

M-417-00

IN THE SECONDS after the shots were fired, the bedroom seemed so quiet that he could almost hear dust settle. Then the sharp smell of cordite, mixed with the coppery smell of blood, began to fill his nostrils. Barbara was still on the floor not ten feet from Ray's body. Shane moved first. He stood slowly, feeling his knees shake as he rose. He stumbled to the dresser and leaned on it heavily, propping himself up for support. They were both trying to digest it, understand what had just happened and comprehend how it would alter, in a ghastly way, events stretching before them. Then, from the floor, Ray Molar farted. Shit ran into his pants as his bowels let loose. The perfect punctuation mark for the past few minutes.

"We need to get a story, Barbara," Shane said. "This isn't going to go down smooth. You know how they all feel about Ray."

"I don't know . . . I don't know . . . He just . . ."

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"Barbara . . ."

Her eyes were darting around the room in a desperate escape dance. Her face was also beginning to swell where Ray had hit her on the right side, distorting her natural beauty.

"Tell me," he prodded softly, "what set him off?"

Somewhere in the distance they could hear the faint wail of a police car.

"Already?" she said, referring to the sirens.

"You were screaming, shots were fired, you've got neighbors. Nine-one-one response time is supposed to be less than five minutes. If something more is going on here, I need to know, Babs. You and I, we're not completely clean, if you know what I mean."

"I know." She pulled herself up on the bed and sat. He could see that her hands were shaking as she brought the back of her wrist up to wipe the blood oozing from the corner of her mouth. Her hand came away with an ugly red streak on the back. "He . . . he just . . . I don't know."

"He just what? Let's go, there isn't much time. What set him off?"

"I got a call yesterday from a woman. She asked me if I'd seen the videotape yet."

"What videotape?"

"I don't know. That's the whole point. I haven't got any tape, and I told her. She sounded like she was crying. Then she said it was coming in the mail, and it will show me what a cheating bastard Ray was."

"Who was she?"

"Didn't say. I didn't recognize the voice. She just hung up."

The sirens were now less than a block away as Barbara Molar looked at Shane in desperation. "What're they gonna do?"

"They're gonna separate us. Take statements. This is our only chance to coordinate. We need the same story. Stay with me here, Babs. Keep goin'. What happened next?"

"Ray hasn't been home much since he got his new assignment.

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He's been away days at a time, so when he got home tonight, I asked him where he was all the time. I told him what the woman said and he . . . he just . . . went nuts. You know his temper, how he gets. You worked patrol with him. He accused me of sleeping with his friends. He called me a whore. He started beating me. I can't take any more beatings. I can't. I told him I was going to leave him, and then he chased me into the bathroom. I locked the door and called you. Then he just—"

The sirens growled to the curb outside, and Shane quickly looked around the bedroom, taking mental pictures of the crime scene, filing them in his memory for later. Oddly enough, it was Ray who had schooled him in this technique, quizzing him at "end of watch" on what he remembered. They'd sit in some bar at EOW, betting drinks on the answers. Ray would ask questions: What was on the dresser? How many windows in the kitchen? Were there screens? Ray was violent and unpredictable, but he sure knew how to police a crime scene.

"They're gonna take me downtown," Shane said. "They'll take your statement here, then probably transport you to the ER. Just say exactly what happened. He would have killed you, Barbara. He fired first. This was self-defense. Just leave out you and me. Whatever you do, stay tight on that."

They could hear cops coming into the house through the open front door.

"We're back here, LAPD!" Shane yelled. Then, as an afterthought, he whispered to Barbara, "Call the phone company and see if you can get an AT&T printout of calls to your phone so we can try and find out who that woman is."

Barbara nodded just as a uniformed South Bureau "dog and cat" team came through the door, guns drawn. Shane had his hands in the air and his Beretta Mini-Cougar hanging down, dangling uselessly from his right thumb. "LAPD," he said again.

The cops didn't know him, and not seeing a badge, the male officer rushed him, disarmed him, and threw him down onto the

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floor right next to a puddle of Ray's blood. The female kept her Smith & Wesson trained on him until her partner had Shane cuffed. Then they both roughly yanked him up.

"Where's your shield?" the lady cop said. Her nameplate read S. RILEY.

"On my dresser, at home. I was asleep. She called for help. I live four miles from here. I'm Sergeant Shane Scully, Southwest RHD. My serial number is 50867."

They looked down at Shane's now-bloody bare feet, then at Ray. The male cop was a policeman III; his nameplate read P. APPLGATE. He knelt down and looked closely at the body. "Shit. This is Steeltooth. You shot Lieutenant Molar."

