

L.A.'S LAST STREET COP

Surviving Hollywood Freaks, the Aryan Brotherhood,
and the L.A.P.D.'s Homicidal Vendetta Against Me

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Prologue

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I WAS JUST LYING THERE on the couch in the living room when a group of monstrous, heavily tattooed white men walked in armed with knives and sawed-off shotguns. What was really strange was they all looked at me as they slowly filed by but made no attempt to take the two-inch .38 backup I carried on the job or my .44 Magnum Smith and Wesson. The firearms were lying within my reach next to me on the floor. But I was frozen in place—no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't move.

Then came the horrid screams and cries for mercy as the Aryan Brotherhood gang members systematically slaughtered my little brothers, my sisters, and my mom.

It was the most vivid and horrifying dream I ever had.

For years, I had this recurring nightmare and similar ones as well. I went into a paranoia of sorts but fortunately recognized I was teetering on losing my mind. So I immersed myself in my faith and started working out twice a day instead of falling into the axiomatic trap of alcohol and drugs to sedate my overwhelming psychological pain and fear.

I went nowhere for months, not even my usual Saturday night date with Maria Elena, the beautiful Mexican foreign-exchange student I met when I was working Hollywood Division a few years back. One Saturday as I sat in Mom's car—parked in front of the house listening to the radio and armed with Rosco and Gun-zalez (my two-inch .38 and .44 Mag)—I called her and told her what was going on. That angel drove over and joined me in the car, bringing a picnic of

wonderful homemade sandwiches, chips, a pint of tequila, and a six-pack of the “Champagne of Beers,” my favorite, Miller High Life.

I looked into Maria Elena’s magnetic brown eyes and told her everything—my whistleblowing, the terrifying fight with the Aryan Brotherhood and the death threats, and the vendetta the department unleashed against me. Her full lips parted and she gasped, “Al, your L.A.P.D. sounds as corrupt as our Mexican police.” Then she tried to change the subject. It wasn’t because she didn’t care; she just wanted to take me away from my living nightmare, a nightmare that was the consequence of fulfilling my childhood dream of wanting to become a twenty-first-century Praetorian Guard.

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The Praetorians' Vision

OCTOBER 10, 1975—Our Los Angeles Police Academy class, “8-75,” was at the halfway point to our scheduled graduation day—and we didn’t know shit about almost anything.

At this point, eight cadets had dropped out, six men and the only two females in the class. We were now down to fifty-six. Everyone was chomping at the bit because for the next four weekends, we were each going to work as a third man in an A-car (two-man patrol car) in one of the department’s eighteen geographical divisions.

It was an intimidating experience. I was assigned to work my Friday and Saturday p.m. watches at Wilshire Division. I got to Wilshire Station early to familiarize myself with the station. I walked into the watch commander’s (W/C) office and introduced myself to Sergeant II Frank Windsor.

Windsor was old school with thirty-plus years on the job. Six foot four, lean and handsome, he looked immaculate in his navy-blue uniform sporting his Sergeant II chevron on the upper sleeves. The lower part of his uniform sleeve was covered from the cuff to the elbow with diagonal hash marks denoting four years of service per hash mark. He had a full head of pure white hair, a heavily wrinkled face with piercing blue eyes, and a soft but deep voice. He would have made a much richer character than Theodore Roberts who played Moses in the 1923 Cecil B. DeMille film, *The Ten Commandments*.

I expected him to give me the standard rookie treatment we were all accustomed to at the Academy. As I started to introduce myself,

he raised his arm in a “just a moment” gesture while he spoke to two other officers about some police business.

A few moments later, he wheeled around and asked, “Military?”

“Yes sir, Marine Corps.”

He extended his long arm for a handshake and said, “*Semper Fi.*” No doubt, I was shaking the hand of a World War II Marine Corp veteran. He looked at my name tag. “Officer Moreno, who were you with?”

“India Company 3/7, sir, First Marine Division.”

