hours cleaning this piece of shit!

And to top it off, it could have been any portion of the bill, but noooo, it has to be the most recognizable part, the "20" on the corner, so clearly evident and easy to spot at even a ten foot distance. It's simply an undeniable, unmistakable part of a counterfeit bill: one, which was printed on this press.

They know what I'm up to. They've got to! It all makes sense now. This has got to be the end of the line for me. I wait for one of them to pull a badge and yell... "Freeze, motherfucker! You're under arrest! Face down on the ground! Do it! *Now!*"

But the three of them begin to laugh as if it were a prank I pulled. After all, who'd believe one could have this bad of luck?

So, keeping my voice low and even, and a smile on my face, I start the press again. I don't even look back over my shoulder. With a turn of the speed handle. The press sucks-up more of the paper perfectly, then I shut it down with relief.

I finish by showing-off some of the new, inventive fabrications I designed and added, along with the addition of factory upgrades I'd purchased and installed.

“Some of the new systems are designed for top performance,” I point out, “They’ll provide you with better quality printing and higher running speeds, thus allowing for not only happier customers, quality-wise, but time-wise as well. And with all these features and benefits, you can get on to the next profit-earning job, sooner.”

They seem impressed and are happy once again. No one speaks to make an offer, though. It seems anyways, that I’ll have to kick them out immediately if I’m going to make my plane on time. It’s now gotten real late. Screw this. I’ve got to get moving. I don’t need their petty bullshit or pocket change. At least I’d given it a try.

Just as I’m about to open my door to toss them out, the Cuban man asks if I’ll take three thousand, cash? Well, ummmm, sold!

As the others leave the house I say my goodbyes, “Thank you for stopping”... fuck you very much.

The Cuban gentleman reaches for his wallet. I wait to see a badge. Maybe he didn’t want shots to be fired with innocent bystanders nearby. And maybe I’ve seen too many cop movies.

He pulls a wad of crisp hundreds; then laughs aloud as I check each of them to ensure that they’re genuine. I think he knows about me, but doesn’t care. Maybe he’s buying the press to do the same thing I’d done.

“Senor, may I juse jour phun? My partner has got de trok. We deedn’t wan to pool op fron an make jou thin we’re eesy, jou know?”

“No problem, amigo.” I retrieve the cordless phone’s handset for him “Just push this button, here, and you’re ready.”

“Gracious,” he smiles.

“Da nada.”

Within one minute, a bright yellow Ryder moving truck pulls-up alongside my driveway. Another Cuban man, dressed almost paramilitary style jumps from the passenger seat while the driver remains behind the wheel. The buyer and the passenger talk for thirty seconds then wave their hand at the driver.

A skinny, sickly looking, salt and pepper-haired, bearded older man in cut-off denim shorts and leather sandals, jumps from the open door and hoofs it to the rear loading door. He flings up the latch, then, slides the door upwards. He then jumps inside and tosses out the aluminum loading-ramp. At this time he runs down the ramp pushing a large four-wheeled dolly.

“Great,” I say. “A four wheeler. I wish there were more people like you, senor. This’d be a much better world.” I thank him sincerely.

Just as I speak Alexia comes out from the bedroom where I’d asked her to stay in hiding while I tried to sell the press. I didn’t want the strangers to ask questions she couldn’t answer. She understood my reasoning and obeyed my request, until now.

When the three men see Alexia, their eyes light up. They try not to smile, that is, until she greets them in a sexy Spanish voice, "Ola. Como estas?"

They reply at the same time, "Bien, eh to?"

"Bien. Gracious," she smiles.

I laugh inside as I observe "human-man" behavior at its best. They stare at her from head to toe and everywhere in between. She pulls me aside and informs me that while she was waiting in the room, she packed everything we'd need for the trip to Las Vegas.

Now she heads for the kitchen to pack some fresh vegetables and fruit in Zip-Lock™ baggies which we'll carry on the plane. The vegetarian meals served on airlines aren't always the most health oriented to my particular standards. No tofu cheeses and no sprouted breads, etc; so she'll prepare us a small healthful feast.

"Alexia," I ask her quietly, "could you call my uncle and make sure he's on his way here. He promised us a ride to Fort Lauderdale International."

"I'll call right now."

I don't understand. From the goodness of my heart I offer the bastard uncle five hundred thousand dollars, then ask for a damned ride to the airport, and the old goat goes *Billy* on me? I sure hope he's on his way. He'd better get here soon. The airport is at least twenty minutes away.

I help to lift the fourth corner of the press onto the dolly/cart. We push it slowly to the front door. Once the press is out the door they must move it carefully across the rough cement to their truck.

I ask Alexia again to try calling the uncle at Cemetery Village... I mean Century Village. She laughs, as *he himself* does when they hear the altered name I gave this retirement condominium complex located a few miles west of the beach.

"Alex, if he's not there try the condo at the beach: please."

Just as I'm thinking of him, and just as the Cubans are creeping across the driveway with the press, he finally shows up.

What the—? He brought my aunt Esther? What an *idiot!* She'll be much too curious as to why I have a printing press in my house?

I love her so much and I hate to lie to her, but how do I explain a printing press? And to top it off, fat-fuck brought the "Pimp Mobile!" Sonofabitch!

Remember the car I had mentioned earlier and promised to tell you about? Well it's here. And it's in my driveway. It'll be my chariot in which I'll be whisked away to the airport to begin my highly illegal adventure. Is this any way to start?

The car is a late eighties four-door Lincoln Town Car. It's that ugly-shaped squared-off bucket of bolts. The paint is bright candy-apple red with a white vinyl roof. The interior is all filthy white vinyl as well.

To make matters worse... if they could be worse... is the *clincher of shame*. This very conspicuous pimp-mobile has (where the front license plate is supposed to be), a rectangle of white plastic encircled by a gaudy, gold plated, thick linked chain. Glued to the white plastic are enormous, cheap-looking, four-inch tall gold letters, which spell out, "MR. G." Yeah. Okay. The man is truly lost in space. "Hellllo—earth to Dave."

I've unfortunately, unknowingly committed myself to ride in this... *thing!*

"What happened to the brand new Cadillac Sedan DeVille, uncle Dave?"

"I didn't want to scratch the trunk with your luggage."

"Are you sure? Cause I just don't believe that aunt Esther would let you drive it?"

Aunt Esther laughs aloud before the old man can get in a response. When it comes to cars and clothes the guy really never has had much taste.

He's the only person I know who'll wear his shirttail hanging out below his evening jacket when he's out on the town. I generally walk ten feet behind him and hope that no one links us.

It's so embarrassing. Hell, he might as well walk with a six-foot tail of tainted toilet paper hanging from his pants. Lucky for me the relationship is purely maternal.

Anyways...

They walk towards Alexia and my aunt gives her a quick peck on the cheek. The old pervert gives her a long mushy wet one right on her mouth. I'm sure Alexia has to fight to hold down the bile wanting to erupt from her stomach like a volcano.

After the Ryder truck disappears down the street, my uncle walks towards me as I stand twenty feet from the two women, "Wayne, my boy," he whispers, "the money' all finished? It's all hidden too?"

"Uncle Dave, you don't have to whisper. And yes, everything is done. It's all ready to go. But I got a small problem regarding the hundred thousand of test money. Follow me, quickly."

I lead him to the bedroom where I show him the not-able-to-zip-closed shoulder holsters in which the hundred thousand was supposed to be secured; and now it won't fit...

"So we've got to put the money in the suitcase, but I have no lock. I'll need you to drive by the tool store on Pembroke and Four-forty-one so I can buy a lock. You'll have to drive faster than usual, though, if we're gonna make it to the airport on time. We got less than forty-five minutes to get there and get on the plane."

"Sure, Vanehala. Are you ready to go?"

"Yeah. And don't forget, you gotta make a story to tell aunt Esther about the printing press if she asks. Did she know what it was when she saw it?"

“No. Don’t worry, my boy. I’ll take care of that.” He holds one of the bundles of money with a smile on his face. “This money looks so real! I can’t wait to hear from you on your first phone call. Tell me if it works out. Don’t forget to call, okay?”

He’s such a dick. He only cares about the money. I can tell.

I grab the heavy suitcases, as usual, and toss them into the mafia-sized trunk of the Lincoln. Alexia runs around the home’s interior to ensure that all the lights and other electronics are off. I raise the air-conditioner temperature to seventy-four. Joey will come here to feed and give water to Zorro. Doors are locked... we’re on our way.

• • • •

My head stays ducked low as we drive down my street. I honestly don’t want to be seen in public in the pimp-mobile. After stopping at the tool store for the lock, we head east to I-95: then north towards Fort Lauderdale.

When we arrive, there’s only ten minutes to spare. The skycap tries to grab my luggage before I have a chance to wrap tape around the important counterfeit-laden piece.

“Whoah! Sir” I quickly stop the *likely-illegal* alien, “I need to wrap this one. The zipper is messed-up. Do you have any tape I could—”

“No, sir. Sorry,” he interrupts abruptly and non-caringly.

I look over at the United Airlines desk next door and spot a large roll of tape. When I ask the attendant, the man actually has the audacity to extend his hand as if he's asking for a tip, or a price, beforehand?

So now I feel like just grabbing the tape and slapping him-five... and I don't mean dollars. However, I'm in a hurry and I need this tape more than I need trouble, so I give him a ten-dollar bill and grab the tape rudely.

I proceed to make four bands of tape in two directions around the piece of luggage, similar to the way I had wrapped the tape around the half million I buried.

This jerk-of-a-skycap receives in return a slice of round cardboard tubing: not one inch of tape left on it. Hey, I paid him ten bucks!

Now *my* skycap can check it in while Alexia and I say our goodbyes to the aunt and uncle. We make our escape and disappear into the bustling terminal. We barely make it on time for the last-call announcement.

Our seats are in the utmost aft section. Nothing is behind us except carpeted bulkhead. So here we sit, comfortably in an L1011 Luxury-liner. This is a smooth-flying aircraft. It has a good dependability record... except for the L1011, which crashed in Dallas a few years ago.

Both United™ and American™ airlines have excellent maintenance programs and safety records, but I'm still terrified, regardless. This aircraft is not as big as a 747, but it's big and it flies, in the air, at 600+ mph, 25,000 feet above the ground.

We've waited many months for this moment. I've put in so many hours... days... weeks... months. Back breaking and mind-torturing labors. I hope it all works out fine. *This is it!*

I try to relax as I look out the window at the green fields surrounding the runways. The small cotton-puff clouds cast defined shadows on the ground. They threaten only sprinkles of rain. I contemplate the genuine money in my pocket and the massive amount of counterfeit in the luggage.

As I stare outside it's impossible to *not* notice this one solitary piece of luggage, which stands out like a flashing neon stop sign at night.

"Wow," I whisper to Alexia, "I never should have used so much tape on that piece. Damn. It seems to be shouting out, "Hey... look at me! I've got something to hide!"

I suppose it wasn't one of my better ideas.

However, no one seems to notice, or even cares. The strange looking piece of luggage rides up the conveyor belt then disappears into the plane's belly.

I hear the engines start. As usual, I inspect the job of the ground crew as they perform their final duties. I wish that I could be out there to assist and double-check their work.

Nonetheless, I'm forced by federal regulations to merely sit here and do my armchair preflight duty of basically... a prayer to a God I cannot see.

We push back onto the tarmac and taxi down the flight line towards the main runway. Because of the winds direction, we'll take off to the east as the wind blows westward. This procedure allows for more airflow over the wing's surface—resulting in a stronger force of lift.

We slowly taxi past the private Saberliners™, Learns™, Gulfstreams™ and other small jet aircraft. I marvel at them, knowing deep inside, that someday I'll own one myself.

I'll fly it through the clouds and dive-bomb kamikaze-style toward earthly objects in a manner that'll absolutely scare the shit out of Joey, and even Alexia. Driving with me on the ground will become a joy, comparatively.

I hold Alexia's hand as the engines rev full speed and roar to life. The brakes release and we begin our no-turning-back rollout, accelerating rapidly down the runway. We're pressed tightly against the cushions of our seats as the huge turbofan engines thrust the equivalent of more than "150,000 horsepower" out the rear of the jetliner.

It's up into the wild blue. In just a few hours from now we'll touch down. *Viva Las Vegas!*

RULES FOR EXCHANGING COUNTERFEIT CURRENCY

Rule Number One: never exchange counterfeit in an establishment where it'll take more than five seconds to escape—should trouble arise.

Rule Number Two: never... and I mean *never*, exchange the counterfeit in an establishment where there are armed guards who can actually shoot at you!

CHAPTER TEN

“ The Beginning To An End ”



April 21, 1992 - 9:30 am (Las Vegas, NV)

Our faces are too easy to remember should a witness need to bear description. Alexia and I drive our new luxury rental car to a costume store where I purchase an exacting mustache made of genuine human hair. Add some fake eyeglasses, and I'm all set to go. She chooses an all-black genuine human hair wig for herself.

• • • •

By now it's time for lunch. We drive to Kathy's Natural Foods Marketplace. We discuss our plans once again while we eat our steamed brown rice, which is topped with lightly seasoned sautéed vegetables. The second course is stuffed baked yams. Everything is organically grown. It's very nutritious and tasty.

After lunch we rush back to the dump-of-a-hotel, the Excalibur, where we're staying. It looks better from the outside... trust me.

I know we'll have a wonderful time making love. An hour with Alexia and anyone would be truly satisfied. Afterwards, we take a drive and I give her a tour of the Las Vegas Strip. Her dazzling smile shows the excitement she's feeling.

She and I play tourists for several hours. Hesitantly, I suggest we attempt to exchange our first counterfeit bill. She's as nervous as I am. And who wouldn't be? I happen to have several counterfeits in my wallet, and counterfeiting carries a *twenty-year* prison sentence!

• • • •

Allow me to state that I am very embarrassed to be in this particular type of establishment, let alone utter the words that I'll now need to speak in order for this plan to work.

It's been twelve years since I've stepped into a fast food establishment. I won't identify it as a restaurant because a *restaurant* is where one purchases *food*.

• • • •

The young girl with a noticeable saturation of acne on her greasy, pudgy, smiling face, speaks briskly and friendly, "Hi, welcome to Wendy's. May I take your order, sir?"

"Sure. I'll have a small hamburger... aaaand, uhhhh, a small soda."

"And what kind of soda would you like?"

I haven't had soda for so many years I seem to have forgotten the names of brands and flavors. The forgetfulness could be extreme stress, coupled with paranoia. This quickly becomes an awkward moment. "Okay. I'll have a... *Coke*?"

"Anything for you, miss?"

"No, thank you. I've just eaten."

Alexia smiles and gently squeezes my arm.

"Okaaaay," she says while she fingers the plastic keys on the register, "that'll be one single burger, plain, and a small Coke."

"Yes, thank you," I reply with a grin.

"Anything else for you?" she continues.
"Fries, frosty —"

Now she's beginning to irritate me. If I wanted that crap I would have asked for it. "No thank you."

"Salad bar or a cookie—"

"No thank you... really."

I maintain full coolness and exhibit no obvious symptoms of my elevating temper.

"Okaaaay, sir. If that'll be all, then, your total is two dollars and twelve cents, please."

I reach for my wallet knowing exactly where to extract one of the fake twenties that lies in the secondary section next to the genuine bills.

My hand trembles fiercely as if it has a mind of its own. It looks as if I have an advanced case of Lou Gering's disease.

As I give her the bill, my hand problem escalates from a tremble to a severe shaking. She *has* to notice... she just has to.

The youngster places the counterfeit atop the other twenties in the register. Now she's pulling my change from the smaller denomination money slots. "Okaaaay. You're change from twenty is seventeen dollars and eighty-eight cents, sir. You're order'll be up in just a sec."

She calls the order in a code over the loudspeaker. While paying attention to the manner in which she handles my counterfeit, I notice that she *does not* rub it between her fingers as if she's checking for two bills stuck together.

When money handlers do this, they're basically coping-a-feel for genuine' in a nonchalant diction so as not to insult the customer. Or, they rub it lengthwise as if they're straightening the bill.

However, this cashier, as with so many others, is in too much of a hurry, confirming my prediction, just as I hoped she and all the others would in the future. She has just proved to me that this plan for achieving tremendous wealth is going to work just fine.

I try to contain my excitement, as does Alexia. We want to grab our genuine change and walk straight out in triumph—a glorious victory. Success prevails in its finest example. Unfortunately, we have to wait for the food in order to make the transaction look legitimate.

After receiving the *cooked-in-its-own-fat, dead animal patty* between two *white dough buns*, and the *sugar-laden, carbon-dioxide-saturated, artificially colored and flavored beverage*, we walk quickly, yet calmly out the front door.

I end up giving the *stuff-in-a-bag* to one of two construction workers who are changing their flat tire in the establishment's parking lot.

Just as we arrive at our car, Alexia hugs me with all her might and gives me a bunch of kisses... "Babe, did you see how easily she took that money? You did it! It works! We're gonna be rich!" She's astounded with joy and dreams soon to come true.

I'm astounded as well. My dreams, too, are soon to come true: African photographic safaris, scuba diving the Great Barrier Reef, whale watching cruises off Alaska's coast, an expansive beach-front home on Florida's eastern shore, boats, fancy cars, and funding with the necessary time to help ecological conservation groups. This counterfeit works well. Absolutely! We're definitely rich.

• • • •

April 22, 1992 - 8:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

Once we finish our breakfast of fresh fruits, we brush and floss, then take the elevator to the casino level and walk towards the car. As we approach the rental vehicle, I split a bundle of the counterfeit and give it to Alexia. She places her \$2,500 worth of twenty-dollar bills into her little white leather pocketbook.

I fold my half and stuff the thick wad into my left pants pocket. The six other bundles get hidden deep in the confines of the car's trunk. We'll cash the other bundles once we cash the first.

We drive to Fremont Street in the heart of downtown. This is the original historical main street of Las Vegas well before Benjamin Siegel's time.

There are roughly sixteen hotels and casinos packed on this quarter-mile world-famous street. The neon lights are extremely bright. Come nightfall, the darkness becomes day. It's truly *that* bright.

The downtown hotels keep their casino frontage open to the sidewalks where the passing pedestrian tourists can easily walk inside and lose their money. The hotel management wouldn't want the gambles to strain an arm while opening a door when they need that same arm to pull slot machine handles.

We casually walk into each casino and exchange the counterfeits with the change persons who roam the interior.

They wear canvas waist-pouches that hold the loot. In these pouches are large quantities of rolled dollar tokens, quarters, nickels, and of course my favorite... *cash*.

When reserves run low, they have a large lock-box nearby in which supplies can be restocked. These storage boxes are located at the end of the slot machine rows. The thick wads of cash these employees carry are for making fast change with the gambling customers.

At first, Alexia stands next to me as we execute our first exchange in a casino. We have concerns about the fact that there are security guards who carry loaded guns, *and* who have the authorization to shoot when they think it's necessary.

The girl at Wendy's was likely naive and in a hurry. Also, she had no gun that could kill. Maybe the ease in which my first counterfeit passed was a fluke. I'm not really certain. This moment, however, is the *real* test.

We'll be trying to fool a professional money handler. Think about it. All she does for eight hours each and every day is handle currency. This initial test exchange will either excite us or send Alexia and I running at a cheetah' pace to the nearest exit. I certainly hope it works as planned. I silently pray to the God of Counterfeit.

"Hi," I smile at her, "I'd like a roll of quarters, please?" I hand over the counterfeit twenty while speaking. The greenish-blue *Bank of America* stamp looks so dammed authentic.

She glances at the bill, rubs it nonchalantly, then places it into her wad of currency and removes a genuine ten-dollar bill. She then pulls a roll of quarters from her pouch and hands it to me as well.

"Thank you very much," I grin while accepting the money; then I stuff the ten into my right front pants pocket. Using a slot machine's coin tray, I break the roll of quarters open with one hard whack!

Alexia and I play forty quarters in a joyous state of euphoria as we realize that even those expert Las Vegas money-handlers cannot begin to distinguish my counterfeit from genuine currency.

It's an awesome feeling knowing that I can, and did, manufacture with my own two hands, twelve and a half million dollars worth of spendable U.S. currency. It's even a greater feeling knowing that I can print as much as I desire, anytime, when this supply runneth empty.

We stick together for a few more minutes until Alexia rustles-up enough courage to begin exchanging the counterfeit bills on her own.

At this time, we decide that it's easiest and much faster to simply ask for two rolls of quarters. This is so the change person doesn't have to fumble around to find a ten-dollar bill amongst their thick bundle of cash. A quicker exchange allows less time for second thoughts and further scrutinizing the bill.

Alexia stands behind me in line, three customers back. Generally there'd be no line. However, today the casino is packed with gamblers just waiting to give their money away. I'll never quite understand why they do it.

We decide now to just break open the ten-dollar rolls of quarters and dump them into our plastic buckets, rather than suspiciously carrying them around unopened and in plain view. To continue on *without* this new method would certainly be too cumbersome and obvious.

Alex follows me around the casino seeking-out more change persons to make exchanges with. She's getting more bold in her attitude.

We play this machine and that one, always walking about as if we're looking for that one magic winner... that *hot slot* that's going to smile upon us with rewards of a Vegas jackpot.

Of course we don't give a shit about winning, though. She and I merely want to find another change person who'll exchange a few more counterfeits.

"Hi there," I smile and hold out another twenty. "Can I have two rolls of quarters, please?"

It generally pays to be polite.

"Sure," she replies in a Philippine accent as she places my counterfeit on bottom of her cash bundle. She hands over two rolls of quarters. "There you go. Good luck, sir."

After several hours of exchanging we become absolute professionals. And to pick up the rate of wealth building, I begin to request *four* rolls of quarters. It requires the exchanging of two counterfeits at once. There's no time to waste.

During this frenzy of counterfeit exchange, I dig myself deeper and deeper into the bowels of the casino—far from any nearby exit. At this point, none are in plain sight.

The breaking of rule number one!

I head towards the Blackjack (21) tables. Curiosity has the best of me. Will the dealers meet my counterfeit with the same degree of acceptance?

Or will the bright lights that shine down onto the green felt-covered tables be an exposing factor, forcing me to bolt for the nearest exit that I cannot even see right now?

I put four counterfeits and one genuine on the table. We watch as the dealer's jewelry-laden, manicured hands spread my five bills across the felt. The damned-spotlights shine down on the money like jewelry display case lamps illuminating brilliant diamonds.

Nevada State Gaming Control Officers as well as casino executives are upstairs in the overhead catwalks, watching down from thine heavens above the ceiling to ensure that the dealer passes me one hundred dollars in chips and not a single dollar more.

The dealer now scoops—in one fast motion—all five of my bills, and places them across a slot in the playing table. I watch eagerly as he uses a clear plastic spatula to push the four counterfeits and the one genuine completely through the slot. They disappear into the collection box hidden below.

The collection boxes throughout the casino are taken away every few hours to the soft-count (*currency only*) room in a somewhat vaulted area of the casino.

In these rooms, all bills are sorted by denomination. Next, they're tallied with the use of high-speed counting machines. These types are very similar to the machine that I had used to count the millions I'd printed.

It's in the soft-count room where the counterfeits are generally detected—that is—only if they're good enough to make it past the dealer in the first place.

Now that I've seen him scoop my bills and stuff them into the slotted hole, I know they'll be safely hidden away in the collection box for several hours. Who cares if they're discovered at that point in their journey: I'll be out of the casino shortly... well before the alarm bells toll.

The dealer smiles at me and politely asks, "What denomination chips would you like, sir?"

"Oh, how about two greens and ten reds, please."

As he spreads the chips out on the table for the eyes above to see and verify, he calls out loud enough for his Pit Boss to hear as well... "Changing a hundred! Good luck."

"Thank you," I smile.

I sit and play several hands. Win a few, lose a few; give him a tip. I thank him and walk away eighty dollars richer. It wouldn't wise to be seen cashing large amounts of currency at the tables unless I'm losing some of it back to the casino.

There are so many watchful eyes from every direction. However, I must say, that this was a good test for my counterfeits' quality. And they pass the tests with flying colors.

I'm now elevated to an even higher state of euphoria as I test my counterfeits on Blackjack, Roulette, and yes, even the Wheel of Fortune.

Finally, I head nervously over to the Dollar Slot Carousel. I've already transferred more counterfeit from my left pocket to that special spot in my wallet.

As I stand in front of the change person who's walking the perimeter atop the carousel, I extract *five* twenties. Subtly, she takes them from my hand.

At this point I'm very prepared to run should she recognize the five counterfeits. From where I'm standing it'll take more than five seconds to reach the nearest exit, even at a full sprint.

Unfortunately for me, though, this casino, as all gaming establishments alike, has a squad of armed security guards. Not thinking in my normal manner regarding safety, I go for it against of my self-instituted laws.

The breaking of rule number two!

I wait patiently—nervous as hell while she counts my cash. After what seems like an eternity, she bends down from above; not to hand back my counterfeits, nor to scream "*Security!*"—but to endow me with a red plastic rack filled with one hundred shiny one-dollar slot tokens. Although they're made merely of nickel, they're as good as gold.

The coins get dumped into my plastic bucket and I play a few machines while strolling to another carousel fifty feet away. It's smartest to stand on the opposite side, whereas the first change person cannot witness as I ask the new change person for *two* racks more. I boldly hand her *ten* twenties.

Within minutes my bucket runeth over. By the second hour my left pocket is now empty of counterfeit. Alexia is in the same financial situation. She stands looking at me from several feet away. Her smile is tremendous.

She and I cash-out our loaded buckets at the main casino cage. We wait until we're in another casino before exchanging our newly acquired tens for hundreds: the ones we got from the roaming change persons. We seem to have enough smarts to stick to at least *that* plan.

Before she and I head back to the downtown area we drive to the *Boulevard* shopping mall. This time our goal is to test the counterfeits' acceptance at the mall's food court. You know... cookies, pretzels, sugary drinks, hot dogs, cinnamon buns, burgers and other poisonous crap.

They're all in one convenient area dispensing their garbage. It doesn't matter how unhealthy it is because we're not eating it anyways. Let them destroy the health of someone else.

As we soon find out, the food court is too slow of an exchange process. And, there are many people who seem to stare suspiciously as we leave the *foodstuff* behind on the tables untouched. I don't want to be wasteful and toss it in the garbage where it truly belongs.

So much for that! It's time again to do the casinos downtown. After exchanging several bundles at a few downtown casinos, we take the rest of the evening off to enjoy the Las Vegas sights and attractions.

• • • •

The evening is wonderful. We dine in celebration of our success. Afterwards we marvel over the *twenty-thousand-gallon* saltwater reef aquarium located behind the hotel's front desk at the fabulous Mirage.

It's breathtaking.

The white tigers are next on the agenda. They are such magnificent animals. Unfortunately, the dolphin habitat is closed for the evening. Next, we watch as the volcano erupts sending water and coconut-scented fire high into the air. The intense inferno cascades down the cliff walls into the watery ponds below. It is here where life-size patina'd brass dolphins are ambassadors to the wandering tourists.

At Caesar's Palace we enjoy the incredible theatre of *Omnimax™*. This spherical complex has a screen that composes nearly the entire ceiling. The view is a complete one hundred and eighty degrees.

The movie is projected by a special high-tech machine that carries 70mm film. The sound system is made-up from hundreds of speakers driven by ten thousand watts of amplification. The film themes are mostly subjects of nature, science, the earth and our universe.

• • • •

April 23, 1992 - 9:30 am (Las Vegas, NV)

After a long night of romance and a morning of slumber, Alexia and I get ready for a long, stressful day of money exchanging.

