



Country Mile

Chapter 1 Meeting Bill

We drove up the dirt driveway in a rusty old pickup, and the radio was blaring some old country tunes as Bill shut down the loud engine and opened the old door on the pickup. Bill then stepped out, sliding on his old worn Budweiser cap shutting the door shaking the whole truck. He then walked toward the old double wide mobile home with nothing but a cigarette in his hand, knocking loudly on the aluminum door I could hear the dogs barking from out back as I waited in the truck. I saw the door slowly open and an older man peer out at Bill, the old man asked “what business do you have here?” All Bill had to say was, “it’s my job” as he flashed his badge at the man.

The older man slammed the door as he attempted to grab his shotgun from the coat rack. Bill kicked the door down in one swing of his foot, shattering the window on the upper part of the aluminum door, the old man ran with his shotgun to the back door as Bill chased him. The man swung the door open diving into the dirt and crawling behind a rusty Tractor attempting to load his weapon. I walked through the house after they ran through holding my weapon tightly in my hand as I veered my head through the back door looking for Bill. All the sudden I hear this faint muffled yell, then the man’s shotgun fire into the side of the old wooden shed, but I couldn’t see what he was firing at. Nobody was around except for the old man hiding behind the tractor, I was just out of his line of vision behind the rear part of the mobile home.

Then all the sudden I hear tapping on the top of the mobile home, I slowly made my way to the opposite side to climb the old rusted ladder mounted loosely on the back of the worn out camper to see what was up there. I slowly climbed up and took a glance at what was another man with a shotgun, suddenly the man sees me and attempts to fire at me. I jump down from the ladder cocking my handgun to return fire, it came to my notice that I was soon outnumbered by these outlaws, cornered in-between the camper and a junky old car with the three of the outlaws in front of me. Then I heard a loud rumble from behind me. All the sudden, I see Bill's truck right beside me as he yelled "jump in partner" Bill floored the truck spinning his tires in the dusty Georgia clay as the three men open fire to the rear of his rusty aged Chevrolet. We were both shocked in how terribly wrong that attempt to arrest this one man was. Considering we only stopped at this man's house to ask him a few questions.

Bill drifted from the red dirt road on to a gravel road. Thinking we were clear Bill slowed the truck down, but as I glanced at the left side view mirror we quickly realized that we were mistaking as soon as I saw their jacked up Ford Bronco chasing us and gaining quickly. Bill dropped it in third gear and floored it kicking up the rocks back at their front bumper as we quickly pulled away. The Ford was falling behind as we sped off, but the man leaned out the window and opened fire at us once again one hitting shot the right taillight. I opened the small window in the back of the truck to stick my weapon out and return fire, I attempted to aim for the front grille but all the bumps and twists in the road affected the shot of the bullets.

Bill said "get back in your seat and hold on partner" and he whipped the truck around making the front end of the 66' Chevrolet K10 face the Ford as he shifted it in reverse and said

“hold on to the wheel, I’ll take care of this” Bill grabbed his shotgun from the gun rack above that back window of the truck and stuck it out the driver’s side window as the truck’s front bumper slightly touched the front bumper of the Ford as Bill fired two shots, the first shot missed but the second one went right into the front right tire sending the Bronco flying off the side of the road and plowing it into a large rock making it flip three or four times. Bill grabbed hold of the wheel and slowed the truck to a stop as he drove over where the wreckage from the Bronco was scattered all over the side of the small ditch and in part of the field.

We both stepped out of the old Chevy to take a look at the wreckage in front of us; the three men were still inside the overturned Ford unable to move. Bill told me to check the other two men as he busted open the driver’s side window of the Ford to drag out the older man that was driving. Fortunately for us, the driver was still alive but the other two guys weren’t so lucky, Bill told me to get the CB radio and call this mess in. Bill dragged the injured man from off the road next to an old tree to lean him up straight. Bill kept asking him “Who are you sir? Answer me!” The man finally opened his eyes and came around to notice Bill was speaking to him, he got up and he didn’t seem to have any noticeable injuries from the wreck.

Bill asked again “Who are you sir?” The man shuddered then answered “You’ll never get no information out of the likes of me” as the man tried to pull away from Bill’s grasp. Bill slowly pulled out his handgun and pointed it at the man’s leg as he told him “You sure about that buddy?” The man looked at Bill for a second or two with a hard stare no budging an inch until Bill pulled back his arm to cock the weapon. The man finally broke down and told Bill “Me and my buddies were offered a job, at first we thought it’d be an easy pay but then we were told

what the job was. They gave us some weapons, brought us to this trailer and were told to murder anyone who came near” Bill jumped in and said “The pay must not have been too much eh buddy?” The man answered “We were only paid half of the amount they claimed to offer” Bill nor didn’t I know what to think of this situation so far.

As Bill brought the man to his truck he slapped some handcuffs on him as he gradually opened the old Chevy door. I was sitting in the passenger side calling in this situation to headquarters on the CB radio but there was no reply, dead silence. I was pretty worried about why there was no answer, I told Bill we should head out before dusk. Bill’s old 66’ Chevrolet K10 truck was lacking in a backseat, we were forced to cram in the bench seat in the front. Bill fired up the aged pickup and dropped it in gear as we pulled off the side of the road heading back onto the main road. Not too far into the drive, the man who had not even let us know his name started to apologize for attempting to run us down and kill us.

Bill and I didn’t really have much to say to that we just gave him a look as he started to tell us about who was. The man said his name was Calvin, and he needed this extra cash to pay rent on his home. The job didn’t turn out as planned when they threatened to kill him and his buddies if they decided to quit or run away, he claimed to be in big trouble now that we took him into custody. He said “If Dan and the crew found out I was taken by you guys, I’ll be killed for sure” Bill questioned him right of the bat “Dan?” Cal replied “Yes, they call him ‘Dirty Dan’ from what I saw him do, he lives up to his name”.

Bill turned to Cal again in the truck and asked; “Where is this ‘Dirty Dan’ guy?” Cal replied with “I’m not sure, a month back when I first got the job they were down a few miles off

of a country town called Fillmore”. Bill claimed to know where Fillmore was since he grew up in this area, me being new to the area by two years working with Bill was a experience that taught me much. Bill knew just about everyone in the town he’s from, He had friends in every corner of this state. Bill knew each road around here too, getting lost with Bill was nearly impossible. We pulled in the small worn-down Mobil gas station in Bill’s home town of Daxton to fill up his pickup.

Bill got out of the truck as I waited inside with Cal, Bill walked into the station to talk to the owner Jack about the current things in the town as the pump slowly filled up the truck. The dings on the aged pump indicated the gallons put into the tank of the worn out pickup as the number of the gallons increased to twelve gallons. The dim lighting glowed off the side of the front fender of the pickup as Bill’s shadow vividly appeared from the reflection of the chrome side mirror as he walked over to the pump to return the nozzle to the faded old gas pump. The price on the sign for gas at the time was around 39 cents a gallon as bill reached inside to grab some change out of the center counsel to round up enough money to pay the price of around \$4.00 that Bill ended up putting in the tank.

As Bill went in to pay, Cal asked “I never did catch your name buddy, what is it?” I replied “They call me Raymond, Ray for short” Cal said in return, “Nice to meet you Ray” as I said “Much obliged” Cal didn’t stop there, he began to ask a few questions about Bill. He then asked “How did ya’ll meet Bill?” I began to think of the story on how I and Bill began to be partners since I didn’t want to tell this stranger; I thought “I was driving down from Nashville to see my folks down in Tallahassee Florida they had recently moved there after my dad retired. I

ended up going through Georgia and taking the back roads due to me taking a wrong turn somewhere off an exit. About a few hours into the state I run across a worn down gas station, I stopped there to see if there was a phone or if I could get directions back to the main roads but it didn't turn out as planned.

I walked in the front of the station right as these two men were attempting to rob the joint, the one had a gun to the owner's head as I tried to make my way back to my car but right as I tried to leave two more men on motorcycles pulled up and blocked my path, one with a shotgun told me to get against the wall as the other went inside to meet up with the man robbing the station. Out of the corner of my eye and through the window I saw the one robber shoot the man behind the counter right between the eyes as he grabbed the money and made his way to the door. Then out of nowhere I heard this loud roar out from the empty road as this truck drove right on past this station. I thought I was screwed since the guy had driven on by. I was just waiting to be killed as the other men rummaged through my car.

Then I heard the noise again, the truck had came back around roaring louder than before straight toward the gas station as the man driving slammed the brakes and whipped the back end of the truck around taking out the two parked motorcycles, swiftly opening his driver's side door knocking down the criminals as he spun his truck's wheels doing a donut and violently jolting to a halt. This man jumped out of the truck with two handguns in the palms of his worn dusty hands, He fired at each of the men taking down both of them in one shot each. The men from inside saw this and ran out to return fire at this mysterious hero that appeared out of the blue.

The two criminals both ran out the front door of the service station, only one had a firearm. I was sitting behind a couple empty drums located on the side of the service station as I heard nothing but silence. Then I heard a loud smash and saw a trash can roll into the middle of the cracked asphalt right to the side of where I was sitting, then I heard the shotgun that the criminal was holding fire into the side of something metal, I hadn't thought to much on what it was and I was too scared to take a peek since my head could be blown clean off by that shotgun. I saw a shadow approaching the stack of empty drums, I began to think this was the end because I knew these guys would hesitate to kill me. I got ready to make one last run for it as the figure approached closer and closer. As I opened the corner of my eye I saw that it was the man who drove in and took out most of the criminals. He said "Partner, we got to get up out of here" as we both heard the men coming closer. He told me to get up and follow him, as soon as I stood up I saw that the fuel tank of a tank wagon had been punctured by the slug of the shotgun.

The man's truck was parked right near where the drums were so it wasn't far, he told me to get in as he took his firearm and fired into the air. I was wondering what he had done that for, we could have made a clean getaway but instead the two criminals ran from the side of the building to the front, the one with his shotgun pointed straight us. The man who had come to my rescue just stood there, pulled out a cigarette stuck it in the corner of his wrinkled mouth he then lit it calmly and made his way to the truck as the two criminals ran toward him firing shots at the side of the truck. He got in the old truck, started it up and peeled out tossing the cigarette out the open window into the puddle of gasoline that spilled out from the tank

wagon as the truck rapidly sped away from the station as the cigarette ignited the pool of gasoline and engulfed the whole place in flames.

As we sped down the road I exclaimed “Thank you so much sir! They call me Raymond, Ray for short” The man said “Much obliged partner, I’m Bill” As I began to talk to Bill more I found out he was a Cop and where he was from, which didn’t do me no good since I didn’t know anything about this place.” And that’s partly how I met Bill. Cal seemed shocked; he didn’t say a word until a few minutes later. Cal began to ask “The Service Station that had exploded? On county road 5000 west? I replied “Yeah, that was it” Cal started to say something but then Bill had walked back from inside the gas station and popped open the door to the old truck and said “Well guys, I suggest we head back out to my place for the night and we’ll answer these loose ends in the morning” I agreed and so did Cal as Bill fired the engine up and shifted the truck into gear then pulled away. I only had been to Bill’s place one other time and that was the day we met, since my car was basically totaled and I was a long way from where I was headin’ he offered to let me stay there for the night. This time I’m not sure why he wanted me over at his place, maybe it had something to do with this crime gang or possibly Cal.

Bill lived in an old 1970 Airstream trailer near a old barn that looked to be un-useable, he never said what was in the barn nor did I ever ask. Bill swung the truck around and parked it by the rear bumper of the old Airstream camper. We slid out of the truck and made our way to the faded door of the camper to get some rest for the night. When I stepped into the camper I was greeted by Bill’s dog Joey, there was a story on Joey as well as almost anything Bill did or had. I was told about Joey shortly after I had met Bill, we were on our way to check out

abandoned farm house that a murderer was supposedly hiding out at. It was about a hour drive from Daxton when I asked “Do you like dogs Bill?” and Bill replied “Yes sir, I got a huntin’ dog named Joey” I had went on and said “When did you get him, he wasn’t there a few years back when you took me back to your place after that gas station deal”

Bill then began to explain “I was outside my trailer that night sitting in a lawn chair when I heard this noise from behind the ol’ barn near my place, I set down my beer and grabbed the shotgun and the flashlight from my truck an went to check it out. I walked around the side of the barn, come to my surprise nothing was there. I was pondered over that, I swore I heard something from back there. I started back to my place and then I heard it again. It sounded like a faded cry or yelps of some sort, I walked back to the back of the barn and scoped out the area. Not much back there except for the old Farmall tractor that has been broken down for years in that field, I thought to myself it could have been coming from that tractor.

I walked back by the rusting and decaying tractor and out of nowhere I see a litter of about 5 puppies right near the back wheel. I never was one for animal neglect or abuse so I went back to my trailer and grabbed a small cardboard box and walked back to pick up the puppies and take them back to my place.” I interrupted Bill and asked “What happened to the other 4 puppies” Bill said “I’m getting there son, cool it down.” Bill continued “Anyways, I was unsure of what to do with the puppies I was thinking over whether to keep one or not. Since it was late that night I decided I’d drive them into town that following morning and take them to my good buddy Rhett.

Rhett was a man I had known ever since I was in high school, he owned a farm right off the main road of town. He always loved havin' animals around ever since his wife passed away a few years back. So, that morning I drove to Rhett's place to talk to him about the pups. He was always up tendin' to the horses around 6am so I swung by there and yelled "Hey there Rhett!" from behind the fence separating his property and the road. He knew it was me without even turnin' his head, he let out a "Howdy there Billy, what brings you by my place?" I walked over to the gate as I said "Well buddy, last night I done found some pups out behind the barn" Rhett replied "Well! How about that, how many are there?" I told Rhett there was five young pups, I had no idea what breed they were as I lead Rhett to my truck to show him the pups.

I asked Rhett "Would you mind takin' em' off my hands ol' pal?" It didn't take long for Rhett to reply "Sure buddy! I could always use more friends round' here, but don't ya'll just want to take one of em' for your own? It wouldn't feel right takin' them all from ya son!" I said with a grin, "Sure why not, I'll take one" and that there is how I ended up with Joey" I remembered that as I was sitting on the couch petting Joey thinking to myself. Then Bill said "There is a recliner in the back there and there is a couch right where you are sittin' Ray" Cal didn't have much choice other than to sleep on the recliner since I was already parked on the couch.

Bill called Joey's name and went outside, the door slammed shut as I stretched back on the couch. It was bothering me after about forty minutes that Bill didn't return back to the camper with Joey, Cal was over on the recliner snoring as I quietly got up to peer out the window. I looked out the side window of the camper and saw the light from the old barn shine

into the dark night and reflect of the bumper of the truck. I couldn't help to wonder what was he doing in that barn, I decided to go outside and check it out in a few hours thinking Bill may be asleep. A few hours passed and I got up to check the window again, a light still shined from the cracked door on the barn but I decided to go check it out.

Cal was still snoring as I slowly moved across the creaking floor, popped open the metal door and stepped onto the ground and made my way to the barn. I walked to the front doors and attempted to peek through the cracked door on the left. I took my hand and pulled open the door enough to take a look inside. The barn looked as it was bigger from the inside than the outside, I was full of tools, other large equipment and power tools. But one thing that caught my eye was a blue and red tarp over something I couldn't tell what it was.

I saw Bill in the corner asleep on a bale of hay propped up against the wall of the barn holding an empty can with his hat tipped down over his eyes, and Joey was asleep right next to him. I made my way inside to peek under the worn red and blue tarp but all of the sudden, the can in Bill's hand fell and made a clash on the toolbox right near him. Joey heard it and started to bark, I backed away quickly before Bill woke up and caught me sneaking around his place without permission. I walked quickly back to the trailer, popped open that creaky metal door and took a seat back on the couch.