“I was with the First Marine Division on the Canal [Guadalcanal].” Shit, this old Corps Marine was in the first offensive of the hellish Pacific Island fighting. At this point, several other officers queued behind him waiting to talk to him before roll call. So, it was a short but memorable conversation with this old Praetorian Guard. “Marine, have a seat in the roll-call room.”

I had a flashback of my Dutch beauty, Danique—she always called me “Marine.” It seemed like just yesterday when we were spending endless summer days spearfishing in her Palos Verdes coves. My God, I miss her. But I made my choice and fulfilled my childhood dream. I was well on my way to becoming a twenty-first-century Praetorian.



When I walked into the roll-call room, it was still empty. So I looked around for something to read and noted a stack of sheets on the desk up front. The sheets were known as *Daily Crime and Arrest Summaries* (DCAS). The officers called them D.O. sheets. They categorically listed the previous days’ crimes in the division, including the officers’ names who made the arrests.

The crime categories on the D.O. sheets included both crimes against person and property. *Crimes against person* include murder, attempted murder, felony, and misdemeanor assault, rape, and kidnapping. *Crimes against property* are robbery, burglary, grand theft auto (GTA), fraud, forgery, arson, and the like. In some cases, a detailed description of the suspect(s), their vehicle(s), and weapons

used were listed as well. The D.O. included the crime report (D.R.) number; the type of arrest; the suspect's name and booking number; the date, time, and location of the crime; and a line describing the suspect's *modus operandi*.

The countless numbers of stolen vehicles were listed in a separate sheet called the "hot-sheet," which also listed the license plates.

By now the p.m. watch officers were filing into the roll-call room, and I instinctively knew there was a pecking order in the seating arrangement. The boots were in the first row, followed by the senior officers, with the old-timers in the very back of the room.

It was 1500 hours, the start of the p.m. shift. Sergeant Windsor walked in followed by two p.m. field supervisors, Sergeants Darr and Kunz. Damn! All the officers and sergeants looked really big and squared away.

There was a height requirement back then of five feet nine. I don't know why, but just then I thought about another background hiring requirement called *moral turpitude*, a legal concept in the United States and some other countries that refers to "conduct that is considered contrary to community standards of justice, honesty, and good moral character." This term appears in US immigration law beginning in the nineteenth century.

Moral turpitude was strictly enforced back in the day. For example, if your background investigator found that a police candidate was living with his girlfriend out of wedlock, he was perceived as lacking in moral character and was disqualified from becoming a Los Angeles police officer.

The roll-call room fell completely silent when Sergeant Windsor started handing out the daily patrol assignments. "Brophy, Wilder, and Moreno, 7-A-77." "7" denoted the division; "A" signified a two-man patrol unit; and "77" designated which reporting district (R/D) or quadrant of the division the unit was to patrol.

While Windsor went on, all the officers were dutifully making entries into their field notebooks. The cover of the notebook displayed the Admonition of Rights, or Miranda Rights—a 1966 landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court in *Miranda v. Arizona*. The Supreme Court held in a 5–4 majority that both inculpatory and exculpatory statements made in response to interrogation by a defen-

dant in police custody will be admissible at trial *only* if the prosecution can show that the defendant was informed of the right to consult with an attorney before and during questioning and of the right against self-incrimination before police questioning, and that the defendant not only understood these rights but voluntarily waived them.

Roll call is supposed to be forty-five minutes long, but it never went longer than fifteen to twenty minutes before we were all hustled the hell out to relieve the previous watch. When I walked out into the hallway, I was approached by my partners, Officers Brendan Brophy and Jack Wilder, both in their midtwenties, just under six feet in height. They were fit, motivated street cops, each with a bit over five years on the job. I could sense that these two had worked together for some time, and they were indeed an impressive pair. Brophy did most of the talking and asked me how old I was and if I had been in the military. I gave them the same short introduction I gave Sergeant Windsor. "We're not going to give you any shit," Brophy said. "Just do exactly as we say and we'll be good. And don't call me fucking sir!"

