

THE BLIND SIDE

by

Jim Doherty

The car, a medium-sized, nondescript sedan, pulled over to the curb on North Pulaski Street, in front of the entrance to the currency exchange. The driver turned to the passenger seated to his right.

“This isn’t a legal spot,” he said. “We’re right by a fire hydrant.”

“We’re about to rob the place,” replied the passenger, “and you’re worried about a parking ticket?”

“I’m just thinking about a cop maybe seeing it, and stopping to check it out. We’ll attract less attention if we’re parked legally.”

“Just keep the motor running. Eddie and I won’t be that long.”

The driver nodded. The passenger exited the vehicle and stepped out on the sidewalk. He was joined by Eddie, who had been riding in the back seat.

The front seat passenger was tall, slender, and dark-haired. He’d probably have been regarded as good-looking if it wasn’t for the hideous scar across his right eye. Or where his right eye should have been. Extending in a crooked line from just above the eyebrow to a half-inch below the lower eyelid, it was interrupted by an empty socket. The scar and the missing eye were the legacy of an argument with another prisoner over the ownership of a pack of cigarettes during a stay at the Ohio State Penitentiary. He’d lost his eye, but his opponent had lost his life. That seemed a fair trade to him, particularly considering that he’d been able to keep the pack of smokes. Occasionally, like when he was with a lady, he’d wear an eye patch to cover the disfigurement, which gave him a rather dashing, piratical look. But whenever he was engaged in his chosen profession of armed robbery, he found that the frightening scar, which transformed him into something out of an old Universal horror film, was something of an asset, adding an extra level of intimidation.

His name was Symon Klaups, but since his injury he was often referred to, though rarely to his face, as “Eyesocket.”

His companion, Eddie Accolito, was also dark-haired, somewhat shorter than Klaups, with a stockier build.

Both Klaups and Accolito were wearing backpacks.

Klaups paused outside the entrance, turned, and said, “Masks.”

Both men reached into their backpacks, withdrew military-style gas masks, and pulled them over their heads. Klaups also pulled out what appeared to be a small oxygen tank with a hose attachment. Accolito reached under his jacket and drew out a Colt .45 automatic pistol, which would do little good against the bullet proof glass behind which the employees of the currency exchange worked, but would help control any customers who might be tempted to interfere.

Suitably equipped, they burst through the entrance to the exchange.

Klaups pushed aside a woman who was being attended to by the only clerk on duty. He shoved the nozzle through the small opening at the base of the bullet-proof window.

“This is a stick-up, lady,” he told the clerk. “Open up the door and let us in.”

“I can’t do that,” replied the clerk. “You’d both better leave. I’ve already set off the hold-up alarm. The police will be here in a few minutes.”

“This is poison gas, lady. It’ll kill you. Open up if you don’t want to die.”

“Nonsense. You’re just trying to bluff me because your guns are no good against this glass.”

Klaups turned on the valve and the gas started to fill the small work space behind the window. The clerk began a coughing jag, tried to block the gas with her hands, but without effect. She tried pinching the hose. It slowed the flow of the gas, but didn’t stop it. Her coughing jag continued.

“You got no chance, you stupid bitch! Open the God damn door, or you’ll choke to death!”

But she still refused. And within a minute she had collapsed. Klaups’s supposedly foolproof new weapon had accomplished nothing. He’d proved he wasn’t bluffing, but she hadn’t opened the door, and he and Accolito still had no access to the cash, and, with their victim unconscious, no way to get any access.

“Let’s get outta here!” shouted Klaups.

He and Accolito piled into the car. Its nondescript appearance hid a tremendously powerful engine, and the driver skillfully pulled into traffic and sped north.

“Keep heading this way, Chuckie, then turn left on Grand ‘til you get to Homeville Avenue.”

“How much’d we get?” asked the driver, Charles “Chuckie” DePepsi.

“We got bupkis,” answered Klaups, “so we’re heading to what they call in the Air Force our secondary target.”

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In less than fifteen minutes, they were parked in the lot of a Muroverde Pharmacy at West Fullerton and North Homeville.

“We’re gonna rob a drug store?” asked DePepsi.

“There’s a small currency exchange in the corner of the store,” Klaups said. “Just one guy runs it. *That’s* what we’re gonna rob.”

He and Accolito exited the car, pulled on their masks, and entered the store, quickly making their way to the currency exchange adjacent to the customer service office.

John Garson, who operated the exchange, rented space for his business from the pharmacy partly because it was much less expensive than owning or renting a building, and mostly because he’d found that he picked up more business being located in a thriving retail market than he did in a free-standing storefront. The busy store also made it less vulnerable to robbers.

Less vulnerable, but not invulnerable.

Klaups pushed aside the customer Garson was helping, shoved the nozzle through the window opening, and repeated the threat he’d made during the first unsuccessful robbery.

“There’s a woman works at another currency exchange over on Pulaski who wouldn’t open up,” added Klaups, when he’d finished making the threat. “We didn’t get any money, but she died of gas poisoning. You willing to die to keep us from getting any money?”

Klaups wasn’t at all sure the woman was dead, though it seemed a good bet. In any case, saying so made the threat more effective. And it worked. Garson unlocked the heavy door leading into the workspace. Accolito entered, pushed his pistol into the waistband of his pants, and began emptying the cash drawers into his backpack. Once the drawers were empty, he pulled out his gun and turned to where Garson had been standing.

“Now open the vault,” he said. But he was talking to air.

While Klaups and Accolito were focusing their attention on the money in the drawers, Garson had slipped away without their noticing and hidden in the aisles of the pharmacy.

Accolito used his gun to motion the woman Garson had been helping into the workspace.

Puzzled, but too scared to refuse, she complied.

“Open this vault,” Accolito ordered.

“I can’t,” she protested.

“Open the vault or I’ll empty this gun right into your gut.”

“Please, I don’t know how to open the vault. I don’t work here. I just came in to cash a check.”

Enraged and frustrated, Accolito pulled the trigger three times.

He and Klaups ran out of the store and started toward the car, but were met by a City Police squad car.

Officer Danny Milligan, finding it odd that a car with a driver in it was idling in the pharmacy parking lot, had slowed down to take a closer look, just in time to see two men in gas masks, one of them armed, running out of the store to the very car that had first aroused his suspicions. He quickly moved his cruiser between them and the apparent getaway vehicle.

Accolito swung his gun toward the squad and opened fire. Klaups pulled out a Berretta nine millimeter from the small of his back, and also began pumping bullets into the cop car. Several of the slugs caught Milligan in the neck. He slumped into his seat.

Klaups and Accolito ran around the squad, piled into their own car, and yelled at DePepsi to get them the hell out of there.

Milligan, who’d survived several combat tours as a Marine Corps MP without so much as a scratch, would die on the way to the hospital, though he’d live long enough to give a rudimentary description of the two suspects who’d shot him, and to positively identify their weapons.

The clerk at the first exchange, Mrs. Agatha Larson, would hang on for several days, but the damage to her lungs would prove too severe to recover from, and she would die as doctors worked feverishly to save her. Before she passed, she would also manage to give police a general description of the offenders.

The customer at the second exchange, Miss Edie Lindstrom, had died instantly when Accolito shot her.

The trio of robbers had netted a bit less than a thousand dollars for their efforts. Roughly three hundred bucks a life.

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Chief of Detectives Dick Tracy had been attending an executive meeting of all City Police officers above the rank of commander in the conference room adjacent to the superintendent's office when the word reached them that an officer was down in District 25. He and Superintendent Pat Patton had ridden out together in Patton's official vehicle.