It was a while before I actually fell asleep on that couch, but before I knew it, it was morning and Bill came in to make coffee. Bill always had to have a cup or two of coffee every morning, I'd also take a cup, and Cal didn't seem to want any though. Bill gave us both a short briefing on what the plans were for the day, Bill said we had to head down to headquarters to

tell the chief what happened since their CB radio signal was down the day before. We all got back in Bill's truck and headed into town to report back to the chief since it was too late last night to talk with him.

Bill fired up his old Chevrolet as Cal slid down to the middle of the bench seat and I went in after him. Times like this I wish Bill would have taken the company car they offered him. On the way there I had brought up the question "What do you think they will do with Cal?" Bill replied with "I ain't sure" when all along he really did know, I think he refrained from saying a thing so Cal didn't flip on us.

We arrived at the headquarters where me and Bill work, or "work for" I guess I should say. Since Bill had a good friendly relationship with Chief Worley It didn't take much for us to talk with him right on the spot. Bill had went on about how the simple follow up on the property that we were ordered to check out had turned into something more, He then went to explain how Cal ended up with us. The Chief seemed a bit pondered by all of this, he didn't say much until the end of Bill's explanation.

The Chief began to say " Well just until we know what all this mess is about, we'll have to take Cal into custody and have him stay in the cell for a few nights until we get some answers here." Bill stressed to Chief Worley that if anything happened to Cal, we may lose valuable information on this case. Worley agreed that Cal would be safely guarded until further notice, Cal didn't seem to bothered by this either because from what I was told he may be murdered by his past "employers" if he was captured by them. Bill informed Chief Worley about the car

accident off of county road 116 not too far out of Daxton. Chief Worley then told Bill to lead medical personnel and a tow truck out to where it was.

Bill and I had some new orders built off of old ones, as soon as we left the office Bill told me “Right after we lead that there service truck and ambulance to the wreck, we are goin’ to check out that double wide camper where them there criminals were.” We met up with the driver of the ambulance and the tow truck before we headed out, Bill was sure to explain to them; “Make sure you remember how to get back.” We then headed out, a small convoy of a 66’ Chevrolet, an old beat up Ford tow truck and the brand new ambulance that the town had recently purchased with the money the town had received from the grant they had gotten for new equipment. If anything, I was happy Cal was gone just because there was more room in Bill’s truck.

Bill switched on the radio, always set on the same station and always on the same volume. I bet it hasn’t been changed since Bill got that truck, Bill has had that truck since I knew him. I remember him telling me the story not to long after we met on how he ended up with that truck. I had first heard Bill’s story on his truck on our way back from a incident at the County Fair, I had asked him “Have you seen the new 77’ Corvette?” Bill replied with “Yes sir, looks mighty sharp. I always liked the feel of a truck though, nothin’ beats a cold beer, a country song and a good truck” then I asked “What made you get this truck?” Bill then began to explain “Well, I used to drive a 1967 Chevy Camaro SS back in 75’. Boy, I loved car, It was my pop’s he bought it brand new and handed it down to me when my mams said he didn’t need a fast car like that no more and he shouldn’t even be drivin’ at his age.”

Bill continued; “He didn’t want to drive nothin’ but that car for a while, he always took good care of that car it looked like it rolled right off the assembly line it was flawless. We would work on it together almost every weekend adding upgrades and tuning it up, I learned a lot about and from pop when I hung around him. He had always seen my interest in that car one morning when I was going to drive to work, I saw that 67’ Chevy in the spot of the car the department had given me. There was a note taped to the door handle with the keys stuck to it, it read “Son, I know this will mean as much to you as it did me.” I took the note, folded it and put it in the glove box.

Stepping inside that car and sitting on the leather brought back memories, the biggest one is the day me and my pop went to go get her. I fired her up, not knowing at the time pop was looking through the window, as I pulled down his long drive I looked in the rear view and saw him standing on the porch. Not too long after I got a call on the CB that there was a shootout with some bandits out by the side of a highway, I knew that the fellow officers need assistance quickly so I stretched that Camaro as fast as she could go down those old back roads. I started to slow down once I saw the flashing light on top of one of my buddy’s Impala, I pulled in behind it unsure of where the gunmen were.

I jumped out of the Camaro with my gun drawn and proceeded to walk toward this abandon farm house. I then saw my buddy behind a rusted out tractor he said “Billy, glad you got here we got two bandits in that farm house with a hostage, are they sending backup?” I told him “Yeah, they called in backup, they will be here soon.” The two men inside began firing shots at the rusted tractor near the side of the house, then one came sprinting outside to his

vehicle he drove in the ditch when getting there. The two lane highway we were near wasn't as empty as most others, this had light traffic at this time of day. The other bandit ran outside with a gun held to the side of the hostage as they ran back to their car, me and my buddy couldn't fire at them with the hostage in their hands so we put our weapons away and attempted one at a time to walk to the cars to call for backup again before these guys get away.

Unfortunately, we were too late. The bandits started to peel out from the ditch but little did they know an eighteen wheeler was hurling toward them around 65 miles an hour as they swung out into the middle of the road. I couldn't do anything but watch as the eighteen wheeler slammed into the bandit's car and sent it spinning into the Impala and my Camaro as the truck literally went jackknifed and flung into both my car and my buddy's impala right after the bandit's car did. The eighteen wheeler had a flatbed trailer stacked with steel girders, the trailer was nearly tipped sideways in the ditch disconnected from the cab.

My buddy and I ran to the wreck to check on the car driven by the two bandits to see if anyone survived. Right as we walked toward the overturned car there was a explosion, the truck cab had blown up. My Camaro and my buddy's Impala were nearly on fire as the diesel fuel leaked out from the huge tank on the exploded truck and the vapors slowly burned. My buddy ran to the flame engulfed semi-tractor truck to see if the driver was either alive or had escaped as I went to the overturned car to see if they were alright. The men in the car even the hostage were all dead, this had been one of the worst automobile accidents I had witnessed. I saw the fuel from my buddy's Impala leaking out of the tank dripping closer and closer to

inflamed diesel fuel spilt all over the side of the road. I ran over to pull him out near that car before it burst or exploded into a fireball.

My buddy was lucky that day, I yanked him out of there before his whole body caught fire, only his leg was severely burnt. I pulled him to safety as all we could do was sit and watch as the fire spread from car to car, hopefully that call I made for backup would send em' quick. Since everyone that could be rescued was rescued, I couldn't help but watch my pop's Camaro that he had given to me slowly burn. The whole driver's side was pushed in, the front end was totaled from the semi-tractor truck plowing into it. It was terrible seeing this happen to the car he had put so much time and care into, I couldn't do a thing to save it either. All I could do is wait for the emergency vehicles.

It was around 15 minutes after the accident and the fire had spread and gained a bit larger, me and my buddy were sitting by an old fence as the fire trucks finally arrived. I ran over to them to report on what happened, they put the fire out pretty quickly. As I saw the flames smothered by the water over the Camaro, I was in great denial from the damage done to the car. I know my pop would be destroyed by this. There wasn't much left of the cars, lucky for me the Camaro was probably the most in-tact one there.

The fire had been put out, and a tow truck arrived, not sure why because none of these cars could roll very far or even at all. A large flatbed truck arrived to pick up the cars and the big semi-tractor truck. They must have had two fire trucks, three flatbed trucks and like five squad cars all lined up on the opposite side of the road not to mention the emergency response Suburbans and Yukons that blocked the road. They wanted to take my Camaro to the junkyard

due to the condition, I demanded that they take it to my home and sure enough they did. I didn't have enough money after that to fix the Camaro, barely enough money to buy the truck I have now.

Telling pop was the hardest thing I ever had to do, he didn't say a word. I couldn't stop what happened to that car, and he knew that. I think he assumed the car was done for, he didn't know I saved it from the junkyard. After then, I decided to devote a good portion of my life into fixing that car. I wanted to give pop something before his time ran out, he was already 68 years old at the time. I saw the truck that I own right now in the front yard of my pal Rhett's house he was selling it since he recently bought a newer one. The truck wasn't top notch, it was more of a plain-jane 68' Chevrolet half-ton stepside but it was in good shape. Bought her for 4 grand, Rhett gave me a bit of a discount since he heard what happened to the Camaro. That's basically how I got a hold of the truck"

That's how Bill ended his story, I always noticed with Bill's stories they are always long and they seem to have a great impact on his life. Knowing about how Bill got his truck really told a lot about him. It was only 2 years ago all this happened, it was awful close to when I met Bill. I remembered most of that story like he told it yesterday.

We were nearly to the wreck of the Ford Bronco, The emergency vehicle and the tow truck still following us as we bended around the old gravel roads. Then Bill said "Remember buddy, were goin' to lead these folks to the wreck and then head out to the old double-wide trailer we done met Cal at" I shook my head in agreement as we pulled up on the scene of the wreck.

The Bronco was still tipped on its side like it was the day before, but Bill noticed something he said “Look Ray, the driver’s side door is pried open” at first I thought It was from Cal escaping the Bronco but I remembered Cal escaped from the window. I hadn’t noticed until Bill had said this, as I looked closer I saw that the two men were gone from the inside of the Ford.

I had no clue what had happened to them, they were dead when Cal crawled from the wreckage. “The only thing that could have happened was someone came to get them” said Bill, I added “But how would they know where these guys were? I’d be near impossible, there are mixtures of many back roads around here they’d get lost on” Bill then said “Well if these guys are as profound and as advanced as Cal claimed then they probably had some tracking device or somethin’ on that truck.”

I doubted that they had a device on the truck to track it but Bill saw a flashing light from the center counsel, it was some box with a few lights on it. Due to its placement we knew it was put there by the same people that retrieved the two bodies from the Ford. Then I heard Bill say “Why would they leave this unless they wanted us to track them down?” I replied with “Maybe they do want us to find them”

Bill and I stood next to the wreck in blatant and utter confusion as the tow truck backed up to tip the overturned Ford back upright. As Bill walked back to his truck, he said, “Alright let’s go check out that trailer.” I followed him thinking about this whole mess we have been involved in since yesterday.

Bill fired up the truck and we sped off due north toward the old double-wide trailer we ran into Cal in. On the way there, there was dead silence. Bill hadn't even turned on the radio like he normally does, I could only hear the rumble of the engine as we tore down that old highway. I looked over to Bill, his eyes were focused straight on the road as I could see the reflection of the faded white lines passing through his dark glasses.

Bill had somehow remembered the exact location of this place even with all the twists and turns in the road, if I was dropped off out here without Bill I'd be screwed for sure. I asked Bill how far he thought we were from the trailer he began to speak but then we saw this dark black smoke rise above the trees coming from the right side of the road. Bill pinned down the accelerator in rush to see what was burning, we could smell the smoke as we drove up on the inflamed double-wide trailer. Not a soul was around, the trailer was just burning.

We pulled in front of the burring trailer as we ran out of the truck to see what had happened. Even the shed in the back that was a good twenty feet from the trailer was burning. "This couldn't have been an accident" said Bill as he pulled off his dark sun glasses to scope out the fire. We stood there, once again in confusion on what was happening.

Chapter 2

The Mobile Home Inquisition

As I stood in front of the burning mobile home in complete and utter confusion, Bill walked back to the truck, sat down in the driver's seat and grabbed the CB radio. I overheard him call the fire in to headquarters as I stood there in front of the truck looking at the fire.

It was probably around a half a hour before the emergency response team showed up to put out the fire which never seemed to die out. There was barely anything left by the time the fire trucks pulled up to the mobile home to put out the blaze. Bill was leaning on the rear of the truck with a lit cigarette in his mouth as the fire was extinguished by the firefighters. Not really sure why he wasn't saying anything, I had a feeling he was up to some kind of thinking over there all alone.

The fire was finally put out after nearly an hour and twenty minutes, I didn't even think something could burn for that long and the even bigger question was; "How did that fire start". There was nobody around when we pulled up and there were no fresh tire tracks, but that doesn't mean someone wasn't there. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Bill walk over by the side of the burnt structure out to the back forty behind the old shed. He must have seen something, I walked quickly to catch up with him as he walked straight toward the old fence that separated the property and this large empty grass field. Now I saw what he saw, the long thick grass was all matted down in one area.

“Well that’s mighty interestin” said Bill as he passed around it a few times. This matted down grass area was not very close to the building or any of the trees, and it would be near impossible for a vehicle of any kind to make it out in the field this far without leaving tracks. Bill told me to grab the tape measure and the notebook from the truck, I sprinted to the truck and went to do as he said. I returned back to Bill standing in the middle of the circle as he told me to hand him one end and hold it to the edge of the circle. The measure was 25ft long, and that’s exactly how large the circle was. We walked around with the measure it and sure enough it was a perfect circle, all the grass was matted down right in that area, nowhere else.

I handed the notebook and ball point pen to Bill as he mumbled “25ft diameter” to himself, We both made our way to the truck when he said “Helicopter” nothing else, he just said “Helicopter”. I replied with a “What was that?” Bill then said “It had to be a helicopter, notice the circle is far enough out from the trees for a helicopter to make a landing and the pilot could easily walk to the house and light it on fire.” Bill made a good point, he was onto something here.

On the walk back to the truck I had noticed something I didn’t the first time I ran back, two steel burnt gas cans tossed aside by this small trench out back by the shed. Someone had to have flown down in a helicopter and torched the whole place evenly with these 5 gallon gas cans to start the fire. Bill and I both grabbed one of the 5 gallon gas containers as evidence, and to prove our theory.

Since the fire was out, the only thing that was really not utterly destroyed was the small shed in the back of the property. I decided to go check it out while Bill tossed the gas cans in the back of the truck. As I walked over to the shed I saw something in the corner hanging from the side, I walked closer to see what it was. The closer I got I noticed it was a person, barely anything left of the body but it was a person. It looked as the body was chained up to the wooden frame of the shed with some chain and a paddle lock. I called Bill over and told him to hurry, Bill ran over without even questioning me. He stopped right next to me and pulled off his dark sunglasses and saw the body in the remains of the shed. "I wonder how long this guy was in here" said Bill. I replied with "I have no idea, He could have been in here the first time we were here and we wouldn't have known." I asked Bill if I should call this in on the CB, and he said "No, I'll do this one buddy" as we both walked back to the truck.

As Bill radioed the station about the body and the gasoline containers, I was thinking to myself this may be something more than a little set of crimes but there was hardly any proof this was linked to something bigger. I heard Bill on the radio tell the station we had a 187 and a 451 at an old mobile home on East 3000 road. It was getting pretty dark out that day, they told Bill to stay put until officer arrived to take a look. I waited in the cab of the truck listening to the radio as Bill was leaning on the rear bumper smoking a cigarette.

Bill was one of those guys who didn't say much unless asked, he normally kept to himself. He wouldn't say much or even create small talk normally. But for some reason he walked along the side of the truck and popped open that old door and slid in the cab of the truck. I thought we were going to head out but he just sat there with his left arm on the door

and his right hand on the wheel. It looked like he was going to say something but then the CB blurted out “Breaker, Breaker this is unit 24, we are pulling up the drive now, over.” Bill replied to them with “That’s a big 10-4 unit 24, we are currently standing by, over.”

The police unit pulled up the drive right in front of us and Bill and I got out letting him know what happened. The officer stepped out of the car as Bill said “Howdy sir, how is it going?” The officer then said “I can’t complain, how about you?” Bill told him, “I’m doin’ good, we got us a dead body out back here though” The officer said “Yeah, I heard. We got a medic on the way to, Chief Worley told me to take your spot so ya’ll can head back home” Bill told him “Alright, If you need anything though, give me a shout out on the CB, you hear? The officer agreed as he walked back to his patrol car as Bill made his way back to the truck.

I followed Bill to the truck as he fired it up and dropped it in gear. Bill gave the officer waiting in the police cruiser a small wave by extending his hand high enough above the dash for him to see it. We then took off down the dirt driveway back to town. About 5 minutes down the road back to town I hear this rumble coming from either above of or to the side of the truck, in curiosity, I rolled down the window and looked up and around. I could still hear it pretty well but I could see nothing, Bill could even hear it too.