I followed them to the kit room where the officers collected their print kit (fingerprint box) and the Ithaca model 37 pump-action .12-gauge shotgun and ammunition. The shotgun rounds were monster slayers.

We walked out to the parking lot to our black-and-white. To a rookie like me, the inside of the police vehicle looked like the late-1960s *Starship Enterprise* because of all of the equipment. Before we left the station, Wilder lifted the removable backseat to check for any discarded contraband left by an arrested suspect while being transported in the backseat to the station from the previous watch, then we gassed up.

Brophy picked up the radio mic and cleared us for service. "7-A-77, p.m. watch clear."

Communications replied, "7-A-77 p.m. watch clear, good evening."

I was toast. I didn't understand a damn thing coming out of the radio. The radio transmissions were going ballistic with calls for service from the "Glass House," our name for Parker Center, L.A.P.D.'s headquarters downtown. Each RTO (radio telephone operator) was hemorrhaging out radio calls for service to two additional divisions on the same frequency. That meant that an A-car officer needed to distinguish his calls from the other two divisions' radio calls

for service. And you damn sure didn't want to ask the RTO to repeat any information. That would tie up the radio for all three divisions. Brophy somehow managed to write down three radio calls like a court stenographer, then looked down and locked the shotgun rack running along the floorboard of the front seat.

In between handling our radio calls, we were dashing back and forth to "Officer Needs a Backup," "Officer Needs Assistance," and the mother of all radio calls, "Officer Needs Help." It was to be a night of service and mayhem in the City of the Seraphs.

Our first call was at 1645 ½ Gramercy Street, a dilapidated fourplex quadrant of the division with the heaviest calls for service and crime. Wilder parked our black-and-white a residence down from the call. I followed my two partners as we approached the fourplex. We could hear violent screams coming out of the unit.

"Motherfucker, I'm going to kill you!"

"Fuck you, you're not my father!"

This cadence of mixed vulgarities got louder and louder as we approached. Both officers stood on each side of the front door and tapped it with their batons.

An obese woman about five feet tall answered the door. "Edna, what is it this time?" Brophy asked. Evidently, my partners had been here several times before to deal with this mind-bending dysfunctional horror.

As we entered, I thought to myself, hell, this little apartment is half the size of my little home on Lou Dillon, in the gang-infested Florencia-13 part of South Central Los Angeles. There were seven little souls in the squalid apartment ranging in age from one to Edna's eldest daughter, Katrina, fifteen.

Edna's latest live-in boyfriend was Thomas. He was twenty-three years old with a three-page rap sheet, mostly for violations of the 11350 Health & Safety Code, which was being under the influence of an opiate (heroin). The rest of his arrests were for petty theft and residential burglaries. Brophy and Wilder had arrested him numerous times before.

While my partners were trying to sort out the problem and keep the peace, everything was still in a state of vulgar ear-piercing shouts from Edna, Thomas, and Katrina.

All of a sudden, Brophy screamed at the top of his lungs, “Shut the fuck up!” He was speaking their language, and it finally silenced the lot of them, including the crying babies.

Wilder hustled Thomas outside. Brophy told me to take Katrina to the kitchen. I walked her into the tiny kitchen and she was all smiles. She was a darling little girl. While standing there, I looked at all the little ones in the tiny living room. They were sickly, skinny, all dressed in rags, and barefoot. The kitchen floor and walls were filthy, and the stench of the apartment was sickening. My Lord, I was raised in the barrio and knew poverty, but this was a whole different and unspeakable nightmare. Edna was only thirty-five but looked fifty-five. Five of the seven children were from different fathers.

Once Brophy secured a little order, he asked Edna what the problem was. When Edna started talking, Katrina jumped in screaming, “That motherfucker (Thomas) is always trying to fuck me! And that bitch (her mother) ain’t doing a fucking thing about it!”

Brophy gave Katrina the thousand-yard stare, and she chilled for a minute. I thought to myself, what on earth are Brophy and Wilder going to do to resolve this plethora of madness?