Ordinarily, in his capacity as commander of the Major Crimes Unit, Tracy would have been on the scene much sooner, but the other hat he wore as head of the entire Detective Division forced him to perform a lot more boring administrative tasks, such as attending that damned executive meeting, than he liked. That was why Tracy's assistant, Sam Catchem, was carrying the ball at the Muroverde Pharmacy. Catchem approached Patton's car as it pulled into the store lot.

"Three offenders," said Catchem, "including the driver. They killed a bystander inside. Beat officer saw the car in the lot idling and pulled over to investigate just as the two bandits were exiting the building. They'd just killed a woman inside, after robbing the exchange of all the cash in the counter drawers. The officer tried to block their path. They opened fire. You should both know, the wounded cop was Danny Milligan. He died en route."

"Mike's grandson?" asked a shocked Patton.

"Yeah. He's already been notified. He and Mike Jr. are both headed over to Advocate Masonic."

Mike Milligan, a legend in the Department, had broken in both Patton and Tracy in their respective rookie days. When Tracy was first starting out, Milligan was already a thirty-year man, with two sons, Mike Jr. and Tim, and a daughter, Maureen, all following in his footsteps as members of the Department. Danny, Mike Jr.'s second oldest, was one of six grandchildren who were continuing the family tradition into the third generation.

"They were robbing the store?" asked Tracy.

"Currency exchange inside the store," said Catchem. "And it was their second attempt. Fifteen minutes earlier they tried their luck at another currency exchange on Pulaski Street just north of Lake, over in District 11. Lizz is there now, though Commander Tsixes is probably giving her a hard time. He's never really gotten used to women cops."

Commander Tsixes was the head of the detective force covering Area Four, which included District 11 and four other district stations.

Tracy lifted his left hand toward his face and spoke into the object strapped to his wrist, an object that did double duty as both a timepiece and one of the most sophisticated communications devices ever developed.

"MCU-1 direct to MCU-3."

"MCU-3," came the response of Detective Lizz Worthington. "Go ahead."

"What's the story there?"

"Two men entered the exchange, one of them carrying what looked like an oxygen tank. Threatened to poison the clerk. When she wouldn't go along, they opened the valve, and filled the room with some kind of gas. We're not sure what kind, but it's

clearly pretty unhealthy. The clerk, her name's Agatha Larson, she still refused to let them in. She collapsed, and the two offenders left the place empty-handed."

"How is she?"

"She's at Northwestern Hospital. Not expected to live."

"But right now she's still alive?"

"That's affirmative."

"Ten-four. Keep in touch. We're probably going to be taking this over. If Commander Tsixes gives you a hard time about that, refer him to me."

"Copy that."

Tracy turned to Patton and said, "Chief, I'd be anxious to take personal charge of a cop-killing in any event, but in this case, I don't think we have any choice. Two districts. Two different detective areas. The victim at the Pulaski robbery's probably going to check out any minute, but right now she's still alive, which means that Area Four's Burglary/Robbery/Theft Unit'll be on it. Here in Area Five there've been two deaths, which means it'll be a Homicide job. Hansel and Kersten are both damned good men, but they answer to different bosses, and they practice different specialties. The investigation'll be too unfocused and too uncoordinated without MCU providing a unified command."

"You don't have to convince me," replied Patton. "I'd already made up my mind to put MCU in charge. Can you ride back to headquarters with Sam?"

"Sure."

"Good. I've got to get over to Masonic. There's an old friend to whom a few words should be said in bereavement."

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Three days later, seated next to Tess in a pew in Holy Name Cathedral, a bit uncomfortable in his seldom-worn dress blue uniform, Tracy was feeling frustrated that seventy-two hours of intensive investigation by his own MCU, by Lieutenant Jeff Kersten's Area Five Homicide Unit, and by Lieutenant Matt Hansel's Area Four Burglary/Robbery/Theft Unit, had developed no more information on the case than they'd had two hours after the crimes had been committed.

That there were three men, one driver and two gunmen, that no one really had any idea what the driver looked like, that the two gunmen had been wearing gas masks, that one was taller and slimmer than the other.

And that the taller man was missing a right eye.

Several witnesses had commented on that. It was plain even through the gas mask he wore. An ugly scar across the right eyelid, and an empty eye socket.

That rang some kind of bell with Tracy, but it was so faint that he couldn't pull up the details.

With his thoughts so much on the case, Tracy was finding it hard to concentrate on the Requiem Mass being offered for the repose of Danny Milligan's soul.

Tess nudged him. The lector, an officer from Danny's district, had finished whatever scripture selection he'd been reading (was it that passage from Second Timothy about "fighting the good fight?") and was surrendering the podium to no less a dignitary than Eugene Francis himself, the Cardinal-Archbishop in charge of the local Catholic diocese. Suddenly everyone was standing up.

Catholics! All this standing, and sitting, and kneeling. Why couldn't they stay still?

"The Lord be with you," said the Cardinal.

"And with your spirit," came the congregation's response.

"A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke."

"Glory to you, O Lord." And, as they gave this response, most of the congregation made some odd gesture with their thumbs at their foreheads, their mouth, and their chest. Tracy had absolutely no idea what that meant.

In his many years in the Department, Tracy had been to a lot of funeral services for fallen officers. Baptist services at churches in predominantly black neighborhoods. Lutheran services at churches in neighborhoods that had, many years ago, been settled by German immigrants. Several times in Jewish synagogues. A couple in Islamic mosques. Once in a Buddhist temple.

But, not surprisingly in a department that had such a large percentage of Irish cops, along with healthy dollops of officers with Italian, Polish, or Hispanic backgrounds, a disproportionate number of those burial services had been Catholic Masses, and Tracy, who'd been raised Methodist, and who was still something of a dour Calvinist in his heart of hearts, had never quite gotten comfortable with all the pomp and circumstance that seemed so integral to the Roman rituals.

His wife, Tess, being Episcopalian, and an Episcopalian with pronounced High Church leanings at that, was much more comfortable with all the theatricality, but Tracy had always found it a bit alien. Still, he had to admit that all this emphasis on liturgical tradition had a way of keeping people in touch, not only with their faith, but with the history and lore of their faith. It just wasn't his particular style.

This Mass was especially theatrical. Something they called a "Concelebrated Mass," with Cardinal Francis as the main celebrant, and three other priests saying the Mass prayers along with him. One was a family friend, who had been the pastor of the parish where Danny had grown up, and who had baptized him, heard his first confession, and given him his First Communion. Another was the auxiliary bishop who had confirmed him. The third was Father Jack Milligan, a cousin of Danny's who'd bucked the family tradition by entering the Jesuit order instead of the Police Department, choosing the collar over the badge. Father Jack had officiated when Danny married his wife, Teresa, and he'd baptized their baby daughter, Brigid.

In due course, the Cardinal completed the gospel (it was a selection that combined the end of Chapter 24, describing the crucifixion of Christ, with the beginning of Chapter 25, describing the resurrection, a choice Tracy had to admit was quite appropriate). Then Father Jack gave a short sermon, followed by a eulogy given by Pat.

After Pat resumed his seat, the part of the Mass they called "The Liturgy of the Eucharist" began. The Offertory (or Presentation of the Gifts, as they seemed to be calling it these days), the Consecration, and the distribution of Holy Communion.

Then the Final Blessing, followed by the Solemn Procession. Tracy left his seat for that, and joined the other five pallbearers at Danny's casket.

Mike Milligan had asked him personally to help carry Danny to his grave.