I don't bother to call the uncle in Miami since his interest seems to lie only in his share of the wealth I'd promised him. How soon he gets a share, I'm certain, is his only concern. Our conversation would go something like this...

"Vanehala (*my Jewish nickname*) my boy, does it work?"

"Yes, uncle Dave. Very well indeed! Better than I'd imagined."

"How much have you made so far? When do I get my share?"

"Well, uncle—"

"When are you coming home to give me my share? Or: at least part of it. I need the money, Vanehala, to pay my attorneys who fight the lawsuits because of the way I screwed my business partners. You know the story. So come-on my boy, cash... cash... cash! Bring me home some money."

Fuck him! He'll get his share of the money when I'm ready to give it to him—and not a second sooner. I've got other plans. I'm sure he was busy sucking-down fried food and other crap at Morrison's Cafeteria while I was breaking my ass printing this money.

Oh yes, he'll get it when I'm good and goddamned ready! He's such a self-centered old bastard.

• • • •

Alexia has never seen the inside of Circus-Circus. I suppose we'll mix a little pleasure with business. This hotel and casino is located at the north end of the Las Vegas Strip. It's just a few hundred feet north of the Stardust hotel and across from the Riviera.

Circus-Circus has two thirty-story hotel towers, which are located behind a concrete building that is painted white with pink stripes. Its appearance is that of a big-top circus tent.

Inside this two story big-top building are several restaurants and a large casino on the lower level. On the upper level—the mezzanine. This is a midway-style arcade of at least forty games.

Since this morning we've exchanged quite a large sum of counterfeit inside the casino. Now I want to play the midway games and win some prizes for Alexia. The games up here are basically fifty-cents a go-around.

So, instead of three baseballs to pitch at the milk bottles, I'll ask for a half-dozen, then hand the sixteen-year-old girl a twenty. She'll hand me back six baseballs and... oh yes... nineteen-dollars in *genuine* change. I'll stuff that into my *right-side* pants pocket until it becomes full.

Once all my pockets are packed to the brim with genuine cash, I'll have to begin handing over the nineteen-dollars in genuine change to Alexia. At this point she'll place the money into her little white pocketbook.

The change is generally a ten, a five, and four-ones. This little bundle adds-up quickly to a mass fives times thicker than the counterfeit.

And similarly inconvenient, the prizes we're winning are accumulating far too fast. I begin to *accidentally* leave the prizes behind on the midway floor.

We've made so many rounds: basketball throw, horse races, hoop toss, squirt the water in the clown's mouth, and one rather primitive game where a big, fake, furry chipmunk pops his head out of this hole in a table-full-of-holes.

At this point we have to pound his skull into oblivion with this large, caveman-style mallet. Personally, I think the game should be re-named, "Beat the Fuck'in Rodent."

This certainly does fit. However, in such a family oriented environment I seriously doubt the hotel would amend such a name change.

After an hour, the fun on the mezzanine is growing old. I decide to play one more game, then it'll be time to blow this joint and go elsewhere.

We head for the basketball toss one final time. Here the ball seems to be sized within a *thousandth of a millimeter* tolerance to the diameter of the hoop, thus making it nearly impossible to make a prize-winning shot.

Like most challenges, I'm determined to beat the odds. Right now I just want to make at least *one* successful basket before we leave. This is but a few of the games I haven't won a prize on yet.

Alexia is patient as she watches me toss ball after ball. This game really sucks. I'm ready to give up.

As I near my final attempts, Alexia notices the previous game attendant standing there bored; fondling the counterfeit we gave her. The little brat even goes so far as to be destructive and tears a corner from the counterfeit. Certainly an illegal act should that had been a government-produced genuine.

Although the damage is done and she has seen the inside color of the torn counterfeit, it's too late to do anything about the situation at this point. She *has* to notice the contrast between the inside differences of my counterfeit and genuine currency—for genuine has a color of greenish/beige throughout; and my counterfeit is *bright white* within.

It's most difficult *not* to notice. I know this for a fact—as I've done the "*tear test*" at home in Miami, well before this moment. Unfortunately, I never gave a second thought to anyone purposely damaging one of my bills.

I've always pondered the thought of adding more chemical thinner to the ink that I'd used to initially coat the outer surface of the counterfeit paper sheets... remember?

This additional thinning procedure would have made the ink more like a solvent, thus allowing it to bleed all the way through the paper, coating it thoroughly inside and out. A simple solution that would have saved the terrible situation Alexia seems to observe.

The attendant, as young as she is, has got to be clever, judging by the manner in which she appears to be examining the torn bill.

And because of this attendant's actions (*which only Alexia notices at this point*), Alex becomes quite insistent that we leave Circus-Circus immediately. She doesn't explain to me what it was she just witnessed. She merely whispers that we must leave because, in her own desperate words... "*I sense that something's not right, Wayne.*"

I figure that there must be an emergency button behind the game's front counter, because as we're just about to leave, the crackle of walkie-talkies erupts behind us. It becomes quite evident... *it's now over.*

As I turn around, six armed security guards surround us. The guard who's apparently in charge of the others is a skinny geek wearing out-of-style eyeglasses, an ill-fitting uniform, and a haircut that must have been performed while he was riding a wild bucking bronco.

He asks to see the few bills that are in my hand. The same counterfeits I'd just taken from my *left-side* pocket and was about to transfer to my wallet, to be used in the next casino...

"Sir, can I see those bills in your hand?" he asks politely, yet in a firm tone.

"What bills? These? Is there a problem?" I try to act innocent.

"Yes, those bills in your hand, sir." He's more insistent now. "Sir, can I see those bills, now!"

The other geek guards shuffle around on their feet as if they're restless and ready for some action. They think they're tuff. Ooooh, so macho! Isn't everyone tuff, though, when they're in a group... and they're armed with guns?

If this were a one-on-one situation things would be much different. However, there *are* six of them; and they're *definitely* armed.

Aaaand, the nearest exit is at least thirty seconds away, even if we *were* to run at a cheetah' pace. So, at this point, we haven't got a chance-in-hell.

I'm about to face the consequences of breaking not only rule number one, but rule number two, as well.

As I hand the geek the bills, I happen to notice that he has others of mine. Not many, but enough to make an on-the-spot comparison of serial numbers. This will definitely link me to all the counterfeit that has been passed and recovered in Las Vegas up to this point in time. Not a good thing as you can imagine.

When he finds two bills with matching serials (*and I knew he would*), he asks us to follow him to the casino's security office downstairs. The other guards tighten their circle-of-jerks around us as we walk slowly, somberly, sadly.

I could probably break through the circle and make a run for freedom, but Alexia is with me. And even if she and I *did* make a run for it, would Alexia be able to follow? Would she be able to break the grip of grabbing hands? I doubt it.

Additionally, they've probably already radioed ahead posting two guards at each exit. What's the use of trying to run? So we walk cooperatively with the geeks to their main security office, as requested.

Keep in mind that we never intended on getting caught. This entire operation seemed so foolproof—such an absolutely perfect crime. And yet now, we're faced with twenty or more years in a federal prison... locked away... what I'm certain will feel like *forever*.

Because we never had intentions of getting caught, there wasn't much of an escape plan, nor a *stick-to-it* story of innocence. It is now my responsibility to create a good story... no, a *great* story: if we're to be set free. Ahhh, to go about our normal lives which we once knew just a few short moments ago.

At this point of desperation my brain goes into hyper-speed. Yes! I think of a story.

On this slow walk I whisper to Alex from the side of my mouth. It's a somewhat believable story she needs to tell the authorities; one that I hope she can remember and will stick to it under the intense, stressful interrogation about to get under way.

However, even with this tall tale, I realize that there's no way to escape the "Possession of Counterfeit" charge. This is not such a damning charge, though. I do realize, however, that "Manufacturing Counterfeit" is a *send-me-to-a-hellous-prison*, more serious charge.

This is the one charge I must lose or face grave consequences beyond belief. If we can get by with only possession charges we'll likely get off easy with just probation. I can handle that.

Also, consider this. Once they look at our Florida driver's license and confirm our names, they'll hold us while they check each and every hotel registry. I know they'll locate our room at the Excalibur. Then they'll search it inch by inch. The rest of the un-cashed counterfeit *will* be discovered, and from there I'll have a hellava lot more explaining to do.

The Secret Service will never give-up on their investigation until the Agents are satisfied with what they *think* is the truth. Also, they could keep investigating until they find more counterfeit... or at least the source of its manufacture.

Okay, so here's the plan. Wayne the un-trained ventriloquist is attempting to speak to Alexia as we walk, while trying not to be noticed. I have to relay this story as I make it up. She has to remember it *completely*... or we're fucked. It has to be consistent during the interrogation or they'll never believe it, and they'll relentlessly do whatever they can to screw us. I've *got* to make them believe.

"Alexia," I whisper without turning my head, "can you hear me clearly?"

"Uh huh," she responds playing ventriloquist in return.

Smart girl.

“This story I’m about to tell you... you *have* to stick to it no matter what they say or do. Even if they tell you that I’ve changed my mind and decided to confess, you stick to the story, *exactly*... to the end, okay?”

“Uh huh. But I’m scared, Wayne. I’m really scared.”

She sounds so sad it hurts me deep inside.

“This is what we’ll tell ‘em. Remember this... One night, while we were having dinner at the Bandstand in Bayside, I looked out at the yachts in the bay and noticed a black briefcase sitting next to a pier piling. A pelican was standing right next to it. I told you if no one took the briefcase within an hour, I’d take it. No one ever came for it, so I took it...

We found money inside. We didn’t know it was counterfeit until we got here. We needed the money, so we cashed a little bit of it.

You tell them nothing more and nothing less. Got it? Okay? *Exactly* like that, Alexia. Did you hear everything I said?”

“Uh huh,” she nods.

“Remember,” I tell her in an insisting manner, “I’ll never change that story... *ever*. So stick to it *exactly!*”

“Okay,” she whimpers. “What do I tell my parents, though? They’re gonna freak out.”

“I don’t know. Just tell ‘em the truth. I’ll take the blame.”

At this point I'm still clinging to the hope that we're just in trouble with the hotel's security. Maybe get eighty-sixed out of here forever. Who needs it? This hotel is a shit-hole anyway.

If they'd let us go, we can go home and start over honestly... destroy all the money. Unfortunately, though, I'm confident they'll call the Secret Service. And when they do, we're certainly finished.

I overhear one of the security geeks telling the chief that the Secret Service is on their way. My heart sinks. Then it begins to pound. I start trying to take the counterfeit from my pocket and stuff it between the chair's cushions where I sit, but one of the geeks keeps staring at me with his eyes closely peeled my way.

At first I think that maybe he likes me and that's why he's staring so intensely. Then I realize that he's just a scum-bag-piece-of-shit doing his trivial, meaningless, go-nowhere job.

So right now I only hate him enough beat him into a coma, rather than torture him first before actually finishing him off. At this point in time, I really despise him. He could have let me go and told his chief that I turned up clean. Naaa... he wouldn't do that. I should be so lucky?

Thirty minutes pass by and the Secret Service finally shows up...

"Mister Dennis, I presume?" the Agent with the French Revolution-style moustache asks. He's about six foot, husky, dark hair, and dressed in an off-the-rack dark suit.

His partner is dressed in an *off-the-rack* suit as well. They show their badges and identification cards carefully... professionally.

As tough as I'm known to be in the face of danger, I must admit right here, right now, that I'm more scared than Alexia must be, because *I'm* the printer... the manufacturer: and twenty years in prison is a long time. I just keep thinking to myself... twenty years... twenty years... twenty years.

The room is spinning. But not in circles like a drunken person would feel. It's more like the room is continuously tilting left to right and I'm hanging on tight, as if I'm strapped in the cage of some crappy carnival ride and the attendant keeps turning it in half circles, then back again. Then complete circles and back again: slowly, torturously. I feel as if I'm turning over and over no matter how strongly I try not to think about it.

I have a serious concern as well—and that is to try my damndest to keep Alexia out of prison at any cost. I'll lie to my death (well almost) if that's what it takes...

"Mister Dennis," the Agent leans in towards me from his chair, "my name is Special Agent Fitts and this is Agent Johnston to my left. He'll be asking your—"

"Girlfriend. Her name is Alexia," I inform him.

"Your *girlfriend*... Alexus?"

"Actually, it's *Alexia*."

"Whatever... he'll be asking her some questions in the other room while I question you. Do you two live together?"

“Yes. We live together.”

“Is this counterfeit what brought the two of you to Las Vegas?”

“No, sir. Not just that, but I’ve lived in Vegas since nineteen seventy-one. I came here mainly to show the city to Alexia. Cashing the money that I’d found was second on the agenda.”

“You *found* this counterfeit?”

His voice sounds flooded in disbelief.

“Yes, sir. At a restaurant called the Bandstand. It’s in the Bayside Mall in Miami. I found it in a black briefcase on the dock outside the restaurant. I thought—”

“Come on... you *found* this money? How much are we talk’in here?”

“Well, I know you’ll search our hotel room, aaaand, you’ll eventually find it all. So I might as well be cooperative from the start. There’s almost a hundred thousand dollars. We cashed about—”

“Whoah,” he looks to be in total shock and astonishment. “*Waaaait a minute. A hundred thousand in counterfeit?*”

“Yes, sir.”

“Jesus, that’s an awful lot,” he sighs. “Exactly where *is* all this counterfeit right now?”

“It’s at our hotel. The Excalibur. Room twelve-two-oh-two. Under each nightstand on both sides of the bed.”

He leans in closer still, "Mister Dennis, you mean to tell me that if we search room twelve-two-oh-two at the Excalibur, we'll find a *hundred thousand* dollars in counterfeit currency?"

"Well, almost a hundred thousand."

"Okay... before we continue here with this questioning, I must advise you of your Miranda Rights. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to have an attorney present at this questioning and the right to answer only in the presence of your attorney."

The room spins even more as he reads to me from his little sheet of paper...

"You have the right to have an attorney represent you in a court of law, and, if you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed to you. You also have the right to waive an attorney and speak to us at this time. Do you understand these rights, Mister Dennis?"

"Yes I do."

"Would you like an attorney present at this time, or would you like to cooperate and tell us what happened, and how all this counterfeit came to be? And I want the *real* story. Maybe I can talk to the judge and make it easy on you."

And yes, they still do use this bullshit line...

"Just maybe I can get the two of you an *oh-r*. You could simply sign your name and go home to Miami until we need you here for court in a few months."

This guy only *thinks* he's good.

“Does that sound fair, Mister Dennis?”

Very somberly and quietly I speak, “Yes. I’ll tell you as much as I can... whatever that may be. I’m not sure how much help I can offer.”

On the spot I’m forced again to tell this tremendous lie. I tell him the same story of the briefcase. I must stay consistent with the story told at Circus Circus: since they *did* record it.

When all is said and done, Alexia tells Agent Johnston nearly the identical story. Close enough indeed, that they actually believe us.

We suddenly find out, though, that we’ll have to stay the night, apart from one another, in these cold, single-person holding cells without a mattress, pillow, blanket, or warmth; only frigid concrete and steel. Not exactly *Caesar’s Palace*.

I sit here miserable for half the night listening to Alexia cry in the cell next to me. We’re divided mostly by brick, and partially by heavy-duty chain linked grating. I cannot see her because of the way in which we’re divided side by side. The brick wall makes for a poor window.

I can surely feel her pain though.

Every time I ask if she’s alright, my answer comes in the form of sobs and weeps, “Noooo, I’m not... a... a... aaaalright.” And those words flow back into a sobbing cry once again. I *really* feel sorry for her.

It’s my fault that she’s in this predicament. *I’m* responsible for her pain and suffering right now. I’m the one who got her in this trouble; and it’s up to me to get her out with the least amount of punishment.

Tomorrow we're supposed to see a Federal Magistrate in order to receive an O.R. (*Own Recognizance*). If that happens, Alexia and I will fly straight back to Miami.

• • • •

April 24, 1992 - 8:30 am (Las Vegas, NV)

The U.S. Marshall's Office at the Foley Federal Building is located downtown. This is a facility filled with lost souls whose job is to assist the U.S. Attorney in carting people away for many years, or to die in prison.

Because the court orders people to be exiled away from society, lives are ruined and families are split apart: careers and futures are abandoned.

Now, all this is not the fault of the civil servants whom work here in this *institution-of-horrors*. The fault lies in those whom had gotten themselves into trouble in the first place.

However, like the state penal system, I believe that the federal defendant, too, should be given a second chance depending on certain circumstances.

Instead, the Federal Sentencing Guidelines takes the power of decision away from the judge and sends the defendant away to prison, regardless, without option.

The civil servant: DEA, Secret Service, ATF, U.S. Marshall, etc., assist in facilitating the defendants' initial detainment. This, they do without regard to any discomforts or pains the defendant(s) may be feeling.

Many of them seem to take great pleasure in treating the defendant without compassion.

Oh... the unchecked misuse of power against the defenseless.

So, here I sit in this empty cell. My body aches from the cold. This building is lifeless. Soon I'll have my appearance in front of the Federal Magistrate. She'll be the decision maker in regards to my immediate future.

I hear footsteps... keys against metal... the clank of a heavy steel door... more footsteps. Great: they must be coming for us so we can make our appearance. Hopefully we'll receive bond; then head back to Miami. We could be in Miami by dinnertime. Home sweet home.

The Marshall opens the door to my metal cage and Agent Fitts steps in. He just stands there staring at me. Fifteen seconds... no words are spoken. He continues to stare. Thirty seconds... still staring. I don't speak to him as well. An eerie silence fills the cage. He finally speaks in a shaken tone...

"How much counterfeit did you say there was, Mister Dennis?"

"I counted about a hundred thousand... why? Did you not find it in the hotel room?" My best act of trying to sound innocent. My better judgment tells me there's something wrong. I swear I'm feeling dizzy again! My body is wracked with physical and mental pain. I feel tired and hungry... and pretty damn scared.

The cage is turning sideways while I sit here on the *seemingly-refrigerated* metal bench. “Why,” I ask again. “Is there a problem with not being able to find it? I know we cashed some, but it should all be right there in the—”

“Is it?” he interrupts and snaps at me. “All of it?” He knows something of which I have no knowledge. “Who printed the money? And where is the rest of it?” he demands in an angered tone which now begins to worry me even more.

My voice is trembling slightly. It sounds weak and very hoarse. I ask him, “How could I possibly know *that*?”

“Where the *fuck* is the rest of the *fifteen million* dollars, Mister Dennis? And you’d better spit out the goddamned truth. Who’s the printer? Tell us now, or you and your *girlfriend*, ain’t go’in nowhere! You’ll get no bond, and you’ll rot with all the other miserable criminals in that hell-hole-of-a-jail across the street until sentencing day six months from now... aaaand, we’ll see to it that you get the *maximum* sentence. How’s twenty years in prison, locked away from everyone you know and love, sound to you?”

Like I said... this guy *thinks* he’s good! That’s some kinda “*C level*” acting. But I’m still scared.

“I honestly don’t know what you’re talking about?” I tell him; but deep inside I’m certain he knows. *How* he found out... I haven’t a clue.

He reaches into his breast pocket and extracts a little black book. It looks identical to the one I brought with us on this trip.

He holds it close enough so I can see the small gold letters that spell out the word, "ADDRESS."

He plays the acting part as if he's in a movie: the hesitation, the carefully orchestrated movements, intimidating stares, and sporadic periods of silence. His might be an Oscar winning performance after-all. "Do you know about this, Mister Dennis?" He holds the black book so I can see, but it's closed. I can only recognize the cover.

"I... I don't know what it is, except... maybe... my address book? Other than that—"

"Don't fucking play games!" he yells. "You sonofabitch. We want the money! All of it! The entire fifteen million...now! And we want the person who printed it." He's red faced and mad as hell. "You help us and we'll help you. You *don't* help us... and we'll fuck you, *bad!* You got it, mister? Now where's the fifteen million?"

Wow! If they were blown away by yesterdays' news with the hundred thousand, imagine how they must feel about the millions today? He flips angrily through the book, frantically tearing away at the pages until he gets to the middle. That's right... the pages I *stupidly* forgot to yank from the sewn-in binding of this little ledger/logbook. And now this two-dollar book is going to cost me millions.

“Who’s D.L.S? Looks like D.L.S. has seven million of it. You’ve also got listed here, *Wayne*... well, we know who that is. So tell us who printed it?

“I don’t know!”

“Let me tell you this... we talked to the prosecutor regarding the amount of time you could receive for such a tremendous sum of counterfeiting, and you’re looking at, realistically, more than twenty years. Now you’ve got two minutes to tell us *everything*... or I’m done with you. No help from me.” Then he radically motions the “cut” hand-sign across his throat.

He hesitates momentarily. Then in a much more calmed and quiet voice, “Okay, Mister Dennis, let me explain something to you. We just want the counterfeit money off the streets. That’s all. There’ll be less damage done and a hellava lot less work for us to do in its aftermath if it gets circulated around the country. And you seriously *don’t* wanna be responsible for that either.”

The address book pretty much blows the story of the hundred thousand found in a briefcase. As for me *not* telling them who the printer is, well, all they have to do is send a few Agents around to visit South Florida printing supply companies with my photograph to get a positive I.D. This will link me to the purchasing of printing equipment and supplies.

At this point, once their investigation becomes affirmative—and it will—I will be designated as uncooperative and receive more prison time. So I might as well cooperate... somewhat. There's nothing I can do about it now considering the new information they have in their possession.

My demise has become a simple matter of time and their intense efforts to gather information. They'll find out regardless. They've already informed me point blank that they'll never give up until they find the printer of this counterfeit. It's the *quality* that worries them particularly. And this is why they'd be relentless until the end.

Agent Fitts sits next to me and leans in too close. He's so close I can smell his unpleasant breath: possibly a combination of coffee and dry mouth from being so angry. Again, he's trying to intimidate me. He doesn't have to stoop to these tactics though. The information I left behind in the address/logbook is intimidating enough.

Damn. That information was supposed to have been torn out and destroyed along with the other logged information. It was to be seen just once by our little group. This situation is a worse case scenario... besides death.

All the time spent in thought processes, physical effort, and lost sleep in planning is now a total fucking waste. *\$12,500,000.00 gone forever.* How could I have been so careless? This is the worst trouble I've encountered in my life. This trouble will condemn me to hell.

Right now all the counterfeit hidden in South Florida has become instant scrap paper. It's absolutely worthless to me; fire kindling extraordinaire.

I might as well tell them where it is. If I don't tell them where to locate it, someone may find it in the future after I'm released from prison.

They may exchange it. Once it's in circulation again they'll trace the serial numbers by computer, and it'll all come straight back to me. I'll be arrested again and thrown back in prison. They would only speculate that it's *me* doing it again. And could I blame them?

I quickly imagine another potentially damaging scenario. In the future *I'd* unbury the counterfeit or remove it from storage—with the complete honest intentions of destroying it—and they'd follow me. When they catch me with it they'd never believe that I had intentions of destroying it. They'd only imagine that I was on my way to exchange it, just as before.

With this scenario I'd be arrested... again. So I might as well turn it all over to the bastards and protect my future. It'll save a great deal of misery and worry in the meantime as well.

• • • •

During an unheard conversation, the U. S. Secret Service field office in Miami will track-down David's telephone number and business identity based purely upon the initials "*DLS*" which they found written in the address/logbook.

These guys are very expedient, and they have all the brains, including unlimited manpower as I've explained earlier.

After an hour of grinding me—under extreme duress—I'm forced to tell them that *I* am the printer of the counterfeit.

This is unbelievable! For some reason... *the sonofabitches don't believe me!*

Do I look too honest? Too young? Are my hands not stained enough to be a pressman handling inks? So what *does* a printer look like?

I must describe every detail if they're going to believe me and recommend a bond. I talk for more than an hour describing the printing process. Agent Fitts then replies...

"We've inspected the counterfeit under magnification and determined that it's not produced haphazardly on a computer. You've confessed to being the printer and described your use of a press. Therefore, because of this newly introduced information, I must conclude that you are *indeed*, the printer. So I have no other choice but to add the charge of Manufacturing U.S. Obligations in the form of Counterfeiting. It's a much harsher sentence. And while I feel compelled to say I'm sorry... you did this to yourself."

• • • •

Their main goal now is to gather the rest of the counterfeit and get it in the possession of the government. They want to remove it from circulation: store it in some warehouse in Washington, D.C. where it'll be safe from the hands of criminals.

Maybe they'll use it in the future for a ransom payment or an undercover sting operation—maybe a few drug deals. Who knows? It couldn't hurt the economy worse than our own government damages it on a daily basis with their mismanagement and deceptive ways. But nonetheless, they still want the counterfeit off the streets.

Agent Fitts makes a call to the U.S.S.S. (United States Secret Service) field office in Miami from inside this cage using his cellular telephone. It's silent in here and I can hear the energetic voice on the other end...

"Secret Service Field Office Miami, Special Agent In Charge Donzantz—can I help you?"

"Agent Donzantz, this is Special Agent Mike Fitts in Las Vegas, Nevada. We're holding a Mister Wayne Dennis... Caucasian male... thirty-three years of age; and his girlfriend... a Miss Alexia Lopaz... twenty-two years of age... Hispanic... Argentinean; both are from Miami. We've got them in possession of a hundred thousand dollars in counterfeit—"

I can hear the voice on the other end yell. "Whaaaaat? Did you say a hundred thousand?" he questions what he's just heard.

"That's right. Oh, and wait'll you hear the rest. This stuff is very high quality. I'll tell you, Donzantz, I've never seen counterfeit this good, and I've been doing this for fifteen years."

Silence looms in this cold cage.

Agent Fitts continues, "You won't be able to detect a single one without a magnifier. There are only four serials though, so that helps a lot. Now for the best part; and this'll blow you away. Are you sitting down? Here's where it gets *real good*," he emphasizes. "There's fifteen *million* dollars of this stuff!"

I hear the loud boisterous response through the receiver.

"You've got to be shit'in me. *Fifteen million?*"

"That's right! And it's all in your jurisdiction. You've gotta find and gather it. But I can give you directions to its whereabouts. That'll help—especially since Mister Dennis hid it so cleverly. He told us exactly where his portion is... at least five million worth. You'd better bring a truck, though, it's all in twenties."

"I can't believe this. You're not being put up to a practical joke or something, are you?"

"No. Of course not."

"Wow! It'll take us forever to count such a large cache. So... this is for real?" Donzantz asks. "You're not bullshitting me?"

“No I’m not. I wouldn’t do this to you. You’ve got a hellava lotta work ahead of you. I’m sorry to be the bearer of bad news, buuuut, it’s better you than me. I’ll tell you what—you send me a plane ticket to Miami, put me up in a nice hotel with meals, and I’ll come help out,” Fitts laughs.

“*Jesus*. This is outrageous. I can’t believe it. *Fifteen fucking million?*”

“Yep. We almost didn’t discover it, but the clever Mister Dennis, here, was kind enough to leave behind a few pages of information in his address book... or logbook I should say. You ever hear of such a thing?”

“No. Not really.”

“Neither have we. Well, what strikes me is the painstaking manner in which he did all this. What I like most is that he’d made-up *twenty-five hundred* banded packets containing five-thousand-dollars in each. We estimate there’s more than a ton of counterfeit, Donzantz.”

“I’ll be god-dammed. Did he use a currency counter to count it? Does he still have the machine?”

“I don’t know. He’s right here. I’ll ask him.” Then Fitts turns to me. The Marshall stands watching with wide eyes, giving away his emotion of shock and amazement. “Mister Dennis did you use a currency counter? Something... you know... a machine to count it all?”

“Yes. Why?”

"I'd venture to guess that the Agents in Miami will likely need more equipment than what they have in their offices to expedite the counting of the confiscated money."