Shane stood quietly as Applegate fingered his shoulder mike. "This is X-ray Twelve. We're Code Six at 2387 Shell Avenue. We have a police officer down. We need a sergeant on the scene and the coroner. Notify South Bureau Detectives we have the shooter in custody. He claims to be Southwest Robbery/Homicide Sergeant Shane Scully." Then he turned to Shane. "Gimme that serial number again."

"It's 50867," Shane said into the officer's open shoulder mike.

"You get that?" Applegate asked. The female radio-transmission officer answered quickly.

"Roger, X-ray Twelve. That's 50867. You're Code Six Adam at Shell Avenue, requesting a supervisor and a Homicide unit. Stand by." There was static, and in less than thirty seconds, the RTO came back on. "X-ray Twelve, on your suspect ident: that badge number is confirmed to Southwest RHD Sergeant Shane Scully, 143 East Channel Road, Venice, California."

"Roger. We're locking down this crime scene for Homicide and moving outside." The officer then turned to Shane. "Who's your direct supervisor?"

"Captain Bud Halley, Southwest Division Robbery/Homicide."

"You got his call-out number?"

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"Just call the squad. I can do it myself if you take these cuffs off."

"Hey, Scully, you done enough already. You just croaked the best fucking cop on the force." Then he unlocked the handcuffs. "Shannon, take Mrs. Molar into the kitchen. I'll hold Sergeant Scully in the living room." They left Raymond Molar in an expanding pool of his own blood to wait for the Homicide team and lab techs.

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On every unnatural death in L.A., the RHD assigns a fresh homicide number and the next team up on the division rotation gets the squeal. The numbers start on January 1 and continue sequentially until the last day of December. If the body is a male, the number is preceded by an *M*; if female, by an *F*. On that chilly April morning, Lieutenant Raymond George Molar became M-417-00.

The RHD team got there a little after three-thirty A.M. as the crime lab was just finishing photographing the scene. The two lab techs had already done their preliminary workup. They'd bagged the lieutenant's hands, outlined the DB in tape, and were standing around, waiting for the detectives to show before rolling the body.

Both Homicide dicks were veterans and had been notified before they got there that the officer down was the legendary LAPD Lt. Ray "Steeltooth" Molar. They had both signed Patrolman Applegate's crime-scene attendance sheet and now stood in the bedroom looking down at the body with stone-cut expressions as the lab techs flopped Ray over. His face had already begun to fill with blood, causing a darkening of the skin, known as lividity. More postmortem renal jettisoning had occurred, and the smell of feces in the room was getting strong as the two detectives from Robbery/Homicide silently policed the area, making their preliminary notes and observations. They graphed the location of the body and marked the bullet in the doorjamb that Ray had

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fired, then instructed the lab techs to dig the slug out and get it to the Investigative Analysis Section for a ballistics comparison. They bagged Shane's 9mm Beretta; it would be booked as evidence.

Shane was waiting in the living room with Patrolman Applegate. After half an hour the lead Homicide dick, an old, wheezing department warhorse with a basset-hound jawline, came out and sat on the sofa opposite Shane. His name was Garson Welch; he and Shane had shared a few easy grounders back when Shane was still working uniform in Southwest. One case had been so simple, they solved it in less than ten minutes when Shane arrested the perp half a block away as he was trying to stuff the murder weapon down into a Dumpster. The man had confessed on the spot. Shane and Welch had gone EOW at the jail and had had a few beers in a cop bar on Central known as the Billy Club. They didn't have what you'd call a friendship, but they were at least friendly—better than nothing.

"This ain't gonna go down too good at Parker Center, Shane," the old detective said, rubbing his ample forehead with a big, liver-spotted hand.

"Yeah, Gar, you're right. I should've just stood there and let him kill her with his nightstick."

"Calm down and listen," Welch went on. "What we got here is a brown shit waffle. Lieutenant Molar had big juice with the Super Chief. People you and I only read about in the *L.A. Times* are getting phone calls right now over this piece of work. I just got a call and found out he's been Mayor Clark Crispin's police driver for the past two months. So there's gonna be big interest at the city level. We're gonna go slow and get it right."

"The mayor's driver? Shit," Shane said. He hadn't known that was Ray's new assignment.

"I'm gonna take your preliminary here, then send you to the Glass House and let your captain do the DFAR," Welch said, referring to the Division Field Activity Report that had to be filed

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after any incident involving violence or death at the hands of a police officer.

"I got my car. I can meet you there," Shane volunteered.

"I'll have one of the blues drive it in and park it for you in the underground garage, but you're gonna go downtown in the back of a detective car. By the book. That way, nobody gets days off for bullshit nitpicks."

"Yeah, sure, if that's the way you want it." Shane was beginning to get a premonition of disaster. Then he followed Detective Welch out of the house for the long drive to Parker Center.