"Sure, it'd mean that much to . . .," and here the tough old cop had paused for a minute, to fight down the emotion welling inside, then cleared his throat and went on,

“. . . to the old woman. She’s always been that fond of you, Tracy. Sure, it’d be that nice for his widow and child to see a man of your prominence up there, too. Would you be doin’ it, son?”

And what could he say but, “It’d be an honor, Mike.”

Outside of the church, Tracy and the other officers lifted Danny’s casket into the hearse, stepped back, came to attention, lined up at the curb, and, at the command “Present arms!” snapped a hand salute toward the rims of their uniform caps, holding it until the hearse was closed and all the main mourners loaded into the black limousines parked directly behind the hearse.

Then the long procession to St. Boniface Cemetery in the North Side, with marked squad cars from more than three hundred different police forces following, lights silently blinking the whole way.

Then the graveside service. “Taps” on the bugle and “Amazing Grace” on the pipes. A rifle salute by the Department’s honor guard. A second rifle salute by a detail of Marines in recognition of Danny’s military service. The presentation to Teresa of the Stars and Stripes, folded into the traditional triangle, by one of the Marines. The presentation of the City flag by Pat.

Then the casket was lowered, and the crowd slowly began to disperse.

For the next month cops from all over the state would wear black mourning bands over their badges. The City would grieve for a week or so, then go back to their business. Eventually the mourning bands would come off, and the cops wearing them would go back to thinking that, after all, it would never happen to them. And, for the most part, they’d be right. Teresa, a very lovely young woman, would probably, in the course of time, remarry. Brigid would, in all likelihood, come to regard her dad as little more than a face in a photograph.

And Danny Milligan, like the other twenty thousand-odd American cops who’d given their lives since 1791, when Sheriff Cornelius Hogeboom of Columbia County, New York, became the first U.S. policeman to be killed in the line of duty, would be largely forgotten by almost everyone except his brother and sister cops.

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Three weeks later, it seemed as though even Danny’s brother and sister cops had forgotten about him. No new leads had developed. And, inevitably, new murders occurred in Area Five to which Lieutenant Kersten’s Homicide Unit had to devote energy. New robberies and burglaries occurred in Area Four, drawing the attention of Lieutenant Hansel’s Burglary/Robbery/Theft Unit. And major crimes continued to be committed all over the City, occupying the time of Tracy and the Major Crimes Unit.

The trio of currency exchange robbers was still in the wind, and there was no clue to either their identities or their whereabouts.

Tracy, chafing at the bit to be doing something that might alleviate his tension and frustration, was relieved when Sam Catchem came over to his desk with a request from the Lansing Police to check out a lead on a fugitive they were seeking.

“Skel’s name is Charles Allen DePepsi, white male, 28 years old, a.k.a. Chuck DePepsi, a.k.a. Chuckie DePepsi. Wheelman out of Detroit. Broke out of Ionia State Prison six months ago, which is no easy thing, and was identified as the getaway driver at a currency exchange in Lansing.”

“Currency exchange, huh?”

“Lots of guys hold up currency exchanges, Tracy. Doesn’t mean he has anything to do with our gang.”

“Yeah, I know. Just saying.”

“Anyway, a state motorcycle cop spotted the getaway car on I-96, initiated a pursuit, hit an oil slick, spun out of control, and crashed. The trooper died, so DePepsi and the two unknowns are all wanted for murder.”

“What makes them think he’s here?”

“DePepsi’s got family here. His two brothers run an auto repair shop in the North Side. Lansing PD and the Michigan State Police did some checking and found that the family owns an apartment building in Uptown, that there’s one apartment that’s vacant, but that it’s not advertised as being for rent. The empty apartment sounded suspicious, so they thought the brothers might be letting Chuckie use it as a hideout. They want us to check on it. Who d’you want to send?”

“I need an excuse to get out from behind this desk. Let’s you and I go.”

“Thought you might say that.”

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At the supposedly empty Uptown apartment, Sy Klaups and Eddie Accolito were anxiously awaiting the return of Chuck DePepsi.

“What’s keeping that stupid shit?” said Klaups.

“He said he was going to shop up in Evanston.”

“Why the hell in Evanston? There’s a Jewel right down the street, and a Tony’s three blocks away.”

“He’s trying to avoid all the City’s extra sales taxes.”

“Jesus, what a jerk! We’re on the hook for cop-killings in two different states, and he’s worried about saving a couple of cents on sales taxes.”

“He was also going to drop in at his brothers’ auto shop after he finished getting groceries, pick up some part for the car. It’s in the far North Side, so it’s not that much farther going over to Evanston to shop. He’ll be back soon. Just relax.”

But relaxing was hard to do in the cramped studio apartment. There was no furniture. No TV or radio to pass the time.

And no privacy.

They’d been laying low for three weeks, with nothing to look at but each other, and nothing to do except play cards, eat, and sleep.

Accolito and DePepsi seemed to take it in stride, but Klaups was climbing the walls.

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Tracy and Catchem stood outside the door to the supposedly empty, top-floor apartment.

Before coming here, they’d called the auto shop owned by the DePepsi brothers to ask about renting the apartment, but were told that, though it was empty, it was not for rent.

“Need to make some repairs,” James DePepsi had said. “But we’re backed up here, and won’t be able to get to it for a few weeks. Right now we’ve got to leave it empty.”

“Well, couldn’t we at least look at the apartment, see if it suits us?” Tracy asked.

“We don’t have an on-site manager with a key, and we can’t get away from the shop right now. If you want to leave your number, one of us will call you when it becomes available and you can take a look then.”

Now they were listening intently at the door. The assurance by the owner that the apartment was locked and empty meant that if they heard any noise indicating that it was occupied, a crime would be in progress, giving the two cops both the probable cause and the exigent circumstances they needed to enter the place without a warrant.

The voices of Klaups and Accolito were muffled but unmistakable, as was the sound of footsteps from Klaups’s impatient pacing.

Tracy nodded at Sam, drew his Colt Trooper from his shoulder holster, and knocked loudly on the door.

“This is the police! Open up or we’re coming in!”

Tracy was standing to the left of the door, Catchem to the right. The shots that immediately followed Tracy’s announcement came through the door, missing them both, but adding immeasurably to both the probable cause and the exigent circumstances.

Tracy kicked in the door. One man was at the window, stepping out onto the fire escape. Shots could be heard from outside, indicating that there was a second offender, now trading shots with the uniformed patrolman Tracy had requested from the local District to keep watch in the alley.

“Drop the gun!” yelled Catchem.

The man straddling the window turned and brought the pistol he was holding, a Colt .45 semi-automatic, up to bear.

Both Tracy and Catchem opened fire and saw the man flinch as their shots hit, but none of the wounds was immediately disabling. The guy with the .45 fell through the window, but managed to get to his feet and began climbing the fire escape.

Tracy and Catchem both ran to the window. They took a careful peek out, ready to pull back in if anyone was waiting to shoot. The fire escape was vacant.

“How many were there?” Tracy called down to the patrolman.

“Two, both white males. They’re on the roof now.”

“Did you get the first one?”

“Missed.”

“Are you okay?”

“He missed me, too.”

Tracy and Catchem climbed the fire escape ladder up the final story to the roof, Tracy in the lead. He kept his head down as he approached the top, then briefly raised it and lowered it over the edge of the roof for a quick peek.

No shots.