Shortly after hearing the noise for a steady minute or so, it grew louder and then we both saw it. A helicopter flew right over the truck heading due east right where we just came from. Bill was going about 55 miles an hour, and that helicopter passed us pretty quickly. Bill

said “I bet that’s the helicopter that landed in that field to torch the mobile home, I bet they were listening in on our CB channel.”

Bill whipped the truck around and sped off after the helicopter, we could barely see it since it made so much headway. Bill stretched that truck as far as it could go, he was nearly up to 100 miles an hour, and the truck was shaking hard as he nearly missed the driveway to the mobile home. He drifted right into the dirt driveway and took off down it, we couldn’t see the helicopter anymore but I could still faintly hear it over the sound of the roaring engine. Bill hit the brakes hard as he pulled right in front of the remains of the mobile home, Bill left the truck running as we both got out with our guns drawn and ran over to where the squad car was.

I could see the helicopter in the field still running and a dark figure running back to it, the squad car was pumped with bullets and the officer was dead. The man turned around at us and fired, the gun he had was an automatic machine gun, Bill and I dived behind the squad car as he shot rapidly at us. Bill stuck his gun out above the trunk of the car and took shots at the helicopter engine, the man must have been out of bullets because he jumped back in the helicopter and attempted to get away. Bill and I sprinted back to the truck as he drove straight for the helicopter, the helicopter was about to get away. I thought he was gone but Bill nailed it in four wheel drive and took off after the helicopter driving through the field in the truck.

The helicopter was smoking a bit from the engine, Bill must have hit it when he fired a few shots. I wasn’t nearly going as fast as before, nor was it as high in the sky as before. We were tearing through the field in that old truck just about keeping up with the helicopter, I

asked Bill “Should I call for backup on the radio” he said with a loud voice “No! If we do that, we’ll risk being targeted again. We got to try to take this guy down.” Bill told me to grab the shotgun hanging on the gun rack above the rear window and take some shots at his rotors or get a shot on the engine.

I grabbed the gun, took the box of bullets from the glove box and loaded it up as Bill flipped on the overhead lights on the rack above the truck to get a better look at the helicopter. I rolled down the window and took aim at the helicopter, I fired a shot right in the rear tailfin. It shook a bit but it wasn’t going down, my only chance was to damage the rotors. I reloaded the shotgun again to take another shot at the rotor, once again the shot was off the terrain was too bumpy to get a steady shot at it.

We cut through field after field busting through small fences separating the farmlands, lucky for us the helicopter couldn’t get high enough due to the damaged engine to rise above the trees and get away. Bill had another idea, “I got a winch on the front of this truck, and we could try to attach it to one of the skid plates mounted under the helicopter. We’d have to get under it and one of us would have to get in the back of the truck with the winch all the way unwound and attempt to latch it on” I asked “How would we get the winch out though?” Bill then said “Well I got that bumper bar thing on the front of the truck, I could jump out on the hood and pull it out, and you’d just have to release the winch when I tell you. We got plenty of farmland here to run through, with trees on both sides no way is he going anywhere else”

We were running about 55 miles an hour through those fields and it was just about right up with the helicopter. Bill said "If we're going to do this, we got to do it now. I ain't going to let this guy go, he killed one of our men for sure, probably more" I told Bill; "Alright lets go for it" He told me to grab the wheel and scoot over to take control of the pedals as well, he swung open the door and grabbed on to the top rack on the truck and jumped in the back, I tried to hold it steady for him as he climbed out over the hood. Bill was just about to the front of the truck and he had grabbed onto the chrome bumper that covered the front end of the truck.

All of the sudden, the pilot of the helicopter whipped open the door on the helicopter and fired shots at us with a small handgun. I yelled at Bill; "Should I fall back?" he yelled "No! Keep on drivin'! Ignore the gun." When he said that I was thinking "How can I possibly ignore a gun? It's a gun!" But I did what Bill told me to and I pressed on and kept up with that helicopter.

Bill had the hook of the winch in his hand, I could tell by the hand signal he gave me which was a big thumbs up. I released the winch and bill climbed back over the hood with it, and grabbed back on to the rack on the top of the truck. All this happened very quickly, I couldn't believe Bill made it back with the winch that quickly. The next order from Bill was to catch up with the helicopter and get right underneath it.

The helicopter was losing altitude once again, but this time the pilot started to swerve back and forth in the air to lose us. Bill jumped up in the bed of the truck and held on to the rack as he held the winch above the cab. He didn't have many chances here since we were

running out of field, a small creek separated this field and the field next to it. It must have been where the helicopter was aiming to get rid of us.

Bill then kneeled on the top of the cab as I slowly merged in the line of the helicopter, I knew this pilot wasn't going to keep that machine straight, he's going to keep swerving on us. Bill then did exactly what I expected him to, he grabbed on the skidplate of the helicopter with the winch as I tried to keep the truck under the helicopter or that winch would rip right out of his hands. Bill was hanging from the skid plate as the helicopter severely tilted to the left as he attached the winch to the frame. We had nearly 500 feet of field in front of us before we hit the creek and Bill was still on the helicopter so I couldn't execute the plan. Then I heard a faint noise, it was Bill yelling at me, I couldn't quite hear what he was saying though but I had a feeling what he wanted me to do.

I threw the brakes on the truck and the helicopter swung right around the front of the truck like a little toy, right when it got low enough on the front when it swung around, Bill jumped off as I threw it in reverse and sent the helicopter spiraling into a violent tailspin. The winch had either broken off or fell off when it twisted around like that, but it was for sure going down this time. The helicopter went hard right and crashed in the field, I whipped the truck around to pick up Bill who had jumped off about 30 feet from where the truck was stopped.

Bill got in the passenger side and said "That's what I'd thought you'd do, great work" as he laughed a little bit. I could tell he was happy to have pulled this off, mostly because he never sat in the passenger seat and I think he thought allowing me to drive was a sign of gratitude.

We drove down to where the helicopter had crashed, since the crash was at such a low speed the wreck wasn't near as bad as anticipated.

Bill and I got out with our weapons drawn as we walked toward the small wrecked helicopter, the pilot looked to be unconscious as Bill opened the door to drag him out. But then, he came alive and pulled the handgun out of his back pocket and fired at least three shots at Bill as he ran to Bill's truck. I took off running after him and returned fire at him as he ducked behind the truck and crawled to the driver's side. Bill ran over with blood streaming from his leg, he was shot but he didn't seem to mind since all said was "We got to get that fool away from my truck."

The helicopter pilot had now become a truck thief as he got in the truck and fired it up, Bill ran toward it as fast as he could as the truck pulled away. Bill was directly behind it chasing it in the field as the truck headed for the wooded area to the left. I took off after him but I was making no progress on catching up with the truck, I saw Bill get a hand on the tailgate as grabbed onto it and tried to pull himself up and into the bed of the truck. I was still running to keep up with them the best I could as Bill nearly got a foot on the bumper and made his way onboard.

Bill had made it in the back of the truck as it sped down the small dirt road alongside the field, I sprinted the fastest I could to at least keep a good vision on the truck. It was easy to see it in the night due to all the lights Bill had on it. Bill swung through the window of the cab of the

truck and it looked like he kicked the man in the face. The truck jerked and rolled to a halt, The driver's side door opened and Bill tossed the man out and nailed him in the face with his fist.

I had caught up and reached the stopped truck, the pilot and Bill were in a fist fight next to the truck. The pilot pulled the gun on Bill again but Bill grabbed his arm and twisted it backwards and threw the man's head against the back of the truck. "Nobody steals my truck" said Bill as the man laid there on the ground. Bill limped over to the driver's door unaware of the man crawling to grab the gun, the man had the gun in his hand and had it pointed at Bill's back. I drew my gun as quick as I could and fired a shot right into the back of his head.

Bill turned around in confusion as he looked down and saw the man dead, lying there with the gun in his hand. "I got your back, Bill" I said as I said "Maybe I should drive?" Bill said "No, no I can drive. It's just a flesh wound" I asked "Maybe we should take this guy's body back to the station?" Bill said "yeah, go throw him in the back of the truck I guess, and then cover the body with that tarp under the seat there." I did what Bill said and got back in the truck and we headed to the side road as Bill retracted the winch back into the front of the truck.

We took off down the dirt side road next to the field back toward the main road, I assumed we'd be going back into town, but Bill didn't really say or not. It was nearly midnight after all this was over and we were on the road back to town, Bill said "We have to talk to Chief Worley tonight, we got a unidentified body in that shed, a dead officer and not to mention a crashed aircraft that is also unidentified. Talk about a heap of trouble, because we'll be in one."

Bill called the station on the CB to tell Chief Worley we were going to drop by his house, he said multiple times in the call; “it is important.” So we burned down highway 116 which leads right into highway 34 which ran northbound and southbound. Chief Sam Worley lived in the second largest house in town, which really wasn’t saying much due to fact that most of the other houses in town either had wheels still attached or they had a rusted car in their yard.

Mr. Worley’s house was prominently placed on a small hill near the river which was west of the main part of Daxton. Sam Worley served in the military before he became a police officer, he was one of the few men Bill trusted and respected. It seemed noticeable that Worley knew Bill long before he was Chief of Police, but Bill never specified on that or not and I just never asked.

We finally arrived at Chief Worley’s house, as we got out of the truck Bill said to me “No need to speak, I’ll handle this buddy.” So I basically stood by Bill and nodded my head as Bill told a very tired Chief Worley what happened out on that country road not too long ago. Bill then told him about the officer who had been killed by the helicopter pilot that we stopped from escaping.

Worley was in shock by all these crimes and disturbances in the last few days, he was at a loss for words, the only thing Worley could even say at that time was; “Well, what’s your next course of action?” Bill replied; “Sir, that’s why we came to you. I don’t want to risk lives of any more officers on this situation where we don’t even know what is going on.” Worley agreed with that, but we were stuck at a standstill in this whole mess. There was barely anything left to

link anything to anyone, the only one left was Cal. The group of criminals who set this all up cleaned up basically everything that they made a mess of, or we killed one of their men.

Bill had asked Worley if anyone was down at the morgue so we could get this body out of the back of his truck, Worley said "I'll give someone a call and have em' head over there for ya'll" Bill then said, "Sam, we got to talk to Cal tomorrow morning" Worley shook his head and said "I'll see you guys tomorrow, don't get your heads wrapped around all this too much, you hear?" Bill and I both nodded and walked back to the truck, Bill said "I sure hope he remembers to call someone into the morgue, or we'll have this body in my truck for nearly twelve hours."

Bill and I made our way back into town to deliver the body to the morgue, It wasn't that far from Worley's place but it was a solid five or eight minutes away. Bill brought up that we needed to talk to Cal tomorrow in order to get some more information since all the evidence we had, was either destroyed or the person was killed.

In Daxton, we didn't have a hospital, It was just basically a little building owned by a man by the name of "Dr." Frank Reston. We all knew Frank never went to medical school, but if someone was hurt bad enough or sick enough, they wouldn't think twice of driving into the city to get medical attention, so they just went to Frank.

Next to Frank's Doctor's office, there was the "Daxton County Morgue" which believe it or not, it used to be an old bakery. The original morgue was connected to the police station, but in 1952 the police station caught fire and they didn't have enough money to build new buildings for the police station or the morgue so they renovated existing buildings to the correct

specifications. From what I heard, the current police station was a old firehouse, pretty ironic if you ask me.

Bill's old friend Dave ran the morgue, Dave used to be a police officer but in his old age and after being shot five times in numerous places on his body he decided to settle down with a more "relaxed" job.

Dave was standing outside the morgue when Bill and I pulled up, he had a cup of coffee in his right hand and a large key ring in the other. Bill swung around and pulled alongside the building, threw the truck in park, and shut the engine down. We both stepped out of the cab greeting Dave with a simple "Howdy Dave". Dave seemed to be a bit tired because It took him a few seconds to realize we were even standing in front of him. Dave finally came around and said "Oh, Hello there Bill, hello to you too Ray, I was told ya'll have a dead body for me to take off your hands?" Bill said "Yes sir, this fellow nearly killed me, good thing Ray was around or I would have been done for".

"Wow, glad to see you are both alright though, does this man have something to do with the strange crimes lately?" said Dave. I said "Yeah, we think he was also working for this group, we don't know who they are or what they are up to yet but we are going to find out more tomorrow."

Dave shook his head in comply with what I had told him and he said "Well, let's get this body inside so we can all head home and get some rest." Bill walked from the side of the truck to pop open the tailgate to pull the body out of the bed of the old stepside Chevrolet. We drug

the body from the back of the truck and carried him inside to the examination room in the morgue, it wasn't hard to find the examination room since the place wasn't that big in the first place.

Dave followed us out back to the truck and locked up the doors behind us, It was around 1am now after all this had been taken care of, I jumped in the passenger side of the truck and waited for Bill as he pulled out a cigarette and lit it out by the hood of the truck. I saw Dave walk to his blue 66' Impala from the reflection out of the rearview mirror. After Bill finished his cigarette he walked to the door and pulled it open got in the truck sat down and fired it up, we swung out of the parking lot and headed down the main drag of town.

I lived not too far of the main drag that ran straight through town. It was the 3rd house down on the 1st side road that ran east, that road then lead to a four way stop and continued onto the next street. I had bought a house in Daxton not too long after Bill saved my life from the gas station robbery, ever since then I had wanted to become something more than the guy who just sat by waiting for someone to save me, I wanted to become something more. After the night Bill saved me, we became good friends and Bill had offered me a job two days after we met.

Bill pulled the truck in my driveway and said "Stop by the station tomorrow at noon and we'll talk to Cal, alright buddy?" I replied with "You got it Bill, see ya later buddy!" I walked up my driveway as Bill swung his truck back out in the street and headed down back the way he came.

My house wasn't much, just a two bedroom, one bathroom ranch style home with a detached garage out back. I had basement, but rarely went down there, the previous owners of the house had left a bunch of stuff in the basement of the house and I never bothered to clean it out. I had a 1972 GMC pickup sitting out in front of my garage, I bought it brand new about 2 weeks after I had bought the house, the insurance money from my car being destroyed had paid for most of it.

In the garage there were also many things the previous owners had not cleaned out, the story with the folks that had owned the house before me was that there was a elderly couple, they had built the house when they were married and never moved. Well, the elderly lady had passed away, leaving her husband devastated, he refused to do anything really, the car never left the garage, nothing was ever cleaned and the house was falling apart fast. Not too long after the man's wife had passed away, he himself had passed away from basically starving himself to death. He didn't feel a need to live after she had died.

They had no children, and the man's brother had been killed in WWII. So they had no contacts left, basically the house was up for sale dirt cheap so I chose it and just took some time to fix it up and clean it up. Bill had helped with most of the renovations and moving some new furniture in. I never had use for the basement or the garage since my truck wouldn't fit in the garage due to the height of the cab and I lacked in a sufficient amount of stuff to put in the basement.

I probably had been down in the basement twice since I lived in this house, I couldn't even get into the garage at first. We had to bust of the hinges on the side door to even get in since the lock was rusted and nearly unmovable. Me and Bill couldn't believe what we saw when we busted inside. The garage was packed with old tools, just the way he had left them if they were in use. But the main thing that caught my eye, was a 1957 Chevrolet Bel-Air two door coupe, it looked as it hadn't moved since he bought it, nothing but dust covered every inch of the car. It looked like the man spent his days here in the garage, I thought the 57' Chevy was stock, but then I saw an old engine sitting in the corner of the garage. That day, Bill had popped the hood on the old Chevy, the man had installed a 1969 ZL-1 427cu in 7.0L big block engine. Nobody was exactly sure when his wife had passed away, but they did know not many saw the man after she had passed on. He must have spent his days in the garage here working on that car. This house was full of stories, it was like a time machine looking in the garage, I just had to stick my head in the door again to take a look.