Just then, Katrina ran the few feet to the living room and kicked Edna in the ass, then went at her with lefts and rights. Brophy took Katrina by the arm, wheeled her around, and cuffed her. That was my first arrest as a Los Angeles police officer, and I hated it. I would shortly come to learn that these types of radio calls are the norm, not the exception, in South and Central Bureau.

Katrina was placed in the right-rear seat of our patrol car with me to her left. Brophy grabbed the mic: “7-A-77, cancel our two other calls and show us ‘time and mileage’ to Wilshire Station from 1645 Gramercy.” When we arrived, Brophy radioed “7-A-77 arriving at Wilshire Station, your time and our mileage.” This communication protocol protects the transporting officers from unfounded accusations of sexual assault. The officers recorded the location and time from the arrest locations to the station.

Once in the station, the arresting officers inform one of the supervisors, normally the watch commander (W/C), of the arrest and receive booking approval. Then it was filling out one report after another for hours. Katrina was placed in a small interview

room as opposed to the station's holding cell. Once the reports were completed, she would be off to either Eastlake in Los Angeles or Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Downey where minors are detained. Katrina was detained at Los Padrinos.

The arrest took us almost five hours before we were cleared for service once again. When we got back to the Wilshire area, Brophy requested Code-7 (a forty-five-minute meal break). Brophy and Wilder were surprised when communications OK'd the request. Normally, the RTO denies the request and assigns the officer three more radio calls.

We stopped at this greasy spoon on Western Boulevard just south of the Santa Monica Freeway. It was Wilder's favorite burger joint. It was indeed a hole-in-the-wall with only outdoor seating, but the burgers and fries were delicious.

I asked endless questions about the arrest. There was a shitload of violations. Wilder listed everything from child abuse, possible sex abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and general neglect of the children.

Edna has overdosed half a dozen times from prescription pills and street drugs. If we arrested her again, she would spend a few days in County (the general hospital), then be sent back home to her kids. Thomas is a known hype (heroin addict) and burglar who just completed his parole. He wasn't under the influence of heroin when we were there, and he had just cleaned up all his warrants.

Twice within the last two years, Brophy and Wilder took the whole household into the system. They arrested Edna's previous boyfriend, Big Eddie, another hype. That time, they arrested Edna for a slew of child endangerment violations, and the seven children were entered into the worthless California Child Protection Services. Everyone would be back home in that shithole house within a couple months.

"Al, always remember this: This world out here is a shithole with no long-term fixes," Brophy philosophized. "We go to the same homes throughout the division, time after time, for some type of 415 (disturbing the peace) calls, and it's the same drill every time. Remember this: Your main responsibility is to *keep the fucking peace* for that instant in real time and prevent the situation from escalating into another senseless killing or something like that. We just keep the peace, then move on to the next Edna insane asylum."

Our forty-five-minute break was over, and it was back to work. “7-A-77, clear.” There was a short lull over the net—all radio transmissions from the entire city went silent. A Code-3 call was about to be assigned to a unit in one of the eighteen geographic divisions. A Code-3 call is always preceded by three beeps on the net. “Wilshire units and 7-A-77, a 211 (robbery) in progress at 4222 Pico Boulevard; your call is Code-3.”

We were only a couple miles from the call. Brophy activated the red lights and siren, Wilder put the pedal to the metal northbound on Western, then blew the red light on Pico turning westbound. (Vehicle seatbelts weren’t used back then, and officers did not wear body armor.) Wilder was driving at least sixty miles per hour on that busy boulevard, weaving in and out of traffic that didn’t pull over half the time. Brophy reached down and unlocked the Ithaca shotgun, then chambered a round of “get-some.” The mere sound of that action can cause a suspect to have an unscheduled bowel movement.

Brophy screamed out the hundred-block numbers while Wilder continued driving like a possessed man. Brophy knew the call was a Kentucky Fried Chicken joint from previous robbery calls there. As we got within a block, Brophy screamed, “Slow down, you’re going to pass it, slow down!”

Wilder locked up the brakes, and the car slid from side to side before coming to rest up against a high curb.