"Can't they just count one bundle to determine that there's five-thousand-dollars; then count all the bundles? That should save time."

"No! And we don't need your advice. Now what did you do with the machine? The currency counter."

"I returned it to the store I'd purchased it from and got a fifty percent refund. It was a Brandt eight-thousand series."

"Frank. Sorry. He's already sold the counter back to its original owner. It was a good one too... a Brandt eight-thousand series."

"Damn. Oh well. What's done is done. So gimme an address to the counterfeit and we'll get back to you in a few hours, depending on traffic. I'll gather my crew and we'll leave right away."

"Sounds good. Here's the address... or at least the name of the facility where the money' located. It's called ABC Storage on Four-forty-one, near Joe Robbie Stadium. He doesn't know the space number off-hand. The money is hidden in speaker cabinets. Oh, Dennis just informed me that you'll need a pair of bolt cutters or a torch. And you say your guys already tracked the *DLS* address up in Coral Springs. Do you think this is the guy?"

“The computer works miracles, but we won’t know until after we talk to him.”

“Here’s my cellular number. It’s a seven-o-two area code. The rest of it is three six nine, twelve twenty. Please call me back as soon as you can. And Frank... thanks.”

• • • •

April 24, 1992 - 3:00 pm (Las Vegas, NV)

I’d spent many hours in that cold cage while awaiting my opportunity to see the Magistrate and receive a bond. We’re in a huge courtroom at the Foley Federal Building where all the Vegas mobsters go to trial...

“Am I to understand this correctly?” the Federal Magistrate asks in a surprised tone. “*Fifteen million dollars... Mister Dames?* This is an *absurdly* large amount of money we’re talking about here.”

The bespectacled U.S. Attorney, Mr. Dames, speaks into the microphone at the podium, “Yes, Your Honor... however, the Secret Service here in Las Vegas *and* in Miami, have recovered what seems to be all of the counterfeit in its entirety. Mister Dennis and Miss Lopaz both have been honest and cooperative so far. They have displayed an apologetic, remorseful demeanor. I’d like to recommend, on behalf of the United States Government, an oh-r, based on the fact that neither has attempted to flee from authority in the past. And, that they have been instrumental in promptly removing the counterfeit from the community where it can now do no further harm.”

“An oh-r? I hope you’re comfortable with this recommendation? Are there any objections from the Secret Service?”

Agent Fitts speaks-up, “No, Your Honor. No objections. They seem pretty forthright in their honesty and assistance. The Secret Service in Miami has confirmed the defendants’ claims and has recovered most of the counterfeit as we speak. We’ll back the recommendation.”

“So be it. If there are no objections from the U.S. Attorney or the Secret Service, the United States of America grants Wayne Victor Dennis and Alexia Judith Lopaz an oh-r with a signature-binding-agreement of one-hundred-thousand-dollars... In lieu of this: number one, the defendants surrender to the Secret Service or U.S. Attorney’s office, any passports or visas they may have in their possession. Number two, that they will attend all meetings with the U.S. Pretrial Services and check-in with the Agent in Charge of the Secret Service here in Las Vegas and in Miami. Their next court appearance will be... Ms. Kenny?”

The clerk checks her calendar and presses a few keys on the computer... “Their next court appearance will be on June twenty-fourth at ten a.m., nineteen-hundred and ninety-two. If there are any changes, the proper documentation will need to be filed immediately, with notification in advance if at all possible.”

The Magistrate puts on a little smile, “Mister Prosecutor, Mister Dennis, Miss Lopaz, and Agent Fitts, we’ll see you again in June... or at least your trial Judge will see you. This court is adjourned.”

Smack! She slams her wood gavel against its base.

I scribble something that resembles my signature on an official-looking document. Alexia does the same. We’re taken to the Clark County Detention Center to sign a few more papers. Once all the papers are signed, they rush us out of the high-security building like unwelcomed guests. We’re set free on the street with just the clothes on our back and my empty wallet. Alexia has our driver’s licenses.

I smile deep inside. At this point I’m confident that I’ll not likely receive twenty years, or they’d never have given me bail—not to mention a *signature bond!* For the time being, though, we’re free!

• • • •

I’m not sure if they actually believe that Alexia is this dumb bimbo who *didn’t* know I printed the money, and that she merely possessed it—a much less serious crime. And, if they *do* believe this, well shame on them for being so naïve.

Now, if they feel she *is* guilty, I must say that it’s unfortunate for them, because there’s not a damned thing they can do without solid proof that she had partaken in the actual printing process itself.

I suppose they're just happy enough to have busted me and prevent the counterfeit from entering nationwide circulation. After all, this is the largest case in the history of the United States Secret Service. Therefore... I'm certain they must feel overwhelmingly triumphant.

• • • •

In my attempt to be cooperative, I stupidly lead Agent Fitts to my genuine cash, which was a compilation of exchanged counterfeit and thousands I brought with me in the event that the counterfeit didn't pass.

So, unfortunately, because honesty is *not* always the best policy, Alexia and I are now, how you might say, *broke*.

When we get back to the hotel room, I can't help but notice all my twenty-five-dollar casino chips have been stolen, except one—likely by the hotel's honest security staff. Our luggage has been thoroughly ransacked and repacked in such a manner, that I would get sheer enjoyment from the opportunity to kick the living shit out of the piece-of-crap-human who did what they did in such a disrespectful manner.

I understand that *I've* done bad things in the past, but *I* wasn't an officer sworn to uphold the law... so *fuck them!* They're burglars, plain and simple. Just five minutes with the individual(s)... *please*. That's all I want: no weapons: just us in a locked room where no one can escape until taken away with the ambulance sirens wailing.

We have one twenty-five dollar casino chip in which to get back to the airport. I'm not about to call my sister and ask for money. That wouldn't be fair.

My family must already be stunned enough after seeing us all over the television news. I'm too embarrassed. It would be very difficult to face anyone right now.

Alexia and I make it to the airport without cheating the cabbie of his three-dollar and sixty-five-cent fare. Regretfully though, his tip will be small.

The cabbie recognizes us from the news. He understands our situation and wishes us the best of luck. I thank him and we disappear into the terminal.

We're fortunate that the hotel security staff who'd burglarized our room indulges themselves in the Standard American Diet, and could care less about the healthy food we left in the room. We have at least the remnants from our bagful of healthy foods we'd purchased earlier at Kathy's Natural Food Market.

We're absolutely famished. The food tastes nearly as good as sex feels. As we choke the down, the strangers in the airport stare in wonder. Their eyes seem to imply... *where the hell are they from?*

I gaze out the window at all the brilliant, dazzling city lights. Our aircraft accelerates faster and we lift-off into the dark night. As millions of others have done in the past, we leave the excitement and money of Las Vegas, far, far behind.

“With the exception of the military, I’ve never believed in organized *anything!* Regardless of whom they pray to or which patches and medallions they adorn, they’re only as honest as their actions.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“ Father And Son Strike It Rich ”



You know of the “*getting caught*” in Las Vegas ordeal; now Alexia and I are back in Miami awaiting court appearances.

July 4, 1992 – Noon (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

The radio announcer’s voice is cheerfully blasting... “Whaaaaat a scorcher it is here in sunny South Florida on this oh-so-fine Fourth of July holiday, everybody. I know you and your families are out there picnicking and barbequing. Got that cold watermelon and a few brewskis a’popin. Get’in a suntan on those oil-slicked bodes. *Yeah*: a buttered lobster roast’in in the sun. You’re kick’in it with KFM One-oh-two... blast’in rock’n roll from the Palm Beaches to South Beach, and all the fun spots in between. I wanna see ya’ll tonight at Bocas on South Beach at nine p.m., for fireworks, danc’in and fun. Until then, where’re rock’in ya with Bruce Springsteen and *Born in the U.S.A.*”

• • • •

It's hot. It must be at least ninety-two degrees and seventy percent humidity. The beaches are jam-packed wall to wall with people from every origin and color. There are muscle-bound guys and bikini-clad babes strutting their stuff like roosters and hens down at the farm.

Children are building sand castles and aimlessly digging holes to nowhere. Music of every sort blares from portable CD players and radios galore. There are snorkelers, divers, rafters, windsurfers, jet-skiers, football and Frisbee™ tossers, and bicyclists everywhere.

Colored sails fill the horizon. Propeller-driven biplanes buzz loudly overhead as they tow advertising banners touting special meals and parties at various nightclubs and restaurants.

A Bull Terrier passes within two feet of us, wearing a biker's skullcap, sunglasses and bright green sun block smeared on his black nose. A Harley Davidson™ bandana hangs from his thick neck. The owner holds a tight rein while the dog chokes itself pulling against his spiked leather collar. The Frisbee™ disk in his mouth is gnawed beyond recognition. I laugh and point out the pooch to Joey and Alexia.

"Wayne," Joey asks excitedly, "let's go snorkeling out by the rock barrier, okay?"

I turn to Alexia and nudge her, "Alex, do you mind watching our stuff while we go check out the snorkeling situation?"

"No, Wayne... I'm gonna let someone steal it all."

“Okay, thanks. I appreciate that. Oh, and don’t pickup any guys while we’re gone, Alex,” I joke with her. She just lies back down and ignores me.

• • • •

As with many other holidays, this day too, has become insignificant to me because of commercialization: though I still do harbor a few patriotic thoughts. Today seems like just another day at the beach to Alexia, Joey and myself.

However, shortly, an event is about to take place two miles due south of this beach that’ll forever change Joey’s future.

Normally this event wouldn’t have had such an impact on me, mind you, except for the fact that Joey will become a piece-of-shit-human several months from now.

But at this moment...

The sun is high in the sky and the temperature is still hovering in the nineties. People are drinking and celebrating, except for a particular couple of individuals who roam the shoreline of the inland waterway called the *Intracoastal*.

The object the two stumble across is rusty and decrepit. Must be from the saltwater rising over the shore’s embankment as the ocean’s tide reaches its highs twice daily.

Why would this old green ammo box be stuffed under a bunch of tree branches way out here—the father and son have got to wonder?

So the father pulls and pulls until he forces the stiff roots upwards while his son grabs the rusty green box quickly, before the roots can snap back and trap his little stick-arms.

The box is crusted with corrosion almost to the point of disintegration. Mud and barnacles encrust almost the entire surface area of the box. The clasp is rusted tightly closed as well. It takes the father a half hour to pry the container open. When he finally opens it, the mysterious content of the old green ammo box is revealed.

The forty-something-year-old father (*or at least he looks that old*) has a small cardiac seizure as he and his *honest* Boy Scout son stare at the bundles of twenty-dollar-bills.

The two rush home with their newfound treasure and start counting it with the assistance of the mother. The trio hand-count the money for the rest of the day and into the night. It must be very difficult to hand-count the counterfeit because it's still new and unwrinkled. We've all had that new-money displeasure before, haven't we?

So they count and count. When they're finished, they end up with a grand total of \$243,740.00. A nice little find huh? God blessed these three Americans on this Fourth of July.

Well, the *honest* family already has plans for purchasing a new dream home and paying for their son's college education with this money.

Certainly, they *have* to wonder about the origin of this money, though, shouldn't they? How did it come to be? Is it drug money? Leftovers from a theft? A robbery? Bribe money? Ransom? Something! Whatever the fuck... it simply *cannot* be legitimate or it would be kept in a bank, not in a rusty box hidden on the embankment of a waterway.

So, knowing that it's likely to be illicitly gained money, they're still going to keep it and use it? They're not going to turn it in and wait until it's cleared? Whhhhhat? These honest people? How dare they even consider such a thought? What happened to the honest little Boy Scout?

After spending a dozen hours counting their newfound fortune, the father finally notices that some of the serial numbers are the same. "This must be *counterfeit!*" he proclaims. "We might as well turn it in to the authorities."

Hell, I suppose it would be too much work for them to exchange anyway. As they call the Secret Service field office, their hopes for a new dream home, and a free college education for their son vanish.

The following day, the story makes front-page headlines of the *Miami Herald*: the city's major newspaper. A color photograph of the honest Boy Scout counting stacks of *my* counterfeit adorns the publication.

Joey *has* to be crying when he sees the photo and reads the newspaper story. He knows it could only be his. He must have the same feeling a pirate would have when he returns to the burial spot of his treasure only to find it all gone. Even the parrot on the pirate's shoulder would weep over such loss.

Now here's the strange part...

There is no doubt in my mind that Joey packed exactly a half million dollars into the ammo box. And it would be odd if the family kept \$256,260.00, then, turned the rest of the counterfeit in. It just wouldn't make any sense.

So it only stands to reason that Joey had removed a quarter-million dollars in spending money before he stashed the remainder where the father and son found it. He must have figured that he'd exchange it while I rot safely away in prison.

• • • •

When the Secret Service calls me on July the fifth—before Agent Donzantz can get in a word—I tell him, “Yes, that *is* my money, and I didn't want to tell you about it because (*as Joey verbally assured me*) the watertight seal was removed and the bags were unzipped so the saltwater would ruin the counterfeit. Someone must have found it,” I continue to tell him, “and hid it on the embankment until a later date when they'd return to take it home.”

He continues to question me to death because everything I tell him must sound like a lie, because it *is* a lie; and because everything I tell him now is based on what Joey has told me... a big, fat, fucking lie!

That scumbag Joey can now easily cost me an extra five years in prison for perjury and obstruction of justice. I could receive all this extra punishment, because *he* lied to me. That stupid piece of shit! I've never lied to him. So, because of what he's done, he's now got "*strike one in my book of revenge.*"

Agent Donzantz knows I'm lying, but at this point there's not much that he wants to do. I suppose he just lets it go for now. He'll be getting more of the counterfeit off the streets and his name will be in lights once again.

Lucky for Joey that I had been alert earlier when he packed his ammo box with counterfeit and I instructed him to clean the bags of fingerprints then repack it. If I allowed him to do it his way, he'd be on his way to prison with me. I'll continue to lie in order to protect him, even though he may cost me another five long years.

Nevertheless, for those who proclaim to be honest citizens, the father and son are Miami's newest celebrities. As for the rest of the readers of this news headline, who are not hypocrites, the family members are merely *fools*.

After having his money found, Joey finally confesses to the fact that he only unburied *his* half of the million, and that *mine* is still buried in its original hiding spot in the alleyway behind the uncle's linen business.

Yes, that's right... mine is still buried! What the fuck?

It's unfortunate that I'm now forced to spring this surprise on the Secret Service tomorrow. What fun it'll be to go with them to unbury the money in order for me to avoid getting arrested again if I get caught unburying it on my own. This, of course, would be after-the-fact, sometime in the future, *once released from prison*.

This is not something I enjoy, especially now, when my luck is not so good, as you can tell.

• • • •

July 6, 1992 – 1:00 pm (Hollywood, FL)

This afternoon I'm to be escorted to the linen company so that I can unbury my treasure and surrender it unto their possession.

The Secret Service Agents and myself are greeted at the office by my uncle and his son Larry, or Fuzzy or Marvin—whatever alias he's using today.

"Mister Goldmenn?" Agent Donzantz shows his badge as he speaks.

"Yessss," Dave answers acting unsure, surprised and oh so innocent.

"I'm U.S. Secret Service Agent Frank Donzantz, and we'd like your permission to unbury and remove half a million dollars worth of counterfeit currency that your nephew Wayne placed in the ground in your back alleyway. Do you have any problem—?"

"Noooo. Oh noooo. Not a problem at all. In fact you can search this entire facility just to ensure that there's none elsewhere. I can't believe my nephew would do such a thing. I just can't believe that he'd do something like this to jeopardize my business that I've worked like a dog for twenty years to build."

Uncle fucking Dave gives me this real dirty look in front of the Agents. What an actor and a backstabbing piece of shit! His fat son gives me the same look as well. They both know where the money is buried.

They know that Joey already unearthed his, and that none other besides mine will be found in the facility. *That* is why they suggest a further search. It looks good in front of the authorities.

"We have nothing to hide," Dave says.

They stand there acting so innocent, yet they're so guilty it makes me sick. Unfortunately, at this point, I still honor them because they're my relatives. They must be bitter now that they know they'll not receive their three hundred thousand in genuine.

It's easy to sense their alienation since the arrest. We don't speak much anymore, and I've been informed that I'll have to move from the home that I'd fixed up: the one where I printed the counterfeit.

The Agents follow me to the alleyway. Donzantz looks around and notices a small indentation in the ground the size of Joey's now-missing/excavated ammo box.

"What was there?" he asks.

"Oh, there?" I quickly think of a lie. "That's where I started to dig but the ground was too hard. Then I found this spot, here," I point to where I know my half million is buried.

I start digging immediately to try and throw off his train of thought: thoughts that might lead them to Joey's involvement. At this point I'd do anything to protect Joey from the punishment he could receive.

I keep digging and digging for half an hour.

"You sure it's here?" Donzantz asks. The others remain silent.

"Yes I'm sure. Any second now..." thuuud!
"Here it is!"

I have to dig around it. My hands are bleeding because I'm forced to shovel without gloves. I dug fast and furious. I now have to excavate a tunnel under the large speaker cabinet.

They toss me a rope to weave through the tunnel under the speaker. The Agents have to pull the rope from above while I heave from below while standing down inside this deep pit. As it comes loose we all grunt and struggle to lift the heavy load out.

I'm told to stand back while they tear away the wrapping and unscrew the speaker. They extract the counterfeit and count the bundles; each containing five thousand dollars. In their possession now rests a total of \$500,000.00 exactly as I promised.

Uncle fucking Dave asks innocently, "Could I see that? I've never seen a real counterfeit bill before."

"Can I see it too?" his son Fat-fuck, asks.

What a couple of actors; another *Oscar* performance by a couple of lying bastards.

Agent Donzantz tells the two, "I've never seen any of this quality. This stuff could hurt the economy for sure."

"It *is* good. Wow!" Dave boasts excitedly. "Wayne, I just can't believe you'd do this... jeopardizing our business like that. After all we've done for you. I'm ashamed of you."

He spits on the ground at my feet...

"I don't even want to see him, officers. I've got to go lie down. This whole thing makes me ill."

"I understand, Mister Goldmenn. Thank you for your cooperation," Donzantz says.

"Oh, you're *quite* welcome," he smiles at the pretty woman Agent, Tracy, while blatantly ignoring Danzantz. Like he's actually got a chance with her. His son stares at her too, as he waddles away. He walks as if he's got a corn cob stuffed painfully up his ass.

“It has always been my contention that... if a person intentionally brings chaos, financial loss, or physical pain into my life, I will honestly enjoy, *and even relish* the hours of sleep I’d lose while staying awake at night planning my clever, destructive vengeance and ruin, which I’ll rain onto their life... tenfold... minimum... regardless of the cost to me financially, physically, or time-wise. I am *not* exaggerating. Let there be no mistaking my wrath.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

“ Courtroom Lies... Truths... Revenge ”



Between the period of July and October of nineteen ninety-two, Alexia and I live an enjoyable, almost uneventful life, even though prison is pending in my near future.

At the insistence of the Reagan/Bush, Sr. Administration, Congress had enacted the Federal Sentencing Guidelines for the Bureau of Prisons. Alexia and I now learn an abundance of information pertaining to prison sentences and terms of punishment.

This Congressional action has changed the entire sentencing structure, making punishment much harsher, time-wise, for drug related offenses, and more lenient towards most other crimes: mostly white collar offenses in this case.

Counterfeiting happens to be included within the parameters of the “White Collar” category. So, now rather than the twenty-year prison sentence, which I thought I’d soon receive, I’m now looking at a mere five years.

Mere: however, only in comparison.

Still, it’s five long years of institutionalization, and no warm, soft, sensual Alexia. There will be no scuba diving or hanging out at the beach either. And the Unicorn? Yeah right.

It would take several pages just to list all the enjoyments that freedom has to offer: enjoyments, which I'll be missing for the next five years. But I'll survive.

• • • •

Before my sentencing day, October 6, 1992, which is rapidly approaching, Alexia and I enjoy, once again, the Florida Keys, the beach, movies, making love, and earning excellent money at a legitimate business I'd developed since our arrest.

During this time, uncle fucking Dave, Joey, and the other maternal piece-of-shit relatives, have escalated the alienation of the two of us. They have severed the bond of love and friendship. They stay away completely. We are convicted lepers (felons).

• • • •

Aug 23, 1992 - 8:45 pm (N. Miami, FL)

We witness his grand approach during the past few days, but nothing can prepare us for the devastation he's about to inflict. His destructive force is one of the most severe that nature can unleash.

His name is, Andrew... "Hurricane Andrew." Now, I must say that I absolutely love bad weather. In fact, the more severe the storm, the more excited I become.

No joking. I really do love bad weather. I always have and always will.

Like a child in a candy store, a drunk in a distillery, a vampire in a blood bank, a counterfeiter free to roam within the confines of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing, a... well, you get the picture. I really *do* love bad weather.

The day before Andrew was to make landfall, I went to uncle fuck's condo on the beach to find a palm tree for which I was to tie myself to upon Andrews' arrival. Once tied securely in place, I could get some great photographs of Nature's fury during her tormenting hours.

Thus far, Andrew is packing *sustained* winds of "145 mph!" *Sustained!* Wow! Remember: the wind stays constant. It *does not* let up. It destroys nearly everything in its path.

After an hour of argument and pleading from Alexia, she's able to convince me not to tie myself to the chosen tree... fortunately.

Andrew has gusts of "*216 miles per hour!*" Some meteorologists speculate that these gusts are produced by tornadic or vortex activity Andrew unwittingly spawns during his rampage.

He never really slows down once he makes landfall as most hurricanes do. The reason is the plentitude of water for him to feed on: especially when he saps the shallow waters of the Everglades. For Andrew, the River of Grass is like a feeding frenzy at a Las Vegas buffet.

I have fun tonight while Alexia sleeps. I don't understand how she does it with the noise from Andrew's fury. It sounds like a freight train driving at full power.

Outside I stand behind an old-fashioned, sturdy block wall in my front yard while the winds rage. I toss dozens of items into the wind and watch them tear down the street, horizontally, along with other debris (trees, lawn chairs, garbage cans, storage sheds, etc.)

The night sky constantly lights up as the neighborhood power-line transformers, perched high atop their poles, explode with bright green flashes and enormous showers of sparks.

His fury lasts for several hours. Ultimately, his 300-mile-wide path of death and destruction tears a swath from Florida's east coast to its west; then Andrew pops-out into the Gulf of Mexico, where he then turns his vengeance towards Louisiana.

After witnessing Andrew's awesome fury, the following morning, we take an excursion to the beach to survey his damage. Oh, and that palm tree? It seems to have vanished just as many others have too. Much of the beach's sand has vanished as well. The brick walls that used to separate the parking lots from the beach are scattered in pieces on Collins Avenue amongst the residents-only traffic.

It's quite an experience, this fury; one that I would not want to miss, at any risk. In my lifetime I've been given the opportunity to enjoy and live through a major earthquake, several floods, a blizzard, mountain fires, a tornado, and now one of the most powerful hurricanes known in modern times. I've yet to experience an avalanche, mudslide, volcano, and tsunami.

• • • •

Oct 6, 1992 - 8:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

Sentencing day.

Alexia hugs me rather tightly today, as I stand by the front door in my black suit. Today I wear a white button-down, pure cotton shirt, a power tie, dress belt and black business shoes. My hair is cut in a gentleman's style. My shave is close. I'm hoping my clean-cut, honest appearance will impress the judge enough so, that I get only the minimum prison sentence.

Alexia kisses me and looks me in the eyes, "Good luck today, babe. I hope you get probation. Do you think they'll give you probation, like the attorney said?"

"I'm not sure. He says there's a slight chance since I turned in my share of the money. But I couldn't say. I wouldn't count on it. At least maybe I'll get the minimum since everyone is recommending it. We'll see."

She looks me in the eyes, deeper still, "I'll get some dinner for tonight so it'll be here when you get back home. I'll pick-up your favorite foods, okay? Then we'll make love all night. I'm sure you'll need some cheering up after court. I can't wait till you get home. Good luck. And be polite when you speak to the judge. Remember; I love you very, very much. No matter what happens I'll always love you."

"Well, thanks. I've gotta go. It's getting late and it's a long drive to Palm Beach. I love you too, sweetheart. I'll see you in a few hours when I get home."

I give her a kiss and we hug for a silent moment before I walk out the door. I'll stop at the linen company in Hollywood where Joey awaits to drive me all the way to Palm Beach.

In the event that I don't come home today—and it's quite possible—I won't have to worry about my car sitting idle in some parking garage for five years.

Alexia would take me but we're not supposed to be together, because, as part of her defense, I was me who was deceptive and got her involved without her knowledge, and now she's mad enough to leave me. Little do they know, we still live together.

So the lying, dishonest Joey will take me. We'll ride in the same car.

• • • •

Oct 6, 1992 - 11:00 am (Palm Beach, FL)

The Federal Courthouse here in Palm Beach is very intimidating. It's not small and stuffy like a state-operated facility. This federal courtroom has ceilings that are at least twenty-five feet tall; and the space inside each of the courtrooms must be immense enough to accommodate extra large crowds of spectators and officials, as well as the small army of government attorneys, prosecutors and media.

The walls are all oak paneled. The judge is generally Washington appointed. He sits up on a pedestal, like a God, several feet above and beyond the persons below. It's very intimidating.

• • • •

“All rise!” A distant voice echoes in the courtroom. We all stand as ordered. The Secret Service Agents are here; so are the Federal Public Defender, the Federal Prosecutor, and the U.S. Marshalls. In attendance I see several newspaper reporters taking notes. We passed the cameras on the way in.

Of course, none of my family, blood or maternal, is here to show their support for me, or even put in a good word or two. What loving and caring people, huh? A tightly knit family: sarcastically speaking.

So here we stand, waiting in apprehension as the judge opens the hidden door that looks like part of the wall. An old man of who appears to be eighty, with messy white hair (which is obvious that he'd been abruptly awakened from a long, restless nap) walks into the courtroom.

“Jesus Christ!” I say to myself, “Look what the fuck'in cat dragged in.”

His skin is horrible with red alcoholic blotches. He has a sour look on his face from either eating an unripe lemon or his miserable life dealt him a bad hand where he hasn't had a woman since... the Civil War.

“You may be seated,” he speaks. His voice sounds hoarse and unforgiving. Everyone in the room takes their seats. “Will the court clerk please read the case before us—” It's not a question.

The older woman's voice is cold, uncaring and distant, "The United States of America verses Wayne Victor Dennis, case CR-Fane; one-two-eight-six-six-seven."

I feel cold, weak and shaky. All the authorities here have recommended the minimum sentence time of forty-seven months (three and a half years). However, based on the looks of this judge, I'm willing to bet the farm that I'm about to get the maximum sentence of fifty-seven months... or longer if he can find a way to impose it upon me.

The judge speaks again, "Will the clerk please read the counts against the defendant, Mister Wayne Victor Dennis, as brought before this court?"

"The United States District Court of Southern Florida, having accepted the request for a Rule Twenty from the U.S. District Court in Southern Nevada: to bring all the charges to the Southern District of Florida, thus running the charges and the sentence as one concurrent event, the Southern District of Florida hereby brings forth the charges herein, and accepts the plea of guilty by the defendant who is here present, Wayne Victor Dennis, as follows: Count one; Conspiracy to Counterfeit United States Obligations in the amount of fifteen million dollars—"

"Hold on! Pardon my interruption of the proceedings," the judge rudely butts-in. Did you say *fifteen million dollars*?"

He breathes out a long breath of disgust while he stares down at me, very much angered.

"Yes, Your Honor," the clerk assures him.

"Okay," the judge quietly adds, then breathes out slowly again, "Continue please."