It was about 2am by the time I walked inside the house and sat down on the couch, nothing but the sound of the wind gently blowing on the metal flap covering the vent for the oven fan. I was slowly falling asleep on the couch that night, the constant soft bang of the vent flap creaking in and out painted a picture in my mind as I laid there. I thought about my old home town, about how different it was from Daxton. People weren't as friendly and not everyone knew everybody, this is one of the reasons I never went back. Plus, Bill was probably one of the nicest guys I had ever met, he went out of his way to save me, show me around, and even get me a job.

That next morning, I woke up around 9am just by my normal habit, I made some coffee and went out in my back yard to drink it. You could see the river from the deck in my backyard, mostly fisherman in this part of the river, but on the weekend afternoons there would be some ski nautiques and bayliners out pulling people on skis. There were only a select few in town with boats, especially a ski boat, there were only two or three in the county.

My job wasn't normally very demanding, not very often would Bill and I be near as busy as we have been in the past two days, going on three. We both could tell something was going on, something larger than what is being shown by the lack of evidence. But from what Bill told me, Worley just thinks all the crimes are a coincidence, and he was just as right as us because neither theory had enough proof to back the story up.

It was nearly 10am by the time I decided to head into town and get breakfast at Uncle Twister's. Uncle Twister's was one of the two restaurants Daxton had to offer, everyone in town normally went to Uncle T's on Saturday night but at this point in time, I didn't feel like cooking myself breakfast.

I grabbed the keys to my truck and headed out the side door on my house that lead right into the driveway, my GMC was pretty high off the ground, the guy I had bought it from basically used the truck as a toy so it stayed in great condition and nearly looked brand new when I bought it. It sits outside all the time, because even if my garage was cleaned out it was too high to fit in the door. It was painted up red and white with big off-road tires and a toolbox in the back of the 7 and ½ foot bed.

As soon as I climbed into the cab of the truck with my coffee in my hand I see Bill's truck come around the corner and pull straight in my driveway. I set my coffee down in the center counsel of my truck and jumped out to ask him what was going on.

I said "Hey Bill, I thought we were going to meet at the station around noon?" as I leaned against the side of his truck and looked at him through the open driver's side window. Bill pulled off his dark sunglasses and said "There was a break-in at the station this morning around 4am, the killed the night watchman and Cal." I was in shock, Cal was our only link to these guys and now they killed him off too. These guys won't stop or even think twice about killing someone off for the benefit of whatever their plan may be.

Bill also added; "Remember the other day when we were at that old property off of 3000 East? You know the mobile home?" I shook my head in agreement as he continued; "The dispatcher sent an ambulance for that dead body we found in the burnt shed and the officer who had been shot, but they never returned back. They called in on the CB when they picked the bodies up but sometime after they did, they disappeared."

From what I was hearing, it didn't seem like we were heading in the right direction with this crime, everyone that has been involved in attempting to solve it has been killed, even the fellow police officers who were just doing their jobs.

"So now we have a missing medical Personnel Vehicle?" I said to Bill. Bill answered my question with more bad news; "Not only do we have a missing ambulance, Mr. Worley found a letter stuck to the window of his car threatening to kill him or anyone involved if he does any

further investigation in these crimes.” Bill said as pulled his dark sunglasses back over his wrinkled eyes.

It looks like these guys want to hide something; they cover nearly every track they leave behind. Then Bill said; “It’s been Worley’s orders that we don’t make any more investigations until further notice, he wants to avoid any violence that could possibly occur toward our town. He told me and the rest of the guys to take a day off and we’ll get back to this mess on Monday.”

Worley was right; we didn’t want to endanger townspeople and since we really had nothing to go on, there wasn’t much anyone could do. As I leaned back from the window of Bill’s truck, Bill said; “Hey, how about me and you just head down to McCoy’s Tavern later today and get a beer? It’s been an interesting couple of days, I think a few drinks are in order.” I agreed, backed up from the side of his truck as he backed out of the driveway, tipped his hat and drove off.

Chapter 3

How we got to be this way

Shortly after Bill had left, I walked back over to my truck, climbed in and headed to Uncle T's Diner for my delayed breakfast. It wasn't much of a drive to get to Uncle T's Diner from my house, just a right, a left and another right and there I was.

I was surprised when I pulled up to the building that James "Gramps" Gordon's Coupe was still there, I knew he ate there every day at 10am but it was going on 10:30am now. James "Gramps" Gordon was the oldest man in town, one of the nicest guys around, when I moved in he was one of the first to come to my door and welcome me to town. His wife, Ethel "Grams" Gordon normally tagged around with him everywhere. They were the nicest couple, everyone thought of them as family, that's how they got their nicknames of Grams and Gramps.

I walked in the diner and peered across the center booth seating area only to see Gramps Gordon waving me down to take a seat with him and his wife. He must have seen me park my truck, which was very possible since there was a window right across of where they were seated. As I walked over to where they were seated, Gramps shouted out "Ray! Man, I haven't seen you in a while buddy! How have you been?" He then reached over and shook my hand with that same firm handshake that he had back when I met him.

"I'm doing pretty well Gramps, How are you and your lovely wife" I said as I turned to Ethel and sat down next to him on the old wooden booth seat. "It's been pretty good for myself I can say, Ethel won the Bingo tournament so she's pretty happy herself" Said Gramps.

Ethel jumped into the conversation and said; “I read in the newspaper about all those crimes lately, is all of it true? Are they really threatening that sweet old Mr. Worley?”

“I’m afraid so, Ethel. We are at a standstill now with the investigation, they really got us at a dead end” I said as they both looked at me a bit worried. “How’s your ol’ partner Bill doing?” said Gramps as he sipped on his coffee. “He’s doing well, all these crimes got him more uptight then usual though.” I said.

Gramps then flagged down a waitress to buy me a cup of coffee, even though I told him “I’m fine Gramps, you don’t need to buy me a cup of coffee” around five times. Being an persistent elderly gentlemen, he couldn’t help but go out of his way to be respectful and buy me coffee. As the minutes turned into around an hour sitting there talking with both of them, we touched every subject. I asked about his car, their home, and their farm even their cats. All was well with the Gordon’s, which was around the best news I had heard in the last 3 days.

Gramps’ car had always interested me; it was a real work of craftsmanship. It was a black 1941 Cadillac Coupe, always clean. I have not once have I seen that car dirty, even in the winter it was as clean as the day it rolled of the production line. The Gordon’s owned about eight acres of farmland due south of Daxton, many have offered to buy the land due to the couple’s old age but Gramps wouldn’t sell, he claimed he wouldn’t sell until he’s dead. The Gordon’s didn’t have any kids, or any living relatives left. Being alive the longest does have its pros and cons, one of the cons had to be watching everyone you knew die as you lived on.

It was around noon now, Gramps and Grams had been talking to me for nearly two hours. They had to get going now, Gramps had some work to do at the farm and Grams had to tend to the cats. "It was nice talking to you!" Gramps said as he got up from the booth and picked up Grams' purse as she got up as well. "Nice talking with you too. See you around you two!" I said. I tossed a few bucks on the table for a tip and followed the Gordons outside as they headed for their car.

I had parked my truck alongside Gramps' Cadillac so it wasn't a far walk, it was also very nice out. The sun had come around from behind the clouds since this morning, which had warmed up the air to a comfortable near 80 degree temperature. I jumped up in my truck as I heard gramps start his car, it fired right up like it always has. I waited for him to pull out so I could leave myself, I fired my truck up and flipped on the radio as I waited for Gramps to back out. I could only get three and sometimes four radio stations in my truck, all but one were country, the other was just a news and weather station that broadcasted on AM.

I was a bit of a fisherman and I couldn't resist using up some free time to fish, I planned to grab my fishing gear and head down to Beaver Creek to do some fishing for a bit. I saw Gramps finally pull out and slowly disappear down the road as he turned onto a side road that lead to his farmland. I then backed out in the opposite direction and took off toward my home to grab my fishing supplies.

I pulled into my driveway and left my truck running as I jumped out and walked swiftly to the garage to grab my tackle box and fishing rod which were right to the left of the door next

to the old metal trash can filled with rakes and other lawn care tools. I took them out to my truck, tossed the pole in the back of the truck and set the tackle box down on the floorboard of the passenger side. I also remembered to grab a cooler with a few cans of Coca-Cola in it from the refrigerator; as soon as I had everything I pulled out of the driveway and headed out toward Beaver Creek.

Beaver Creek was about a 15 minute drive, it ran directly off of the river and got smaller as it continued across the flatlands and separated many farmlands. I heard from many that the upper section of Beaver Creek was the best fishing spot in Daxton, I had been there many times and had pretty good luck considering I wasn't the best fisherman out there. The only way to get to the ideal fishing location on Beaver Creek was to take this thin dirt road down through a small valley which surrounded each side of the creek and was covered with many trees and other vegetation. I kept following that road until I reached the old wooden bridge, that's where the ideal fishing location was. Few knew of this spot, I was lucky enough to overhear a group of older fishermen talk about it at Uncle T's about 7 months ago, and that's where I went ever since.

When I got there, I backed my truck up to the side of the creek and put my tailgate down. I found that to be easier than bringing an old lawn chair to set down in the dirt. I left the back window of my truck open so I could hear the radio as I sat there waiting for a fish to bite on the line. I didn't really care if I caught a fish or not, I just found being out there relaxing and an escape to any worries I may have.

I popped the top of one of the Coke cans I had brought along with me, It had been around 20 minutes or so without a single tug on the line so I decided to lean back a little and just lay there for a while, I hadn't got much sleep the night prior to this day a nap was perfect. I laid there looking up into the trees across the small bridge; the truck was on a slight angle tilting toward the small trench near the creek. Past the trees, there was nothing but miles of farmland, I could see the rolling plains along the side disappear into flatness as I tried to follow it is as far as I could with my eyes.

It was quiet, other than the light sound of my radio playing; nothing else was making a noise. If I listened close enough I could hear the water flowing down the creek as my line blew gently in the wind. After a while, I felt myself slowly drifting to sleep, the wind was gradually blowing through the trees made it cool enough to tolerate the direct sun I was getting due to the lack of shade where I was.

Hours passed before I woke up, the day before must have tired me out good because it was near 4pm by the time I got up and looked at the clock on the dashboard of my truck. The sun was sinking lower in the sky and I had decided to pack it in and head home. I remembered I had to meet Bill at McCoy's tonight which was around a mile south out of Daxton on Highway 34. McCoy's was a Bar or tavern, some would call it a "Road house" some even call it a "Truck Stop" but never the less, it was a Bar. A lot of interesting people went to McCoy's, mostly you had cowboys, truckers, thirsty hitchhikers even some veterans and bikers. Each category of people basically had their own little section in McCoy's, if you were a trucker, you just didn't sit with the bikers and if you were a cowboy you didn't sit with the veterans.

Bill knew “Big” Earl McCoy as a very close friend; they basically grew up together and went through high school together until Earl dropped out to become a ramblin’ man and see the country. Bill once told me the story of Earl McCoy, I began to remember it on the drive home. I remember Bill telling the story; “Earl and I grew up as neighbors when we were children, my pop had lived in town at the time and not long after we moved there, a new house was being build alongside ours. Turns out, the owners of the property were the McCoy’s, the McCoy’s moved to Daxton from Fillmore, their old house had been flooded out due to the river overflowing, Plus Earl’s father had worked at the grain elevator which was closer to Daxton than Fillmore. Earl and I were about 15 years old at the time in the summer of 1946, my pop had a 1942 Chevrolet Pickup at the time. The McCoy’s had a 1938 Ford Sedan that Earl’s father drove to the grain elevator everyday at 6:30am.

My pop had always worked as a mechanic at George’s automotive shop until the day he retired, my pop and Earl’s father seemed to leave for work around the same time. I first met Earl while walking to school one day, Earl happened to leave the same time I did that day. We basically walked into each other right on the sidewalk in front of our homes; it didn’t take long for Earl and I to start talking. We held a conversation that whole walk to school, even throughout the day of school. Since it was only our freshman year of high school, I didn’t know much about what I wanted to do for a living but Earl sure did. Earl wanted to basically run away and travel all around, he wanted to pick up his guitar and just ramble on town to town. Earl was very talented on the guitar, he could even sing a bit as well. Earl just wanted to travel, play guitar and make a bit of money just that way.

Earl and I had been very good friends for the first two years of high school, but one day Earl didn't show up to school. Normally he'd skip a day or two but this went on for a week. Earl hadn't returned and his parents had no idea where he was, shortly after I found a note he had left stuck in the back of the mailbox. The note was wedged in there where it wouldn't have been grabbed unless you peered your head inside far enough to see it. Earl's parents were devastated when I showed them the note the note read "Billy, you have been a great friend, I hope to meet you again sometime in the future but now, I must do what I feel is right. I don't want to be stuck in this boring circle of a life any longer, I'm heading out west."

All Earl had for transportation was an old dirt bike his dad had bought him as a 16th birthday present. One day someone said they heard Earl's name come on the radio following a song, which was very surprising to everyone. Nobody was sure if it was the Earl we all knew or if it was some different guy. We hadn't seen Earl for nearly seven years, then later in the year of 1955, Earl showed up back in town driving a 1952 Ford F100 pickup. Nobody expected such success from Earl, but turns out he didn't go far west, he ended up in Nashville and in those seven years he became a hit with his music and song writing talent which explained the folks hearing him on the radio. Earl was the talk of the town for the next couple months after his return; many people envied and were jealous of Earl. Even one of the guys we had went to school with had smashed the windows on his truck out of jealousy and anger.

The only question I had was "Why would Earl return after such success?" Well, later that year he told me; "I wasn't built to live in a city like that, I may have been good at what I did but that wouldn't stop me from coming back here to everyone I knew, everyone I grew up with.

Around there, there are no true friends, friends are bought in a city like that, who am I to become part of that lifestyle.”

Earl had matured greatly over those seven years, he came back with more money that he could spend. Most of it he gave to his parents but the amount he kept either went into the bank or into his project. His project was to build a bar not too far out of Daxton, it was a dream of his to own such a place where people could congregate together and just have a good time. Earl waited a few years to start construction on such a place, and in the late fall of 1959 they finally broke ground.

Earl wanted a different style of building, He wanted something more than just a bar, he wanted a stage, with tables, booths, even have them serve food. The construction of the bar was put on hold nearly a year after it had started, the construction company Earl had working on the property lost a lot workers, most quit due to low pay. They wanted higher pay to work through the winter months but the company didn't have that kind of money to make it happen. The project sat for around a year and a half before Earl got a new construction company to continue working on the bar. The bar was finally finished in 1963, four years after they broke ground. Earl was just happy his dream was now started, he hoped to make this place the best bar for miles around and that's what he did.

The grand opening was a huge success; the bar was a hit for truckers, travelers and even local citizens due to the location almost directly in between the two towns. McCoy's bar was the talk of the town for the longest time, anyone who was anyone showed up at McCoy's on

Friday nights for karaoke sessions. McCoy's hasn't really slowed down since all the year it opened; people still go there as much as they ever did, after the years Earl didn't care about the money, he was making so much that he never had to worry."

That's the story Bill told me about Earl McCoy, much like any other story from Bill it always was about his past. I just pulled in the driveway of my home as I remembered that story, I just had to drop off my fishing pole and tackle box back in my garage then I'd head out for McCoy's since it was about 4:30pm I figured if Bill wasn't there I could shoot some billiards or something. I got back in my truck, threw it in reverse and headed back out. McCoy's was the right off Highway 34 about 8 or 11 miles down.

Being a Friday night, the road was a bit empty just a car or two went by on my trip to the bar. When I pulled in the parking lot it was packed as usual, many eighteen wheelers, pickups and even a motorhome or two. I parked to the left of the building near the other pickups, Bill's truck wasn't there yet, and he'd probably show up soon.