The fast-food restaurant was located on the northwest corner of Pico and Crenshaw Boulevard. Our car was in a tactically inferior location, stopped diagonally up against the curb, just in front of a large metal door on the south side of the building. If the suspects happened to exit through that heavy door just then, there was only the width of the sidewalk between us and being shot.

The main entrance to the restaurant was on the Crenshaw side, with a large parking lot in front. The customer entrance was the same as all other Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants, with a heavy glass front door flanked by huge windows on either side for all to see inside from the street. Sergeant Edwin Darr was already standing in front of the metal door just in front of us armed with a shotgun and barking out to us, “It’s a good call; there’s two armed suspects inside with hostages.”

Brophy had the shotgun and Wilder was armed with his .38 caliber revolver, both behind the left-front part of our patrol unit. I was behind the right-rear door closest to the metal door on the street side on Pico.

Sergeant Darr ran to a position of advantage behind his vehicle south of our car. Brophy shuffled to his right and reached into the patrol car for the radio to put out an "Officer Needs Help." I was amazed at how calm his voice was. It was as if he were at home with his wife and two young children having dessert after a Sunday night dinner. This was the consummate street cop. They don't get any better.

If the robbery came down to a firefight, all of us in the department had little to no confidence in our standard-issue Smith and Wesson piss-ant .38 six-shot revolvers. They had absolutely no knockdown power. The .38 fired a 158-grain soft-nosed lead slug at an ineffective muzzle velocity of 767 feet per second with little to no stopping power. The weapon earned the nickname "Widow Maker" because of its repeated failure to knock down suspects, putting both the officers' lives and the public in great jeopardy.

After Brophy put out the help call, he switched the radio to the P.A. system and ordered the suspects inside to release the hostages and come out unarmed. The suspects refused to comply, thereby escalating the armed incident into a S.W.A.T. call-out. Brophy radioed the communications center downtown about the armed and barricaded situation with numerous hostages. At this point, our responsibility was to put everything on ice until S.W.A.T. arrived.

By this time, it seemed that half of the department's patrol units had responded to our help call, and more were rolling in at breakneck speed with their sirens blaring and red lights flashing. Then I heard a familiar sound overhead. It was Air-6, one of our helicopters. The rotor noise was deafening and made it difficult for us to communicate with each other.

There must have been fifty guns by now covering the front entrance on Crenshaw and the employee entrance on Pico. L.A.'s Praetorians do this on a daily basis, and it is stunning to see how calm they are.

A few moments later, the metal door directly in front of us opened slightly inward. It was one of the two armed suspects having a look-see outside. Then the door abruptly slammed shut. I took a quick look

to my left and saw Brophy and Wilder zeroed in on the door. Just then, a pair of plainclothes officers working a juvenile unit (J-unit) parked next to Sergeant Darr's car. These two were full-on, old-school gunfighters. One was of Sioux descent and fondly called Chief; the other was Asian.

Again, the door slightly opened, and this time I could see one of the teenage female hostages. She was being used as a shield in front of the armed suspect. The suspect had his left arm wrapped around her throat and a six-inch .357 Magnum up against her right temple. She couldn't have been more than sixteen years old, dressed in her red-and-white-striped uniform. Her sweet face was frozen in sheer horror.

The suspect was a Negro male, about six feet in height, in his midthirties, with a resolute look in his bloodshot eyes. His hair was styled like Don King's, straight up like a porcupine. I couldn't get over how evil his eyes looked.

Then all at once, he stepped out and started screaming, "Give me the fucking keys (to our patrol car), or I'll blow her fucking brains out!"

I had the perfect shot—about four inches of the left side of his face was exposed between him and the hostage. He was no more than four and a half feet away from me behind the right rear door of our car. I was 100 percent confident I could make the shot. I wasn't going to give him the opportunity to murder that innocent little girl. His .357 was in the cocked position, and I knew it would only take the slightest jerk from either the suspect or the hostage to cause the trigger to slam into the chambered cartridge.