"Yes, Your Honor." She stumbles to find her place on the page... "Count two; Manufacturing Counterfeit United States Obligations in the form of Twenty Dollar Federal Reserve Notes. And, Count three: Possession of Counterfeit Obligations in the form of Twenty Dollar Federal Reserve Notes. All three counts are in direct violation of Title Eighteen, United States Code; Sections three seventy-one and four seventy-one. Class 'C' and 'D' felonies."

Her voice is so shallow, so empty. Her soul has probably faded from her body after all the past years have ground her away watching families torn apart, women become widows, and children become orphans, as one, or even both parents receive federal prison sentences of thirty, forty, fifty years, and life.

With the "Feds" a convicted individual will serve out at least eighty-five percent of this time. The clerk knows that those condemned to life sentences will actually die behind forty-foot concrete walls or the razor wire fences of Maximum Security Federal Penitentiaries.

My sentence is the next she'll hear. I'll have one of those faces she'll watch go limp as I'm handed down the maximum sentence. Can she have a more depressing job, other than a mortician or medical examiner?

The judge speaks in a firm voice and shows no emotion. His job has rendered him emotionless as well. He's completely incapable of human affection and compassion: unhearing of the defendant's verbal remorse and apologies: unseeing of their written sorrows and pleas for leniency.

Then he speaks...

"The Defendant before me, Wayne Victor Dennis, having already plead guilty to three charges on August the sixth, nineteen hundred and ninety-two, and who is in full control of his mental and physical capabilities: does he now have anything to say to this court before I hand him his sentence?"

"No, Your Honor. I'm sure I've taken enough of your time with my letter and all the additional paperwork I'd submitted to you."

"Yes, Mister Dennis. I've read it all. And it's rather lengthy. But, nonetheless—interesting. Thank you, Mister Dennis. You're quite a character... and a businessman. I don't know how you let yourself get in this kind of trouble with all your knowledge and talent. I'm sorry to see this demise. However, you did break the law... and in a major way. At this time, does the Prosecutor, Mister Banta, have anything he'd like to say?"

“Yes, Your Honor. James Banta, Assistant United States Attorney. I would like to add that Mister Dennis has been most cooperative and honest during the past few months. We’ve recovered nearly all the counterfeit, with the exception of some two million nine hundred thousand dollars. However, we believe that it was wasted in the printing process, and there is very little of his counterfeit left on the streets. In lieu of this fact, and because of his cooperation in resolving this matter, it is in the best interest of our office, that we’d like to suggest, or recommend to the court, that the defendant receive the minimum sentence here today.”

“Thank you, Mister Banta,” the judge gives a feigned smile. “And the Agents of the Secret Service?”

“Your Honor; Special Agent Frank Donzantz. And with me is Special Agent Tracy Horten. We’d like to say that Mister Dennis was most helpful and cooperative. He didn’t plead innocent and ask for an attorney. At first he was a little less than honest regarding the counterfeit and how it came to be; but then he turned a hundred and eighty degrees as an honest individual. Your Honor, before this court, I see an intelligent, bright young man who used his knowledge and talents the wrong way. I feel that giving him a sentence longer than the minimum allowable will be more inhibitive, rather than productive. I believe that he has learned his lesson and he will do good after a shorter term of imprisonment.”

Tracy adds, "I feel the same, Your Honor. My sentiments exactly."

"All sentiments are accepted," the judge speaks. "Mister Burch, Federal Defense, do you have anything to add before I hand down the sentence to Mister Dennis?"

"Yes, Your Honor. Peter Burch, Assistant Federal Public Defender. I too believe, that by giving Mister Dennis more than the minimum sentence, it would hurt him rather than help to rehabilitate him. He's been the most easygoing client I've had since I've been an attorney. I ask that you show a little leniency and mercy for the defendant, Mister Dennis."

"All that was said is acknowledged and accepted. And now, I'd like to say something," the judge boldly speaks forward. "Mister Dennis; you've definitely got the knowledge, talent and ability to set-up something of this magnitude. However, I don't think all this is as innocent as you'd like us to believe. The picture you paint is one of a victimless crime. And yet you deliberately, and willfully, set out to cheat countless victims of not just fifteen dollars: nor just fifteen hundred dollars. And certainly not even fifteen *thousand* dollars: but fifteen *mmmmillion* dollars! Mister Dennis... *what made you print so much?* I'm sorry. What were you thinking? That's an awful lot of money. It hurts the economy whether or not you want to believe it. And it can hurt employees who unknowingly accept it. Do you understand this, Mister Dennis?"

“Yes, Your Honor. I very much do.”

Deep inside I want to tell him that I don't give a shit about hurting the business revenues of casinos, fast food, and alcohol serving establishments. They don't give a damn about people. Why should I care about them? It would be a better world if none of these businesses existed in the first place. But what the hell—he wouldn't understand. Not too many people do.

He continues to scold me...

“Furthermore, this is not a crime that you did on some kind of a whim. This is a crime that was well thought out. It's a major felony by all standards and measures. Planned and strategically developed; well financed. A very large scheme to defraud an awful lot of folks.”

Hmmmm... I thought the same scheme played out by the U.S. Government and the Internal Revenue Service, and the Defense Department with its contractors charging \$750.00 for a \$10.00 hammer, hundreds of dollars for a bolt, thousands of dollars for a cheap coffee maker, \$7,000.00 for a toilet seat, and millions of dollars for useless research to find out why a fucking desert monkey closes his eyes when hurricane force winds blow sand against his face! And, worst of all—wasting tens of millions of dollars from hardworking, mostly honest, taxpayer's dollars for investigations into a U.S. President having consensual sex with a more-than-willing White House intern!

Key word: *consensual*.

Oh yes, let's not forget Food Stamp and Welfare recipients who wear gold jewelry and drive luxury automobiles; and billions in aid to foreign countries who hate the United States; who'll never pay us back... aaand billions of dollars paid to illegal aliens to help them get started in their *illegal* new home called, America.

Is all this *not* considered a scheme to defraud an awful lot of folks? Hard working *citizens* of the United States? They're getting defrauded daily... every time they get a paycheck and a good portion of it has been sapped by a variety of taxes, which will ultimately get pitifully squandered beyond reason and belief.

The judge continues during my thoughts. I almost don't hear a word he says. It's quite meaningless. I only care about how many months the old bastard sentences me too...

"So it is hereby ordered, in the interest of this court, to give you as much time in prison as I can legally give... and that's probably *still not* enough. I hereby sentence you to fifty-seven months in a federal prison. You will be remanded to the custody of the United States Attorney General and Bureau of Prisons: effective immediately. Your sentence begins today."

The public defender quickly speaks-up, "Your Honor, it is requested that the defendant be allowed to self-surrender so he may have the opportunity to pack his possessions and household goods—"

"Doe's he not have relatives, Mister Burch?" the judge asks.

“Yes, Your Honor; but they’re not trust-worthy, and—”

The old bastard interrupts again, “If he can’t trust his own relatives, Mister Burch, who can he trust?”

“Your Honor, they’re his maternal relatives who—”

“I don’t *care*, Mister Burch! Your request is *denied!* Marshalls, take the defendant into custody... *now!*”

I plead to Mr. Burch as they quickly begin to handcuff me, “Please tell Alexia what happened here today. She thinks I’m coming home tonight. Tell her I love her—” and they drag me away before I can finish my last words.

I think to myself as I pray deep inside, though it may not sit too well with many people... but these thoughts won’t go away... these thoughts and wishes and prayers. I will the judge to die, slowly, painfully. Please, God... let nature take its course and take him off this planet, *now!* Get him the fuck out of society and straight to hell where he can’t hurt people with his cold, callous, inhumane manners and ways...

It is *he* who should be imprisoned for misrepresenting a Federally Appointed office where people trust him to make the *right* decisions based on given information by authorities who, work for his court. Yes... he made a very poor judgment call.

These bad thoughts drain my energy. I feel weak. I guess I won’t be seeing Alexia tonight for sure... especially for the next four and a half years.

• • • •

Dec 18, 1992 - 4:15 am (P.B.C.D.C., FL)

For all the money in Palm Beach, you think they'd build a more humane jail. The Palm Beach County Detention Center (P.B.C.D.C.) is a crappy shit-hole of a jail. I have seen a few, so I do know of the differences between them.

A very loud commanding voice yells, "Breakfast! Get your sleeping criminal minds up for breakfast! Get up! Get up!"

"Fuck you, asshole!" an anonymous voice yells out from inside one of the twenty jail cells.

"Yeah, fuck yo momma, you punk-ass bitch!" someone else yells.

"We don't need your motherfuck'in breakfast! Go stuff it up your wife's ass," I yell out; then chuckle aloud.

I laugh because I know the guards cannot do anything about this unless they know specifically who yelled back at them.

And even then, we're federal inmates being housed on floor number five, and they're only county guards contracted to keep us in custody during pre-sentence, pre-trial, post-sentence, and/or transfers.

They have very little authority over us. The Palm Beach County Detention Center is a real fine institution... sarcastically speaking.

"This food looks like shit! This place sucks!" I say as I grab my food tray from between the steel bars coated with thick lime-green paint. The paint is filthy and peeling.

The food is only good as trading material for someone's vegetables at lunch or dinner. The bartering system works fine in jail.

Half the guys eat only a small portion of the *stuff* they feed us. Rats would probably think twice of even stealing a bite.

This cell-house is in a non-lockdown status twenty-four hours a day. In the dayroom (nice term), there are ten metal tables with attached benches; all bolted to the cement floor. The tables are filthy and the paint is peeling as well.

Directly behind this area is a long corridor; made dark due to a lack of lighting. Only the dim lights from the twenty two-man cells emanate into the dingy corridor. The old-fashioned steel-barred doors to the six-by-ten-foot cells are always open. Inmates roam around twenty-four hours a day. It's very chaotic: a fucking mad house of tortuous mental hell.

This jail is very old. Cockroaches run rampant like unwanted household pets you can't get rid of. It's truly unbelievable. They're even in the cells and on the beds.

Speaking of which: each cell has two steel beds. Steel! And the mattress is a mere one-inch thick. When we arrive at the cell-house we're carrying our mattress *rolled-up under one arm!* The blanket is like a large piece of stiff Velcro™. The pillow (if we get one) is made of plastic... really. Cold crackling plastic!

There's a combination sink, toilet and water fountain in each cell. A comforting thought when getting a sip of drinking refreshment. We hang our blanket from the steel door bars to the steel frame of the bed, for a privacy curtain while using the toilet.

There are always card, chess and domino games being played twenty-four-seven. Between the inmates yelling at each other and the television playing RAP music at full volume, with a cracked speaker, the noise level is very aggravating. The RAP music comes over the cable via, "The Box™."

The brothers call their *homies* or their *bitches* & *hoes* at the crib, or sometimes call their *dogs*, to tell them to call in to the request line to play the RAP songs they like over and over and over and over... day and night and night and day, until I wanna just *kill-a-motherfucker*. Hey, now *that* should be a title to a RAP song.

We're doomed souls being forced to continually listen to "Snoop Dog," "Heavy D," "Ice Cube," "Ice T," and I don't believe there's an "Ice Tray" yet.

It's a freak-show comedy-circus in here.

Our only reprieve towards decency is to watch NFL™ football or video movies, which they play for us at noon, six and nine p.m., seven days a week.

My peace and tranquility comes for an hour each day as I peer out the dirty slot-of-a-window, where I view the east-west runway of the Palm Beach International Airport.

I often daydream about flying away somewhere. For a few moments I seem to forget the paranoia I have of flying.

I sit here on this cold metal stool, sad and lonely, where I imagine the people in the planes: how happy they must be. I know they're on their way to somewhere beautiful, or going to visit a loved one. When I feel spiteful and angry at my predicament, I sit here and hope for a crash.

Misery loves company.

Watching the wicked lightning and thunderstorms also keeps me sane amongst the insane.

As for the food... the oatmeal has the viscosity of thick, dry, wallpaper paste. The chicken legs (which I trade away) look more like the legs from a pigeon on crack cocaine. They give us canned vegetables (which I eat, yet despise). They're my only shot at nutrition. To me, canned anything means "little or no" nutrition anyway. Not much of a chance here: but I try to make due: pure survival mode.

To stay in shape I resort to a large amount of push-ups and other creative freestyle resistance exercises.

Another form of exercise is to practice martial arts. So I spar with my huge, mentally unstable, bank-robbing cellmate, Tim. He's so psychotic looking; he never had to use a gun when he robbed each bank. However, he still received a twenty-six year sentence to a maximum security USP.

He and I spar (fight) at three a.m. while half the inmate' sleep, and the other half are making game-playing noise.

As we gain seniority, we move to cells that are furthest down the corridor from the dayroom. It takes less than five minutes to pack our worldly belongings and move to another cell. However, even at the further distance, and with wet toilet paper balls stuffed into our ears (which is very uncomfortable), we can still hear the noise to a level where it's nearly impossible to sleep. It's a continuing severe deprivation, which lasts for months on end, thus far.

• • • •

April 17, 1993 - 6:00 pm (M.C.C., Miami, FL)

The Metropolitan Correctional Center (M.C.C.) in West Miami is a paradise compared to the P.B.C.D.C. Once I'm moved into the custody of the Bureau of Prisons facility at Miami, I call Alexia and ask her to go to the linen company in Hollywood and retrieve some pages from my invention portfolio, which are in one of the boxes she so neatly packed for me on October the seventh.

The uncle gave his blessing to store my personal possessions in the upper loft area within his laundry facility. I suppose this was a good will gesture in exchange for my silence regarding his involvement.

Well, when Alexia arrived and walked up the steps to the loft, she quickly noticed that half of everything was missing and the remaining boxes were torn apart.

Let me repeat myself I case you weren't paying attention... "*Half of everything* that is my personal property (and much of it irreplaceable) is gone! Stolen! Taken by relatives; uncle-Dave, Joey, and Larry/Marvin/Fuzzy/Fat-fuck."

I cannot believe that my own relatives stole my personal property. Yes, be it they are only maternal relatives, but they're still my relatives!

Now I'm absolutely and totally pissed-off and full of vengeful thoughts: thoughts that can send me away for an even longer time.

While Alexia was on her hands and knees, crying, trying to pick-up the remnants, my dear old uncle Dave stood above her sneering downward; and he said to the girl whom I love and cherish, this disgusting comment. He spoke these words to a crying girl in pain, who's never spoken a bad word towards him...

"Alexia, we've got the photos where you're topless on the tree in the water... nice tits. Can we see the rest?" He laughed while she cried even harder still.

Now first of all, "Tits" (actually Teats) are on a cow. "Breasts" are on a woman. Second of all, he's a backstabbing, piece-of-shit, thieving liar—and he went straight to *strike-fucking-three*. Oh you better believe it. He is absolutely done.

Shamefully, he's eighty years old and he'll probably be dead of disease or old age before I get a chance to pay him back—my way.

I suppose it's more for his fat-ass son to deal with, rather than just the lawsuits and funeral after his death. If I can't get to the culprit, I'll get to his legacy—legally.

• • • •

As I speak to Alexia, she's still in tears and in shock that a family member could be such a piece of shit: and so disrespectful. She can barely speak.

"Aaa-aall y-your stuff is g-gone, b-babe. They s-stole it, aaa-aaand broke what was left into pieces. It's all scattered a-aaround. What should I d-do with the rest of it?"

She's crying so hard I can barely understand what she says with any clarity. I don't know what to say. There isn't much left, so she'll put it in a few boxes and store it at her mother's condo on Miami Beach, where she now resides temporarily.

She continues to cry, "They e-even took your beautiful b-b-bedroom set, Wayne. I am so, so sorry. The neighbors said they saw them leaving with y-your television s-set and VCR. They even t-t-took your car and sold it! They're no good, babe. I h-h-hate them."

"Alexia. It's okay, sweetheart," I try to calm her.

"Your photo albums with all the flowers and sunsets, a-a-aaand animals (she's trying to remember my photographs, while she cries), and they even took the *negatives!* The videos of you on the talk shows... your music video—they're gone..."

Marvin' got your tool chest and scuba gear, and Joey's got your Rollerblades. There's nothing left. I saw Joey using your skates and he said you won't be needing 'em anymore. They—"

"Those fuck'in bastards! They've got two weeks to give it all back... or I turn them in. No one steals from me, and treats you like that and gets away with it! I'll give them a call and find out what's going on. Just hang tight, okay, sweetheart? Store whatever's left in your house and I'll take care of it from here on. Stay away from them, alright?"

"Okay."

"Promise me."

"I promise, babe. I love you so much. I miss you mentally and physically. I dream about you almost every night. I reach for you a-aa-aand your nooooot therrrrre," she cries even harder. P-pplease don't f-forget about me. Don't ever lose your love for me, babe. Promise me."

"I won't ever. I promise you. You know how much I love you. I've got to go, though. My phone time is up in one minute. Goodnight, my sweetheart. I'll call you tomorrow. I love you, Alexia."

"I love you too, babe."

And so it is; the torture, torment, and bullshit ways of the Goldmenn clan begins. God help them for their ignorance, stupidity, and terrible human behavior. If they only knew what is about to come: somehow... someday... someday.

• • • •

I call Joey and Dave at a time, which is well past their written deadline I'd given them: whereas they were to have returned my personal belongings to Alexia.

The only answer they give me (and remember, I've done absolutely nothing wrong to them up to this point) is... "Fuck-off, Wayne. We hope you rot in prison. Don't call here *anymore!*"

Now all my correspondence to them has to be through the mail; and it's a time-wasting process of communication.

I don't want to cause them more legal problems than what they'd already caused for themselves, so I just keep writing and pleading and writing and pleading. I'm even stooping to the begging routine... *begging!*

Another month passes. I'm still going through hell and hating prison. Now my letters to them are coming back to me, unopened and marked "Return to Sender."

They won't answer my letters or take Alexia's calls. And they still refuse to return my personal belongings. At this point in time I've tried every avenue and I've exhausted all forms of communication available. I can't even make them understand the ramifications when using my friends to relay information. I simply receive foul messages in return. And, my personal property is still "M.I.A."

My threats of legal retaliation to turn them in was previously met in return with relayed messages telling me that *"I can't do anything to them, because I'm a convicted felon who's stuck in prison and no one will believe a word I say, because I'm a low-life criminal."* They went on to say that *"I can't prove a thing, and that I should fuck-off and die in prison."*

Sorry, Goldmenns... I tried to be civilized."

• • • •

June 21, 1993 - 9:00 am (P.B.C.D.C., FL)

After my broken hand healed completely, the government sent me back here to this shit-hole, via M.C.C., Miami.

I received a broken hand in what looked like a made-for-the-movies fight over the rights to watch NFL™ Monday Night Football™ in our jail here at P.B.C.D.C.

I'll bet the fat illegal Colombian wishes he never pointed his newspaper in my face and ordered me to turn back the television to soccer.

You want soccer, you fat-illegal-fuck? Do your crime in your own country where they love soccer, not America where we love football. His head and neck had to have been more damaged and much more sore than my hand.

It's now time for a phone call here in this retched jail. As usual, I wipe the receiver handle of the telephone with wet toilet paper; then dry it off. I dial the number, which I had sent to me via the U.S. mail. The phone rings on the other end...

“Secret Service Field Office: may I help you,” the bored, monotonous-sounding voice speaks.

“Hello, is Agent Donzantz or Tracy Horten there, please? It’s very important.”

“Hang on. Lem’me see if either of them is here yet.”

Silence for forty seconds...

“Agent Donzantz. To whom am I speaking with?”

“This is Wayne Dennis. I’m still up here in West Palm Beach.”

“*Still?*”

“Yes, sir. I don’t know why.”

“Hummmm,” he sounds as puzzled as me. “What can I do for you, Dennis?”

“If I tell you something good... something where you can nail a counterfeiter’s bastard assistant for your record books, gain some more notoriety, could you assure me that I won’t get another charge for perjury or obstruction of justice?”

“You know as well as me, there are no guarantees. But I doubt that you would if you’re honest and it pans out. Let’s give it a shot. What’cha gotta tell me?”

Damn. I might as well take a chance. I hate the Goldmenns so much it would be worth a few extra years I prison just to pay them back—but good.

“Well,” I say reluctantly... very, very reluctantly; but the thoughts of those pieces-of-shit make me go forward in my speech... “Do you remember the green ammunition box with the two hundred and something thousand in it?”

“Yyyyes,” he says calmly.

“And do you remember the hole in the alleyway, when you asked me what was there?”

“I *knew* it.”

“Well, well...” there’s a long silence as I contemplate what I’m about to tell him. Then I just keep thinking of what pieces of shit the Goldmenns are... “That hole was where the ammunition box was buried. The box, and its quarter million in counterfeit belonged to my cousin Joey; Dave Goldmenn’s grandson...”

When I got caught in Las Vegas, I called Joey and told him to destroy all the money. The bastard took his share and hid it so he could cash it while I’m in prison. But, he told me that he destroyed it. He assured me. He had me totally convinced. I believed him about the seal being taken out and the bags being opened. And that’s why I told *you* what I did. I truly believed it was destroyed and harmless.”

“This is interesting,” he says. “It all makes sense now. Please... go on.”

“Joey helped with everything from the start. Dave Goldmenn acted so perfectly that day when he played the innocent bystander; the day we dug up the money in the alleyway.”

“Oh yes. I remember that very well.”

“He should have won an Oscar for best performance by a piece-of-shit human. Do they have that category?”

“You’re pretty funny, Dennis.”

“Anyways... Dave Goldmenn knew all along about the counterfeiting. In fact, he was the one who supplied the house where we printed it. At first, I was gonna stay silent until my death. But then he and my cousin Joey stole everything that was important and irreplaceable to me. They even took my car and sold it—”

“They can’t do that! That’s—”

“I know. But the fuck’in idiots must have forged the title. You know, I tried so many times to warn them to give back all my personal items and I’d forget about the things they broke. But they just told me to fuck-off and die. And that they hope I rot in prison—”

“They said *that*?”

“Oh yeah. And they verbally abused Alexia with disgusting sexual remarks. I can’t believe they’d be so stupid to steal my personal property and then ignore my warnings that I’d turn them in if it wasn’t returned. And now, because of their total disregard for honor, and their disregard for my future, I’m gonna forget my commitment to stay silent...

Since they don’t care, I don’t care. I’ll do whatever it takes to do the right thing to prove their involvement. Lets put them in the same position as myself and see how they like it. You can even show Joeys photograph around at printing supply stores. That’ll secure more witnesses...

I'll even stay I this piece-of-shit roach-motel jail for as long as it takes to go to court and nail those bastards. They thought I was joking. They think I'm powerless?"

"I understand. I don't blame you in the least."

"I'm ready to go. You just name the time and place."

"Those Goldmenns are in some *very* serious trouble. I'll get back to you shortly. Thanks."

The Agent has all he needs; power, authority, resources, manpower, evidence... and one knowledgeable individual who's mad as hell.

• • • •

Life in the Palm Beach County Detention Center is truly torturous. Months seem like years. And sadly, football season is now over. I'm still forced to eat crappy, non-nutritious food and listen to RAP music. As for the steel bed and the one-inch thick mattress—I feel like a rotisserie chicken as I lay here turning circles just trying to get comfortable.

Time passes very slowly.

• • • •

June 25, 1993 - 4:30 am (P.B.C.D.C., FL)

The sounds of handcuffs and shackle chains ring like an old familiar foe waiting to inflict pain on my wrists and ankles.

But this time it's different. This time I don't mind the pain; for today, I get to inflict the pain of "*ten times... minimum*" as promised, unto my ex-cousin Joey.

I pleaded with him. I even gave him explicit advance warnings of promised future retaliation. I told him to make it right or he'll suffer the consequences. And he just laughed while I suffered; and still do suffer.

This morning, uncomfortably restrained, I'll ride down south to the federal courthouse in Fort Lauderdale. I'll likely be escorted by two U.S. Marshalls—yet it'll still be a nice drive.

I'll get to see other humans in cars next to me as they hustle and bustle their way to work and beyond. Perhaps these people are headed to the beach, or the Keys island chain. Maybe even a golf course or the airport.

The Marshalls will likely transport me in some new-style converted Impala or Crown Victoria, rather than a white twelve-passenger van. It'll be much more comfortable—for me anyway.

The pain from the handcuff and shackle restraints, and the disruption of having to go from my daily routine and good food in prison, to the shit-hole called the Palm Beach County Detention Center, is well worth it all. I can't wait to see the face on this person I now despise.

The old Joey is gone. The cousin I once loved and cared about has vanished forever.

The new Joey awaits me in the massive, intimidating federal courtroom. He's a betrayer: a piece-of-shit traitor. The one whom I trusted for so long has done me so wrong. He was a "Good-time-cousin." Only when times are good, huh, Joey? Well, for you, motherfucker, times are about to become very, *very bad!*

• • • •

“Watch your head, Dennis,” the Marshall tells me as he helps me out of the car.

As I close my eyes and direct my face into the sun, I take in a deep breath of the ocean’s breeze: “Ahhhh, fresh air! I love it!”

“Come on, let’s go,” they’re insistent.

I smile as I look around at all the familiar Fort Lauderdale buildings and landmarks. The men escort me slowly because of my chains. They direct me into a typical Marshall’s facility-holding cell; then remove my restraints.

These benches have got to be made by the same manufacturer. They’ve got to be refrigerated. It’s freezing cold in here so I do hundreds of push-ups in an attempt to warm myself. Once I’m finished I use a roll of toilet paper as a pillow and lay on the cold bench to relax. It’s no use. This bench is freezing!

The Marshalls bring in my personal black suit, which I’d worn on sentencing day. My brother brought it to their office. I’ve got to look my best for the jury; and jail clothes don’t cut it.

• • • •

“Will you swear-in the witness,” the judge demands.

Now *this* particular judge has an honorable appearance and manners, which lends well to the robe he wears. He’s very respectable in tone as well; a much more professional judge than the grungy old “Hang-judge” in Palm Beach.

Another empty voice from a court clerk speaks forward, "Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to the best of your knowledge, so help you God?"

"Yes, I do." I look around at the full courtroom. The only persons I recognize of those present is the prosecutor, James Banta, the two Secret Service Agents, Frank Donzantz and Tracy Horten, and Joey. No family members show-up to lend support or even credibility to and for Joey. What a creepy family, those Goldmenns. Fucking losers.

"You may take your seat," she instructs me.

"Thank you," I give her a small grin.

It feels good to wear non-institutional clothes after such a lengthy period of time in my jail rags. I feel like a million bucks.

"State your name, please."

"Wayne Victor Dennis."

"Your age?"

"Thirty-three years old."

"Thank you," she says without even so much of a hint of emotion.

"You're welcome," I reply.

The judge calls upon the prosecutor, "Mister Banta, you witness."

"Thank you, Your Honor." He walks towards me, "Mister Dennis, have we ever met in the past?"

"Yes, sir. You were the prosecutor in my case."

“Have you and I spoken before today regarding the case against Mister Goldmenn?”

“Yes, sir. For about an hour.”

“Did I coach you on what to say, or promise you anything in exchange for your testimony?”

“No, sir. We discussed the details of this case, and you explained to me the procedure of events. And, no, I wasn’t promised anything. I’m here today because I’ve decided to break my silence. I’ll no longer protect Joseph Goldmenn, my cousin: because he stole everything that was ever important to me after I was sent away to prison. Now it’s time for him to face justice and be penalized for his part in this major crime. That’s why I’m here today. No more protection for him. He’s a criminal.”

The jury has a look of total astonishment on their faces because of my candor and honesty. Being so straightforward can be such a shock. When the truth is let out of the bag without delusion; and the fact that I admitted my true motive for being here today, I can see why all twelve of their faces are shocked. They now know that this *will* be interesting. Like nothing they’ve seen on television or at the movies.