He climbed the rest of the way and carefully stepped out onto the roof, revolver at the ready, followed by Catchem. They made a brief reconnaissance of the roof, but the two gunmen were gone. There were buildings on three sides that were within jumping distance, which meant there were three directions they could have gone. The two detectives jumped to the roof of each of the three buildings, finally finding bloodstains from the wounded gunman on the third. But, by that time, too many minutes had passed, and further pursuit was pointless.

Tracy called Dispatch on his wrist communicator, gave a description, necessarily skimpy, of the two offenders and had it broadcast to all units. He also requested a

shooting investigation team and forensics to the address to begin an officer-involved shooting probe.

“Let’s get back to that apartment and wait for the troops,” he said to Sam.

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While they were waiting for the investigators from the Office of Professional Standards and the crime scene techs, Tracy reached Lizz on the wrist device and ordered her to the DePepsi brothers’ auto shop to investigate the use of their apartment building as a hideout. Then he turned to Sam.

“You have the picture of Charles DePepsi?”

Sam handed it over to him. Tracy looked at it intently then handed it back to Sam.

“That wasn’t the guy in the window.”

“No it wasn’t,” agreed Sam. He passed the photo over to the young patrolman, who was nervous and edgy over his first shooting.

“This look like the other guy?”

The uniformed cop perused the photo and shook his head.

“No, that guy was tall and slender. This guy looks kind of chubby. I couldn’t give you a lot of detail. I was too far away, and once the shooting started I got too focused on staying alive. But this guy isn’t the one I saw; I can tell you that much.”

“That means DePepsi wasn’t here, and, presuming he was the one using the apartment, he’s hooked up with two other guys.”

“There were two other offenders in that robbery in Lansing,” said Sam. “Maybe they’ve decided to stick together.”

“Maybe. In any case, we’ll have to wait until we’re cleared on this shooting before we can do anything about it.”

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About fifteen minutes after the apartment shootout, two men entered DePepsi Auto Repair. One was tall and slender, and might have been good-looking but for the hideous scar across the empty socket where his right eye should have been. The other was shorter and stockier than his companion, and seemed to be walking with difficulty. Neither of the two customers already in the shop waiting for service looked up, but if they had they might have noticed that the shorter, stockier man was leaving a trail of bloodstains.

Chuckie DePepsi, bent over the open hood of a 1970’s vintage Toyota Corona, looked up at the two new visitors.

“Sy. Eddie. What are you two guys doing here?”

Chuckie’s brother, Jim DePepsi, who’d been bent over the same engine, also looked up.

Eddie Accolito, his right hand clutched over a cluster of wounds at his side, reached into his waist band with his left, pulled out his .45, and, without a word, fired three shots into Chuckie DePepsi’s face.

The sudden gunfire shocked everyone except Chuckie DePepsi, who was dead before he had time to be shocked.

Accolito, his face grimacing in pain, walked over to Chuckie’s body and pumped three more thoroughly unnecessary shots into the corpse’s chest, shouting as he fired,

“Lousy, snitch mother-fucker! You ratted us out, you rat-bastard squealer! You ratted us out!”

While Accolito’s attention was directed at Chuckie, Klaups drew his own pistol, the nine-mil Berreta 92, and covered the other three men.

“Who’re you?” he asked.

“I’m Jim DePepsi,” said Chuckie’s brother. “I own the shop. My brother, Pete, and I own it, I mean.”

Klaups fired three shots into Jim DePepsi, deliberately aiming low, so that the shots entered through the belly, fatal, but not instantly so, and intensely painful in the meantime. Then he turned to the waiting customers.

“How about you two?”

One of the other men, his hands raised, said, “We’re just here to pick up our cars. Please, mister. We don’t know anything.”

“You know enough. Both of you, keep your hands up, walk out of here, and get into the car outside.”

“Look, buddy,” said the second customer. “I got a wife and two kids. None of this has anything to do with us.”

“It does now,” said Klaups.

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Lizz arrived ten minutes after Klaups and Accolito had left with their captives, to find Chuckie DePepsi dead and Jim DePepsi dying. Despite his condition, Jim had managed to get to his feet, and make his way to the phone on the wall. He’d just finished calling Pete DePepsi to warn him that Chuckie’s erstwhile friends were determined to kill them all because of the mistaken belief that they had informed on him. He was hanging up just as Lizz entered the shop. He turned to look at her, then collapsed to the floor.

Lizz immediately called for an ambulance response on her two-way, then attempted some rudimentary first aid to stem the hemorrhaging from the garage owner’s wounds, but Jim DePepsi bled out before the Fire Department’s emergency medical techs arrived.

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The next day the surviving DePepsi brother, Peter, was in the MCU office at police headquarters, being questioned by Tracy, Catchem, and Lizz. Tracy and Catchem, having both been tentatively cleared in the previous day’s shooting, were back on regular duty.

“You knew your brother was an escaped convict. Why would you let him use your property as a hideout?” asked Tracy.

“He was our brother,” said Pete DePepsi. “It was probably stupid. And I know it was against the law. But he was family. You just don’t turn your back on family.”

“And he never told you anything about either of his partners?”

“He never even told us he had partners. It was a small studio apartment. There was barely room for one person, let alone three.”

“Mr. DePepsi, when you agreed to conceal Chuckie from the authorities you were entering into a criminal conspiracy, one that led directly to both your brothers’ deaths, at the very least. The two customers who were kidnapped by the killers are in all likelihood already dead. That adds up to four. Judging from the bloodstains one of the killers left,

he's probably bled out, too. That's five deaths, all because you decided to let Chuckie hide in your empty apartment. Do you understand that?"

"I know. I'd give anything to change it, but what's done is done."

"Do you realize that you could be held responsible for all five of those deaths? Any death resulting from the commission of a felony is murder, and all principles to the felony share in the guilt equally. You're probably going to be charged with five counts of murder. If you know anything, anything at all, telling us now is much more likely to improve your position than keeping quiet."

"If I knew anything, I'd tell you. I just don't know anything."

Tracy sighed in exasperation, then nodded at the uniformed patrolman standing by the doorway.

"Okay. Get him out of here."

When Pete DePepsi had been escorted out of the office, Tracy turned to Catchem and Lizz.

"Any thoughts?" he asked.

"Seems pretty straightforward," said Sam. "After they escaped from the apartment, they jumped to the conclusion, the mistaken conclusion, that Chuckie and/or his brothers had informed on them, and went to the repair shop to get revenge. Then they took the two customers with them to eliminate witnesses."

"Why?" asked Lizz. "They'd already killed Chuckie and Jim in the shop. Why not just finish off the two witnesses there, too?"

"Who knows?" said Tracy. "They probably weren't thinking straight. Maybe they killed the DePepsi brothers in the heat of anger, and suddenly realized they were leaving too much of a mess. They knew they had to take care of the witnesses, but thought it would be safer to get away from the garage as soon as they could first. God, what a screw-up! We should have taken those two at the apartment. We're as much to blame as the DePepsi brothers for whatever happened to those witnesses."

"That's not true and you know it," said Lizz. "The DePepsis did something they knew was illegal. Pete's going to pay a heavy price. And Chuckie and Jim've already paid as high a price as there is. But none of the blame falls on you. All you and Sam did was try to apprehend a pair of dangerous criminals. Okay, they got away, but that wasn't because you were falling down on the job. It was just one of those situations that couldn't be controlled absolutely."

"We should have had more men."

"And what would have been the justification? You weren't even sure Chuckie DePepsi was using the place, let alone any partners he might have been working with. Jim and Pete were both law-abiding businessmen. There was no real reason to suppose they were helping out a brother who went wrong other than that they owned an empty apartment that wasn't being rented out. Were you supposed to call out an entire SWAT team just to check out an apartment that was, in all likelihood, empty?"