Right next to my truck was an older Dodge streetvan painted red with black and gray stripes along the hood and sides, it had a chrome rack on top and chrome tailpipe extensions coming out both sides, it also had chrome running boards and a body kit that made it look very sporty. The van had American racing "Torque Thrust" chrome rims too, the tires embroidered with raised white letters that spelled out "Goodyear". A CB Radio antenna stuck out high above the back of the van, a flat black wing stuck out above the top of the van, even the windows

were all tinted dark black. This van caught my attention, mostly because I had never seen it here before, or even around town. It had a Georgia state license plate that read “REDLINE”.

McCoy’s seemed a bit busier than usual when I walked in the front doors, the bar was packed with people and there were few places to even find a place to sit. Earl always had a live band playing on the stage in his bar, the band he usually playing called themselves the “Barn Burners”. They would normally play Country/Western or Bluegrass music, the highlight of the group was probably Wide-eyed Joe who played the fiddle better than anyone else I have heard play. Nobody knew where Wide-eyed Joe came from, not even the Gordons knew. The first time Joe was spotted around town was at the old rail yard playing his fiddle inside a boxcar, a conductor walked out from the locomotive engine to find Joe sawing away on his fiddle shortly after Joe started to become known around town from playing his fiddle at social events, bars and even a birthday party or two. He made quite a bit of money at his talent, but the nickname people around town gave him was what made him even more popular and known. They called him “Wide-eyed Joe” for no other reason than his eyes were wider apart than the mud tires on ol’ Jimmie Kayes’ Ford Bronco.

I started to make my way to the billiards tables over to the right of the bar, Earl McCoy’s office was in a loft overlooking the whole bar he must had saw me walking in and he met me as I walked over. Earl greeted me with a pat on the back and “Ray! Hey buddy how is it goin’ bud!” in a loud twang-y voice. I swung around to say hello and give him a firm handshake. Earl was a stocky man with a rough looking beard and dark brown hair, he always had on a black cowboy hat with black boots. Earl always had on the same belt, a dark brown belt with an old and worn

buckle loosely mounted on the belt. He told me once it was his great grandpop's belt which was from the early 1800's.

Earl was one of those guys who was pretty friendly, he greeted nearly everyone we walked by with a "How are you bud?" or a "Howdy Ma'am" as he tipped his hat to them. Earl held his arm around my neck as he walked me over to an open booth off to the side near the side windows. We sat down and talked a bit, I asked Earl how his business was going "Better than ever" he claimed, which I wouldn't doubt due to how many people were packing the bar tonight. Earl was the kind of guy who stayed at his bar as long as it was open; he'd manage the employees himself and take responsibility for anything that happened on his watch at the bar. There was few rules for the joint, but the most enforced one was; "If you're gonna fight, you best take it outside"

Time rolled on as Earl and I sat there chatting away, nearly 45 minutes had passed and still no sign of Bill which had me pondering on where he might be. Earl invited one of his old buddies over to sit and chat, his name was Burt. Burt was one of Earl's good friends that helped with the designing of the bar, he was a pretty old guy or at least looked like it. Burt had a dark gray mustache and sideburns, and he didn't have much hair. He didn't seem like he had much to say but he sure liked to drink, he'd pour beer after beer down his mouth as we sat there just rambling back and forth about anything that came to mind.

About an hour had passed and Bill still hadn't shown yet, I decided to take a walk outside and see if his truck was in the parking lot. The parking lot in McCoy's was all gravel on

the left side where I had parked my truck that red van once again caught my eye as I walked by it, the dome lights were on and the driver's side door was open. At first I didn't see anyone near it but as I walked around it closer to my truck I saw a lady standing on the running board bending over the driver's seat reaching into the center counsel. I walked on by to my truck which was parked right near the van, I leaned on the front quarter panel of my truck and looked out past this telephone pole into this open field. I heard some change hit the gravel and the girl mumble out some curse words and slam the door to the van.

I walked over to help her pick up the change, she said "Thank you" and started to walk back in the bar. I walked quickly to catch up with her, I asked "Where are you from" She replied with "My van" I was a bit confused with that answer then suddenly she said "I mean, I just travel around." I asked her if she had been to McCoy's before, she said she had been through this area but never stopped in before.

We walked back into McCoy's together talking a bit back and forth, I invited her to come sit with Earl, Burt and I back over to the side in the booth. She accepted and we walked back to find Burt passed out in the booth and Earl talking to someone else in the booth next to his, so I decided to find a new booth and chat with her until Bill showed up. We sat down in a booth beside the stage; it was more to the left of the stage just a bit. Her name was Rebecca, she didn't say much about where she came from or who she was but she didn't hesitate to talk about her van though. As far as I knew from talking to her, she lived in her van but I didn't want to ask her that so I just assumed.

Not much time passed before she started to ask me about my life, I said “Well, my parents and I lived in Indiana for the longest time then my mother died and my father couldn’t stand to stay in our old house so we moved down to Nashville Tennessee where he ended up meeting another woman. I didn’t care for her very much to tell you the truth so I ended up leaving my home at the age of 17 in my dad’s Buick. I burned those wheels down that old highway for miles, I ended up somewhere down in the southern part of Texas before that Buick broke down on me. With the car broke down I didn’t have much of a choice but to walk to the nearest gas station which was difficult since there was nothing for miles, I probably walked for hours before I reached a small town with a gas station.”

I paused there and asked “Are you sure this is interesting to listen to, it’s not necessarily the most interesting story.” But she said “No, no please continue, I did ask you. Plus, I’m pretty entertained so far by the story!”

I continued the story as Rebecca sat across from me sipping on a bottle of Budweiser; “So, with the little money I had left I had the car towed to the gas station’s garage and asked If I could work there in exchange for work done on the Buick, the owner agreed to my proposition and hired me on the spot due to the fact he only had one other employee and he was missing three of his fingers on his left hand so he was little help to the owner. The owner’s name was Henry, I got pretty close as a friend to Henry over the time I worked with him. Even when I paid off the work done on the Buick I stuck around for a while in order to save up some money. Henry was even nice enough to rent me out a room above the general store he also owned in that small Texas town. I wasn’t sure at that time where I would go or what I was going to do but

I knew I needed money for anything I decided. My father probably wasn't too happy about his car being stolen by his own son and the fact I had left without a word to him may have bothered him as well."

At this point in the story, Rebecca seemed very engaged in what I was saying so I felt I should continue.

"Two years had passed since I had been home, and I was skeptical about returning. There was nothing for me back home, and I didn't feel there ever would be so I stayed in that town for a good 20 years all together and took over the gas station and general store after Henry passed away in 1966. I left the town in early 1976 due to all the stores and small town businesses being bought out by some rancher. I decided I should head back to Nashville to see my father but when I returned to my old house, another family had moved in. The only man who knew my father well in that town was the owner of the Buick dealer, Gregory Daniels.

The dealer was still on the corner where it always was and Greg still owned the place so I stopped by to ask him what had happened to my father. Greg said my father went down to Tallahassee Florida nearly 5 years after I ran away. I asked Greg if my father seemed worried about me leaving and Greg said "Not really, your dad didn't say much at all. He acted nearly the same and wasn't really surprised that you had ran away." After Greg told me that I was set on driving down there and giving my father a piece of my mind. But on the way down, I ended up getting into a situation at a gas station and that's where I met my buddy and partner Bill.

Bill saved me from a couple of guys with guns that had just robbed this gas station I happened to stop at and ask for directions at. The criminals shot the cashier and were after me next that's when Bill happened to show up. After that, I stayed in the closest town to where I was which happened to be Daxton where Bill worked as a cop since I had no car due to the gas station being engulfed in flames which also burned my car.

I had no where to stay, not enough money for a new car and I really had given up hope on driving down to Tallahassee to confront my father. Bill offered me the couch in his home, which was really an Airstream camper but it was better than nothing, so I took him up on his offer and stayed there.

Bill ended up recommending me for a job as police officer because of what happened a week after Bill let me stay in his Airstream. I was really out on a limb due to having no money, no car and no home, I really owed it to Bill.

One afternoon, Bill was called on the CB radio about a robbery at the grocery store on Main Street in Daxton. Bill told me to jump in his truck and help out by manning the CB radio in his truck when we got to the robbery. When we got to the store, Bill saw there was about four hostages inside the building and decided to walk up to the door and attempt to reason with the criminal on letting a couple hostages go. But things didn't go as planned, before Bill could even get close to the door the robber pushed open the front door and violently held a firearm at a older lady's head as he threatened to kill the lady unless he could get away clean. All Bill could do was back away and drop his weapon on the ground.

Well what Bill and I didn't know at the time is that this robber had a buddy who was emptying out the safe in the back of the store as the robber out front stalled us from thinking anything else or anyone else was involved in the crime. But as soon as the robber's buddy finished grabbing the cash, the robber out front holding the hostage hit the lady in the back of the head with the gun and fired a couple shots at Bill as they bolted for the car they had parked near the side of the building. I couldn't let them get away, and since Bill had been shot I had no idea if he was alright or not but I figured I better go after these guys.

I fired up Bill's truck and swung it around to chase the two men as they peeled out from the alley near the side of the building. I didn't know much about the roads around here so I had to get them pinned before they made it out deeper into the country. The car took off in the direction of where two cop cars were blocking the road but that didn't stop the robbers, they blasted their car right through the middle of the two parked cars. I followed them the best I could as the man in the passenger seat stuck his arm out the window and fired back at me.

Their car was heavily damaged from busting through the two police cars and was losing speed quickly as smoke poured out from the hood. Suddenly, the car pulled to the side of the road and jolted to a stop as the men ran out into a field. The only weapon in the truck that I saw was the shotgun on the gun rack in the back window, I grabbed it and sprinted after them. Being a double-barrel, I only had two shots in the chamber as I fired at the man with the bag full of money. The shotgun blast struck the man's legs as he fell to the ground. The other man seemed to be out of bullets as he ran over to grab the bag of money.

The man took off straight for a farm fence that separated the open field from the farmer's property; he climbed over the short fence into the property as I followed him gaining on him with every step. He was sprinting toward the open doors of a old barn on the farmer's property, as soon as he ducked in the barn I lost sight of him. The barn was packed with equipment from tractors to rakes, many places to hide as well. Suddenly, I heard a bang in the back of the barn, near the loft part that lead up to the attic section. The ladder had fallen over onto some old buckets; I bet he went up into the attic, which was a stupid move on his part because he kicked down the only way out other than a sketchy jump from nearly 25 feet up.

I walked back outside the barn and looked for a way in without the robber noticing, only thing that was close to the barn was an old concrete silo with grain elevator pushed up next to it. If I could climb that grain elevator I could swing around on the top of the silo onto the roof of the barn and into one of the windows that were on the side or at least make him think I was. I figured this guy must be a few pistons short of a V8 if he trapped himself in the attic of a barn with nearly no way out.

I grabbed a few rocks from the ground and threw them onto the roof of the barn, I heard the robber yell some curse words from inside the barn as he ran to the front of the barn attic where there was a huge opening where the farmer would winch hay up into the attic.

The robber didn't hesitate to even look down and see me standing right there as he jumped from the barn and landed with a scream of pain and a few broken bones. The owner of the farm was standing on the porch as I grabbed the sack of money from the robber's hands

and made my way over to the man on the porch to tell him to call the police over here to get this guy and his buddy in the field over to the side of the property. Surprisingly enough, the man had already done so, the police showed up nearly 5 minutes after this whole ordeal. Bill was in one of the cop cars that showed up on the scene, he got out limping since he was shot in the leg by the one robber as they made their “brilliant” getaway. I asked why he didn’t get some medical attention and he said “I did, I had ol’ Frank pull out the bullet already. I’m all good”

Bill walked over to me and said “Hey man, good work back there. It took guts to go after those guys, even though they may be a little on the dumb side but believe it or not they have been unable to catch for months, they have been ripping off stores all over town for nearly 2 years.”

Not much time had passed before I got a call from Chief of Police, Sam Worley. He wanted to honor me at the community center in Daxton for getting these criminals behind bars. At the ceremony, Chief Worley offered me a job. He said “One of my best officers had recommended you to me, and your actions the other day showed me you’re up for the job.” I accepted the job offer on the spot. Being a police officer paid more than any job I had before and it wasn’t long before I bought my own house in Daxton, and shortly after that I bought my truck.

This is basically how I got my start here in Daxton, never thought to leave after that. Never saw a reason to find my dad after I got my job in Daxton, since he obviously didn't care that I left I thought it would be best to do what I felt was right. "

By the time I finished telling my story; Rebecca seemed to be even more interested by it. She said "Is Bill around? I'd like to meet him too" I said "Bill said he'd show up here tonight for a few drinks but he ain't here yet."

"That was my story, what's yours?" I said to Rebecca as she sat across from me. She looked up at me and said "Um, well not much happened to me. I used to live in a town in Alabama with my dad, my mom died when I was really young, I couldn't even tell you what year or how old I was when she died. My dad "raised" me after then, he was nothing but a drunk. I'd make his dinners and do laundry while he sat on the couch drinking his life away. One day, I couldn't take it anymore, so when I was fifteen almost sixteen I packed a bag, grabbed the keys to his old truck and left. Ever since then I went from town to town just looking for something more than what I knew. I was about out of money, even the money my dad kept in the glove box of that old truck was about gone.

I found an old abandon barn one time close to this small town so I'd pull my truck in there and basically use it as a shelter. I needed a job but I had no idea where to get one, the closest town had a general store and a small diner and that was about it.

About two days had passed before I found out the barn I was staying in was actually owned by a farmer that owned the field near the barn with a few silos. He scared me half to

death when he opened up the door and knocked on the hood of my truck to wake me up. At first, the farmer wasn't too happy about me using his barn as a garage but after I got to talking with him, he said I could stay in the small trailer behind his farm house if I worked on his farm. I accepted the offer right away, I figured it was better than nothing and that's all I had was nothing.

The trailer behind the farmer's house was nicer than anything I had lived in before. His wife would bring me over a plate of breakfast and a plate of supper each night, those two people treated me more like family than I had ever known before, the work was hard but it sure got me in good shape. I'd bail hay, feed the farm animals, take the tractor another round on the field, he'd even let me take care of the horses.

Originally, the deal with the farmer was that I lived in the trailer behind his house in exchange for working around his farm, but in the few years I worked there he paid me a bit for some jobs around the farm. I was glad to be—

She stopped her story and looked over my shoulder toward the main entrance of the bar, I asked "What's wrong?" she didn't speak, I turned around slowly to see what she was looking at. The rumble of motorcycle engines filled the parking lot as they poured in by the dozens. I never had seen something like this before, not in this town, or even at McCoy's.

Rebecca grabbed my arm and said "We should go now, follow me" she pulled me over past the bar and ran for the back exit. The bar went dead silent as the front door creaked open and a rough looking man with a sawed off shotgun stood there with it pointed straight at me

and Rebecca as the rough looking man said “Going somewhere? If you don’t want to get blown away, you should stick around for the party” The rest of the bikers started walking in McCoy’s, nobody moved an inch, I was looking for Earl but I couldn’t see him around anywhere. Rebecca seemed to know or even saw the biker guys before since she tried to have me bail out with her. Times like this, we need Bill around; these Bikers weren’t here for a good time, or at least our form of a good time.

All these bikers had weapons drawn and pointed at anyone who was in front of them, we couldn’t do a thing to escape. A younger guy sitting by the side door jumped up from his seat and bolted for the door, the rough looking biker at the door fired his sawed off shotgun right into the escaping man’s chest and said “Anyone else want to join him?” Nobody said a word.

Chapter 4

Escape from McCoy's

We were trapped in McCoy's bar with no way of escape, Bill hadn't shown up and I had no idea what to do. A closer look at the biker group's jackets reminded me of the two criminal bikers at the gas station. They had the same jackets as these guys, which had me more worried than anything; these guys wouldn't hesitate to kill anyone. As we already saw, the head biker guy already shot a man who tried to escape.

The group of bikers walked up to the bar and demanded some beers, the bar keeper didn't have much of a choice other than give them all free beers due to that sawed off shotgun pointed at his face. Rebecca then whispered in my right ear; "I have seen these guys before, they will have a few rounds of beer, screw around a bit and then trash the place. But the bad thing is they are always looking for a specific person and if they don't find that person they attempt to murder everyone in the place."