“Mister Dennis;” the prosecutor continues. “The charges against the defendant, Joseph Goldmenn are: Count one; Conspiracy to manufacture counterfeit...”

He reads all the charges against Joey.

“And if he’s found guilty in this court, he may receive a prison sentence that would lock him away for many months. Do you understand the implications of the charges against him?”

“Yes, sir, I do. That’s why I called the authorities on him.”

“And all the testimony which you’ll give to the court today will be truthful and accurate to the best of your knowledge?”

“Yes, sir. *Exacting* knowledge.”

“Then we may proceed if the court is satisfied with this witness.”

“We are,” states the judge. “You may proceed with your questioning, Counsel.”

“Thank you, Your Honor.”

The prosecutor stares at me trying to look serious in the eyes of the jury, “Mister Dennis, part of the counterfeit in question, is in the amount of two hundred and forty-three thousand dollars, which was found on July the fourth, nineteen ninety-two; and bearing upon most of the bills were the serial numbers ‘e-six-oh-three-one-nine-oh-two-oh-c’, and check letter ‘C’, quadrant number four, face plate number ‘C twenty-two’, back plate number seventy-one, drawn on the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco...

These were the bulk of the bills which were turned-in, and which are identical to the ones, that you earlier manufactured; and later you did give the face dollar amount to Joseph Goldmenn, here today, the total sum of five hundred thousand dollars...

half a million dollars, for his assistance in helping you to complete the counterfeiting operation in question. Is this true, Mister Dennis?"

"Yes, sir, it is absolutely true."

"And you will verify that the defendant Joseph Goldmenn, is present here in the courtroom today?"

"Yes. He's right there at the defendant's table, wearing the white shirt and blue tie."

I couldn't wait to point directly at him just to let him know that it is *me* who is about to fuck him ten times more in return... as promised.

His new haircut, suit and tie make him look gentlemanly and innocent. The more I look at him, the more I think of the good times we once had as friends rather than as cousins. But that was in the past. He's had plenty of opportunity to right his wrong against me.

After questioning me for forty minutes, the prosecutor rests his case until his time for rebuttal. The judge now asks to hear from the defense counsel. I sit here and wonder why Joey's grandfather didn't hire for his grandson a real attorney, rather than allowing Joey to be represented by this very ill-looking, poorly dressed, public pretender?

Dave probably knew that the truth would prevail and Joey would be convicted regardless of his defense team: so why waste money on a lost cause?

Sounds reasonable to me.

The ill-dressed, ill-mannered attorney steps forward towards me coughing, then looks over at the judge, "Your Honor, I'm Mister Jonathan Dawson, Assistant U.S. Defense Attorney representing the defendant, Joseph Goldmenn."

"Very well. Continue on please," the judge says irritably. Judges don't have patience for liars, or for those who lie professionally to represent them either.

"I'd like to address the court and the jury in this matter, and what brings Mister Dennis here today. It's not because Mister Goldmenn is guilty of anything! It's because Mister Dennis, here," he points indignantly at me, "has a fifty-seven month prison sentence, and he's hating it! And who wouldn't? In fact, he's hating it soooo bad, that he's fabricated a story, then called the prosecutor's office to implicate his loving, innocent cousin, in an effort to get the prosecutor a conviction, and get himself... well... a reduction in his sentence. This is called a Rule thirty-five; correct me if I'm wrong," he says this as he looks over at the jury one by one in a grandstanding fashion; so movie-like, so dramatic. "Now, poor innocent young Joey sits here falsely accused..."

Your Honor: ladies and gentlemen of the jury, young Joseph Goldmenn was about to enroll in law school at Broward Community College. (Now that's a school to boast about to Joey's prospective future clients). He's working hard at his grandfather's linen company in Hollywood...

(He neglects to mention that this is Joey's first job, besides a thieving burglar, and he's likely being paid under the table, thus cheating the IRS). And noooow, if he's convicted, his days as an attorney are over before they even begin. (That's a good defense. Just what the jury needs, another dishonest attorney, a well-loved occupation). I'd like to prove to the jury that my client is innocent, and that Mister Dennis is lying. Go ahead Mister Dennis," he looks at me. "Let's hear in *your* words what happened in this case, and what brings you here today?"

The fool. I'll bet he assumes that by allowing me to speak openly, I'll slip-up and damage my credibility. However, all I have to do is tell the truth. Simply reminisce. The truth is always easy to remember... *because it's the truth!* Lies are difficult to remember. I look at the jury, then over at Joey...

"There's so much to explain; so many areas to cover in order to completely depict exactly what did take place during this operation. You know, as I look over at my cousin, I realize that I still love him. He was my friend as well as a relative. And so I wonder why he did to me what he did... stealing all my life's possessions. It's because of my anger that I must now let the truth be known. He stole everything that meant anything to me: all that I cherished in my life. It's all gone forever. He's betrayed me to the highest degree. I know if I tell the jury the truth, it'll all make sense, because the truth always makes sense..."

Lies can always be detected. Maybe Joey'll go to prison for a few short years once the jury convicts him—"

"Objection! Your Hon—"

"Overruled! Continue on, Mister Dennis. Mister Dawson please allow the witness to finish, *uninterrupted!*"

"Yes, Your Honor. I apologize."

"Mister Dennis," the judge smiles at me, "go ahead."

"Yes, sir. At any rate: maybe prison will help him to become more honest. At his current trend, he may get himself mixed-up with drug dealers and get murdered, or get himself a life sentence for trafficking. I feel certain he'll follow that path. Or, maybe the reality of prison will save his life in advance. He decided to enroll in college only *after* he received his indictment. It was a sham—"

"Objection! Your Hon—"

"Overruled! Mister Dawson, I'm warning you. Let the witness finish!"

"I sincerely apologize."

The Judge shows a slight smile at me, "Mister Dennis, continue, would you?"

"Yes, sir. Joey joined to community college to trick the court into believing that he was a good citizen on his way to a career. And if you send an independent investigator to the linen company to verify his employment, you'll likely find it too, to be a sham. I know how his family operates. Unfortunately, I was once a part of that family and it ruined my life..."

Anyways; the two things the investigators will find out is that Joey is not employed there, and that the company is dumping hazardous, poisonous chemicals into the Florida water-table—”

“Objection—”

“Mister Dawson! This is your last warning!”

“Sorry, Your Honor. But the witness can’t prove that the company is dumping hazardous waste. That’s unfounded hearsay. I—”

“One more interruption: I mean it, Mister Dawson. Go ahead, Mister Dennis.”

“Yes, Your Honor. Personally, I would send an investigator from the EPA immediately, before the trial is finished. Please don’t be fooled by Joey’s innocent appearance. He’s been involved since day one when we bought the printing press. The owner of the store can verify Joey’s presence.”

The defense attorney quickly speaks, “He thought you were buying the printing press to print your book.”

“That’s a real good one!” I laugh. “And which book is that, Mister Dawson?”

“Okay,” the judge stops us. “The court doesn’t need you two bickering back and forth.”

“Yes, sir... Anyways, that’s the same lie I used at the supply store. He’s heard me say that several times. Joey actually took printing classes in high school: Graphics Communication it’s called. You can verify this with his school records. That should be good proof right there...”

Although he learned nothing in general, he was still able to make film negatives of twenty-dollar bills during lunch breaks while his classmates were eating. Without experience though, his knowledge wasn't worth a damn. The printing plate was absolutely useless. But nonetheless, he made one. It was at this point that we decided *not* to go any further with our plan... this plan of counterfeiting...

Then later, I started the VCR Lock Corporation with an idea I came up with, and patented the invention. Then Joey's grandfather, my uncle, depleted the corporation's funds by misusing them to fight lawsuits against himself after cheating his business partners—

“Objection! Your Honor, there's nothing to substantiate these accusations. This is—”

“I told you not to interrupt! You *will* let Mister Dennis finish. You'll have your chance during rebuttal, or when finishing your cross. I'd like to lock you up for contempt, but I don't want to drag out this trial while we find a new defense attorney. Your objection is overruled! Denied! Proceed, Mister Dennis.”

“Yes, sir. So now I had to disband the corporation. It was around this time that I met the financier that the Secret Service now knows of after finding my records ledger. It was at this time that we began the counterfeiting operation which brings us here today.”

At this point, mentioning Spillman's name can do no harm, because he's already been caught, and has surrendered his millions in counterfeit. I know he's awaiting trial.

I also know that he can never beat the government, especially when he's caught red-handed with the counterfeit.

I go on to explain the counterfeiting operation as "you" now know it, including a very detailed explanation of Joey's involvement. The jury listens intently as I'm instructed to show the negatives, plates, and even some of the counterfeit. The money is now well worn and looks even more genuine. The bailiff passes it around to each member.

I have to explain exactly how I printed it and the process I used to age it. I've been speaking for almost two hours now. My voice is getting tired and hoarse...

"And furthermore," I speak towards the jury, "if I didn't instruct Joey regarding the safe manner in which to pack his half million, you wouldn't need me here today, because his finger prints would be all over the baggies stuffed with the counterfeit."

The jury stares at me as they hang on to every word. The bailiff could douse all twelve of them with gasoline and set them ablaze, and they'd still sit here in silence listening to the words of blatant truth.

Everything I say is the truth, so it all makes sense. I don't even have to think hard; it's all the absolute truth, and so it's believable.

Now the defense attorney makes his final error. This goes to show that he must have attended the same law school that Joey *was* to attend. What an idiot. The jerk must have studied law at “Bill’s Bar & Grill, Law School & Bait Supplies?”

“Mister Dennis,” he speaks so bold and confident, “do you recognize this police badge?”

“Yes, sir, I do. That must be the badge Joey stole from my car right before they forged my signature and sold it without my permission, while I’ve been locked away. But yes, that *is* my badge.”

Mr. Dawson’s face becomes soured and sullen. A frown of frustration takes the place of his recent over-confident smile.

“I used that badge quite often in school speed-zones. It was very effective, possibly, in saving lives. I’d just flash it at the drivers who’d speed more than the fifteen-mile-an-hour limit, where the blinking yellow lights overhead did nothing to slow them from running over little children. When they’d see the badge they’d slow down *real fast*. Probably ninety percent of the people would wave at me and apologize as they slowed down. I may have saved some lives... I don’t know.”

Every member of the jury smiles with 100% approval... even the judge. It’s only obvious that each person, at one time or another, has encountered a school-zone-speeder, and had said to themselves, “Where’s a cop when you need one?”

I continue on in my soft-spoken manner, “You know, I took my good-Samaritan duties even further, sir: I always flashed the badge at idiotic parents who I’d seen many times allowing their children to sit on their laps unbuckled, or stand on the front seat like missiles just waiting to be launched through the windshield if the parent had an emergency stop or an accident.”

The judge is now smiling rather happily. One juror looks as if he’s about to stand up and applaud. No one gives a damn that it was illegal to have a badge and use it like that. They just know that what I did was scaring drivers and parents into doing the *right thing*.

That’s the good thing about court: it’s like the movies. You can say all you want, with inflection, with added hesitation for effect, until you’re finished, *mostly without interruption*. The jury once again smiles, and Joey now looks like a thief, as well as an accomplice, and a liar.

The more his attorney badgers me, the more foolish I make him appear in the eyes of the court and its attendees. Joey’s conviction comes nearer with every spoken word.

The truth and poetic justice will prevail. If the defense attorney had a gun in his possession, he’d probably put a bullet through his pea-sized brain right about now.

It has become apparent that the truth I've presented here today has far outweighed the degradation of unlawful acts that were brought to light by the brilliant mind and representation of Assistant U.S. Federal Defense Attorney, Mr. Dawson.

• • • •

By now, Joey has probably pissed himself twice, and shitted himself once. It must stink over there at the defense table. He can only sit there helpless... just as helpless as I was when they stole my personal belongings. He must sense his freedom slipping unnecessarily away.

It's so fucking unbelievable. All he had to do was simply return my personal effects to Alexia. If he were not so stupid and greedy: and if he'd had taken me seriously, he'd be sitting in a classroom right now instead of a courtroom. And, instead of being surrounded by legal beagles and Marshalls, he'd be surrounded by beautiful young college girls: stupid, stupid Joey.

• • • •

As I'm about to leave the courtroom, I turn to the jury members, and with a gentle smile I mouth the words, "Thank you." I turn and walk through the side door where the two U.S. Marshalls wait.

Once I'm through the door, out of sight from the jury, they quickly put me in cold steel handcuffs, then leadith me unto the refrigerated holding cell. I'll be stuck here until the end of the day; until they're sure they won't need me again.

• • • •

The Marshalls bring me lunch, which is actually identifiable. Like a desperate starved man, I stuff the food into my mouth and try not to choke.

"Ummmm. Guddum. Thus uss gud!" I smile.

I can feel some scraps of food as they hang from my lips and chin, but I for once I don't bother to wipe it away... not yet.

"*Goddamn*, Dennis" the Marshall laughs, "where you been locked-up at?"

I force down the remaining food in my mouth, "Ask your buddies who picked me up... why?"

"Just curious, man. Juuuust curious."

I know deep inside, what Joeys' verdict will be. I'm still a little uncertain, though. It must be a "12-0" vote in order to convict. The jury is smart. They'll know. They've gotta know. After all, he really *is* guilty! And if they find him to be innocent, well, then, the justice system will have failed once again.

• • • •

June 27, 1993 - 8:10 pm (P.B.C.D.C., FL)

The telephone rings four times on the other end of the line. Irving Goldmenn: the only honest male of the Goldmenn clan, and the black sheep because of his honesty, hears the electronic voice announcement of the collect call during his screening.

He immediately picks-up the handset and depresses the number two key. There's a loud "Beeeeeep!" and the connection begins...

"Hey, cous!" he shouts. "How the heck are you?"

"Fine. How about you?"

"Super. Couldn't be better... except we wish you were here. Diana says hello."

"Tell her that I said hello and I miss her."

"I don't have to ask how court went," Irving laughs a little. "I read the story in the newspaper. They convicted the little fucker!"

"Really?" I shout. "Alllright! I can't believe it. Fuck him! Thanks for the good news, Irving. I hope they send him to my prison. I will beat him like a redheaded stepchild with buck teeth."

"Hey; you didn't know until now?"

"No. In this jail we don't often get newspapers.

"Now you just gotta get Dave," he says. "He's one guilty sonofabitch!"

“He sure is. And I’ll try my best. You know I will. A life sentence in prison is not enough for him. Not even long enough to make up for all the bad he’s done. His involvement will be hard to prove though. The only one who’d ever testify against him is Alexia, and she’s supposed to be innocent: just a possessor. She’s not supposed to know about the operation at all.”

“Yeah, I understand. Damn,” he says. “There’s gotta be a way. Keep try’in.”

“Oh, I will. You can bet your ass on that! I’m thinking I.R.S., E.P.A., you know?”

We talk for fifteen more minutes. I’m as ecstatic as can be. Justice, *and* poetic justice, my friends, has finally been served.

• • • •

Joey receives a thirty-six month prison sentence, where the lucky punk will be allowed to self-surrender, (he’ll never have the unpleasant, painful experience of being handcuffed and shackled and transported by bus or Con-air to his prison). And he’ll get to serve his time at a “Club-Fed Camp” on Florida’s beautiful Gulf Coast, at Eglin Air Force Base, or Pensacola.

His job could be a dishwasher, a janitor, or *beach groomer*... a prized job. Regardless, he *will* work eight hours a day for twelve cents an hour.

And it’s still prison: including a scar on his record. In my books, though, it’s not quite enough... but it’s all I can do *for now*.

• • • •

July 13, 1993 - 8:50 pm (Tallahassee, FL)

I'm so happy to be back in a bona-fide federal facility. Though it's a higher security prison, with several razor-wire fences as dense as a wall, it's still one hundred times better living conditions than that of the Palm Beach County Detention Center.

We'll discuss Federal Prisons shortly.

• • • •

The telephone rings in a condo on Miami Beach. Alexia answers. Although she's on house arrest for six months, along with five years probation, and ordered *not* to communicate with me, she still spends nearly six hundred dollars a month in telephone bills to talk to me, via my collect calls. This is the only way prisoners can call out. And she sure can't call in. This constant communication is at her impassioned request...

"Hi, babe," she sounds as if she's crying.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" I ask her gently.

"N-n-nothing."

Girls. I swear. Can't live with 'em...

"Come on. Whadaya mean, nothing? You're crying. Come on, Alex, what's wrong, sweetie? Please tell me... Alex."

"You'll hurt him if I tell you. He—"

"Wait! How can I hurt anyone? I'm in prison hundreds of miles away. Who you talk'in about? What the heck happened?" I beg and plead with her.

She tries to stop crying... "W-well... w-w-well... Robert (Robert Yarken, the wimp) rented a movie called *Body Heat*. I'd never seen it before, so I agreed to watch it with him at my house. He said it was a really good movie."

Allow me to interject for just a moment here. Robert is supposed to be acting as Alexia's big brother and platonic friend: pure and simple... *period!*

"S-so, we're in my mom's room, w-where the VCR is hooked-up, a-and we're laying there on my mom's bb-bed, far apart from each other."

"Yeah."

"And," she sniffles, "We're laying there; and after some sex scenes that I tried to ignore, because I miss you so much, babe... and h-h-h-he said he needed to use the bathroom. When he came back h-h-he forced himself on top of me and was trying to kiss m-m-me. I y-yelled and c-cried until, finally, he, h-he got o-off meeeeeee," she begins to cry all over again.

"Whoah! Whooooah! You're serious?"

"Yeeees! What do you think?"

"Alexia. I'm in total shock! I can't fucking believe this! This is very serious. Go on, please!"

"That's it. I threw him out. I never want to see him again!"

"I'm so shocked, Alex. I... I don't know what to say."

"There's nothing *to* say," she barks.

"Alex. Please. Stay right there. I'll call you back. Gimme just a few minutes. Stay right there, please."

“O-okay, babe. Don’t threaten him. We don’t need any more trouble.”

She knows exactly what I have in mind for him, and that it’s him I’m about to call.

“I love you. I’ll call you right back.”

“I love you too, Wayne,” she sobs in a whisper.

• • • •

Robert has been a pseudo friend for a couple of years now. The three of us: Alexia, him and myself, have done an awful lot together. We shared some damn good times. I trusted him to care for and watch over the girl I love.

Robert has an honest, gentle, and harmless look about him. His look is so similar to the famous actor Dustin H, in fact, that strangers often ask for his autograph in their case of mistaken identity for the genuine Dustin. Robert still signs the autograph, and the recipient goes away happy.

However, unlike the genuine Dustin, Robert cannot get a girl. And if by some miracle he does, the relationship lasts just long enough for the girl to realize what a scummy, pervert wimp he is, and she dumps him like a quick-moving wheel-barrel that blows its tire. He’s been with a girl a total of three days in two years! No exaggeration.

Now, as I stand here, on the telephone, I distinctly remember the time that the one girl I’d seen him with had the same experience that Alexia had with him.

You see, with that girl, Robert rented the movie *Truth or Dare*, (full of sexually explicit scenes) to try and get his date hot and horny. It's because of this knowledge I have an insight to his personality and his way of thinking.

My next move is to call someone I've known for quite some years, Jerry Adler, in Las Vegas. He knows all about entertainment including rock groups and the name of each member, sports teams and the individual players' names, movies and their stars, etc. He is very, very knowledgeable. Jerry lives most of his life in front of a television, so I know he'll be home. I need to talk to him now to confirm my suspicions regarding Robert's movie rental and his motives...

"Jerry babeeeee, what's doing?"

"Heeeey," his usual calm drawn greeting.

"I am so glad you're home, bro."

"What's up?"

"Jer, you ever see the movie *Body Heat*?"

"Sure. It's great. Plenty of sex," he laughs.

"Yeah? You sure, Jer?"

"I've seen it a couple of times," he tells me confidently. "I'm a hundred percent sure. Why?"

"*Body Heat*? ...Jerry." I double check.

"Yeeees! I'm sure"

He doesn't like to be doubted when it comes to entertainment or sports trivia. This guy can even tell you the date and time of any one of the 575 music concerts he's attended.

"Okay, okay, Jerry. I'm just mak'in sure."

"Why?" he's curious. "What's so important about *that* movie?"

"Gimme a minute. You gonna be home?"

"Yeah. You know I will. My favorite shows are on T.V. tonight. Of course I'll be here."

"Okay. Thanks a million, Jer." Click.

• • • •

"Hello... Wayne?" The scared voice answers once he hears the electronic tele-message.

"Yeah, it's Wayne, Robert. You wanna voluntarily tell me about it? Or do I escape and come down there and mangle you like a fucking animal... you piece-of-shit-motherfucker! What the hell were you thinking?"

"I'm sorry. I am so, so, so very sorry, Wayne. It just happened," he hurriedly explains.

"It just happened, huh? Okay... it just happened. Robert, have you ever *seen* the movie *Body Heat* before tonight?"

I'm trying to establish guilt and honesty... if there is any within him. Alexia already told me that he told her that he'd already seen it and that's why he recommended it to her in the first place. Now I want to hear it from him...

"Yeah," he says.

"How many times, Robert?"

"I think once."

"Once? You *think*, once?"

"Twice. It was twice. I've seen it twice."

"So you're quite familiar with the movie and its scenes?"

"Yeah. Why?" the fool asks.

“I’ll tell you why, you gorilla motherfucker! The way I figure it... you rent this movie that you’ve seen before... twice... and you know for sure that it’s full of erotic sex scenes, and you convince Alexia to watch it with you; hoping to get my girlfriend horny; knowing that she hasn’t had sex in many, many months... so you try and take advantage of her? You practically try to rape her: in her own home? You are one fucked up individual, Robert. When I get out—”

“It’ll never happen again. I swear, Wayne. I am so very sorry. It’ll never happen again... I assure you. I guarantee that... I swear!”

“Oh, I know it’ll never happen again! You know why you wimpy fucker? Because the only time you’ll ever see her again is tomorrow: when you bring her a large bunch of flowers and an apology letter. And I don’t give a *fuck* what you have to do or who you have to see tomorrow night at nine thirty, but you’d *better* be in front of her condo waiting till she gets home. You give her the flowers and the letter, and you *don’t* let her tell you that it’s okay. You give her the flowers and letter and you leave. If I call at ten fifteen tomorrow night, and find out that you didn’t do exactly as I directed, you’ll be eating dinner with me in a few months, like Joey, except you’ll have no teeth to eat with, cause I’ll knock ‘em right out of your stinky fucking mouth. You got it... you scumbag?”

“Yes. I got it. Consider it done, Wayne. I’ll get it done right. I’m so, so sor—”

Click. I hang up on him.

• • • •

At ten p.m. tonight, Robert meets her at the condo. He carries a large arrangement of flowers and a humbly written letter of apology.

Then he takes off on foot towards his car, repeatedly telling Alexia that he's sorry. He even drives by in his black Corvette™ convertible telling her he's sorry one final time before he disappears out of her life... *seemingly* forever.

Robert paid cash for that Corvette™ a few months before my arrest. It cost him all his savings, and his stocks and bonds. It's a beautiful automobile. He used to let me drive it. I raced through traffic like a madman, scaring the hell out of him... and sometimes even myself. It handled very well. The anti-lock brakes performed superbly during several emergency near misses.

• • • •

"Well, that was nice of him," I tell Alexia when we speak during the next days' phone conversation.

"What did you say to him?" she asks.

"We just had a friendly talk, that's all."

"I don't ever wanna see him again," she whimpers.

"I seriously doubt that you ever will, Alex."

I smile as I say this, but she can't see it.

• • • •

July 15, 1993 - 7:00 pm (Tallahassee, FL)

Earlier this morning, my counselor tells me that if I pay my court fine of one hundred and fifty dollars, I'll be eligible to be transferred to Nellis Federal Prison Camp located on Area II at Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada. It's rated one of the two best facilities in the "Club-Fed" prison/hospitality government franchise chain.

Between you and me, I can easily pay this fine and be on my way to a more lenient prison institution; however, I'm not too keen on the idea of diminishing my commissary funds. And, since I'm still angry with Robert, I figure I'll test his loyalty for the good time' past.

I think I'll give him a call and ask him to loan me the one-fifty. And I'll pay him back too. Honestly... I will.

"Hello," he answers hesitantly. He's got to wonder, what now?

"Robert?" I'm sounding more mellow this time.

"What's up, buddy?"

"Well, I heard you did as I asked you with the flowers and the letter. She appreciated it. Thanks."

"I'm still sorry," he tries to sound sincere.

"Robert," I tell him, "you must know inside that prison really sucks. It's worse than you'll ever, ever know. And, well, I've got the opportunity to go to a camp. It's like the difference between prison and freedom..."

There' no fences. And there' no bright lights while I'm trying to sleep. Also, I can work at the Air Force Base and be around regular people. Imagine that!"

"Sounds good. I wish you the best of luck."

Right... I'm sure you do Robert.

"I need a favor of you, though. And I'll pay you back. You know I always keep my word."

"I know you do. Whadaya need?"

"I need to pay my court fine of a hundred and fifty dollars, to the counselors here at the prison, and they'll send me to the camp at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas. They'll send me right away."

"Well, when could you pay me back?"

"Rob, they took all my money when I was arrested and I make a total of twelve cents an hour. At the rate of fifteen dollars a month... and I still need to buy toiletries; so I can only pay you ten dollars a month until it's paid. So— "

He rudely interrupts, "No. I need you to pay me back the entire fifteen dollars a month until it's paid," he insists rather coldly.

"Robert, you want me to go without anything in prison for ten solid months? Am I not already suffering?"

"I understand that, but I need my money back," he insists even more sternly.

"You'll—"

He stupidly, rudely interrupts again...

"And I'll need some interest on the loan as well. Because I'm gonna lose interest when the money' not in the bank."

“Wait a minute. You want *all* my money each month? You wanna leave me with no money? Aaaand you want interest on top of that?”

“Well, yeah. That’s the only way I’ll do it.”

To patronize him I agree to his terms. I’ll pay him back. However, he’ll get no interest.

“Okay, Robert. Thanks. I need you to send it out tomorrow, because I’m gonna sign the papers with the counselors today. And make sure you send it tomorrow at the latest! If not I’ll get in trouble with the prison, and the counselors. So promise me that you’ll send it tomorrow.”

“I promise. It’s as good as done, buddy.”

“Thanks, Rob.”

“No problem. What are friends for?”

• • • •

Aug 15, 1993 - 7:30 pm (Tallahassee, FL)

The following month I call my... *buddy... the attempting rapist*. The telephone rings at Robert’s high-rise condo in Aventura. Just as he’s in the middle of saying hello, I interrupt...

“What the *fuck* is up with you, Robert? The counselors are harassing me everyday! They’re threatening to get me in more trouble.”

“Oh yeah,” he says. “I gave it a great deal of thought, and before I send any money, I want something in writing that proves you really *do* owe money to the prison... I mean the court.”

“Robert, you mean to tell me you couldn’t have taken a minute to write me and tell me this new thought... a month ago? ...

I waited an entire fucking month for you to tell me this? Do you know I've stood like an idiot in the mail line every day, waiting for your letter and the money, and you couldn't have dropped me a note to tell me you changed your mind?"

"Well—"

"Never mind, Robert. You keep your fucking money. I can see how you are. All the dinners I've treated you to... and when I found your six-hundred dollars you lost when we were at the art fair, *and* gave it back to you; and the times I fixed your car, and treated you to the movies, and helped you with your condo, and was going to split hundreds of thousands of dollars in counterfeit with you... fifty percent of the pro—"

He quickly interrupts, "Don't talk about that on the phone. They could be listen—"

"Fuck you! I'll see you at dinner in a few months." I disconnect the line with a slam.