"Okay, maybe you're right."

"You don't sound convinced," said Catchem. "Just be glad you're not me. We Jews are much more prone to irrational guilt than roundhead Scots like you."

"And you're so sure it's irrational?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. Lizz really is right about this. All we were doing was our job. And we were doing it the best we could. And our best, by the way, is pretty damned

good. It didn't work out? Okay, but that wasn't because we didn't try. And we didn't create the initial situation. So get a grip. We've still got two killers to catch. Did we get any leads from the crime scene techs?"

"They recovered some slugs from the wall outside the apartment and turned 'em over to the State Police lab for analysis."

Tracy picked up a manila envelope and emptied it onto his desk. The contents were an oddly shaped key and a baby photo.

"And they found these inside the apartment. In the pocket of a jacket left on the floor. No one seems to have any idea what this key fits, but this photo has a studio name stamped on the back. Carter Photography in Cleveland. Lizz, I want you to go out there and see if they have any record on who ordered it."

"Why me?"

"Cause I'm Chief of Detectives, and Sam's senior to you by something like twenty years."

*

Lizz walked up to the counter of the shop, flipped open her badge case to display her star and ID card, and said, "My name's Worthington. I'm an out-of-state police officer, and I'm investigating a murder in my City. I'm hoping you can help us trace whoever ordered this picture."

The guy behind the counter took the photo and studied it, turned it over, read the stamped logo on the back, then handed it back to Lizz.

"That's one of ours," he confirmed. "But I don't have any way of tracing it to a particular customer."

"Don't you keep negatives of all the photos you take?"

"Of course. But they're filed by the customer's name. I can find a negative if you can give me a name, but I can't find a name from a negative. Or from a print."

"Do you at least subdivide them? Baby pictures in one file, wedding pictures in another file and so on?"

"Nope. Just by name."

"Well, we're investigating a multiple homicide, here, and it's very important that we trace the customer who had this picture taken. Would you be willing to go through your files and find the original negative to this print?"

"Officer, I've got a business to run, and it's a sole proprietorship. Emphasis on 'sole.' I take the photos, I keep the books, I run the cash register. I do it all. I've got literally thousands of negatives back there. I just don't have the time to go through them all to look for one name. If it's that important, you're welcome to look through them yourself as long as you keep all the files neat."

Lizz sighed.

*

It took her the rest of that day to get as far as the "C's." The second day, she managed to get through all the "H's." By the third day, she was starting to get so cross-eyed, she was afraid she might miss the matching negative even if she came across it. And she almost did.

Towards the end of the "K's," she started to shove the negative of a baby picture back into its envelope. Then, acting on some impulse she couldn't quite put a name to, she took a closer look.

It was the matching negative. She'd looked at so many pictures of babies in essentially identical poses, she'd almost passed it by, but it was definitely the matching negative.

She looked at the name on the envelope. "Klaups, Dorothy," with an address and phone number.

She lifted her left wrist and spoke into the two-way strapped to it.

"MCU-3 to MCU-1."

"Go ahead, Lizz," came Tracy's response.

"I've got the name. It's a woman named Klaups. That's 'King,' 'Lincoln,' 'Adam,' 'union,' 'Paul,' 'Sam.'"

"Klaups! That's the name I've been trying to remember! Great work, Lizz. Catch the next flight back here. You've just developed the first major break in this case."

*

"While you've been airborne," said Tracy shortly after Lizz walked into the MCU office, "we've gotten our second major break, a ballistics report from the lab. The rounds that were fired at us in that apartment building came from two semi-automatic pistols, a .45 and a nine-millimeter. The lab just matched them up to the slugs recovered from the currency exchange robbery in Area Five last month. Now we know that the guys who were holed up in that apartment building, including the deceased Chuckie DePepsi, are the same guys who killed Danny Milligan and those two ladies in the robberies. And now that Lizz has tracked down the name of that photo shop customer, we know who one of the other suspects is."

"Who's that?" asked Catchem.

"Symon Polyphemus Klaups, aka Sy Klaups, aka 'Eyesocket' Klaups, aka 'Socket' Klaups, aka 'Sock' Klaups. That detail about the missing right eye tickled a memory way in the back of my mind, but I just couldn't pull it up."

"Who is he?" asked Lizz.

"Professional armed robber in the Cleveland area. White male, 33 years old. Specializes in currency exchanges because they're usually unguarded, generally have as much cash on hand as a branch bank, but aren't insured by the FDIC, which means he avoids FBI attention. He got sent up to Ohio State Pen in Youngstown five years back on two counts of Aggravated Robbery. He lost the right eye, and earned the nickname 'Eyesocket,' in some altercation with another prisoner. He killed the other guy, but was able to get off on a self-defense plea since he was the one who was attacked. He broke out about two years ago and has been in the wind ever since. We're about to light a fire under him. The FBI captured one of their Top Tennessees yesterday, so there's a new opening on their Most Wanted list. I got off the phone with Jim Trailer in DC a few minutes ago. Sy Klaups is going to fill that opening."

"I presume that 'Unlawful Flight to Avoid Confinement' is the hook that the Bureau's hanging their hat on?" said Catchem.

"Exactly. Once he crashed out of prison, he became a fugitive, but until there was strong evidence that he'd crossed a state line after he escaped, no federal UFAC warrant could be issued. Now we've provided that evidence. All the effort he spent trying to fly under the Bureau's radar was for nothing."

The phone rang. Tracy answered, listened for a few minutes, then thanked the speaker and hung up.

“That was Bill Szawak, chief of the County Forest Preserve Police,” said Tracy. “One of his officers just found three dead bodies buried in their Deer Grove Preserve near Palatine. All dead of gunshot wounds. This may be Major Break Number Three.”

*

Two of the bodies, apparently killed by pistol shots through the back of the head, though this couldn't be certified officially until the Medical Examiner conducted a postmortem, were identified as Angelo Ventura and William Earl, who, Peter DePepsi was able to confirm, had been customers of DePepsi Auto Repairs.

The third body was identified as Eduardo “Eddie” Accolito, a Michigan hood with a long record going back to his juvenile days, and a known associate of Chuckie DePepsi. He'd been found with a small shovel clutched in his hands, indicating that he'd been trying to bury the other two when he finally bled out from four gunshot wounds in his right side, presumably delivered by Tracy's Colt Trooper and Catchem's S&W Chief's Special.

Now Sy Klaups was on his own.

*

When she was finally located a day or so after Sy Klaups had been identified, Mrs. Symon Klaups had turned out to be the *former* Mrs. Symon Klaups, having, in the years since the baby photos of her daughter had been taken, divorced Klaups, relocated, and remarried. She was now Mrs. Walter Kaelin, and her eight-year-old child, Shannon, had been adopted by her second husband. More to the point, she was living right outside of the City. The Kaelin family had, for the last four years, been making their home in the comparatively affluent suburb of Park Ridge.

Tracy, seated in the living room of that home, was trying to explain to Dorothy Kaelin, an attractive brunette in her late 20's, what the situation was.

“But, Mr. Tracy, he's just not a part of our lives anymore,” she said. “I was still a teenager when I married him. Still a teenager when I had Shannon, come to that. It didn't take me long to realize just how bad mistake I'd made. When he went to prison, I corrected that mistake as fast as I could.”

“I understand that, Mrs. Kaelin, but you have to understand that he's here in this area now, and he has no real reason to be here except you and your daughter.”