Without thinking, my Marine Corps firearms training went into overdrive. There was zero margin for error. I centered my weapon's rear sight aperture with the front sight blade at the suspect's left eye, an instant kill shot. I started slowly pulling the trigger back for the shot, incorporating the B.R.A.S.S. system: breathe, relax, aim, slack, squeeze...

But a nanosecond before the hammer slammed into the chambered round, an explosion went off to my left. It was Chief! He took a "Hail Mary" shot and miraculously made it, striking the suspect through the mouth. I lost my stationary target and released the trigger from completing my shot. The suspect's face violently spasmed sideways from the impact of the slug precisely when the round slammed into

his face. The hostage tore away from his death grip and rolled down and away from the “Contagious Fire” (all officers firing at once). Unbelievably, the suspect didn’t go down immediately and raised his weapon to get a kill shot before he went to hell.

Simultaneously, Brophy, Wilder, Chief, and his partner, including a reserve officer, opened up at the same time. It was one of the most extraordinary things I’ve ever seen in a firefight. Brophy hit the suspect center mass with all four Ithaca shotgun rounds, at the same time the suspect was being hit with bullets from the other officers’ revolvers. I checked my fire the whole time.

That malevolent soul never got a round off. The whole street was covered in a fog of gray smoke from the gunfire, but it wasn’t over. We all maintained our positions for about two long minutes more until the other perpetrator inside the building released the remaining four hostages. They came out through the metal door hysterically crying. Brophy, Wilder, a couple other officers, and I ran from around our cover and hustled all four remaining hostages out of harm’s way.

Just then, the remaining suspect walked out with his hands up. Chief and a few other officers quickly slammed him to the ground and cuffed him.

S.W.A.T. arrived moments later and gave their blue-suiter (street cops) brothers a thumbs-up. Brophy, Wilder, several other officers, and I walked up to the deceased suspect and were surprised when this big slick-sleeve (an officer with no chevrons on his sleeves) walked between us and handcuffed the obviously dead man. We all looked at him with a “What the fuck? He’s dead.” It was Big John Petrovitch, an ass-kicking street cop from Wilshire patrol.

“The department manual says that all suspects ‘shall’ be handcuffed including suspects who have been shot in an Officer Involved Shooting (O.I.S.). Big John was studying the department manual in preparation for an upcoming promotion to Police Officer III (P-III). He was simply following department procedures to the letter.

I thought to myself, oh well, what the hell. Years later, I would be partnered-up with Big John. He ended up becoming one of the department’s premier Robbery/Homicide Detectives.

The gray fog from all the shooting was finally clearing up when a rescue ambulance (R.A.) arrived and pink-tagged (confirmed the death

of) the suspect's body, although it would be eight to twelve hours before the coroner would transport the body to the morgue because of the extensive shooting investigation by Robbery Homicide Division (R.H.D.) out of Glass House. The body was evidence and could not be moved until Scientific Investigation Division (S.I.D.), working in conjunction with R.H.D., completed their laborious task of collecting the crime scene evidence, including taking hundreds of photographs of the crime scene, taking endless measurements, and analyzing the trajectory, angle, and path of every bullet fired.

Within a short time, Brophy, Wilder, Chief, his partner, the reserve officer, and I were separated and individually transported to the station for at least eight hours of interrogation ending with the "walk-through." In a walk-through, each officer gets back into soft clothes (civilian clothes) and is transported back to the shooting scene to reenact every single second of every individual action taken from the time the call was received until the conclusion of the shooting.

When I got to the station, one of the Wilshire captains asked me how many rounds I fired. I told him I had "checked my fire" (did not fire my weapon). He walked over to a handful of other plainclothes detectives and department brass. They deliberated for a couple of minutes. The captain walked back to me and said. "We don't need to include you in the O.I.S. investigation if you didn't fire your weapon." He told me, "Go home and have a beer. Good job, Officer."

What in the hell was that all about? It was our radio call—Brophy, Wilder, and me. I was closest to the suspect when he was killed, but they felt I didn't need to be part of the investigation? Well shit, I was still in the Academy, and my probationary period was months away, so I kept my mouth shut.