• • • •

With all this being of his own deliberate doing, I now have legitimate, heartfelt reasons to inflict the final sting of pain into Robert's worthless life.

One: For being a good-time-only friend who is a cheap bastard that hoards his money: and who is a very selfish individual.

Two: For what he did to Alexia: an unforgivable act. It is not in my belief, or standards to ever, *ever* force oneself upon a woman... regardless of *anything!* Robert did in fact break our trust.

Three: He wanted to charge me interest on a small loan, *while I'm in prison?*" Then: potentially screw me over by being inept. He's what people around the world so rightfully title others as an "Asshole."

He deserves all the fucking he's about to get.

• • • •

Aug 17, 1993 - 9:00 am (Tallahassee, FL)

It's time to assert my wrath of vengeance unto Robert. His triple betrayal cannot, and will not go unpunished.

I've been given time off work in order to make this legal phone call so early on this fine day. The telephone rings hundreds of miles away in Miami. It picks-up on the third ring...

"Secret Service Field Office, Miami, can I help you?"

"Agent Donzantz or Horten, please?"

"Hold on a minute." His voice is as pleasant as death.

A hoarse, sandpapery voice now answers, "Agent Frank Donzantz, can I help you?"

"Hello. This is Wayne Dennis, again. I'm finally up here in Tallahassee at the FCI."

"Oh hey there! You had to of heard the news about Joe Goldmenn, haven't you?"

"Yeah. Are you guys sure you don't want to go after Dave also?"

"Nah. He's too old. From what I can see, his life is full of misery enough. He may not live long enough to even go through the court process. Give 'em a break."

“Break?” He doesn’t deserve one. He’s hurt a hellava lot more people than just me!”

“Be happy with Joes conviction. Don’t you think that hurt his grandfather too? You’ve got your revenge,” he gives a little laugh. “So, how can I help you today?”

“Well... how would you guys like a new Corvette convertible? It’s black, with black leather interior and a black rag-top. The car is very nice. And it’s all paid for. This car was purchased with cash. Aaaand, you know what’s better still? It was used in the counterfeiting operation; so you can seize it as a forfeiture.”

“Wow; you are full of surprises, aren’t you? Sure, we’d like to have it. But what reasons do you have that you think the car would qualify for a forfeiture?”

I can vividly imagine Robert’s face and what a piece of shit he is. I can see him clearly as he forces his way on top of Alexia... helpless without me there...

“Do you remember a while ago when you questioned me regarding some extra negatives, plates and other items?”

“Sure. I remember that day in your empty printing room.”

“That’s right. Well, this car was the transport vehicle used to deliver the negatives and plates from the house to the Intracoastal Waterway in Aventura. The William Lehman Causeway Bridge. I gave all the supplies I mentioned to a guy... a real fucking loser named Robert Yarken.”

“And what did he do to *you* that he should be so stricken down by your wrath?”

“It’s simple. Besides betraying me in several different ways, he tried to rape Alexia.”

“Ooooh... ouch. That is *not* good.”

“He was in on this case from day ten: but not as much as the rest of us. The guy looks real honest, and is also a very good liar. Buuuut, if you handcuff him to that restraint chair in your office and interrogate the hell out of him, he’ll break. He *will* confess. I’m sure of it. I swear.”

“You’re not exaggerating or making any of this up because you’re mad at him, are you?”

“Not at all! He lives right next to the causeway bridge I told you of: and I had him toss about ten plates that were folded... along with the negatives. They were all taped-up. I put it all on the floor in front of the passenger seat. I told him not to forget about the bag, because it was placed in a dark area out of sight... and not to speed on the way home. He definitely knew that all the mentioned items were in the bag. I’m serious! Interrogate him hard. You’ll beat him... he’ll break... you’ll see.”

“Ooookay,” the Agent breathes a sigh, “give me his full name, address and telephone number. Do you happen to know his license plate number?” he asks.

“Of course I don’t know the plate.”

“Didn’t think so. But I thought I’d give it a try since you seem to remember details.”

“Not this time. Sorry. But I have his phone number and the name of the condo he lives in.”

“Why don’t you give me that info and I’ll let you know how it goes?”

“My pleasure.”

• • • •

Three days later I get a call... in prison... from the Secret Service office in Miami. I’m brought to the counselor’s office to talk with the person on the other end of the line...

“Mister Dennis,” an angered voice speaks, “I’m one of the Senior Agents in the field office in Miami. We’ve got Mister Yarken in our office, and he swears that he knows nothing of what you told us. You’d better not be lying to us, son!”

“I’m not lying. Who the heck do you know who’ll just confess outright?”

“Bullshit! This guy looks as honest as apple pie. And it doesn’t sound to us as if he’s lying!”

“You guys crack me up. I told you about him. He’s duping everyone. You’ve *gotta* be able to see it. I thought the Secret Service was the best of them all! Have someone interrogate him harder? He’ll break. I know him. It may take an hour... but I know how he is. Just have Agent Donzantz hammer—”

“We’ll work him. But if you’re ly’in to us, pal, you’re in *big* trouble! You got it?”

“Keep work’in him. You’ll see. I’m telling the one hundred percent truth. Tell Robert that I’ll personally testify against him. He may give in. Regardless; you’ll still get the car!”

"A Rule Eleven E," he says.

"Okay... so what'll that do to him?"

"Well, we'll seize his Corvette and he gets no prison time. He'll also have an arrest record for a felony. He'll be forced to testify against Spillman... or whomever else they decide."

The Agent hangs-up abruptly; then I walk back to my work. I can picture that wimpy fucking gorilla sitting there, all scared, praying that he doesn't come to my prison.

I hope he does confess... for I have no proof, nor a credible witness willing or able to testify against him. All my co-defendants have plead innocent.

• • • •

Two hours later I get called back into the counselor's office. Agent Donzantz tells me the news with a boasting, jubilated voice. Robert finally did confess. He was arrested, booked, and then released... in a sense. He's given a "Rule 22 E." The lucky-piece-of-shit. But Agent Donzantz does thank me for the new Corvette convertible...

"It's a real beauty!" he says.

• • • •

I'm informed by Alexia a month later that Robert came running up to the window of her automobile as she pulled into her drive. He was very skinny and even more frail and feeble than before. "He looked ragged," she said. "Almost spooky. He scared me."

He began pleading with her, "Alexia, please tell Wayne to leave me alone. I'm as sorry as sorry can be. I've lost my stockbroker's license, my job *and my car*. My father had a heart attack when he heard I was arrested. He was hospitalized... and they cut me out of the will. No island home... no money. Please... please, tell him to stop. I'm soooo sorry."

Well... talk about a chain of events from one incident, huh? I'd say he would have just *given* me that \$150.00 *free* if he could only get back his Corvette™, his job, and his \$5 million inheritance. I must say that he and I are pretty much squared away. I suppose I'll leave him alone from here on out.

• • • •

Sept 3, 1993 - 3:30 pm (Tallahassee, FL)

It's mail-call time here at the Federal Correction Institution...

"Dennis, Wayne!" the loud voice calls out.

"Right here!" I respond and the guard passes my mail forward to where I stand. As usual, I get a letter from Alexia. I'm happy once again. Time stands still while I wait to tear open her letter. I turn away and begin to read it...

"Dennis, Wayne! This is your lucky day, Mister Counterfeit. Two letters."

Counterfeit or *Mr. Counterfeit* are two of my nicknames.

"Yeah; my lucky day. Sometimes we all get lucky," I tell him.

As I read the letter from Alexia I smile at so many things she says about her love for me, and that she'll wait no matter how long it takes. She professes that no one can ever take my place in her heart, or in her life. I'm her *soul mate* and her love for me is more important than life itself, she insists.

After being imprisoned for about a year thus far, Alexia accidentally slips out a few unreasonable words during a recent telephone conversation. Because of this, I'm prompted to perform some investigative work.

Within weeks I get her to confess that she's been sleeping with someone new... Ted from the *Unicorn*... while she still writes to me with her professions of devotion and love!

Someone once said... "*Actions speak louder than words.*" What a true statement this is. And while I cry over Alexia more often than I should, I'll get over her as I finish my prison time. It'll be lonely without her letters and hearing her voice on the telephone. It's a shame that her actions were not as loud as her words. But as another person once said... "*Such as life.*"

• • • •

Oct 7, 1993 - 3:30 pm (Tallahassee, FL)

Mail call at the Federal Correctional Institution as usual. I receive a piece of mail from my *good cousin*, Irving Goldmenn. The news it contains is in regards to David Spillman and his legal woes.

It seems that he took his case to trial and spent some "\$185,000.00" on this big-shot New York City attorney who foolishly got him convicted to seventy-two months in federal prison, and was fined "\$235,000.00" as well.

He was, however, allowed to self-surrender to one of the finest prison camps in the Bureau's chain. He may have been sent to the same institution as Joey.

It was last heard, as told to me personally by Steven Penar (while coincidentally sitting next to me on a prison bus), that David is captain of the camp's tennis team, and he's adapting well.

There was, in addition, \$600,000.00 missing from his \$7,000,000.00 share of the now-confiscated counterfeit. I'm still a little curious as to where it disappeared to?

I hope David is fine these days. I wish him the best and hope that he quickly gets back on his feet once he's released. I'm confident he will.

As for me... I must finish my sentence in "Club-Fed."

“With an annual spending budget in the billions... the United States Federal Bureau of Prisons is well-supplied with quality foods, activities, privileges and amenities. The U.S. Attorney General does not have the foresight to know which dignitary may soon be boarding within its vast confines. It would be most politically incorrect to pamper a few and not the rest. I pay my taxes, therefore, I am equally entitled.”

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“ ‘Club-Fed’... Your Tax Dollars Spent ”



The United States Bureau of Prisons (B.O.P.) currently houses approximately “105,000” inmates. There are ninety institutions scattered across the continental United States, with one institution located in Puerto Rico.

Once a person receives a criminal indictment by a U.S. Federal Prosecutor, the chances of winning, regarding an acquittal in a trial, is a mere five percent (5%) in favor of the accused.

You see; the government doesn’t seek an indictment through a grand jury until they have damning evidence against the person in question, or unless they have a credible witness who’ll testify against the accused.

Therefore, if the persons whom comprise the grand jury agree that the same evidence against the accused is substantial enough to indict, then it’s likely that the jury at a federal trial will act upon this evidence, and will most likely convict the accused. And, if this evidence is not quite strong enough to convince the trial jury, a credible witness will then be enough to hammer the final nail in the defendant’s coffin.

The Federal Prosecutor's Office knows this; and so, to save time and money, they generally offer the accused a deal of a more lenient punishment regarding prison. If they simply plead guilty and accept the guideline sentence, the judge will soon impose this deal once the court appearance is in its final stage.

The accused has a mere five percent chance of winning back his/her freedom, and life. It's a long-shot lotto number that makes the odds very unfair. Most people choose a guilty plea and hope for the best: the *minimum* sentence.

• • • •

Where an inmate is sent to live-out his/her sentence is based upon what the Regional Designator calls a "Security Level."

For example: If the inmate has a history of violence or escape, and/or has been given a long-term sentence of more than twelve (12) years, they will likely be sent to a maximum security United States Penitentiary (USP).

In cases of a somewhat-violent prisoner with, say, a five to ten (5-10) year sentence, the inmate may be sent to a medium security Federal Correctional Institution (FCI), which also has dense razor-wired-fences and anti-helicopter wires overhead. The movements (freedom to walk around the compound/yard) are almost as restrictive as those of a USP. Medium to tight supervision is regulation.

If the inmate has a non-violent, no-escape background, and has been given an even shorter sentence of approximately seven (7) years or less, they will likely be sent to a minimum security Federal Prison Camp (FPC).

The low-to-medium security FCI's and minimum security FPC's are considered "Club-Fed" institutions in many cases. However, the minimum security FPC's are considered the Cream of the Crop "Club-Fed" institutions... five star for sure.

• • • •

At one point during my sentence, I had a brief opportunity—about two months' time—to *unfortunately* live at USP Atlanta, in the beautiful state of Georgia.

This institution was built in the early part of the 1900's. The infamous Al Capone did a stint there before he was moved to the famous Alcatraz; situated on an island in the middle of the San Francisco Bay in California.

USP Atlanta is a nostalgic place; symbolic in appearance to a typical penal institution you'd see in a Hollywood movie. The buildings are constructed of rustic red brick. The main housing stands six stories in height. It's capped-off with dark gray, angled metal roofing. It's nearly black in color. Medieval if I might say.

The aged building bears years of punishment by the elements of Atlanta's four seasons. The condemned inmates bear the punishment of time as well.

Blackened, corroded steel bars cover the broken windowpanes. A majority of the glass has been broken away by angry inmates from the past and present.

There's a poured-concrete wall, forty-foot feet tall, surrounding the entire institution. Thick steel rebar fills the inside of the cement wall. It's built to withstand an artillery blast.

Guard towers line the top of the wall at incremental distances of roughly three hundred feet. The officers whom watch over the inmates below are well armed with M-16 high-powered rifles and shotguns. Their bulletproof glass protection windows slide open so they can shoot at will. *And they're not afraid to do so when necessary.*

With the implementation of such intense security measures, I'd say this high-security institution is nearly escape-proof... but then again... wasn't Alcatraz *supposed* to be?

One benefit to being a short-term inmate at the USP Atlanta is, we never have to worry about clothes styles and what to wear on a daily basis. We each wear a jumpsuit... and they're not like a mechanics' type; nor like those worn by Elvis in Las Vegas. Nosiree. Ours look exactly like those worn by Sanitation Engineers (Garbage Men). The jumpsuits are a very-easy-to-see-a-mile-away, bright orange. Yes, bright enough for the guards to be able to pick us off at great distances; even at night. The only thing missing is a bulls-eye target painted on either side.

We're allowed to use the recreation yard for two hours, three times a week. I try weight lifting but the worn socks covering my hands always get stuck to the ice-covered barbells. And it's always so cold working-out at seven a.m.

I try football, but no one ever seems to block for me once the ball is hiked into my frozen hands. I'm sacked by the defense too many times without the protection of pads. I'm forced to quit once my injuries get too painful to sleep.

I try walking. There's a one-foot-wide clay pathway beaten into the grass along the walls' perimeter. I constantly look down as I walk this pathway-of-the-doomed. Doing so helps me to imagine that I'm hiking a path high in the Colorado Rockies, free, never wanting to look up and face reality. It takes a hell-of-an-imagination to trick my mind into believing that I'm not in prison. It's a great mental escape... the only way out for now.

Nighttime entertainment is a pain in the neck... literally. Bolted against the cement wall, high above the viewing floor, is a small television. The only way we can hear a single word from the speakers is to cup both hands behind our ears in order to capture the sound waves emanating outward from television. Words are barely audible over the roar of the disrespectful punk-ass inmates.

I won't even bother talking about the toilet and shower area. Use your imagination and think... disgusting, topped off with zero privacy and many seemingly staring eyes.

Finally, sleep time. This is the only part of the day where peace and quiet would, and could prevail. I relax my weary body and mind while lying in bed.

I wait for the lights to go out; then I realize that they never will. After using a sock to block out most of the light, I am able to catch four hours sleep before breakfast.

United States Penitentiary Atlanta lacks everything that represents "Club-Fed." Within the impenetrable prison wall lies a very old, dingy, decrepit hell-hole filled with the doomed souls who, for the most part, their own actions had sent themselves to a long-term, or final destination of despair, isolation, and for some, death. This is a place where the only escape is, ones' imagination and time.

• • • •

The next place I travel to has got to be better. They say I've been sentenced to "Club-Fed," yet all I've seen to this point (with the exception of FCI Tallahassee) is "*Club Ghetto*."

Where we travel this morning is not entirely clear. I know we're heading south towards Miami. I have an idea that I may be held in MCC Miami while awaiting a designation back to FCI Tallahassee.

I don't know if this is "Diesel Therapy" or if my security level is finally being lowered? But regardless, I'm heading south. I sure hope I don't have to stay another day in the Palm Beach County Detention Center. Anything but that!

The inmates who travel with me are all handcuffed and shackled likewise. We're loaded onto a big white coach bus, which is specially made for the Bureau of Prisons. The bus is built with steel bars covering the windows from the inside. This is done so the passing citizens cannot see the bars through the black tinted windows. There are no markings on the bus whatsoever: not even the American Flag (such as the hard-to-see flag on the vertical stabilizer of the "Con-Air's" 737 jetliners).

The bus stops nowhere except at jails to pick-up and drop-off inmates. During this travel, we're given a box lunch, which contains food I'd rather not be forced to eat. And, if I do decide to eat the food, I have to contort myself so I can throw the food into my mouth, because the waist chains hold my cuffed hands right close at my midsection.

Our intelligent, highly qualified bus driver has gotten all 42 of us lost in Orlando, Florida; and in heavy afternoon traffic. The not-too-courteous Orlando drivers disallow our bus to turn around in an intersection for *at least* fifteen minutes. After waiting in anguish for so long, one of the *huge* African American guards—dressed in unidentifiable black fatigues—jumps from the bus while flailing his 12-gauge pump shotgun above the driver's vehicles, pointing and crazed looking.

Well, let me say that traffic sure as hell stops now; and our bus is given plenty of opportunity to turn around. I laugh out loud for two solid minutes.

After several more fiascos, our proposed fourteen-hour trip turns into a *twenty-two-hour-excursion-from-hell... on a bus... cuffed and shackled... having the painful urge to urinate the entire time.*

Once inside the super-high-security fences of MCC Miami, I get to a toilet where I relieve myself in private. It is easy to see that my urine has become white and is almost triple its normal density. I don't know what the hell happened here? Some good advice... "Don't ever hold your need to urinate for more than twenty hours." Also... "Don't go to prison."

• • • •

After a few months in MCC Miami, I'm relocated by bus again to FCI Tallahassee, situated on Florida's Panhandle on the northern edge of the Gulf of Mexico. This lush area is where you'll find Florida's state capitol, just a few miles north of the prison. I must say this is a beautiful, scenic region.

The prison itself, for being an FCI, is truly a "Club-Fed" institution. Everywhere I look is a Mecca of beautiful and well-constructed red brick buildings, which were built back in 1929, by then low-security-risk Federal inmates. The grounds are richly landscaped and impeccably kept. Plant life abounds.

There are flowerbeds overflowing with colorful perennials. I see majestic fir and pine trees towering over the razor wire fences.

The buildings that house the administration offices, the chow-hall, schools, and inmates are also kept impeccable inside and out.

From within the perimeter fence, this place looks very much like an old Ivy League college campus. The tree moss partially covers the mercury vapor lighting, which barely illuminates the cement tables where many inmates play chess. They sit here thinking their time away. It's an ambiance of a small town park, somewhere in Honestville, USA.

In the recreation field there are many sports to occupy ones' time. I walk the four lane Olympic-sized track while listening to my radio play rock and roll, and sometimes smooth jazz songs that remind me of Alexia.

On many occasions I watch, and on some, play the enjoyable sport of Bocci Ball. The courts are sublevel. Their make up is of rich, orange-colored, native clay. The inmates take great pride in caring for and grooming the playing courts. There are four bleachers surrounding the Bocci courts. Large sums of money, tuna, stamps or ice cream are bet the outcome of players on a daily basis. Some of the players are very, very good.

There are mountain bikes, racquetball courts, a weight lifting area, a miniature golf course, clay walking tracks, sand-bed volleyball court, baseball fields, and basketball courts with electronic score keeping.

Outside here, you'll also find an ice cream/fruit-bar stand, Frisbee™ discs, footballs, and an "outdoor" big screen television to view while riding the stationary exercise bicycles.

And when the sun is shining, which is nearly every day, inmates flock to the grassy hillsides with their coolers, food, radios, and suntan lotion. Here we relax and soak-up some of the warm Florida sunshine.

If one chooses not to hang-out at the "rec-yard," there's always painting, foosball, billiards, musical instruments, leather-craft, ceramics, ping pong, bingo for big prizes, HBO™ movies, Pay-Per-View™ boxing, electronic typewriters, compact disc (CD) music listening libraries, newspapers, magazine and book library, or, one can take in a nice shave and haircut at the vocational haircut salon.

At this salon, an inmate can always choose his favorite barber two days in advance, by appointment only. Headline News™ plays continuously in the lounge-style waiting area. We tip the inmate barbers with a can of tuna, pack of smokes, or a few postage stamps. The salon is complete with a lighted, rotating barber peppermint stripe sign.

My typical breakfast at this prison consists of six bowls of plain Cheerios™ topped with three sliced bananas. I also indulge in fresh fruit as well.

For those who eat a Standard American Diet (SAD), they can have all the sausage, bacon, eggs, toast, hash browns, milk, butter, and other *crap* they desire.

Lunch generally consists of chicken sandwiches, soy or meat burgers, Lasagna, pizza, tuna sandwiches, chicken breasts, Mexican dishes, and meatloaf. They have all the typical side dishes with each meal.

The menu changes daily and we always know what's to eat each day, a month in advance, by way of planned menus.

There are two twenty-foot salad bars with practically everything nature grows. Above the long, restaurant-style lines of food glows two neon signs spelling-out the words "Salad Bar." This adds a rather nice touch to the overall ambiance.

On the way out the door there are four (4) soft-serve ice cream machines. Cones too! They provide two different flavors each day, with real fruit added. Of course chocolate and vanilla have not the added fruit. If one so desires, he can take the vanilla ice cream and add it to the root beer soda at the soda fountain bar... and viola'... a root beer float.

I save all the fat and sugar calories for Fridays when they bring out the various fruits and syrups sundae bar. With a banana hidden in my pocket, I make myself an occasional banana split.

Dinner basically consists of the same items as lunch, but there's more of it given to the population of sixteen hundred hungry inmates. We've worked hard all day to keep this institution so clean and operating perfectly.

And speaking of jobs: my job for a good deal of my stay at FCI Tallahassee is, to tend to my large hillside gardens. I grow everything from Brussels sprouts to carrots to watermelons to grapes.

My garden design and hard work pays off well when the Warden uses my picturesque garden as a backdrop for the institution photographs. I also grow moss and learn to culture Bonzai trees.

Aside from this job, I serve as an electrician, plumber, carpenter, and carpet shampooer. The pay, as you already know, is a whopping twelve cents an hour... tax-free.

Sometimes at night I peer out my barred window, where I can barely see through the sea of razor-wire on the perimeter fence—something in the distance—which appears to be a 7-11 convenience store. I can see occasional headlights from passing automobiles and I daydream about the day I'll be out there. Seeing this reminds me that there is still a world outside, and once again, someday in the future, I'll be out there—and I'll be free.

• • • •

MCC Miami: Metropolitan Correctional Center. This is a "maximum security" holding facility for pre/post-trial federal detainees. They're at this inescapable institution for nearly every crime imaginable.

I live amongst bank robbers, arsonists, drug smugglers, growers, distributors & manufacturers, frauds, embezzlers, computer hackers, national security threats, murderers, and even a professional yacht thief.

Recently, I have been a confidant to a well-known Middle-Eastern arms dealer. He's fat as hell, doesn't work as we do... and worth *billions*.

I also have a friendship of a well-known "Capo" of a major east coast crime family. He treats me like a son. He makes me tell my story to all his paesanos at the dinner table. Each day another chapter is narrated. It's cool hanging out with them and listening to their New York accents and cursing... *those mutha fuck'in sonsabitches*.

Also, Manuel Noriega resides here at MCC Miami. I watch as they build him his own private, freestanding, single-man, brick-constructed cell. His wife is allowed regular un-supervised personal visits directly in his cell.

He never gets to come out and play with the rest of us though. No sir. They assign two guards to escort him on nightly walks around the centerpiece lake at nine-thirty p.m., once we're locked down. He waves to us as he passes by.

This facility is newly rebuilt. It was recently reconstructed after being destroyed by Hurricane Andrew. The mass of past-facility-debris still lies outside the perimeter fence; and will remain there since no one will ever get close enough to perform clean-up work. MCC Miami houses some of the most important criminals in the B.O.P. system.

The buildings were constructed with a large supply of thick glass from floor to ceiling. I especially enjoy this because I get a perfect front row seat to view the intense storms that march in from the *very-nearby* Everglades. This is a spectacular electrical show put on nearly every day and night by Mother Nature herself.

This institution has basically the same recreational equipment and programs as FCI Tallahassee. As an added bonus, though, we're entertained by visiting *live jazz musicians* with a beautiful female lead singer. Our resident Cuban masseur makes MCC Miami a "Club-Fed" resort institution all the way.

• • • •

FPC Nellis; Federal Prison Camp. This institution is located at Area II, just two miles north of Nellis Air Force Base's main installation. It's one of the largest and most well equipped Air Force bases in the world. This AFB is located just on the outskirts of Las Vegas.

This prison facility is geared to house low security inmates who have no record of escape, and, whose sentence is no longer than approximately seven years in length.

During the last four to six months of imprisonment, nearly every inmate in all federal prisons are sent to the local halfway house in their resident city. The one in Las Vegas is *co-ed*.

At FPC Nellis, the only fence we see is that of the Nuclear Arms Depository. This high-tech security fence deserves some mention because of its awesome complexity.

Our walking track (which is a casually-driven road for the military) runs next to this fence. This barrier fence is technically magnificent. There are three rows of chain-link walls that stretch for miles beyond eyesight over the rugged terrain.

To begin with: fence layer number one has angled poles strung with barbed wire running across its top edge. If a person were able to make it across this first fence, they'd now have to cross a twenty-foot wide dirt barrier, which is reported to be mined, and has underground sensors which can detect even a gently creeping field mouse.

Strategically placed in the pathway of dirt between fence number one and two are infrared and sonar dishes that face each other, and are separated by roughly two hundred feet of space. They likely detect heat and movement.

In the centerline of all this are a continuing series of active all-weather video cameras which keep an eye on everything that moves. The third fence is electrified, and has motion sensors woven through its chain link.

The perimeter of the Nuclear Arms Depository is continually patrolled by Air Force Special Police who drive Hum-vee desert vehicles equipped with large caliber machine guns attached to their roll bars.

The weakest link in this high-tech security area is the main gate into the "N.W.D." Here, the heavy steel entry booth is covered with many rows of razor-wire. Its windows are made of thick bulletproof glass to protect the sentry inside.

There are massive steel bars mounted into concrete on outward-facing forty-five degree angles to stop an attack by a moving vehicle. And believe me, this tuff barrier will stop the progression of *any* moving vehicle... period! And if this weren't enough; within a moments' notice, fighter jets from two miles away would fly in to takeout any attacking land or air vehicle... guaranteed.

The Special Air Force Police out here have two duties. One is to patrol and protect the transport tunnels and storage caverns which are built deep into the solid rock base of "Sunrise Mountain."

Their other duty is patrol and protect the Groom Lake secret facility (which doesn't exist), and the ultra-secret, Area 51, (which also doesn't exist).

• • • •

A few final bytes of information regarding FPC Nellis: and this makes it a "Club-Fed" facility all the way...

The chow-hall: called the "Red Horse." It is utilized by both co-ed Air Force Personnel and Federal Prisoners *at the same time!*

On many occasions, the Air Force Police perch their *loaded* M-16 rifles right next to our table while we eat our meal. I could be mistaken—unless those ammo magazines contain blanks—but I doubt it!

Now, this restaurant is very similar in ambiance to a richly decorated Texas ranch-style, eating establishment. The walls are covered in dark, knotty, solid mahogany paneling, and the roof supports are thick-wood beams which holds several chandeliers that are constructed of wood wagon wheels having flower-pedal glass and dimly lit lights.