Not long after, this larger biker guy with long dirty hair with a backwards cap on his head came around scoping out everyone in the bar. Near the front of the bar, there were two of the bikers on either side of the main entrance holding these automatic weapons.

I really expected someone to try to be a "hero" and take a swing at one of these biker guys and take their weapon. And well, sure enough as me and Rebecca were leaning on the side of a booth a man in brown pants and a dark brown jacket probably in his mid 30's took a swing at the man with the long dirty hair as he walked around scoping the bar out. It looked like he

broke the biker's nose there, the man in the dark brown jacket then reached for the fat biker's firearm as he fell back on the floor. All eyes were on the man in the dark brown jacket now, the bikers were just laughing as their fallen comrade got up from the floor and pulled out a switchblade from his jacket pocket. The man in the brown jacket backed away from the big biker and I guess by his accident, he backed up right into more bikers. The two bikers he backed into grabbed his arms and held him down as the large biker with the dirty hair walked closer with his switchblade.

Their leader walked into the middle of the bar and said "Tonight, you WILL die, not one, not two, but ALL of you WILL die unless we find the one person we are looking for. Let's start with asking our little hero man in the tacky outfit over here."

The biker's leader walked closer to the man in the dark brown jacket who was in the grasp of two bikers holding him to the wall. The leader pulled out his handgun, put it to the man's chin and asked "Well, mister "hero" we'll start with asking you, have you seen a brown haired girl, shiny necklace with a red jewel, about 5'-9", pretty attractive, and she wears brown cowboy boots?"

The man in the dark brown jacket was shaking as he said "No! NO! I swear, I never seen a girl like that." The biker leader, pulled his gun down from the man's chin and walked back to the middle of the room and said "We are the Little Sallies, the most feared biker gang in all the country!" Everyone in the bar let out a little chuckle, they tried to hold it in but some couldn't

help it. The biker gang leader started again "You think it's funny? Well, maybe your tacky friend over here doesn't think it's too funny, slice him Greaseball!"

The large biker with the switchblade cut the neck of the man in the dark brown jacket and began to laugh, the biker gang leader began to speak once again; "I will ask again, where is this girl!? I KNOW SHE'S HERE, the van she drives is in the parking lot, I have no problem with having my man Greaseball go around cutting you all like butter!"

Then I saw someone stand up; all eyes were on this man now. He pointed near me and said "THAT'S HER, the one next to the guy in the cowboy hat!" I looked down only to notice Rebecca had on brown boots, and a look at her neck showed the necklace with the red jewel. I couldn't let them take Rebecca; I was trying to think of a plan in my mind but I was stuck, I'd need a weapon for one, I wasn't about to get myself killed like dark brown jacket man.

The rough looking biker leader walked toward Rebecca and I, he grabbed her by the wrist and jerked her out into the middle of the bar and said; "Was that so hard? Alright Sallies, let's ROLL OUT!"

The rest of the bikers smashed their beer bottles on the floor and followed their leader to the main door. He had another biker pull open the door as he shoved Rebecca outside, as soon as they walked out, the headlights of a parked truck had just flipped on and shined light on the bikers. They all looked confused but I knew who it was, it was Bill. Bill got out of his truck and stood right in front of the biker leader, and said in a rough voice; "So you like to shoot people? You know, I have a similar problem." As Bill said that, he raised up his handgun and

shot one of the bikers. The head biker pulled his sawed off shotgun and pointed at Rebecca's head and said; "You wouldn't want to be the cause of this little lady's death would you now?" Bill said back to him; "No, I wouldn't want to do that, but neither would you now would you? Why go to all the trouble to get her if you're going to kill her right?"

The Biker lowered his sawed off shotgun from Rebecca's head and said "Don't think I won't kill you man, I'll give you this chance to walk away now." Bill then said "Sounds fair enough" as Bill looked as he was walking away from the bikers. He then whipped around and shot the biker leader right in the right shoulder making him drop his sawed off shotgun. I pulled my handgun out as I ran outside to assist Bill. Gunfire rang as bullets filled the air Bill ended up pulling Rebecca from the biker's grasp and got behind a old dumpster for shelter against the gunfire.

I ran out the side door of McCoy's to my truck to get more bullets, some others followed me outside including Burt who said "Hey man, hook me up with a gun so we can shoot these guys up man" I had another gun in my glove box, so I gave it to Burt. Burt said "Yeah man, let's do this man; these bikers are in for a surprise when I got a pistol in my hand."

Bill was holding the bikers off as he used the old dumpster as a shield as Burt and I ran over to the dumpster to help Bill out. Bill said "Hey Ray, sorry I was late, but good thing I showed eh buddy? Burt? Hey man! What's up buddy?"

Burt said "Yeah man, how's it goin' man?" I said "I hate to break up the reunion here, but these two guys have automatic machine guns and they are coming toward us now." Bill said

“Well we best get out of here because them guns will shred this dumpster, we won’t last long on the road either with a truck, and these bikers will catch right up and try to jump in the bed of the truck. I have seen it before.” Rebecca jumped in and said “I got a van” everyone looked at her for a second a bit confused. Rebecca added “It’s pretty fast; I dumped a ton of money in that van. It has a 5.2 Liter V8, four speed manual.”

“Alright then, let’s do it then. Where is the van?” I jumped in and said “It’s right next to my truck to the left of the bar, let’s all make a run for it at once. I’ll cover you.” We ran for Rebecca’s van as I shot at the remaining bikers that were still returning fire at us. The biker with the machine gun nearly got us as we made it around the corner of McCoy’s running to the van. That gun tore through the dumpster like Bill said it would, we were lucky to get out of there. Rebecca jumped in and fired the van up, Burt, Bill and I all jumped in and she took off out of the parking lot as Bill tried to close the two side doors on the side of the van. The bikers saw us leaving and jumped on their bikes, I saw 5 or 6 bikes take off after us as we pulled out onto the highway.

We were flying down the highway; the bikes were hot on our tail though. Bill yelled; “Make a right on this road up here; it’s a dark road so flip on your extra lights. I’d put money they’ll wreck because of all the curves in the road here, I hope you can handle it.” Rebecca shook her head and shifted into fourth gear, the bikes were fading fast in the rearview mirror. This van was really nice and well kept; the interior was red and black with chrome strips that ran around the dashboard. The rear part of the van had a couch and a place to store things, the back part had overhead lighting that ran around the raised part of the roof. Burt and Bill were

sitting on the couch since there were only the driver and passenger seat up front, no 2nd row seating.

Rebecca nearly hit 120mph around the gradual winding country road, I could still barely see a few of the bikers from the side mirror but they were too far back to shoot at us. They were fading fast behind us once again, Bill said "Keep going, in about 5 miles from here there is a road that leads back into town, if we make a right on that road and follow it 3 or 4 miles there will be a road off of there that leads to my place, we can pull this van in my barn and hope they don't find us." Rebecca agreed, she said "Ok, just tell me when to turn."

The first thing that came to my mind since we weren't as much in harm's way was why did those bikers want Rebecca so bad. I was about to ask but Burt jumped in and asked "Beg my pardon ma'am but why did them there bikers want a hold of you so cotton pickin' bad?" Burt wasn't much of a charmer when it came to small talk, but no matter, Rebecca didn't mind to answer the question.

Rebecca began to speak but then suddenly, Bill pointed out three lights coming straight for us. My assumption was it was more of those bikers from McCoy's. They must have figured out a way to intercept us. Burt was losing grip on reality and he started to mildly freak out a bit, Bill said "There's a dirt road up here on your left, do you think you can make it before we collide? Rebecca replied "Yeah buddy" and pinned the accelerator down to the floor. The lights got closer and close as we sped down the old road; we were almost to the dirt road off to the left a bit. This was going to be close; Rebecca pulled the handbrake and drifted right onto the

small dirt road. The bikers nearly missed the back end of the van, I looked over into the rearview mirror and saw one of the bikers try to turn around and end up in the ditch alongside the road, I don't think those bikers were going to give us anymore trouble.

The dirt road was terribly bumpy and uneven; it was just a small side road that split two cornfields apart from each other. Rebecca said "Bill, how long does this road last? It's shakin' us to pieces here!" Bill replied; "Well ma'am, I'm sorry to say but I have no idea. I have never been down this road before, I barely knew it was here; I just saw a split in the fence line and told you to go for it, hell ma'am, it could be a dead end." On that note, Rebecca slowed the van down to a more reasonable speed for a road like this and we all began to look around for another road or possibly if we could see farther down the road itself. It was too dark to really tell what was in front of us down this road, and we could only see what was alongside us as we drove by it.

Burt said "Why don't we just turn around, then there bikers would have at least attempted to follow us down this way if they were still out on that paved road." Burt had a point; we could just turn around on this dirt road and head out back. Without notice Rebecca spun the van around and took off back down to the main road, or more main of a road than the road we are on now.

We weren't too far down that old dirt road so it didn't take much time to get far enough back down it to see the paved road. It looked like we were home free but then right in front of us as we got to the end of the dirt road; four bikes flipped on their headlights and blocked the road, looks like we really screwed up on this one. Burt yelled "Drive through em' Drive through

em' now!!" Bill told Burt to shut up because he distantly heard one of the bikers talking over the engine idling. The biker said "We are going to give you 30 seconds to get out of that van before we fill it full of bullets" the biker snapped his fingers and two more of them held up machine guns. We had 30 seconds to make a choice, either do what they say, back up or run them over. Bill said to Rebecca; "You got four wheel drive in this puppy?" she replied with "No, it's a rear wheel drive, plus she ain't high enough to make it through a field like that."

"Well I know what I'd do, I'd fake them out" said Bill. Rebecca replied "Fake them out? What do you mean; I mean just tell me I'll do anything to get away from these guys."

Bill explained "You just got to make it look like we are going to run them over and then kick it in reverse, swing her around and me and Burt will pop open the back doors and shoot them to pieces as you drive away." I was onboard, so was Rebecca. It was official we were going for it, when the biker said we had ten seconds left, Rebecca stuck her head out the window and said "Alright, we are getting out." She quickly popped open the door and then shut it right away as she floored it spinning the wheels making it look as the van was coming right toward the bikers. Rebecca then hit the brakes and tossed it in reverse pulling away from them. The bikers were knocked back by the scare that the van was going to run them over, Rebecca did as planned, she spun the van around and took off nose first back down the dirt road.

Bill and Burt swung open the rear doors on the van and shot back at them as they attempted to kick start their bikes and follow us. One of the bikers caught up and Bill began to fire a few rounds at him. Bill shot the front tire which threw the bike onto the side of the road,

the rest of the bikers were far back. Bill said to Rebecca; "You know what else I'd do, I'd spin this van around again and head straight for them, play a little chicken with those bikes."

Rebecca did what Bill said as she whipped the van around, headed right back for the bikes which were moving toward us. The bikes hadn't budged yet as the three headlights grew closer from the front of the motorcycles. Rebecca held the van straight down the road as she picked up speed, the road was bouncing the van around, but we were still holding the road as Bill attempted to shut the rear doors on the van.

The bikes didn't even think twice about holding their line, they bailed out to the side of the road as we flew past them in the van. We now had a straight shot to the paved road; just a left and we'd be gone. Rebecca kept the van at high speeds as she slid onto the paved road and took off down it before any of the bikers even knew what happened.

It looked as it was smooth driving from here, a few miles down this road and we'd make a right and head down to Bill's place. Going back to McCoy's to get our trucks might be a little risky since some of the bikers might still be there waiting for us to come back. Hopefully Earl got the place under control, but who knows. This was a good time for everyone to catch their breath and cool down; Rebecca kept the van moving fast enough to allow some space between us and the bikers if they decided to follow us again. We got to the T in the road and made a right toward Bill's place, it was about another five miles until the turnoff to the road leading to his property.

Rebecca began to say; "Yeah, as I was saying before those bikers were after me for quite some time. It all started back four or five months ago, I happened to be driving through the outskirts of Fillmore when I saw an old general store that looked to be open due to the lights being on. So since all the other stores were closed early that morning I walked in to see if they had some dog food for the farmer's dog because he had run out the night prior and didn't tell me until the next morning.

At first, the place looked like a regular general store. I walked up to the counter and hit the bell on the counter to ask the owner if he had a large bag of dog food since I didn't see any on the shelves. Nobody came out, but I could hear some talking behind the wall next to the counter, so I decided to check it out. I saw a figure standing in the light but the shadow covered his back so I couldn't place who it was or if the man owned the place. I said "Excuse me sir, do you have any dog food" the man turned around walked out of the shadow and looked at me then said "You shouldn't have come in here" I stepped forward a bit and said "Why not, your sign says open" I looked past him as he walked forward and noticed someone tied up to a shelf bleeding out the side of his head.

I was shocked; I backed away quickly from the man as he walked closer to me. He had on a black leather jacket that said "Little Sallies" on the front pocket. At first, I laughed a bit at the name as I backed away to the counter. Then the man pulled out a switchblade and said "See, you just shouldn't have walked back there and seen that, then I wouldn't have to do this." He reached his hand under the counter as he passed by it, a short duration of a light beep sounded and I couldn't open the door, I was trapped.

He grabbed my arm and took me into the back room next to the man tied up to the shelving unit. He did the same to me but on the opposite side of the shelving unit. I had no idea what was going on at that point, the man next to me was gagged so he couldn't speak and he had a huge gash on the right side of his head. This man with the leather motorcycle jacket went into another room alongside the one I was tied up in. I heard some light conversation, but I couldn't really make out what they were saying, or even who this guy was talking to.

The guy next to me was mumbling a bit since he had been gagged and nudging his head downward toward the bottom of the shelving unit. It looked as he was trying to tell me something, it didn't take me long to realize what he meant. The guy that tied us to this shelf wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer because he had tied us to the bottom leg of the shelf, which could just be lifted up and the ropes around our hands that were bound to the leg of this shelf would just slip out. With the both of us sitting there we gave it a go. We pushed our backs against the shelf to attempt to tip it backward and leave room under the front legs to slip out the ropes.

After about two tries we got the ropes out from under the shelf and they became loose around our wrists so they were easy enough to slip down. After our hands were free, I attempted to help this man with the rope around his ankles since his right arm was bleeding pretty badly along with the gash on his head. We could still hear the men in the back room faintly talking as we both attempted to head back out to the main "store" area and escape. I didn't want to say a word to this man until we were in the free, any noise could make these guys head back here and check on us.

I just remembered though, in order to leave the store I'd have to press the button under the counter to release the lock on the door which made a light but noticeable buzzing noise. Plus the door had a bell above it that rang when the door was opened. The man that was there with me pointed out this small opening on the side of the building that was loosely covered by a piece of wood held on by duct tape where a wall air conditioner went at one time. This was a smaller hole but it was low enough to the ground to be able to easily make it through.

The man pulled off the wood patching the hole and slipped through and I followed but I accidentally kicked a shelf on the way out which caused a coffee can to hit the floor. The two men from the back room ran out to see what had happened; it took the one guy a few seconds to realize we were escaping and he ran straight for the door but then realized it was locked after a few pulls. He cursed rapidly as his buddy tried to bust open the door, it looked to me that neither of them were firing on all cylinders. Eventually I stopped peeking through the window in the front of the store when the one guy realized he has to press a button to open the door. The guy I was tied up with seemed to be long gone, never did say a word to me.

I bailed out of there as fast as I could, obviously those biker guys really cared about having that one man tied up in their shop, or a shop, I don't know who owned that place but I knew not to attempt to shop there anymore. Since there wasn't really any phone books I decided to go back to where I lived and call the police from there to explain to them what happened. There wasn't much they could do, or that's what they claimed at least when I told them the full story. Once I told the police it was the Little Sallies causing the trouble, they didn't want to hear anymore about it.

Ever since then, those bikers have been after me two or three more times, today was the closest they ever gotten and if it wasn't for you guys, I'd be screwed."