“But how could he find me? He knows I divorced him and married someone else, but he doesn't know Walt's name, and he doesn't know where we moved.”

“We have to assume he does know. There are currency exchanges all over the country, after all. He's not from here. Neither of his partners was from here. Either it was some cosmic coincidence that he just happened to start operating in an area where, as far as he knew, he had no personal connections whatsoever, or he was aware that you and your daughter lived here. Which seems more likely to you?”

“Didn't I read in the paper that one of his partners was from here?”

“DePepsi had family here, that's true, but he wasn't from here. And, in any case, that was a reason, and a fairly tenuous one, at that, for Chuckie DePepsi to come here. Not for your ex-husband. And with Chuckie dead, it's certainly no reason for him to stay.”

“And you're sure he's still here?”

“No, but if he is, you and your daughter are the reasons.”

“But even if he knew we were here, he hasn’t tried to get in contact. And now he’s on the run, and with all the publicity that’s been generated over the last few days, and the FBI entering the case and all, getting in touch with us has to be the last thing on his mind.”

“That’s precisely the point. He’s on the run, both of his partners are dead, and he’s stuck in a place where he doesn’t know anyone except you and Shannon. Right now, you’re the closest thing to a friend he’s got in the whole metro area.”

“And you really think it’s likely he’ll come to me for help?”

“‘Likely’ is perhaps a little strong. But we certainly think it’s possible, and we want to be prepared for that possibility.”

“Well, what do you want me to do?”

“First of all, we want your assurance that you’ll contact us if he does get in touch. In fact, we’d like your permission to put a tap on your phone. Second, we think it would be a good idea if we put you and your daughter, and probably your husband, too, under surveillance. Nothing intrusive. What we call a ‘loose tail.’ Mainly for your protection.”

She looked alarmed. “Do you really think he’d try to approach Shannon?”

“Again, we think it’s possible. He was still carrying your daughter’s picture, so it’s pretty clear that he still feels some sort of connection, even after all this time. If you’d been separated from Shannon for six or seven years, wouldn’t you want to see her?”

“Okay, Mr. Tracy,” she said after a few moments silence. “You’ve made your point. You can bug our phone, and, in the meantime, you can put us all under surveillance.”

*

Tracy’s instincts were accurate. Klaups was still in the area. At about the same time Tracy was briefing Klaups’s ex-wife, Klaups himself was pacing the floor of a small room in the North Loop YMCA, where he had been staying since the garage massacre. Located on City Avenue, between Dearborn and State Streets, it was, ironically, right around the corner from Holy Name Cathedral where, weeks earlier, Officer Danny Milligan’s funeral service had been held.

His decision to come to this City had turned into a total clusterfuck. Everything he’d touched had turned to shit. The poison gas gimmick had come a cropper. He was on the hook for seven murders. Eight, if you counted that highway cop back in Michigan. Both his partners were dead. That small part Chuckie DePepsi had needed for the car had apparently been far more important than he or Accolito had realized, because the engine had begun to act up shortly after he got back to the City, following the disposal of Eddie’s body and those of the two witnesses. He’d left it parked in a crowded shopping center lot where it might be overlooked for a few days, but eventually, he knew it would be noticed and traced back to him.

To top it all off, he’d been ID’d, and now, in addition to local and state cops, he had the God damn Feds on his tail.

And he hadn’t even gotten a chance to get a look at his little girl, which was the main reason he’d wanted to come to this town, the main reason he’d persuaded Chuckie and Eddie to come along.

Now he was stuck in the middle of a City that had been the epicenter of some of the most famous manhunts in American criminal history. The Big Boy, shortly after his crashout from a federal prison; bank robber Boris Arson, after his dramatic escape from a local jail; psychopathic rich boy Selbert DePool; contract killer Flattop Jones; his brother Blowtop; the enemy spy known only as “The Brow.” All of them had gone on the run in this town, and, ultimately, since the cops here, particularly this guy Tracy, seemed to know how to run manhunts, every one of them had eventually been either captured or killed.

Some of the old-timers who’d lived here for years told stories about how, for a short time, Boris Arson himself had once used this “Y” as a hideout, and that he’d checked out just in time to miss a police raid on the place led by Tracy. It was kind of a local legend. Well, Arson hadn’t been caught here. Tracy’d eventually caught up with him down in Oklahoma. Maybe that meant this place was lucky.

In the past few days, Klaups had, in an effort to change his appearance, started a goatee and mustache, which was growing in rather nicely. He went out only during daylight hours when he could lose himself in the crowds that were plentiful in this downtown neighborhood. He wore a large pair of wraparound sunglasses that mostly hid the scar, and completely hid the empty eyesocket, without being as conspicuous as his piratical eye patch.

But the grand they’d netted from their one successful (and only semi-successful, at that) robbery was running dangerously low, and, with his car out of commission, he had no way to get out of town. Public transportation facilities, bus or train depots, airports, and the like, were undoubtedly being watched closely.

Chuckie’d mentioned that he had a back-up ride at his brothers’ repair garage, a little too flashy, but there if needed. But how was Klaups going to get it? And he’d have to get some more money soon, but with the heat turned up so high, he couldn’t risk another job.

Dorothy wouldn’t want to help him. She’d made it clear when the divorce papers were served on him in prison that she wanted nothing more to do with him. But there was no one else he could ask.

What he needed was some leverage.

Maybe he’d get a chance to see his little girl after all. And maybe he’d be able to make seeing his little girl work for him.

He rolled out of bed, put on his shades, took the elevator to the ground floor and left the building. A short walk to Michigan Avenue put him in front of a Muroverde Pharmacy at the corner. He entered, bought a disposable camera, exited, and walked over to a City Transit Authority bus stop to wait.

*

Dorothy Kaelin riffled through the photos. They’d come in an Overnight Express envelope with neither a return address nor an accompanying note.

They were all pictures of Shannon, taken only yesterday to judge by the clothes she was wearing in them. They showed her entering her school building, playing with the other kids at recess, waiting at the curb for her ride home from school. The shots weren’t particularly good, or even particularly careful. They all looked like they’d been snapped hurriedly, as if whoever was taking them was trying to burn through the roll as

quickly as possible. Why had anyone bothered to take them, and why send them to her? It was puzzling, and after the visit from the famous Dick Tracy, a little worrisome, too.

The phone rang. She walked across the room to answer it.

“Hello.”

“Dorothy?”

“Yes.”

“How’d you like the pictures?”

“Who is this?”

“I got close enough to Shannon yesterday that I could have reached out and touched her. I didn’t, but, God, I wanted to. Six years is a long time to go without seeing my own kid.”

“Sy?”

“That’s right. It’s been a long time, hasn’t it, love of my life?”

“We agreed that was the best thing for Shannon.”

“I wasn’t really in a position to argue. Now I am. And if I want my daughter in my life, you and that straight-arrow you traded me in for can’t stop me.”

“How’d you find us?”

“It wasn’t really that hard, Dorrie. It’s not like you went into witness protection. People I knew kept track of you. I didn’t want to interfere, but I wanted to know what was going on with Shannon. I think I had a right to that much. Don’t you?”

“Keeping tabs is one thing. Sending me pictures just to scare me is something else. What do you really want, Sy?”

“Not that much, really. I need a car, and I need money.”

“Where am I supposed to get a car?”

“One of the guys I was working with kept a back-up car stashed at a repair shop his two brothers owned. His sisters-in-law are running the place right now. Just go in and say the car’s been in storage, pay the fees in cash, and they’re not likely to ask any questions. It’s a blue BMW convertible. My friend kept it in reserve because it was a little too sporty to blend into the background.”