There are lighted candles in red glass holders, next to flowers in vases on each table. There's a large 100-gallon fish aquarium in the middle of the restaurant. It is home to several Oscar fish: a very nice touch.

We eat from glassware and use metal silverware... including real knives. There are the usual beverages, however, we have the addition of delicious Tropicana™ orange juice and fresh hot tea with lemon slices

Always stocked, is a rotating refrigerated dessert bar made of glass and stainless steel. Although we have many choices of delectable goodies, I try to use my willpower wisely.

We can choose between two entrees, vegetables or breakfast main courses. At least we have that much of a choice. And; the food is served by pretty, Asian women. We also have the privilege of having our trays taken away at the end of each meal by more pretty Asian women.

On the way out, don't forget to grab a toothpick from the dispenser. "Oh, hey," I ask the guard as a joke, "where's the after-dinner-mints? I think you're out of 'em." They simply laugh and nod their head in disbelief.

• • • •

For exercise there are two tennis courts and three indoor, completely enclosed racquetball courts. We enjoy a fully equipped weight room downstairs in Dorm "A"... my dorm. The weight room is mirrored wall-to-wall and is air-conditioned. There's everything from Stair climbers to free-weights to Nautilus and more.

We also have indoor, full court, wood-floored basketball courts. And outside, the usual federal prison recreation yard.

Occasionally, a few comedians from the Las Vegas Strip come in and cut-us-up... joke-wise. We have large pizzas sent in from out in Las Vegas, on Super Bowl™ Sunday... one pizza per man. And yes, each of us pays for his own pizza with our commissary money.

During the holiday weekends we enjoy three different movies each day at each of the three separate movie-viewing rooms; one of which is a newly built fully-fledged theater. On regular, typical nights, after the dinner meal, a first-run video is played for our viewing pleasure.

At nighttime when I walk the track, after my weightlifting, it is easy to identify the multitude of Las Vegas hotels by the colors of their lights:

MGM, emerald green; Circus-Circus, pink; Caesar's Palace, turquoise; Imperial Palace, blue; Mirage, white; Luxor, space-bound white laser; and the Stratosphere: it's simply the tallest structure on the Vegas skyline.

I sit on Michael's Mountain, forty feet up, amongst the trees, looking out at the glittering lights of Las Vegas; and though it's nighttime, I daydream. Dreaming about the day, soon to come, when I'll be released to the Clark Center Halfway House in downtown Las Vegas.

I think and plan while I anxiously wait for that day. I simply cannot fathom the thought of when I get to hold a woman in my arms again... to kiss and caress her, and feel her soft skin against mine... its warmth... her beauty.

I think back about Alexia. I suppose she never did find the strength she said God had given her: the strength to wait for me. Instead, she found only, Ted, the vitamin department stock-boy.

“Always follow your dreams, regardless of how far out of reach they may seem. Make them come true... and your life will be joyous and fulfilled.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“ The Counterfeit Millionaire’s Legacy ”



Sept 18, 1995 - 9:15 am (FPC Nellis)

The thoughts I've reminisced regarding my experience with the Federal Bureau of Prisons vanish as reality strikes me a hard blow... but it's a reality I'm about to enjoy.

In an hour *I'll be free!* It's time for me to rejoin society. I suppose they think that prison has reformed me. Realistically... between you and me... I didn't need any reforming. I realized my unlawful behavior back in 1992; and I was sorry. Some say I was only *sorry I got caught.*

No comment.

But now, I feel an excitement, which one cannot understand unless they've been imprisoned for more than a year. This is a feeling of pure, undiluted joy. I can't wait to eat whatever I want, when I want. I'll stuff my refrigerator with a bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables; the best nature has to offer.

I'll shower without clumsy, irritating shower shoes; and feel the clean tile under my feet. My towel will be large, and warm, and soft. No more towels with a thread count of fifty. I'll soon get to enjoy my favorite all natural olive oil soap.

I can't wait to feel the bristles of my black badger-hair toothbrushes; hand made in Italy. And before I go on a date, I'll apply some Calendula natural deodorant, and rub on a few drops of spiced natural oils. A little beeswax lip balm and I'll be ready to go. I can't wait to meet a new girl; somewhere, somehow... it's just a matter of time.

Once I leave the halfway house and move into a place of my own, I'll enjoy the convenience of cabinets, cupboards, dressers and closets, rather than a small locker as I've used for the past few years. No combination padlock to fumble with constantly.

And when I sleep I won't have to wear earplugs and my hand-sewn blindfold with built-in alarm clock holder: a necessity in prison. Wow, what a bunch of shit that was to have to wear each and every night for the past thousand-plus nights.

I'll have to get a new driver's license; mine's expired now. Will I remember how to drive? I'll once again carry a wallet with money in it. And inside, genuine currency, not coins as we've been allowed only to possess.

I can go to the grocery store when it's convenient for *me!* And I can pick what *I* want from a large variety, not having to fill out a stupid commissary list and hope they don't forget anything. In prison you only receive what they *don't forget* from your shopping list.

In the civilian world, the store's cashier will thank me for shopping at his/her store, and they'll smile rather than throw my items under the glass and tell me to get the hell out of there!

I think of the health club, and how nice it will be to walk through the front door and be greeted by pretty young girls. Then, work out on clean, modern equipment, while looking at beautiful women, instead of fat, ugly men.

On the way home from the health club I can stop at Blockbuster™ video and rent whatever movie I want to watch, and view it when I want to view it. And I can do this with my girlfriend by my side all snuggled on our soft couch, nibbling on fresh strawberries, cherries and grapes. Then I'll nibble her ear and...

I cannot wait to snow ski and scuba dive, hike in the mountains, and breathe the fresh air of freedom. I'll be able to swim again and bask under the sun, while listening to CD music of *my* choice.

I'll design and build large saltwater fish aquariums and fill them with the most beautiful, intriguing creatures that only Nature's tide pools, and reefs can provide.

I'll purchase a new BMW™ convertible and drive it to the east and west coasts of the U.S. photographing Nature's most beautiful scenes and creatures.

Once I equip the Bimmer with all the finest in high fidelity, radar/laser, and sporty wheels, then I'll take that road-trip I've been promising myself for quite some time now.

I'll drive the southernmost route "10" as I did on my motorcycle so many years ago. Only this time the weather will be nice and I'll cruise in a convertible sports car with the top down.

To ensure a fun time with no stress, my pockets will be filled with cash, my plastic will have high limits, and I won't be towing a U-Haul™ trailer, or be soaking wet on a motorcycle. It'll be very enjoyable.

I'll cruise and be free. People who pass by will smile in admiration, and I'll give them a warm smile in return. The dream... the goal... the wheels of determination have begun to spin...

I'm about to be free.

• • • •

I look at my watch and notice that it is now ten a.m. It is time to checkout at the administration office.

"Hi, good morning," I say; kissing ass, as good as I know how just to get this lady to have half-a-heart to help me.

It takes the obese creature all the energy she can muster in order to lift her three hundred pound toxic-waste-dump-of-a-body out of her chair. She propels her mass towards me with a burning look in her eyes as if I owe her something...

"What do *you* want?" She asks in the friendliest tone that an abusive, power-hungry prison-worker can speak.

Judging by her anger and her appearance, I'd say she hasn't had a companion of either gender since she topped the two hundred and fifty pound mark. The multitudes of sick-skin blemishes don't help her sex appeal, which could probably be overlooked by some lonely blind walrus or a grizzly bear with no standards.

She's waiting for an answer, and I smile, but it hurts, "I'm leaving for the halfway house in an hour, and they denied me the money a professional is supposed to receive for working necessities like tools, clothes... you know—"

"No I *don't* know."

"Well, at any rate; I was wondering if I could at least collect the two hundred and fifty dollars most guys get when they leave here?"

"Stay where you are," she grunts. "Lemme look at my computer." She pulls down the shade right in front of my face without an apology or even an 'excuse me'. Now she yells from behind the shade, "What's your name?"

"Wayne Victor Dennis. Dennis is the last name," I gently shout this to her through the vent-hole in the glass.

She yells back once again, all out of breath from her ten-foot trek to her desk, "What's your number?"

"It's twenty-seven-eight-one-zero, zero-four-eight," I respond politely.

A few minutes later the shade rises and there again stands... "*The Beast*." She throws a pen under the glass into the metal tray below; then she stuffs a sheet of paper into the tray afterward.

“Sign on the ‘x’ at the bottom, Dennis.”

“Which ‘x’? I can’t see it.”

“You don’t see the ‘x’?” she says in an angered grunt.

“Oh there it is,” my tone is still amazingly polite. “I’m sorry. The ‘x’ is so small I mistook it for a dot.”

Her attitude is really getting me angry, but I’ve got to keep my cool if I want some cash. I wait patiently for my two hundred and fifty dollars. I can hear her digging through her money tray. Coins? Oh shit!

Then she waddles her fat ass back to the window. She damn near throws two twenties and a five into the tray, not speaking a word, and no smile; then pulls down the shade. She doesn’t even have the human decency to say good luck.

I stand here like a fool waiting for the rest of my money, but it doesn’t come. She never comes back either.

Now, it’s not like I really need the money, because I’ve got a couple hundreds under the footpad inside my shoe. It’s just the entire situation, and the principle, which makes me angry. So I shout back through the window...

“That’s it?”

“That’s it, Dennis!” She’s so miserable. “What do you want, a million dollars?”

I think to myself... *no*... I just want someone from Sea World to come get you and take you back to the ocean.

Then aloud I tell her... "Well, don't I at least get a *good luck*, or a kiss goodbye?" Then I mumble and laugh out loud at myself... "Maybe a bite of your donut... you fat fucking beast." Then I take-off down the hallway.

To curb my anger, I think to myself, "In her state of ill-health she likely has only five years left anyway... tops. She can go straight to Crispy Crème hell."

Right now, I'm free. I have only to wait for my ride to the halfway house. I grab my black nylon duffle bag and look for a few people whom I somewhat cared about as acquaintances. These few people are decent enough to warrant spending the time to say goodbye.

"Dennis!" someone shouts to me from besides a new, white cargo van they're driving.

"Yeah?" I yell back.

"Come on! Let's go!"

I suppose no goodbyes this time.

There are two of us getting out today. The other guy's name is Joe. He's a fortyish, chubby, smiley, Italian guy. We look at each other with big grins as we walk calmly and coolly towards the van. I'm so jazzed I can hardly think straight.

We drive out from the Nellis Air Force Base, Area II gate. I can see the prison as it disappears behind us; and I enjoy the front view through the windshield as the city of Las Vegas gets closer.

It still doesn't seem real. It's been such a long time waiting. I feel elated. My heart begins to race faster. I'm actually happy to be in traffic.

There are so many new styles of cars. I see beautiful women everywhere as they drive to who knows where.

While Federal prison is much easier to deal with than a state institution, it's still prison. Any way you look at it, it sucks. In prison there is so much loneliness, and you lose your individuality.

We've had so many of our choices made for us. And we also had no opportunity for recourse or to debate any decision, which was made regardless of its effect on our present life or our future.

Prison is really horrendous. There's no genuine way to put its rottenness into words. People in society take so much for granted each and every day. They'll never know until they're sent away as I was; and as so many others were in the past; and even still more in the future.

Quite a few people who've never been to prison have told me, "I know what you're going through. I understand how you feel."

It's a nice gesture of sympathy; but they don't have a *goddamn clue!* It's like telling a blind person, "I know what it's like to be blind," as you stare at the sandy seashore watching the fiery red sun sink into the horizon. Or, tell a quadriplegic, "I understand how you must feel," as you swim in the pool and play volleyball with the girls as he watches wheelchair-ridden from the pool's edge.

No one *really* knows what prison life is like until they've lived it. And it's truly not a good way to live. In fact, it sucks! I may have expressed to you the quality of Federal prison life in such a manner that it may not sound too bad. Or Federal prison verses state prison lifestyles; but regardless, it's still prison!

And this is not the way a human should live their one and only life. If reincarnation does exist, prison is still not the way a human should live their present life. Got it?

Nothing is worth it... *nothing*... trust me. And why should you trust me? I've been there—as you've already read. I've learned first hand... the hard way. You should learn from my mistakes. Honesty and freedom is the only way to truly enjoy life.

• • • •

Sept 18, 1995 - Noon (Las Vegas, NV)

The Clark Center/Halfway House: this old, refurbished two-story motel serves as the only Federal Halfway House for the Southern District of Nevada. As I'd mentioned earlier, it's located in beautiful downtown Las Vegas.

"Glitter Gulch," as this part of town is known. From here a newly released inmate can find a good paying job just a short-distanced walk away. Working downtown is a matter of convenience for someone with no transportation... like for someone who's uncle and cousin stole their car and sold it.

• • • •

Of the two of us, Joe (the Italian inmate) and myself, I'm the first to check-in. I read a few rules, sign some papers, receive my *resident* handbook and room number, then I give the woman behind the desk my duffle bag for a search of contraband.

It takes the same amount of time for Joe to check-in. Afterwards we're both given a document, which allows us to register as "ex-felons." Only in Las Vegas is such registration necessary. It's a genuine ego booster.

We accept our documents; and for the first time since that cruel morning on October 6, 1992, I'm actually free! No watching eyes... no uniforms... no one to tell me what to eat... unless they're suggesting the fresh catch-of-the-day.

• • • •

Once outside the lobby's front door of the Clark Center, Joe and I practically skip like kids as we head ten blocks east to the police station to register as felons.

"Fuck yeah!" Joe screams.

That word "Fuck" can be used so universally, huh? We can use it to express nearly anything and everything... you know what I fuck'in mean? I try not to use that word too often though. And I never slip and use profanity when it's inappropriate. Okay, so where the fuck was I?

Oh yes... we stop at a 7-11 store; not so much for anything meaningful, but mainly to have the opportunity just to purchase something, *anything*, and pay for it with cash. It's nice to see a woman at the register.

"Thank you, sir," she says as she hands me my change for the bottled water.

"You're quite welcome," I smile happily.

As I turn for the door I can't help but notice the slot machine. I drop in a quarter and pull the handle... nothing. Then I play another... nothing. Oh well. I've never been much of a gambler anyways; at least not the Vegas way.

We mingle with the tourists as we walk down Fremont Street. Construction crews are almost finished building the *Fremont Street Experience*. It's an eight-block-long tubular-steel canopy with 4,000,000 lights—Las Vegas style!

• • • •

A friend of mine, Franco, a Cuban guy who made it good in America through hard work and determination, allows me the use of a decent mountain bike, which I'll use for transportation until I save enough to purchase an automobile.

Within two days after my release from Nellis, I have secured a job as a finishing detailer wiping cars at a busy car wash. At this point I think of this job as being decent in pay and tips compared to the pay in prison.

It's livable for the time being. None of my co-workers *speaka de Englis*. And the ones who can are mad because I started in a position, which they have to wait for two years of seniority before they can be granted this position.

However, this doesn't matter, because within seven days' time, after dealing with dirty, wet, chapped hands, and the realization that this is a go-nowhere job, I quit and move onto a better paying field of employment. It's adios, mi amigos!

• • • •

The famous Horseshoe Hotel & Casino: Mr. Benny Binion made it symbolic of Las Vegas during its beginning era many years ago. The hotel is just a two-minute walk from the Clark Center.

The young woman in the personnel office is very adamant and cruel, "We have absolutely no openings at this time, but you're welcome to fill out this application if you'd like."

Just as she says this, the head of personnel walks by and stops in his tracks. He walks over to the window where I have my hands folded professionally on its wide ledge.

"How are you doing, young man?" he asks.

"Fine, thank you," I smile.

"I couldn't help but overhear that you're looking to work as a waiter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, how extensive is your experience?"

"I had two short-term positions in a health food restaurant."

“Okay. Sounds good. Can you get all three of your cards today? You can start tomorrow, if that’s alright with you.”

Now, I don’t know if it’s my neat appearance, my suit, or, well, I’d like to think he has no other motives. The restaurant he chooses for me to work in is a beautifully decorated dining establishment done in rich colors of Hunter Green paint and Oak wood finish elsewhere.

For its size, this restaurant is one of the busiest in Vegas, twenty-four-seven. I didn’t realize this when I applied. I only hope I can keep up with the volume of customers and the fast paced grueling work. After all—realistically—I’d only served maybe twenty people in those restaurants I worked at.

And what the hell, movie stars have survived this occupation for many years until they’d become famous. If they can do it, well then, so can I.

Once I’d secured my Alcohol Awareness Card, Sheriff’s Card, and Health Card, I’m thrown to the lions. I quickly learn the computerized ordering and payment system; then I memorize the table numbers, their locations, and the kitchen procedures.

Now I’m ready. Let the show begin.

It looks comfortable in the dining area; so peaceful and serene. But through the swinging double doors, which separate the kitchen and the dining area, all hell breaks loose.

The kitchen in most restaurants is a chaotic environment that can drive the most intelligent and tranquil mind to insanity, very quickly.

If I'm not getting slammed into by some wait person, I'm slipping on the slick floors, or I'm threatening my co-workers to stop stealing the salads and bread platters I'd made for my customers, not theirs.

And if that's not enough, I don't want to unnecessarily stress my brain to make it remember trivial stuff like...

"Young man; my husband, Harry, gets whole wheat lightly toasted on one side, and make it dark on the other; and butter on one slice, yet none on *half* of the other. Then two of the three eggs will be cooked sunny-side-up, and make the third scrambled...

And, oh yes, sonny, oatmeal on the side with brown sugar, some cinnamon, and a shot glass filled with low-fat milk... and a soup spoon rather than a tablespoon to eat it with...

Aaaand, a small glass of orange juice with a little crushed ice. A cup of decaf for Harry, here, and, sonny, make sure it's decaf! Oh, and could you separate the orders on two plates so my Harry doesn't have to pay for two orders; and make sure he gets his toast without butter, and he gets half of the scramble eggs and half my sunny-side egg. And, sonny... young man... are you listening?"

"Yes, ma'am."

“Are the coffee refills still free? They are, aren’t they! Oh, and, sonny, hurry it up would you! We wanna go play the penny slots.”

“You know... fuck this... fuck you... and fuck you, Harry. You cheap bastard! I quit!”

She must have freaked out! But who cares. I’m not in prison anymore. I can say what I want. I can quit if I want... and I want to quit.

I lasted almost two days. But I tried. I honestly did try. Maybe I was never cut out to wait tables. I’ll have to try something else until my wealth and fame is earned.

• • • •

Las Vegas *showroom photographer* in the glamorous mega-resort hotels: I’m the only male showroom photographer anyone has ever seen or heard of. Even the tourist are tickled and shocked. A rare oddity I tell you... a rare oddity. The employee information booklet is geared specifically towards women...

“All camera girls will wear light colored nylons or pantyhose. They shall have no runs or tears in these garments. Camera girls will have pleats ironed into their uniform skirts, no sequins on pocketbooks, no excessive make-up, and no strange hair-styles.”

Now, I’m not about to wear pantyhose or a skirt, so I buy a black suit with a single-breasted coat and matching pants. The black looks nice with the thinly piped tuxedo shirt and the black bowtie. I also wear a black cummerbund and black leather dress shoes.

To look the Vegas glitz part, I must cake a handful of extra-hold styling gel into my hair and slick it back Mafioso style.

The camera girls never really adjust to a camera *guy*. They seem to hang with me more than they should. Maybe because I'm a novelty, this... male! Someone new and different for them to socialize with—I don't know.

What I *do* know is, this is a fun job, with decent pay. I see beautiful women from around the world dressed up as elegant as they can look; my uniform is totally cool, and, the best part, all my co-workers are scantily dressed women.

It would take a full page just to list the stars I'm privileged to watch perform night after night. There are also some strange things that happen between myself, and a few of the stars—purposely *and* accidentally. They're memorable times, though.

• • • •

The photographer's job is gone now, and so is the old Toyota™ Corolla, with its "285,000" miles... *yet it still ran great*. I moved on to a newer BMW™ coupe.

I bought it from my landlord and longtime acquaintance, Robert. He's flaming gay; but the nicest, most considerate guy around. He never tries anything on me. However, he does deduct \$25 from my rent if I pay in person... while shirtless. What the hell... I run around shirtless everywhere, anyways.

• • • •

Toyota™ automobiles: I've always been a firm believer in their quality and dependability. I still remember the Corolla. And since I know automobiles inside and out, I figure that I just might be good at selling them.

Within three short months of securing a job in this new profession, I'm able to put a few thousand dollars down on a late model BMW™ 318ic convertible. It's bright red with a tan colored leather interior. This sleek sports car has every option available. Many people at busy traffic intersections stare, smile and compliment this beautiful automobile.

I am also able to furnish my new residence with all the latest in electronics and stylish accessories. I've built my own furniture, and an enormous, thick glass, and rough-wood saltwater reef aquarium.

My closet is jammed full with all new suits, ties, shoes, belts, shirts, dress socks and regular clothes as well. Every item, from the kitchen utensils to appliances, to the electronics and more are all brand new; and everything is color coordinated.

I've done all this within a few short months of my release from prison, and I must admit, I owe it mostly to the quality of Toyota™ automobiles.

I was able to boast about a quality auto and a great investment of the customer's hard earned money without cheating them or lying. *Honesty has actually paid off.*

The only additional mention I'll speak of regarding this new profession is; I get many letters of appreciation from my customers. They thank me for my honesty, thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and professional courtesy, which I've gladly, from my heart, given to them. I'm actually proud in every respect.

• • • •

A year has come since my employment began here at the Toyota™ dealership. It's now time for my vacation. I have ten days to do *whatever* I want and go *wherever* I want—yes indeed.

So, instead of the usual trips to the tide-pools on the California coast, I feel like taking a nice drive in the BMW™, with the top down... to the *Florida Keys*.

I know it's a rather lengthy drive for some, but I love to drive on the open road; and I love this Bimmer. Besides, I've got ten full days; give an extra two or so, should I need them.

• • • •

April 2, 1996 - 9:00 am (Las Vegas, NV)

I kiss the rich girlfriend, AnnaMarie, a sorrowed goodbye; then drive away. With all her money she still has to stay behind to personally care for her zoo of pets at her estate. I'd love for her to come along, but one never knows if I'll run into Alexia once I get to Miami, anyways.

• • • •

The blood circulating through the BMW's™ engine is five quarts of fresh Castrol™ Syntec™ synthetic oil. The fuel that feeds the power plant is high-octane petro with STP™ gasoline treatment with octane boost added.

The trunk holds my red Coleman™ cooler, which at this time is packed with all my new snorkel gear. I've drilled a hole in the back and ran the clear air hose with bubble bar through to the inside of the cooler. A six-volt portable air pump feeds the bubble bar. Hopefully, and maybe, I'll return with "Gulfstream-blessed" marine creatures and plant life.

Within the twenty Zip-lock™ baggies onboard is my own blend of unsalted, raw, un-sulfured, un-sweetened, natural trail mix. It's a wide variety of nuts, seeds, and dried fruit: twenty pounds in all. This should last throughout the "6,300-mile" round trip drive. Not only is this food nutritious, but; it saves me from having to stop un-necessarily for food on the Interstate. I'll only stop for fuel... like pit stops in a Nascar™ race.

I stock three carriages of CD music, including two protective cases containing more than 100 of my favorites.

All sounds come from an Alpine™ deck and CD changer, with Infinity™ speakers, which are driven by Alpine™ amplifiers.

I wear my black, Navy Seal winter-dress beret and oval-shaped black and tortoise shell Revo™ sunglasses.

A pair of baggy, well-worn Levi Strauss™ Silvertab™ jeans, along with black utility boots suits me fine for the drive.

My federal probation officer has my itinerary and approximate travel route, along with my planned date of return to Las Vegas. Thus far, I've achieved nearly all my goals, which I'd set while in prison: and this within a year and a quarters' time since my release.

And now, as I've promised myself, it's off to that place I love so much... *Miami*.

• • • •

The weather has been absolutely beautiful on Interstate "40" east... until now as I climb into the higher elevations and mountains around Flagstaff, Arizona.

I find myself having to pull to the side of the road and put the ragtop up. Blizzard conditions begin to howl and my progress is dramatically slowed.

I stop in Flagstaff to fill the tank, check the oil, and clean the windshield. While in this mountain community of postcard beauty, I stop at the Café Express Natural Foods Restaurant in the snow-covered, rustic downtown area.

College students walk lazily by the café's glass-window front. I can see that this place still uses two recipes from the natural foods recipe books I had authored and sold in the past: the same books which I'd given to Mr. Stephen A. Wynn.

These are the same recipes, which landed me the job at this *same* café during my short-term residence in Flagstaff during the winter of 1985.

I finish my unscheduled lunch, pay the waiter, brush and floss my teeth, then head south on Highway "17" towards the majestic Sonora Desert.

The highway is clear of snow. It's got a clean black look of newly laid asphalt. The white stuff is piled neatly on the roadside next to the tall pine trees. The view is simply breathtaking.

As I make my way down from the mountainous elevation, the lush pines and snow disappear. Desert begins to dominate the surrounding scenery. The outside temperature, according to the BMW's™ digital display, tells me that it's okay to pull to the roadside once again, and lower the ragtop. Any temperature above sixty degrees warrants the need for the top to stay down. It's beautiful outside.

I keep my speed at a constant, ultra-smooth ninety. The Passport™ laser/radar detector beeps every sixty seconds to test itself against false signals. It protects me with 360 degrees of electronic accuracy. There are no wires to this piece of high-tech gear. I mounted it where the "airbag indicator lights" *used* to be at the top of the windshield cross-frame. It appears to be factory installed. I can see only the L.E.D. lights as the music drowns out the beeps.

The Sonora Desert is in colorful bloom. Sitting on the passenger seat, ergonomically within reach, is my new Nikon™ 5005 with a massive, lightweight composite Nikon™ 70-210 mm, 5.6 aperture, auto-focus, zoom lens. It's perfect for special-effect photographs of the many varieties of desert flowers, which paint the landscape.

My favorite method in order to get the most outstanding three-dimensional effect is to stand at a distance of twenty-five feet from the subject (in this case, flowers); then, fully zoom on the subject. Adjust to the clearest focus and steadily, gently push the shutter's trigger button.

The final outcome will be a blurred background and a crystal-clear image of the subject, which seems to jump off the photograph in a three-dimensional vision. The flower photographs should be of postcard elegance and beauty once developed back home.

I feel compelled to stop many times at speeds of ninety mph to zero within a few hundred feet, just to photograph the many different varieties of wildflowers alongside the highway. I go through roll after roll of Fuji™ 36-exposure 400 asa film during the drive thus far.

I stop at Starbucks™ every eight hours or so for a triple shot of caffeine-laced vanilla flavor iced coffee. It's not my type of drink, but it sure keeps me awake.

I'm amazed that I've encountered no mechanical problems whatsoever, yet. Amazingly, too, I've received no speeding tickets, thus far.

• • • •

April 4, 1996 - 10:40 pm (Palm Beach, FL)

This non-stop driving is grueling. I'm tired; I'll admit it. When I fill the tank with petro, I chuckle out loud as I think about the many cars who continue to follow me for a hundred miles or so at a time. All because they can see the laser/radar's L.E.D.'s telling them that it's safe to speed while following me.

Once the Bimmer is ready to go, I walk to the pay phone and call my brother for directions to his new country home in the West Palm wilderness. He cannot believe the time I've made since I last called him from Tallahassee...

"Hi, Gary. I'm here at Okeechobee and Ninety-five."

"What?" he barks. "Why'd you drive so fast? Don't you—"

Just like a big brother, huh?

When I get to his home, ten minutes later, he's waiting at the front door: standing there with Sonja, his wife, and Mitzi, my lovely mother. I haven't seen any of them in several years.