By the time Rebecca finished telling us all that, we were down an unmarked road that lead to Bill's place. One thing that was pondering me was this group of bikers that call themselves the "Little Sallies", we need to learn more about these guys, maybe they are the cause of these crimes or possibly a help to these criminals somehow.

Bill was going to phone Earl when we got back to his place to see if he was alright and if anything else had happened after we peeled out of the parking lot. Burt was one of those guys who carried a bottle of whiskey in his jacket pocket, so he was occupying himself in the back of the van. Bill was explaining to Rebecca where to turn to get to his property; normally it's easy to find his property on this old road because you can see his pole barn as soon as you drove up the small hill in the road, but since it was dark out we could barely see anything out here.

Bill let Rebecca know when she got to the right driveway, we turned onto this small dirt drive, winded down a bit from the main road and there was Bill's place. It was tucked back from the main road enough for someone to pass by not thinking someone lived there. Bill jumped out of the van to pull open the doors on his pole barn to park the van inside. From what I figured up in my mind on the "rules" of Bill's place were "If Bill don't tell, you don't ask and you don't touch." Bill's barn was very organized, everything in a certain spot and he knew if you moved something even if you put it back in the right place, he could figure it out somehow.

Rebecca gradually rolled the van inside the barn barely having her foot on the accelerator. When she pulled in the large pole barn, she put it in park, turned the key off, pulled the key out and leaned back in her seat and took a deep breath.

“Are you alright?” I asked her. She replied; “Yeah, yeah it’s just been a long day. I just hope them bikers don’t come looking for us.”

I heard a clunk from the back portion of the van, turns out it was just Burt attempting to open the side door while drinking what was left of his whiskey. He fell onto the gravel floor in the pole barn and laid there laughing until Bill pulled him to his feet and said “Remind me why we brought this guy AND gave him a firearm.” Rebecca and I laughed at Bill’s remark; even Bill cracked a bit of a grin as he dragged Burt over to the side and leaded him on a few bales of hay.

Chapter 5

Back on track

We were all hanging around Bill's barn as we caught a breath from tonight's excitement. It wasn't that late yet, we would have probably been at McCoy's if it weren't for those bikers. Bill's idea was to wait for around an hour or so and head back out to McCoy's to check everything out and see if anyone else was killed since we had left on our escape/rescue mission. Both of our trucks were still at McCoy's and we had no transportation except for Rebecca's van.

Rebecca didn't want to leave again, but Bill and I both agreed we needed to check out what happened at McCoy's. Burt wasn't much help passed out on a few hay bales where Bill had dragged him, so we couldn't ask him to come along and drive until he was at least halfway sober. Bill told Rebecca that she could come back here to his barn but she said she had someplace to go home to. Bill went over and shook Burt enough to get him awake and Bill once again got him up on his feet as he helped him over to the van so we could head back to McCoy's. I jumped back in the passenger side of the van as Rebecca climbed in and fired it up. We backed out of the barn as Bill walked out beside the van to shut the doors to the barn when we pulled out. He then jumped in the two side doors on the right side and closed them up and we headed off.

Rebecca drove the van steady down the back roads and held moderate speeds as we made our way back to McCoy's. Nobody seemed to speak much as we drove down the old

roads; all I could hear was the constant rumble of the engine and driver's side window that was rolled down just enough to let the wind flow through. I looked back in the rearview mirror and saw that Bill was sitting on the couch in the back portion of the van with his sun glasses resting on the bill of his hat. He had just pulled a small piece of wrinkled up paper out of his left pocket and began to look closer at it. I didn't want to ask him what it was, but it was really pondering me. I heard a groan from the back of the van and saw Burt roll over and groan. It looks like he was coming around; he sat up and said "We are still in this gall-darn van? I thought we was going to go to some barn, man."

Bill told Burt we had already been to his place and we decided to head back to McCoy's after a short wait to check things out. Burt yelled out "WHY? I don't want to get blown away by them bikers!" It seemed as Burt was still a little drunk because Bill had just explained to him how we escaped the bikers, but on the note Burt didn't follow what he was saying, Bill repeated it again. The wind had picked up and it was now blowing straight into the driver's side of the van which made Rebecca's hair blow around into her face. It wasn't long before she rolled up the window with the manual crank on the door and fixed her hair by pushing it over with her left hand. The wind also seemed to blow my hat a bit crooked, so I fixed it as well.

I always had on my faded brown cowboy hat that Henry had given me before he passed away. Henry always wore that hat and me and him had become good friends, he respected me and decided I was worthy of his most prized possession. When Henry gave me his hat it really made me think about if I made the right choice, but in the long run, looking back I was glad I ran away. I imagined what life would have been like if I hadn't took off with my dad's car. I wouldn't

be here right now that's for certain; I wouldn't know half of the people who treated me more as family than my own did. All and all, looking back at those moments, I wouldn't have changed my life for the worse or the better.

We were nearly back at McCoy's, just a little farther down highway 34 and we'd be there. Nobody really said too much, Bill was never the most talkative person out there but I expected him to be saying something. As we approached closer to McCoy's I could see a blue and red flashing light in the parking lot in front of the main entrance. Looks like someone had called the police, Bill and I were probably in deep trouble for not being there, but there was no way we could have answered the CB radios in our trucks from Rebecca's van.

Rebecca swung the van into the blacktop part of McCoy's parking lot, pulled over to the side and shut the engine down. Bill's truck was still parked in front of the entrance of McCoy's with the driver's side door open from when he saved Rebecca from the bikers. To me and Bill's surprise, Chief Worley was there along with his so called "best officer" Phillip Morris. Bill didn't like Phillip one bit; they had a pretty bad past as co-workers you could say.

Phillip was looked at as the most heroic officer in town for something Bill did, but Phil just took the credit right under Bill's nose. The fact that Phil is here with Chief Worley just tells me he's sucking up again to try to get Bill and I fired once again.

Bill told me about what happened with Phillip right when I got offered the job with the department. I remembered Bill telling me about Phil; "I had been with the department for quite some time now when this new recruit joined the department. He was the retired chief's

grandson, his name was Phillip Morris. His grandfather, Richard Morris was the Chief of Police before Chief Worley became the Chief of Police in Daxton County. I had known Richard for a brief time before he ended up passing away; since Richard's son was in the army and was killed at a younger age he wanted his only grandson to become a police officer as well. Richard was a nice guy, a great police officer but I couldn't say the same for his grandson Phillip.

When Phillip applied for a job with the Daxton County Police department, which Worley couldn't really deny do to the fact his Grandfather was still alive at the time when Phillip wanted the job. Even though Richard was about on his last leg of his life, Worley hired Phillip just for that reason that it was Richard's dream to see his only grandson to strive at being a great police officer. But the thing was, Phillip couldn't handle a gun worth damn and he had no skill as a police officer what so ever, he was cocky and a jerk to everyone else in the department just because of who his Grandfather was. Worley had every intention to fire Phillip as soon as Richard had passed away, but here's how Phillip kept his job after his Grandfather had eventually passed away after Phil had the job for around a year.

Right before Richard had passed away, Worley ordered me to basically "train" Phillip to show Richard that Phil was improving and doing something right out there. I was Worley's top guy at the time and he thought I'd be the right person for the Job to get Phil on track. Now, most ask why Worley cared so much about impressing Richard before he died and the answer to that was simple. Worley and Richard were very close friends, Richard had nobody else but his Grandson left in his family and he had quite the sum of money plus he thought very highly of Worley. Worley was just basically sucking up to Richard for a dip on his money after he passed

away. I know Worley denied it, but that was the truth to what was going on. Well since I was stuck with Phil I tried my best to keep him in line but my patience grew thin. The thing that really made me dislike Phil the most is what happened next.

It was pretty early on a Thursday morning and as usual I'd park my squad car near the side of the main highway that ran through Daxton County and keep an eye out for speeders and other things since people would just fly down that road. But the thing different about this was that Phil was in the passenger seat of my squad car.

I always had my radio on in my squad car set to one of the country stations we picked up here in Daxton but Phil didn't like that kind of music so I either had to turn the radio off or listen to the garbage he called music. The squad car was parked behind a old Pepsi Cola billboard when I heard a loud roar from down the empty highway, I peered my head out the window and pushed my sun glasses down farther on my nose to take a look at what it was. Turns out it was an old Mustang flying down the road, he had to be going nearly 100mph.

I fired up the squad car, put it in gear and held down the clutch until the mustang got closer. He was heading straight into town and I didn't want this guy to wreck and take out a citizen or ruin some town property. Daxton County recently had gotten new police cruisers in 1973 which were 1971 Plymouth Furys, well they were new to us at least. I had just gotten in the "new" police vehicle the day before because that's when three of them rolled into town from the state.

The Mustang flew past us in the squad car and I whipped out behind him and chased him down highway 34 into town. About eight more miles and he'd be in town. I flipped on the siren and the lights, which only made him pin the accelerator down farther to the floor. The Plymouth Fury was a pretty fast car but it had nothing on this Mustang. I told Phil to call it in on the CB that there was a speeder heading into town. Surprising to myself, he actually did what I asked him to but he changed it up a bit. Phil pulled the CB radio from the dash of the squad car and radioed the dispatcher telling him "Yeah, we got a speeder heading into town, Bill here let him get away and now we are in pursuit." At this point I knew for a fact Phil was out to ruin my job.

Highway 34 curved around to the left, wended through the countryside and weaved through the valley leading to Daxton. I knew there was a small dirt road up here that intersected Highway 34 a few miles before town. I swung hard to the left onto the dirt road, Phil went literally crazy in the passenger seat uttering out vulgar language and waving his hands in the air yelling "What are you doing?! I called for backup you fool! You don't have to stop these guys; it's not going to save your job even if you do!"

I said to Phil in a deep tone as I pulled down my sunglasses "I'm not doing it for my job; you can either shut up or get out. I'm not stopping though, if you want out you jump out. I had enough of your garbage." I pinned the accelerator down to the floorboards and took off at a higher speed down the dirt road. The car was bouncing up and down the unsmooth surface as the car shot a trail of dust in the opposite direction. I couldn't see highway 34 from where I was on this unmarked road but I knew it was a shorter distance to town. The only problem was, the

old wooden bridge was torn out up here due to Beaver Creek overflowing a few weeks before. Most of the old bridge was pushed up onto the road which created a bit of an incline. I knew what I was going to do, and I think Phil could see it too since he started to yell; “You crazy old man! You’re going to get me killed, or injured! You’ll lose your job for sure if you jump that creek you moron!”

Beaver Creek wasn’t very wide at that point and there was no way I wouldn’t make it. As we got closer, Phil kept rambling on more and more. We hit the old wooden bridge pushed up on the road and flew up it at a high speed. The wheels spun as we floated in the air for just a few seconds and landed on the other side nearly on all four wheels, the front two touched a bit before the back but we made it and I kept that car moving down the road. Phil didn’t say a word after we landed; I was expecting him to go on about how I’d lose my job again but he didn’t just yet.

We were nearly to the point where this dirt road and Highway 34 intersected again, It was a open shot with no trees on either side so it was pretty easy to see if any cars were coming or not. Right when I got close to the end of the dirt road I saw the Mustang come around the bend, I had one shot to force him off the side of the road since he had to slow down for that bend or he’d be off the road and into the lower part of the valley. When he exited the bend his speed was reduced greatly from earlier and I had my shot to force him over to the opposite side of the road. I swung the Plymouth onto the Highway as the Mustang grew closer, I bet he thought he was home free since we didn’t follow him but he was in for a surprise.

I picked up speed as he attempted to pass me due to the fact that he didn't really have too much time to slow down from when he attempted to accelerate when he exited the bend. We were side by side with these guys as he pushed on the rear quarter panel of the Plymouth with the front end of his Mustang. Town wasn't too far up the road but there was another bend in the road up here and I knew that he'd try to take it at a high speed. I pinned him closer and closer to the side of the road with the side of the Plymouth. He did exactly what I expected. He laid off the gas and fell back behind us as he attempted to pass on the left. The curve was coming up and all I had to do was maintain his speed as he took off past us on the left, I then fell back to a lower speed to take the corner as I saw him spin out, bust through a fence and fly into the side of an old tree.

The Mustang was wrecked on the side of the road as I pulled up to it and saw the driver get out and try to run. I pulled out my gun and told him "Stop where you are, you got nowhere to run!" The man ignored me and took off into the wooded area past where the car had wrecked. Phil jumped out of the car and started shooting his firearm at the escaping man. I yelled "Phil! What are you doing?! Are you trying to kill the guy?" He didn't reply as he fired rounds into the direction of the escaping man. The man fell down in the field as I tried to run over to Phil and pull his weapon down, but it had been too late. I got to Phil and attempted to pull his gun down but then Phil snapped and pointed the gun at me.

Phil waved his pistol in my face and said "Nothin' says I can't kill you right now and make it look like that guy did." I responded to him "He was unarmed Phil! He was unarmed Phil! You don't fire at an unarmed man!"

Phil continued to hold his pistol in my face as I just stood there waiting for him to lower it or actually pull the trigger. As we were standing there, the man in the field must not have been shot because out of the corner of my eye I saw him get up and begin to sprint into the wooded area. Phil turned his shoulder and pointed it at the man, missing once again as I knocked the pistol out of his hand. Phil said "Do you want this guy to get away?" I replied back to him "He wouldn't have been that far away now if it wasn't for you, he only ran farther when he heard you shoot, it's not like he has a gun!"

I took Phil's pistol and put it in my belt as I ran into the wooded area after the escaping man. The man was bleeding a bit from his left leg; I assumed that's where Phil had shot him. He was losing breath as he stopped and leaned against a tree. I grabbed the man's shoulder and hand cuffed him as I walked him back to the squad car. He was limping a bit due to the gunshot wound; as usual I patted him down for any other weapons which he didn't have. Phil had went back and sat in the cruiser as I lead the man to the rear seats on the car. He yelled to me "Alright you got the guy let's get out of here now."

As I opened the door and told him to get in, I saw something hanging from the bent up trunk on the mustang. I shut the rear door and walked over to it as I pulled my sunglasses onto the bill of my hat. As I got closer I saw that it was a strap to a bag. Phil had a fit when I walked over to the Mustang, he yelled "Where are you going now, the guy is right here!"

I raised the trunk open and unzipped the black bag that was in the trunk of the Mustang. I couldn't believe it, the bag was stacked with bundles after bundles of 100 dollar

bills, there had to be over a million dollars sitting right there in front of me. Unfortunately for me, Phil had walked over leaving the man un-attended like he was told not to do. He saw the money and said “I’m sure they wouldn’t know if I took a few bundles” I zipped up the bag before he could get his hand inside the trunk far enough to grab a bundle. I picked up the big black bag and brought it to the trunk of the squad car checking on the walk back we still had the criminal. Now I knew this guy was more trouble than just your average speeder.

I tossed the bag in the trunk and locked it. Phil was already back in the passenger seat of the Plymouth as I stepped in the car and reached for the CB to call this into the station. But before I could, Phil grabbed it and radioed dispatch. He stretched the limits of the story to the sky as I tried to tell him to give the radio to me. Eventually I said “screw it” and fired up the car and headed back for the station.

When we arrived back at the station I had a terrible feeling that I’d probably lose my job thanks to Phil here. I went right to Worley’s office after I got the man out of the backseat and took him to the officer in charge of the small jail we had in the Daxton County Police Department building. As soon as I opened the door to Worley’s office Phil was standing there next to Worley and Richard. Worley said “Oh Bill, I was just going to send for you. Phillip here told me the whole story so save your breath. Why would you fire your weapon at a unarmed man, Bill? I said in a frustrated but calm manner, “Sir, that is not how it happened. I assure you I wouldn’t do such a thing.” Worley didn’t say anything but Richard did “Then who shot at the man, because it wasn’t my Phillip!”