“And you also need some money?”

“Not much. A grand or so, just to walk around on ‘til I can put another score together.”

“Just a grand or so, huh? And suppose I tell you to get stuffed?”

“You’ve already seen how close I can get to Shannon. If you want to keep me out of her life, get that car, and the money, and meet me tonight, after two o’clock, at the corner of Berwyn and Clark, in the City.”

*

“We were married, Mr. Tracy,” Dorothy Kaelin said. “We lived in the same house, slept in the same bed, had a baby together. He knows me from top to bottom. He’ll be able to spot an imposter.”

“Detective Worthington and you are about the same age, height, and build,” said Tracy. “You’re both brunettes. And he hasn’t seen you in years. From a distance, in the dark, he won’t be able to tell the difference until it’s too late.”

“Can you count on that? Because if you’re wrong, he’ll back out as soon as he sees it’s not me, and then you won’t be any closer to catching him than you are right now.”

I won't have this threat hanging over my little girl. I want it resolved. That means it's got to be me driving that car."

"She has a point, Tracy," said Sam Catchem. "If he spots a ringer, he'll just vanish again. We should be able to cover that corner tightly enough to keep her from harm."

Tracy turned to the man seated next to Dorothy.

"What do you think, Mr. Kaelin?" he asked.

"I agree with you, Mr. Tracy. I think it should be a policewoman who resembles her. But I've got to warn you, in four years of marriage I've never won a single argument with Dorothy."

"Can we at least put Lizz in the back seat?" Tracy asked Catchem.

"The 120i is a four-seater," said Catchem. "But it's a convertible. When he approaches he might see her there on the floor, and he'll know his number's up before we're ready to move in."

"We could put the top up."

"The weather's warm. Hasn't rained in weeks. If we hide Lizz in the back, it won't make it easy for her, lying there. If he sees the top up, it'll look suspicious. And if we leave the top down, and hide Lizz in back, maybe put a cover over her, it'll put her in a really awkward position, all cramped up on the floor. She'll have a hard time reacting quickly if trouble starts."

"It's better than nothing," said Tracy, who then became silent and pensive, as he considered the options. After a few moments, he shook his head, turned to Mrs. Kaelin, and said, "It's against my better judgment. But it's your neck, and your family. I guess if you want to risk one to save the other, it's your decision to make. But Detective Worthington will be with you in that car or it's no deal."

*

Tracy crouched by a window in a second floor apartment, overlooking the intersection of West Berwyn Avenue and North Clark Street, cradling a .30-30 Winchester 1894 lever-action rifle. He looked down at the BMW 120i parked at the northwest corner by a coffee shop. During daylight hours, this was a thriving commercial neighborhood in the City's Edgewater District. At this hour of the night, it was quiet and mostly deserted, which was probably why Klaups had chosen it.

With the top down, Mrs. Kaelin was easily visible in the driver's seat. Lizz, out of Tracy's line of sight, was presumably lying on the floor of the back seat. A small, cramped space, as Sam Catchem had pointed out. She was undoubtedly quite uncomfortable, but Tracy wasn't about to let an unarmed civilian sit alone in that car waiting for an armed killer.

At strategic points within site of the car, more than a dozen officers were posted, from Tracy's MCU, from the Homicide Units of Areas Four and Five, from the Investigations Section of the Sheriff's Police, which was contracted to do the follow-up on any major crimes that occurred in the Forest Preserve's jurisdiction, from the fugitive unit of the local FBI Field Office, and from the Homicide Unit for Area Three, in which the intersection of Clark and Berwyn happened to be located. Tracy himself was in overall command, and had given himself the birds-eye view.

The weapon he had chosen to arm himself with might, at first glance, have looked a little anachronistic, something Chuck Connors might carry in an old western from the

1950's rather than a weapon appropriate for a member of a modern-day, technologically advanced law enforcement agency. But, the fact was that, after more than a century, the Win 94 was still one of the finest rifles available, and was, as far as Tracy was concerned, ideal for situations like this.

Some preferred .30-30's manufactured by other companies, such as Marlin, for police work, because, as side-ejecting weapons, it was easier to mount telescopic sights on them. But Tracy found that, with the aperture sights he had mounted on the top-ejecting Winchester, he could shoot with pinpoint accuracy at any range up to a hundred and fifty yards, and with reasonable accuracy up to two hundred. And tonight, if it came to shooting, the range would be a lot shorter than that.

Aside from that, this rifle had a kind of sentimental value to it. His dad had used it years earlier, during a short stint of deputy sheriffing in Pawnee County, Oklahoma, before moving north to this City, meeting the woman who would eventually become his wife, and settling down to family life. The rifle had passed to Tracy when he'd reached adulthood, and he rather liked the idea of using it to carry on a family law enforcement tradition into the second generation.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a movement in the shadows. A tall, dark-haired man, wearing wraparound sunglasses despite the sun having set over six hours earlier, started to approach the BMW. He was casually dressed, and had a backpack strapped over his shoulders.

Tracy spoke into his wrist device.

"MCU-1 to all units. A white male, fitting the general description of suspect, seems to be approaching the vehicle. Sunglasses, nylon jacket, backpack. MCU-2, if this turns out to be our guy, you give the verbal warning over the PA. All other units remain silent. Be advised, once he's positively ID'd I'm taking a green light if he makes any aggressive movement. That makes it imperative that a verbal warning be absolutely impossible to misunderstand."

"MCU-2, ten-four," replied Catchem.

A series of "ten-fours" sounded over the two-way's speaker, as all the officers on the stakeout acknowledged Tracy's transmission.

The man stopped next to the BMW, by the passenger's side door, his right side to Tracy. In the dead of night, sound carried farther than during the bustle and activity of daylight. Tracy listened intently.

"Dorrie," said the man.

Mrs. Kaelin looked up. The man took off his glasses, revealing the scar and the empty socket, obvious to Tracy even from across the street.

"MCU-1 to MCU-2, it's him. Issue the warning."

With that, Tracy brought his rifle to bear, worked the lever, simultaneously chambering a round and cocking the weapon, sighted in carefully on Klaups's right profile, and lightly squeezed the trigger, not enough to get off a shot, but enough so that it would take only a half-pound or so of pressure to fire. He took a deep breath and held it.

Catchem's voice boomed through the PA system of an unmarked police panel truck.

"Klaups, this is the police! Do not move! You're under arrest! Do not move!"

Klaups's face twisted in rage.

"You bitch!" he yelled.

He whipped back the light nylon windbreaker, reaching for what Tracy presumed was a weapon.

Holding the sight picture steady, he slowly began to exhale, and slowly tightened his finger on the trigger of his rifle, whispering to himself, over and over, as he let out his breath, "Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze."

A split second later, Klaups pulled the weapon, a Berreta 92, clear, and started to bring it up.

Tracy's finger continued to slowly tighten on the trigger of his rifle, and he continued to whisper to himself, "Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze."

Klaups had the weapon pointed directly at the terrified face of Mrs. Kaelin now, fumbling just a bit, as he tried to insert his right forefinger into the trigger guard of the double-action pistol.

Out of the corner of his eye, Tracy could see Lizz struggle to a sitting position on the floor of the BMW's back seat, reaching for her own pistol.

His finger continued to slowly tighten on the trigger of his rifle, and he continued to repeat to himself, "Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze. Squeeze."

A shot rang out.

The slug entered just above Sy Klaups's right temple, burrowed through his head, and blew a hole above, and a just bit behind his left ear.