Before I get the opportunity to greet and hug my three wonderful nephews, Jordan, Eric, and Ethan...

"You want some pie or a sandwich, Wayne?" Sonja asks.

"No thank you. I usually just eat fruit. But thanks."

Then she points at the refrigerator, "Check the bottom bin. There should be some fruit in there."

“Okay, thanks; I appreciate it.”

As I take a bite from my apple, I walk over to my mother and give her a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. She keeps staring at me and expressing how happy she is to see me again, and how proud she is of how well I’m doing now.

Last night’s sleep was very sound and revitalizing. After breakfast the entire family and I cruise some of the more famous areas of the Palm Beaches. We have lunch and hang out at the water’s edge. My mother lives on Miami Beach, so I know she’s bored. She watches me watch the bikini-clad babes as they walk by, and she laughs.

Several hours pass and it’s time for dinner. I treat everyone to a nice meal at one of my brother’s client’s restaurant. We’re given the royal treatment.

Evening arrives. Just before the sun sinks beyond the Everglades, my brother is at the wheel of the BMW™. He tells me that he loves the car; and now he understands just why I drove all the way to Florida, rather than fly.

I’m in the passenger seat and my three nephews are belted securely in the back seat. The top is down and rock’n roll blasts into the open air. “I live my life like there’s no tomorrow...” are the opening lyrics.

I do live like that: but in a responsible manner. I simply enjoy life. Gary and I keep looking back at the smiling boys as we sing the words loudly in unison. I’m sure we look a little silly, but what the heck.

The following day, after breakfast, Gary gives me a tour of his property with all its pine trees, a large fishpond, his modern office he built by himself, and the vintage moto-cross motorcycles (desert racers) he's restored to factory new. He shows me his Husqvarna™, Bultaco™, CZ™, and a Honda Elsinore™.

Judging by his family, home, business, and his happiness, I'd say he's doing very well in life. I'm certainly proud of him.

My mother, who came up to Palm Beach from Miami to see me during my visit, is sad to see me go. One never knows when Wayne Victor Dennis will return, and she knows it. I love her and I'll miss her.

• • • •

After lunch I hug everyone goodbye. My nephews seem sad as well, "Goodbye, Uncle Wayne. Hurry back," they say earnestly.

"I love you guys too," but they can't hear me as I drive down their desolate suburban road. I turn east towards Palm Beach and make a right onto Interstate "95." The traffic southbound on this day is moderate. I stay in the fast lane all the way to Miami.

It took me just an hour and a quarter to cruise down Miami' way. The weather is still picture perfect in every respect. Clear skies. The temperature is in the seventies.

I exit I-95 and head east on Hollywood Boulevard. As I approach Biscayne Boulevard I get excited about seeing the Unicorn again.

I'm very hungry. I suppose I'll relive old times and eat my meal outside at the umbrella'd café tables.

Son of a—they changed the name of the Unicorn. It is now called Whole Foods™. Oh well: as long as the food is still the same. And for the most part, it is.

The time has come for me to drive further south and see someone I haven't seen in six years! I'd like to see if Alexia is home. I don't want to call her. I want to surprise her. Oh, what a surprise this'll be!

I race over the William Lehman Causeway Bridge and wonder if the printing plates are still down below encrusted in the bottom of the Intracoastal Waterway?

And now I see the bright-turquoise shallow waters of the Atlantic. The bridge lets me off on Collins Avenue. The sight of the tourists and the ocean makes this vacation seem very real.

With the ragtop down, the sun drenching me, and the trade winds blowing through my hair, I get an overwhelming feeling of alluring content. I despise the deserts of the west. I belong here. This is my lifestyle. This is *my destiny*.

• • • •

As I pull onto "Wayne Avenue" (No kidding. This is really the name of the street, which Alexia resides), I get this feeling of strong anxiety, excitement, and a hundred other thoughts.

Hot blood rushes through my veins, while chills rattle my bones. I feel weak, yet high. The moment I've waited years for, is only seconds away. I hope she's home.

I dial the number on the building's resident phone located outside the security door. I hear a ring. Then again... then...

"Hello," a familiar young woman's voice answers. I'm silent. "Helloooo," she speaks again louder this time. Maybe she thinks it's a bad connection. "Is there anyone there?"

As she's about to hang up, my finger trembles as I depress the button that says, *talk...*

"Alexia?"

"Yes."

"It's Wayne. I'm downstairs. Can I come upstairs and—"

"Oh my God! Ohhhh God. Yes! Give me a minute. No, hold-on; just give me five minutes then I'll click the door... wait!" she hesitates. "What if you don't like the way I look anymore; what if you—"

"Shhhish. Don't worry, Alex. I'm sure you're still gorgeous. And I'm—"

"But it's been soooo long. And I've made my hair darker. And... okay... okay... five minutes. Oh, my God! I can't believe you're here!"

It surely seems like the longest five minutes in my life. Buzzzz. Click. My heart is racing. I must still be in love. I must not have forgotten what Alexia is all about. Her good qualities far outweigh her bad. And hey, nobody's perfect. But she comes awfully close.

The door to her condo opens slowly, just an inch or two. I see this one, solitary, beautifully sloped eye unsurely peering outwards from the door's opening. It's rather funny.

Then the door opens further... all the way now... and there she is with that big, white, dynamic smile. The little mole above her left upper lip is so sexy. Most girls who have one had to pay. Alexia' was created in Argentina by Mother Nature herself.

She's just as gorgeous as I knew she'd be. I walk to her and she leads me inside. We hug and give each other a little peck-of-a-kiss on the lips. No intent. No harm. We're a couple of friends who are secretly in love... still... after all the years and miles apart.

We talk, while sitting next to each other on the couch. This is the first time I've seen her as a free man, or even touched her since the one visit in prison several years ago... and I only held her hand.

Today... now... I hold her hand again, while I tell her a story...

"Alexia, do you remember David, from the Unicorn?"

"Yeah. The one who used to flirt with me?"

"Uh huh. *That* one. Well, I was eating at the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas, and he was visiting with some convention; and he recognized me, even with my sunglasses on... with my beret too..."

It was amazing that he would know me after so long; *and* with such a different look I had... aaaand with sunglasses on. *Imagine that!* So, anyways, I asked him how you were and he informed me that it's been rough on you ever since your mother died... a-a-a-nd... I just started crying s-so bad. Alexia, I'm s-s-oooo, soooo soooo sorry." I choke up terribly as I cry.

I hold her for a moment while I sob. "Alex, my heart is still broken in two. It took me five minutes to get a grip on myself in front of him standing there in Las Vegas. W-w-when he t-told meeee. I am s-so-sooo *very* sorry."

Now Alexia knows how I learned of such sad news to my heart. She acknowledges my pain and begins to express the same pain she feels as well. We cry for a few minutes in each other's arms.

She informs me that she has this abusive live-in boyfriend now, and from what she tells me of him, well, let's just say I hope he's gone out of her life before I have the misfortune of beating, I mean, meeting the rotten piece-of-shit.

I'd love nothing more than for him to pick on me and see what happens to the scum-bag-motherfucker. He'll never play piano again. I still may track him down someday for *after-the-fact* vengeance.

Later in the day, Alexia and I have a friendly rendezvous at my hotel room on the beach in North Miami. Before she arrives I stop at the Uni... Whole Foods™ Marketplace, and pickup ten different deli, dessert and drink items that I know are Alexia's favorites.

As I return to the hotel, she's waiting outside. It would be nice to walk the beach for old times' sake, but her piece-of-shit boyfriend is due home in an hour and a half.

Inside my hotel room, we sit at the kitchen table and talk, while we eat our food. After we finish, I show her a few photographs of my home and my saltwater aquarium.

I explain that tomorrow I'll be leaving early in the morning to Key Largo for snorkeling. She wants so much to come along but I can't take her. If there's an accident, I would be in trouble by the probation department for visiting her, and she'd be in trouble with her piece-of-shit abusive boyfriend.

"I wish you could stay a few more days in Miami," she speaks to me sadly.

"I can't, Alex. I've got a long drive back whether I like it or not. I drove my car here: almost three thousand miles. I can't just change my mind and fly home. Someone' got to drive it all the way back. I guess that someone' me. It's gonna be a hellava long trek back to Vegas... *Wow!* So when I'm done in Key Largo I've got to drive back to the hotel room, take a shower, then drive aaaaaall the way home across the country."

"I wish I could go snorkeling with you, babe... I mean, Wayne. Sorry."

"That's okay. It sounds kinda nice."

"Yeah."

I look into her eyes and wish I could hold her forever, and comfort her, and love her, and care for her. Take her on more wild and dangerous adventures. It would be great to share life's gusto with this girl who's a daredevil adventurer herself. I know she enjoys the excitement as much as I do.

"Well, Alexia; I don't want you to get in trouble. You'd better get going."

"But I don't want to," she says in a young girlish-sort-of-voice.

"You've got to, though; we'll get together again someday... I promise."

"When?"

"I don't know. I *can't* know."

And with that, I give Alexia one last hug and a harmless kiss on the lips; then I walk her towards her car. She stops for a few moments to checkout the BMW™. She sits in the passenger seat and praises the car to my delight. Tears begin to fall, and they slowly trickle down her cheeks onto her pouting lips.

She gets out and sits in her own car. I speak while I try to hold back my own tears, "Goodbye, Alexia."

"Bye, Wayne," she says. Then she touches my hand for a brief moment. More tears trickle down her cheeks. I watch her drive away... out of my life... once again.

• • • •

It's ten p.m. With the Bimmer as shiny as I can possibly polish it, I cruise for an hour on Miami's famous South Beach. The ragtop is down and the music of Sammy Hagar rocks loudly as many in the crowd turn and smile from the umbrella'd tables, which line the sidewalk.

• • • •

The scantily dressed Florida beauties help to take my mind off Alexia, but it doesn't work as well as I wish it would. Michlian is an exotic, beautiful young woman who stands four inches taller than myself. She speaks with a sexy, yet alluring heavy English accent: from Cape Town, South Africa. This nightclub-front-door-hostess asks me to pick her up at midnight and we'll go do something together. Her voice is so sexy...

"Okay," I smile. "Sounds good to me."

"We'll go out partying and... whatever else *you* want to do," she smiles.

I never go back for her, though. I've got a girlfriend back in Las Vegas, who's waiting upon my return... and, I've also got to get some sleep. In a few hours I'll begin my trek to Key Largo, and my rendezvous with the tropical reefs and exquisite marine life, which inhabits the surrounding waters of John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

• • • •

April 9, 1996 - 8:00 am (N. Miami, FL)

The hotel wake-up bell rings almost to the exact cue of my travel alarm. I feel somewhat refreshed after a full five hours sleep. I grab some fruit for breakfast and I pack the leftovers from last night's dinner with Alexia. I'll eat the leftovers for lunch today. It seems strange to have a refrigerator in a hotel room: a nice convenience.

My car is covered with the salt air grime from cruising South Beach and from sitting a hundred feet from the surf during the night. This morning, during the long drive, the top will be down, though. The warm sunshine will wash me with a golden suntan as I drive.

With the petro topped, oil good, windshield clean, snorkel gear ready, cooler and air pump operational, it's off to the rendezvous. On this weekday, the traffic will be light once I drive south of Miami. I'll take the Florida Turnpike most of the way.

A few cotton-puff clouds drift by. The breeze is cool at this time in the morning. The sun is already playing hide-and-seek with the clouds. When the sun shines through, its warmth radiates against my skin.

I see dozens of Anemones. Some are clear and some are clear-blue. Their tentacles wave gently back and forth in the current.

I also see hundreds of Featherdusters. Their purple and yellow-dotted feathers seem to reach delicately for minuscule pieces of food that drifts by like dust in a breeze. The tube, which houses the Featherduster is covered with tiny, bright green plants and shelled animals.

I see colorful Needlefish that swim close to my mask. There are dozens of yellow and black striped Sergeant Majors swimming in and out of the rock formations. Thousands of yellow and silver Grunt fish, big lips and all, swim right below me looking up in a curious fascination.

A few electric-blue, green and yellow Queen Angel fish dart about here and there: checking-out this human in their domain. They stay at a safe distance of two feet away.

The French Angel fish, a large brown and yellow-dotted friendly fish, allows me to come close enough to pet it. It stares at me through its eye positioned on one side of its body. They are so wonderful.

Purely by accident I grab hold of a sleeping Nurse Shark's tailfin as I reach into the hole of its underwater den. I believe this is the same shark, which Adriana grabbed hold of some years ago during one of our trips here. Marine animals are very territorial and they take-up residence just as we humans do.

On the way back to my starting point-of-entry I notice something very special, which I must have missed seeing, because they were feeding or sleeping during my first pass.

I'm in total awe at their beauty and rarity. Here, sitting on a brown rocky ledge, is a pair of snow white: short-tentacle, ten-inch-diameter, Sea Bay Anemones. The sunlight illuminates their light-blue-tipped tentacles brilliantly.

I have a wide variety of beautiful Clown fish at home who'd certainly enjoy nestling in these anemones. *Wow!* What a sight to see in their own natural environment. I gently touch them with my thin-skinned, gloved finger. This is unbelievable.

There are rather large Barracudas that have been following me for the past couple of hours. They can easily kill me; however, they're just curious. They tend to keep their distance at about ten feet away, yet they swim with me in unison wherever I go. They seem to stare. They must be bored: enough so to have followed me all morning.

Dozens of vividly colored Parrotfish swim in schools just three to four feet below. They look up at me, again, mostly out of curiosity regarding this human in their domain... their environment... their home. I love them all.

The ocean is truly a wonder; but now I'm starting to get a shiver inside due to my prolonged time in the water. H₂O tends to zap a person's inner warmth.

The last and final breathtaking creature I encounter before exiting this universe of H₂O is a Polyp rock, which is at least eighteen inches in height.

This marine jewel is an “*extra very rare*” treasure covered with hundreds of miniscule, delicate, flower-like, light-colored-purple polyps. They live in the hundreds of tiny holes naturally etched in this tubular shaped white coral rock.

The polyps themselves cover it in such a way to the effect that, it’s difficult to see the coral rock itself. They’re situated like pave’d diamonds on a piece of exquisite jewelry.

With the sunlight sparkling on this jewel, it is absolutely dazzling in beauty. And, lucky for this Polyp rock that it lives in an isolated area, or it would end up on display in a large aquarium somewhere. The smaller marine specimens one could *conceivably* collect would easily grow back in just a few short weeks’ time. However, a creature... a specimen such as this massive Polyp rock is as rare as the Hope Diamond. So here it’ll stay... *hopefully forever*.

• • • •

At my hotel room in North Miami, I shower and wash the saltwater from my snorkel gear. As I’m drying off, the telephone rings. It can be only a hotel clerk, or Alexia...

“Hello,” I answer happily.

“Hiiii,” the bright cheerful voice is music to my ears. “How was Key Largo,” she asks.

So I tell her the story of my adventure as you've heard it. Another goal and dream has now been completed: though seeing Alexia and my family were priority-one on this vacation.

"Alex, I would have brought you back a nice souvenir, but where would you tell *him* you got it?"

"That's okay. It's the thought that counts. Just seeing you was nice... good enough."

"Well, I've got to get going, Alexia, before we end up talking for hours. I'm gonna miss you an awful lot. I wish we didn't have separate lives, but we do. And if you ever need anything, you just call me. You have my number in Las Vegas. Be good and take care, alright, sweetie?"

"Alright. You take care, too, Wayne. And drive safe, please."

"I will. I also want you to know that I still love you. I always have, and I always will, Alexia."

"And I still love you, too, babe."

I whisper in a sad, sullen voice, "Bye, sweetheart."

"Byyye." Click.

I'm sure glad she hung-up first.

It sounded as if she was beginning to cry. I know a few tears have fallen from my eyes. I honestly don't know if I'll ever see her again in my lifetime... my true love... this woman I'd cared so much for. After I hang up, I whisper quietly... Goodbye, Alexia. Take care of yourself. I'll always miss you.

I press the gas pedal towards the floor and the Bimmer's engine purrs as it accelerates me faster towards home. I turn the stereo's volume up and the words to a great song begins to play a thought-provoking melody to my ears... *"Don't look back, a new day' break'in. It's been too long since I felt this way. I don't mind where I get taken, the road is call'in... today is the day."*

THE END

A PERSONAL WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

My dear friend... life is like a good book—you never know what comes next. Our lives are a one-way journey and a grand adventure—yet before you know it the chapters are played-out and the book is closed.

Take the time to enjoy your life. Get out there and visit the great outdoors. Soak in all the beautiful sights which nature has to offer. The memories will last forever.

Eat healthy and stay active. Treat yourself and others with respect—and smile.

Wishing you all the best,

Wayne V. Dennis

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CURRENCY:

United States Secret Service
950 H. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20223
www.secretservice.gov

United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220
www.ustreas.gov

Thank you for purchasing this book. I hope you enjoyed the contents for its educational value and entertainment experience.

To have your questions answered, or to voice your opinion, please contact me at the following address:

waynevdennis@msn.com

SIGNED "COLOR" CURRENCY SHEET
FRONTSIDE



SIGNED "COLOR" CURRENCY SHEET
BACKSIDE



SIGNED "COLOR" CURRENCY SHEET

The "Signed Counterfeit Currency" sheet is printed in color and is suitable for framing.

To obtain a personally signed sheet of "Safe Counterfeit Currency", please send U.S. funds in the amount of \$20 + \$5 for shipping-tube and postage, in the form of cash, check or money order to the address as shown on the "Contact Us" page of the www.counterfeitmillionaire.com website. Or you may complete your order/purchase on the website itself by visiting the "Safe Counterfeit" page to learn more; then use our convenient payment methods by way of credit card, echeck, or PayPal™.

It is important that you clearly spell the name of whom you would like the autograph signed to. Please insure that the return mailing address is printed and legible if sending in order/payment.

WARNING !!!

NOT GENUINE CURRENCY

And therefore the individual bills/notes should **never** be cut away from the sheet. The individual bills/notes should **never** be used as currency as a means for obtaining merchandise, goods, services, or otherwise, for any reason, in any situation whatsoever.

AUTHOR SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

If you, as an authority, would like to have the author speak at your school, regarding the "*Life Of Honor*" one-hour talk/presentation, please visit www.counterfeitmillionaire.com and click onto the "Contact Us" page for contact information. The talk/presentation is "*FREE*" to your school.

You may also learn more by clicking onto the "Media Release" page and read the Media Release itself.

In brief, the one-hour talk encompasses all subjects related to the benefits of freedom, to the pitfalls of prison life. The talk also encompasses how important it is for children, teens and adults to stay out of trouble.

The author prides himself in his unique and interactive approach. The subject matter assures the keen interest of his listeners as they sit on the edge of their seats with wide eyes and smiles.

“LIFE OF HONOR” FREE TALK

- 1) Life In General: How the norm can use a boost of excitement. Involvement with the wrong people can lead to trouble. Thoughts of easy/quick income can lead to trouble as well.
- 2) The Arrest Process: Handcuffs, finger printing, mug shot, holding cell, arraignment, bond, release... followed by family member investigation, court; then loss of residence and possessions. Jail or prison sentence.
- 3) Life In Prison: Intake process. Acclimation to the system. Inmate count-time. Mealtime. Dozens or hundreds of roommates... many that snore. Attire. Working for \$.17 an hour (required). Showers. Rest room facility. Living your life from a locker. Visitation. Telephone services. Mail services. Personal items allowed. Commissary. Healthcare. Loss of identity. Loss of freedom. Loss of human interaction.
- 4) Life After Prison: Halfway house. Rebuilding credit. Regaining credibility with family. Finding work... required. Life as a felon or ex-con. Loss of certain American liberties... (right to vote, hold public office, obtain a professional license, bear arms, sign a petition, register as a felon, maintain credibility with all concerned.)

- 5) Future Trouble And Its Compiled Punishments: Should you find yourself in trouble once again, you will face prison terms of greater lengths: loss of credibility even more so. Loss of freedom *again*. Start the entire process again from an even greater disadvantage than the first time. And it gets worse and worse.
- 6) The benefits of living an honest and honorable life. The positive aspects and joys that freedom brings. The reduced stress factor and its role in a happier, longer life, etc.

FINAL WARNING !!!

I wish to express my utmost warning against attempting to, and/or counterfeiting in any manner.

As stated at the front of this book the penalties for counterfeiting are stiff. Prison life is not worth any potential gain. Loss of freedom makes life miserable.

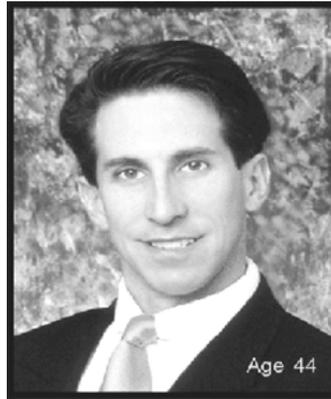
I must reiterate that you use this story as ENTERTAINMENT ONLY. DO NOT use the information as a means in which to counterfeit for yourself. It is highly illegal/unlawful to do so. You *will* be caught... whether sooner or later.

I stress to the highest degree that you to use this information as educational, in order to help combat counterfeiting on an international scale. Do your best to learn and know your money, in order to help catch counterfeiters in the act, before they can cause further damage to world economies.

If there's any educational information regarding currency security features, which I've not mentioned in this book, please visit www.counterfeitmillionaire.com and click on the "Money Facts" page to learn more.

Use all the information you've learned and absorbed here for the better. Take care and thank you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Wayne Victor Dennis was born in Los Angeles, California on May 2, 1959. In 1971 he moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, while it was still a relatively small city with little pollution, traffic or crime. In 2005, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida became his new home.

He believes that living in an environment with clean air is important to longevity. He also believes that the surrounding area where you reside should be a pleasure to see each day as you live your normal life. A city such as Ft. Lauderdale provides the beauty of waterways, greenery, thunderstorms, native animals, and tropical turquoise beaches.

Wayne trains in Martial Arts, cardio and weights as often as time allows. He engages in hiking, water sports, bicycling, inline skating, and other activities as well. He marvels at Nature and all living creatures.

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO BETTER HEALTH

This book took years in the making. Browsing the www.healthwellnessfitness.com website will give you an in-depth insight to the book's educational content.

You will learn how to:

- 1) Stop Smoking In 48 Hours
- 2) Lose Weight Without Going Hungry
- 3) Reduce Stress
- 4) Improve Your Cardiovascular Health
- 5) Reduce Colds & Flu
- 6) Exercise With Ease
- 7) Improve Your Dental Health
- 8) Prepare Healthy Foods w/ Recipes



THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO BETTER HEALTH CONTENTS

Chapter One: The Amazing Human Machine

Page 1

- 1) 100 trillion cells that work in perfect unison.
- 2) The five senses: making your life safer and more enjoyable.

Chapter Two: Stop Smoking in 48 Hours

Page 17

- 1) 100 of the 2,000 poisonous gases that compose cigarette smoke.
- 2) Additives, which manufacturers add to cigarettes.
- 3) Carcinogenic gases of cigarette smoke.
- 4) Cigarettes smoked and money spent as of today.
- 5) Tips to use before and after you stop smoking.
- 6) How to lose, gain, or maintain your weight after you stop smoking.
- 7) 101 things to do rather than smoke.
- 8) 25 damaging effects from smoking.
- 9) 25 benefits you'll notice once you stop smoking.

Chapter Three: Weight Loss Made Easy

Page 69

- 1) Natural foods guide for all seasons.
- 2) Why natural foods are so important to your health.
- 3) Where you can purchase natural foods.

- 4) Reading the "ingredients" list makes all the difference.

Chapter Four: Exercising Towards Health

Page 99

- 1) How exercise may save or lengthen your life.
- 2) Home exercise vs. the local gym or health spa.
- 3) Walk don't run. Running is a part time exercise.
- 4) No need to overwork yourself; just do your best.

Chapter Five: Stress Reduction

Page 107

- 1) Creating a more relaxed lifestyle.
- 2) Don't sweat the small stuff or the big stuff.
- 3) How lighting in your home affects your stress levels.
- 4) Creating a sanctuary within your home, apartment or condominium.

Chapter Six: Natural Care

Page 113

- 1) Medication... do the side effects outweigh the benefits?
- 2) Food additives... more than 3,000 are added to your food.

Chapter Seven: Cold & Flu Reduction

Page 127

- 1) Why we catch colds & flu.
- 2) How to reduce your risk of viral & bacterial infection.
- 3) How to reduce the duration of illness due to cold or flu.

Chapter Eight: Dental Hygiene Care

Page 135

- 1) Healthier teeth make for a happier life.
- 2) The art and importance of flossing.
- 3) Your mouth and its link to heart disease.
- 4) Three steps to dental health.

Chapter Nine: Recipes for a Vital You

Page 147

- 1) Appetizers
- 2) Desserts
- 3) Drinks
- 4) Entrees
- 5) Smoothies

Glossary of Knowledge

Page 175

You *will* become a know-it-all.

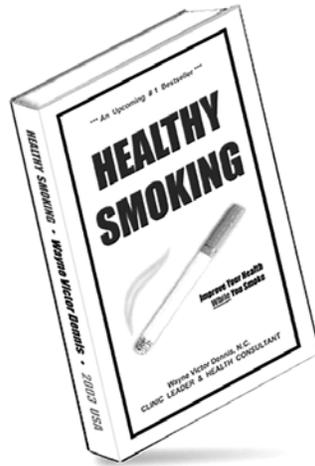
Index

Page 195

HEALTHY SMOKING

This book's title is deemed an oxymoron. However, there are an estimated 1.2 billion smokers in the world who cannot and/or will not stop smoking. This book will show the reader how to dramatically improve their health while they continue to smoke.

More in-depth details can be found at www.healthysmoking.com.



HEALTHY SMOKING CONTENTS

Chapter One: The Amazing Human Machine

Page 1

- 1) The Heart... the pump that keeps you alive.
- 2) The Lungs... your atmospheric connection.
- 3) The Five Senses... making life more enjoyable.

Chapter Two: Food Is Your Fuel

Page 22

Natural Foods Guide... your map to better health.

Chapter Three: Natural Care

Page 52

- 1) Weight and Health... lose weight and live longer.
- 2) Food Additives... what you'll find in today's food.
- 3) Medication... can Nature be the genuine cure?
- 4) Supplementation... add nutrients that foods lack.

Chapter Four: Basic Exercise

Page 83

- 1) Easy Weight Loss While Eating Great.
- 2) Easy Exercise Program... no need for a gym or health spa.

Chapter Five: Recipes For A Vital You

Page 95

25 Health-enhancing Recipes... you won't believe they're healthy.

Ninety Additional Recipes

Page 123

Buy additional recipes and get some free.

The Complete Guide To Better Health

Page 133

If you do choose to stop, purchase the companion book reviewed on the website... "The Complete Guide To Better Health"

Glossary Of Knowledge

Page 135

You *will* become a know-it-all.

Index

Page 150

PURCHASING THE BOOK(S) BY MAIL

If you wish to purchase one or both books by standard mail, without the aid of the Internet and online payment, please remit a check, blind/concealed cash, or money order to:

You may view our most recent mailing address on the "Contact Us" page of the www.counterfeitmillionaire.com website. Your order will be filled immediately and send by way of the United States Postal Service, Media Mail. Please allow sufficient time for delivery.

The Complete Guide To Better Health

\$19.95 + \$4.95 (U.S.) shipping & packaging.

Healthy Smoking

\$12.95 + \$4.95 (U.S.) shipping & packaging

The Counterfeit Millionaire

\$20 + \$4.95 (U.S.) shipping & packaging

Please add an additional \$5 (U.S.) for shipping of orders outside the USA.