On my way home, I thought about stopping at Mom's to have a talk and blow off some steam or maybe paying a visit to my friend, Spanky, to have a few beers. He was a member of the hierarchy in the ruthless Florencia-13 gang in our community. For some reason, he

was endeared to and protected our family from the savage multitude of gangsters in the neighborhood and was personally responsible for saving my life from a planned gang hit.

But when I got to Mom's, it was well after 2 a.m., and Spanky and his homies across the street must have called it an early night because his porch was deserted.

It isn't that I hadn't seen violent death before. By this point, I'd seen more death than most men though not as much as some. Still, I needed to decompress. I needed a soulful conversation with a friend. And it wasn't that I felt any guilt or remorse for the death of that piece of shit. The dead man had a hole in his heart, and the only way he could fill it was by destroying innocence in his path—men, woman, children, it made no difference—so fuck him!

I wanted to drive directly to Cabrillo Beach in San Pedro where Danique and I used to spend those sweet summer days and nights drinking Dutch spirits and eating homemade sandwiches on that wonderful Dutch rye bread. But I was only about five minutes away from the A & N liquor store just around the corner on Alameda and Nadeau, so I decided to stop there first.

When I arrived at the liquor store, it was closed. Fortunately, I saw that Mike, the owner's son and a longtime family friend, was still inside moving merchandise around. When he saw me, he smiled and unlocked the glass door. "Corky, how are you doing? Your brother Arty told me you're a cop now with the L.A.P.D."

I wasn't about to tell him what I had just been through. I just wanted a few beers. I gave him a cursory progress report on how I was doing in the Academy and got a six-pack of Rainier Ale, the "green death." Nostalgia washed over me as I looked at those green-and-gold sixteen-ounce cans. I immediately thought of my two Cathedral High School friends, Tyron Seals and Lourie McCray. My lovable, cheeky soul brothers who introduced me to the world of alcohol for the first time in the tenth grade.

I thanked Mike and continued on my way to the beach. As I was driving across the Vincent Thomas Bridge, I had another sweet thought of my best Huntington Park High School friend and Marine Corps warrior brother, Rick Beach, who once persuaded me to follow him in hanging off the suspension cables from the top of the

bridge. Shit, those were insane but priceless times. Pure magic, care-free days! Rick had titanium balls then but was married now with a couple kids and in the department. The days of *A Summer Place* were indeed gone forever.

I arrived at Cabrillo Beach and pulled into the parking lot; there wasn't a soul around. The October weather was nothing like I remember back in 1969 when I was dating Danique, just back from Vietnam. It was colder than hell, but there was still something magical about this little beach. I stayed in the car with the motor running to keep the heater on while I listened to the radio and drank my Rainer. A 1965 recording by Marvin Gaye played on the radio—"Pretty Little Baby"—it was Danique's favorite song. She loved the haunting lyrics "...*Darlin', you give me joy, am I your toy?...*" and so did I.



When the warm sun started to rise, I walked out to the sand and sat with a single remaining can of Cathedral High School brew. Funny, I wasn't cold, tired, sleepy, or hungry. I was just thinking about Danique, and that gave me all the comfort and warmth I needed.

I don't regret my decision in choosing a life as an L.A. Praetorian, but I would forever live with a hole in my heart for choosing the department over Danique. I chose working the murderous streets of L.A. instead of a life on a hilltop in Palos Verdes with a couple of kids and her lovely parents, Jos and Huberta.

When I popped my last beer open. I heard something shuffling from behind. It was a couple of Harbor Division morning-watch blue-suiters. These coppers were as old as the sand I was sitting on and still working patrol, a real rarity for their time on the job.

The older, shorter one had a voice that sounded like he was chewing on gravel as he talked. "What in the hell are you doing out here? It's colder than a well-digger's ass," he mumbled.

I stood up and ID'd myself. I knew this could mean trouble for me because I was drinking and still in the Academy. But I sensed a