Klaups's single eye froze open, and he fell to his left, his hand still gripping the Beretta tightly.

The FBI's Ten Most Wanted List suddenly had a new opening. Klaups had been on it less than a week. In the immediate aftermath, someone suggested that this might be the record for the shortest elapsed time between being put on the list and being apprehended. Eventually, in the days following the shooting, somebody else would check to see if that was the case. It would turn out that another cop-killer, Billie Austin Bryant, who, in 1969, had been apprehended two hours after being put on the list, still held that record.

*

"You got him from the blind side, Tracy," said Catchem, lighting a cigarette as they both stood over the body. "He couldn't've seen it coming. Couldn't've heard it coming 'cause bullets are supersonic. Head shot would've put his lights out before he had time to process what was happening. You killed him before he even he knew he was dead."

"Put the smoke out, Sam," said Tracy. "This is a crime scene."

"Sorry," said Catchem, gingerly stubbing out the butt between his thumb and forefinger.

"Anybody checked that backpack?"

"No. Lizz was first to the body. I was second. We checked it for signs of life, but aside from that, it hasn't been touched."

Tracy knelt to the ground, carefully unzipped the nylon pack, reached inside, and pulled out a Colt 1911 semi-automatic .45 pistol, a military gas mask, and a small gas tank.

"This was probably Accolito's gun," said Tracy, removing the magazine, emptying the chamber, and locking back the slide. "Ballistics will be able to confirm that."

“And that tank must have been what he used to kill that first currency exchange clerk, Mrs. Larson.”

“Lab can confirm that, too,” said Tracy. He reached into the right side pocket of his suit coat, and took out the key that had been left in the abandoned jacket back at the apartment hideout, along with the baby photo. “I’ve wondered what the hell this key fit. Now I think I know.”

He inserted the key into the valve at the top of the tank.

“Fits perfectly,” said Tracy. “That’s all it was for, just opening the valve.”

“That’s the last piece of the puzzle, then,” said Catchem. “Not too often we get a case without a single dangling loose end.”

“Yeah,” said Tracy. “Every piece of evidence fits perfectly, and every bit of it was obtained legally. It’s almost too bad this guy didn’t live to go to trial.”

“Yeah,” said Catchem. “Almost.”

AFTERWORD

Chester Gould often took inspiration from real life when crafting his Tracy stories. Villains were modeled on real-life criminals. Acts of villainy were based on real-life crimes. Plots were based on real-life events.

I’ve taken a leaf out of Mr. Gould’s book for this story. The plot of “The Blind Side” is a composite of several different cases from the career of a remarkable policeman named Frank Pape.

Pape joined the Chicago Police Department in 1933, by which time *Dick Tracy* had been running in the nation’s newspapers for about two years. In other words, he started his career too late for Gould to have modeled his iconic character on him. But, as a Chicago newspaperman, with many contacts in the Chicago Police, Gould had to have been aware of him, and it’s very likely that Pape’s amazingly eventful career provided some inspiration over the years.

In nearly forty years of service, Frank Pape was responsible for sending over 300 felons to prison, doing hard time. He sent another five to Illinois’s Death Row. He survived fifteen separate gun battles. He personally killed nine gunmen in deadly face-to-face encounters.

Max Allan Collins once said that Eliot Ness was as close to Dick Tracy as any real-life lawman ever came. Frank Pape came just as close. Arguably closer.

Like most rookies, Pape began his career as a uniformed patrolman, and, after gaining a position in the Detective Bureau, would spend time as a District Detective in Albany Park, and on detached duty as a DA’s investigator for the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office. But for most of his career, Pape worked out of Chicago PD’s citywide Robbery Unit, the bulk of those years either as a sergeant, or as the lieutenant in command of the detail. Unlike Tracy, he never got quite as high as Chief of Detectives. The highest rank he ever achieved was *Deputy* Chief of Detectives. But like Tracy, once

he achieved high administrative rank, he'd still spend as much time as possible on the street, not behind a desk.

Perhaps his most famous case was his pursuit of "The Gas Gang." In 1943, a pair of bandits specializing in currency exchanges actually used an oxygen tank filled with poison gas to intimidate victims into giving up cash. In what Pape would later describe as "the best piece of police work we ever did," Pape and his partners actually did run the robbers to ground by tracing a baby photo one of them had left in an abandoned hideout, just as Tracy and his colleagues do in this story.

The abortive raid on the studio apartment that Sy Klaups and his partners are using as a hideout was lifted, with some liberal fictionalizing, from a 1955 barricaded suspect situation, in which a cop-killer Pape was hunting was cornered in a North Side apartment, and tried to escape by jumping from a window of the building he was holed up in through the window of the building next door. I've made it roofs in my fictionalized version, because it seemed more credible (just because something really happened doesn't make it credible). Also, in my version, the bad guys escaped. Temporarily.

Chuckie DePepsi was a play on the name of a real-life cop-killer, Charlie DeCola, whom Pape killed in a 1945 shootout.

The garage massacre derived from a 1947 case in which a professional armed robber killed a friend of his who ran an auto repair shop in the mistaken belief that the auto mechanic was a police informant. Then he and his partners kidnapped the four customers who happened to be in the shop, thus witnessing the killing, and drove them to various spots in the western suburbs, killing them one by one. The real-life case, as you can see, was even grimmer than my fictionalized version.

The final scene in which Klaups is taken down as he tries to kill his ex-wife was based on the culmination of a 1954 manhunt led by Pape for a cop-killer named Gus Amadeo. As in my story, Amadeo demanded assistance from a woman he'd once been romantically involved with, instructing her to bring a car he had stashed to the intersection of Clark and Berwyn. When officers staked out at that location called on him to surrender, he pulled a gun and tried to eliminate his former girlfriend. Pape, posted at the window of a second story unit that gave him a birds-eye view of the intersection, took Amadeo out with a well-placed shot from a .30-30 rifle, just as Tracy does in this story.

I am not the first to fictionalize Pape's cases. The Gas Gang case was dramatized in a special two-part episode of the famous radio series, *Gangbusters* (NBC/CBS/ABC/Mutual, 1935-57), entitled "The Case of Damiani and Krause," which ran on January 26 and February 2, 1946. When the series moved to television (NBC, 1952; Syndicated, 1953-55), the same case was dramatized in a single half-hour episode, "The Mendoro Case," with the duo becoming a trio, and the new, wholly fictional titular villain, becoming the brains of the operation.

Pape was also said to have been the primary model for the character who propelled Lee Marvin to stardom, Lt. Frank Ballinger on the popular Chicago-set series *M Squad* (NBC, 1957-60). Several of the show's episodes were based directly on Frank Pape's cases, and Pape himself was reported to have been an uncredited technical advisor on the series.

For those of you interested in learning more about the legendary Windy City cop, you can check out an article called “The Frank Pape Story” by former Cook County Sheriff’s Investigator John J. Flood, which can be found here:

<http://www.ipsn.org/pape2.php>

Pape was also the subject of a book-length biography, *The Toughest Cop in America* (1st Books, 2001) by retired Chicago Police Detective Sergeant Charles F. Adamson. Before his untimely death, Chuck Adamson, himself something of a legend in the Chicago P.D., was also a screenwriter and the co-creator of the classic, Chicago-set cop show *Crime Story* (NBC, 1986-88), based on his own experiences. Filmmaker Michael Mann, who produced the series, dedicated his recent film about Melvin Purvis’s pursuit of John Dillinger, *Public Enemies* (Universal, 2009), to Adamson’s memory.