Worley went on to explain about the large sum of money; “A bank nearly 500 miles away was robbed yesterday and the man got away. Our department caught the man responsible all thanks to Phil.” At this point in time, I pulled my sunglasses down from the bill of my hat and began to walk out. As I walked out I heard Phil say “Thanks Chief Worley, old Bill over there wanted to leave but I had to check out that car before we did!” I couldn’t believe this, it was worse than I expected. What else would this kid frame me for, I couldn’t believe that Worley bought Phil’s story. I walked out of Worley’s office as I heard Richard say “We should have an honorary dinner for Phillip for his heroic actions!”

Talk about getting screwed, there was probably more to come too. I knew Worley would probably have a “talk” with me before the day was done. At the time, I had a small office back in the corner of the station. It wasn’t long before Worley called me into his office alone.

I walked into Worley’s office expecting the worst but turns out, Worley knew that Phil was lying about what happened. Worley asked me to explain what happened so I did, I told him how Phil fired shots at the escaping man and then pulled his gun on me, even the part about me finding the bag of money. Worley knew I wouldn’t have done any of the things Phil accused me of. But like I said before, Worley wanted to look good in front of Richard while he was still around. Richard may have believed Phil, but Worley had my side. Worley just put up a act with Richard and Phil. Worley knew Phil wanted me gone, Phil was jealous Worley claimed, and when you came around Phil became even more jealous.

Phil was recognized as the “best” officer in town until someone found out what happened that day I found the money in the trunk of the Mustang. Turns out, there was a farmer out on his tractor in the field to the left of Highway 34 who saw the whole mess. Phil thought I finally broke the truth to enough people to ruin him but it was really this farmer who told people what happened and spread the word. Phil kept the truth from Richard but everyone else frowned upon Phil after the word got around town, but lucky for Phil the word didn’t get to Richard before he passed away.

The death of Richard put the town to a dead stop. People were saddened and devastated by Richard’s passing. Worley got a decent share of Richard’s money and unfortunately, so did Phil. People didn’t care much for Phil after they found out what he did to gain attention, fame and in the process, attempt to get me fired. The word about Phil never hit the newspaper but it was definitely on the down low for a good 6 months.

Now you may wonder how Phil kept his job after Richard was out of the picture. Well he didn’t, as soon as Richard was gone Worley kicked him out the door. But, for whatever reason nearly a year after he was let go, Phil begged Worley for another chance to prove himself. Worley gave him a shot and Phil eventually proved himself when he saved this elderly couple from a overturned car out past town. That situation got Phil’s foot back in the door and Worley thought the least he could do was give Phil another shot, I personally didn’t care to much for the fact that Phil was back in the department but you gotta do what you gotta do.

The tensions between me and Phil are still very high strung, but I try my best to stay away from him.”

Remembering that, reminded me how much I disliked Phil. Just seeing him there with Chief Worley made me a bit upset. Why would Worley ever re-hire a jerk like Phil?

Rebecca sat there in the driver’s seat looking straight out at the open field to the right of McCoy’s. I saw Bill pull open the two doors on the right side of the van, get out and walk toward Worley. I heard Phil say “Oh now they show up, great timing like always, Paulson.” Paulson was Bill’s last name; Phil would never call Bill by his first name. I couldn’t figure out why but that’s how it went.

Bill and I walked up to the covered concrete pad right in front of McCoy’s that lead to the main entrance where Chief Worley and Phil were standing. When we got close enough, as he always did, Chief Worley gave Bill and I a “Howdy guys, what do we got here?” Phil interrupted quickly; “What do you mean “Howdy guys”?? They go off on some kind of road trip in some girl’s van and they get a “Howdy guys”?”

We hadn’t run into Phil for nearly a week and I guess our luck ran thin when he showed his face around with Worley.

“So, what’s the excuse this time Paulson?” said Phil as he glared at me and Bill. Bill began to speak to Chief Worley; “Do you mind if we take a walk over to my truck and talk instead?” said Bill. Worley agreed and they began to walk over to his truck, I didn’t think I

should follow but Bill waved his hand back at me and said “You too Ray.” I picked up the pace to catch up with them as Phil looked rather annoyed seeing us walk away with Chief Worley.

Worley once again asked Bill what happened and Bill told him the story right down to every detail. Worley understood that we had no CB radio available to us while we were in the van or while we were at Bill’s place, nor did we have a phone once we got to Bill’s property due to Bill just not having a phone at his home. Worley was familiar with the gang of bikers who shot two people and trashed McCoy’s. Not too long after we had been talking to Worley, Earl came walking over to us with his hands in his pockets shaking his head. I could tell he was upset about what happened to his bar, well who wouldn’t be upset about that.

Earl shook hands with Chief Worley and thanked him for showing up. Earl also said hello to Bill since Bill hadn’t shown up until the bikers began to leave. Then, out of the corner of my eye I saw Phil walk back behind Rebecca’s van. Rebecca was still sitting in the front seat in the van leaned back with her left arm resting on the sill of the open window. Burt must have gone to his truck which probably wasn’t a good idea on his part because he was pretty drunk.

Worley, Earl, Bill and I were all standing beside Bill’s blue K-10 Chevy pickup as Bill leaned against the rear left fender of the old stepside talking to both Worley and Earl. I wanted to see what Phil was up to behind Rebecca’s van, but if I walked away from the group as they were holding a conversation about what happened that night wouldn’t look very good for me.

McCoy’s parking lot was pretty empty other than my truck, Rebecca’s van, Bill’s truck, the squad cars, a medic and a few other cars off to the side. Everyone seemed to have bailed

out in that hour or so we were gone. The paramedics were hauling out the bodies of the people who were shot by the bikers as we stood talking. Something I hadn't heard before began to catch my attention; Earl began to say "Yeah, them bikers have been through here before but never were as aggressive as they were tonight. They always were a loud bunch that jacked the place up just a bit but never this much." Worley replied; "You mean they were here before and you never called us? Damn it Earl, those bikers have been raising all hell around this town for months now! I have no idea where they came from but they sure need to be put behind bars!"

Worley was getting frustrated with this whole situation, including the bikers and the series of crimes that have been occurring around town lately. I began to wonder if anyone around town knew anything more about these "Little Sallies" biker group. The group was silent; I figured this was the best time to shoot that out in the open; "If we could see if anyone around town knows anything about the "Little Sallies" biker group then we can see if they are linked to these crimes." I said.

Bill's fear is that asking around would cause too much attention toward the department and make the citizens of Daxton a bit scared. But Bill did suggest we go ask James "Gramps" Gordon. James had been around town nearly the longest and knew quite a bit, not much got by him or his wife. We just needed to learn more about these "Little Sallies" in order to see if they are linked to the crimes or maybe something more, either way they need to be put behind bars.

Worley thought that was a decent place to start, again he warned us not to draw attention to the department. Earl said "Thanks guys, your time is much obliged." And then he

walked back into his bar. Once Earl was out of sight Bill said to Worley; “He didn’t call did he?” Worley looked at Bill for a second in confusion, Bill then repeated; “He didn’t call the station, it was someone else wasn’t it.” Worley asked “How could you possibly know it wasn’t Earl that called?”

Bill said “Earl wasn’t too shaken up nor did he say much.” Then Bill turned to me and said “Where was Earl when the bikers were trashing the place.” I replied “I didn’t see him, as soon as they came in, Earl disappeared.”

“Earl isn’t telling us something, I can tell he ain’t giving us the full picture” Said Bill as he stood up straight and pulled up his old Budweiser cap to scratch his head. Now that Bill pointed it out, Earl did seem very calm about this whole situation. Bill jumped in again and said “He gave it away for himself too, when he told us “them bikers have been through here before” I knew something was up because the department never got a call the other times Earl claimed the bikers trashed his bar, something is up with Earl.”

Bill walked over to his truck and grabbed his lighter from the small cubby under the dashboard of the truck. He grabbed a cigarette from the pack of Winston cigarettes he always had in his front shirt pocket and leaned up against the front quarter panel to smoke.

Worley then yelled out as he walked to the squad car; “Alright guys, we’ll talk more tomorrow. Don’t stress yourselves out over all this!” Worley was almost to the door of the car as Phil showed up walking quite fast around the side of McCoy’s. Phil then got in the passenger seat of the squad car and they drove off back down highway 34 into town.

I peered over to Rebecca's van, no lights were on and it was silent except the faint sound of the radio. I walked over to the van while Bill leaned on his truck smoking. The closer I got, the more I realized Rebecca was asleep in the front seat of the van. I didn't want to wake her up but I thought it was best to wake her up and tell her to get home where it was safer than out here. Before I could shake her arm and wake her up she pulled her head up and looked over at me as she said "Oh hey, what happened?" I replied to her; "I thought you were sleeping, I was going to wake you up and recommend you head home because it's late and everyone else is nearly gone out here."

She said "Yeah, yeah I didn't know if you guys needed the van again son I thought I'd wait." She let out a little laugh after that as I leaned my arm against the door and nearly fell over.

"He doesn't say much does he" said Rebecca. "Bill?" I said back. "Yeah Bill, he's pretty quiet." She said as she played with the driver's side mirror out of the rolled down window.

I began to tell her; "Yeah he's not the most outgoing guy when it comes to social interactions, he's very sharp though. He's probably the smartest guy I know, also the most mysterious guy I know. Normally if you don't ask, he don't tell."

Rebecca said; "I better get going then, if you want, you can call me sometime." She reached in the center counsel of the van pulled out a small notebook and a pen clipped to the cover and wrote the number down on the first page, ripped it out and handed it to me.

I said “I’ll be sure to do that; I’ll be seeing you around.” I waved to her as she backed up and turned around. She pulled out of McCoy’s parking lot and headed back down highway 34.

I walked back to Bill’s truck to see what we had to do tomorrow or today rather since it was nearly 2am again. I knew where to find Gramps every morning, so I told Bill we need to head to Uncle T’s diner around 10am to meet up with gramps to ask him about the Little Sallies biker group. It’s going to be a rough start to a long week but Bill and I were back on track.

Bill and I were the only ones left in the parking lot now, Earl had gone inside and everyone else had left. Most of the mess in the bar would probably be taken care of tomorrow or today rather since it was nearly 3am now. I was standing beside Bill’s pickup as he still was leaning beside the front quarter panel on the left side of the truck smoking the last bit of his cigarette. He then spoke; “Where did Phil go when all of us were talking?” I told him; “I saw him walk over by Rebecca’s van then he went behind McCoy’s. He showed back up right when Worley was ready to leave though.”

Bill flicked his cigarette onto the blacktop and crushed the remaining piece with his boot. “Well, I see no reason why we can’t go back there and look around” Said Bill as he reached into the glove box of his truck and pulled out a flashlight and handed it to me

“What do you think he was doing back there?” I asked as we made our way around the side of McCoy’s. There wasn’t much light in the back of McCoy’s and the flashlight wasn’t as bright as it could be so it was awful hard to see anything. Normally the only thing behind the building was Earl’s 1975 Cadillac Deville. But Bill found something else; there was a blue tarp

along the back wall of the building stuck up between where the two walls met at a 90 degree angle. We walked up to it to take a closer look but then suddenly, the back door to McCoy's flung open. Bill yanked his gun out of his belt and pointed it at the figure in the open door as I stood next to him pointing the dim flashlight at the door.

Chapter 6 Drive

“Whoa Bill, what are you doing back here, put down that gun” Said Earl as he walked out from the back door. Bill pulled his gun away, slid it back into his belt and said “We thought you were someone else I guess, we saw Phil come back here while all of us were talking by my truck and I could resist but to come back here and check it out.”

Earl walked out from the door a bit toward us and said “Oh, well ya’ll don’t need to be here now. You guys can come back when it’s light out, how about that?”

Bill replied; “What about this tarp, what’s under that tarp?” Earl stood there for a minute and said “What tarp?” Bill said “Come on Earl, we have known each other for years. You don’t have to hide nothing.”

“No I’m serious, what tarp are you talking about.” Earl said as he looked at us with a confused look on his face. Bill told him about the tarp behind him, and Earl turned around and pulled off the tarp. I pointed the dimmed flashlight at the tarp as Earl pulled it off. Bill walked closer and bent down a bit and said “It’s an old Harley, still warm too.”

Earl said; “I have no idea how this got here, I was with you guys for a long while after the incident and this tarp wasn’t here before all the commotion tonight.”

The motorcycle had a bit of mud on the tires and the tailpipes were still warm. Whoever had put it there just recently used it. With the little light the flashlight still shed, I noticed a light

trail of mud up to where the tarp was coming from the field behind McCoy's. The bike could have been easily ridden up to McCoy's through that field for sure. The only one who was back there was Phil, but the chance of getting Phil to admit to anything would be a shot in the dark.

Bill said; "Earl, can we roll this thing inside. I don't want to risk having someone take off with it before we can make it back here to check it out more." Earl agreed and we rolled the bike inside. Earl also had some old beer kegs in the back room that we could put under the tarp so it looked like nothing was touched just in case someone came back around to get the bike.

Earl was actually on his way out to his car when we ran into him by the back door, so we didn't see any reason to stick around and keep Earl waiting around this late at night, besides the flashlight's batteries were about dead and it was too dark to see anything outside. As we were rolling the old Harley inside the back door of McCoy's Bill noticed something red stained on the side of the white gas tank. Bill took a paper towel from his left pocket and streaked it along the stain on the tank and leaned into the light to look at it. Bill always carried around paper towels and picked them up from anywhere when he could, it was almost like he collected them, but they did come in handy sometimes.

I walked around the front of the bike and saw the same red stains all over the white front fender. Bill confirmed it was blood on the front of the fender and the gas tank as well. The closer I looked at the gas tank on the old Harley; I saw what looked like a smeared handprint on the left side of the gas tank. "Now we got this to add to the list" Bill said as he tossed the paper towel in the trash. Earl waved with one swift motion of his hand and said "Alright guys, I'll make

sure nobody messes with that, I doubt anyone will be here tomorrow anyways because of the huge mess the bikers caused. But I need to get home and get some rest, ya'll should too; I have a lot of phone calls to make tomorrow to get this bar back in working condition."

Bill and I walked out the back door of McCoy's as Earl locked the door behind us. Earl walked to his Cadillac which wasn't too far from the rear door. His car was a 1975 black Cadillac with white walled tires and horns on the hood. Earl's car is one of the many things he bought with his money.

Bill and I had to meet Gramps at Uncle T's diner in the morning so we agreed to both be there at 10am right on the dot. I walked out to my truck as Bill walked to his. Earl was already pulling out of the parking lot and heading home. Bill fired up his truck and pulled out too, I was the last to leave the parking lot.

I stepped in my truck, shut the door and sat there for a while. I pulled the piece of paper Rebecca had given me out of my front shirt pocket to take a look at it since I didn't really see it in the dark when she gave it to me. I flipped on the dome light in my truck and read the small message she wrote under her phone number; "You meet the best people in a country mile."

I folded the note in half and put it back in my front pocket, I didn't really know what she meant by that to tell you the truth, it could mean many different things but I tried not to over think what may be just a compliment.

I turned the key to my truck as it chugged a few times as I lightly pushed down the accelerator and give it a little gas so it would turn over. It fired right up after that and I threw it

into reverse to back out from the parking lot. I swung my truck around and pulled out of the parking lot of McCoy's and headed back into town. The drive home was even emptier than the drive to McCoy's. Not a car or truck in sight as I glided down the old dusty highway in my truck, it was a warm enough night so I was able to roll down my driver's side window.

The sound of the dual exhaust from my truck filled the cab, so I turned up the radio to balance out the noise. One of my favorite Waylon Jennings songs came on the radio shortly after I had turned it up, so it was a relaxing drive back home. When I got home, I pulled my truck in the driveway like always, shut it down, and stepped out as I pulled down my worn out black cowboy hat back on my head as I walked toward the front door to my house. I felt like I hadn't been home that often anymore since this whole crime situation started up, but as Bill would say; "You gotta do what you gotta do."

I had a old hubcap to a Pontiac sitting near my door where I'd toss all my keys, I found it in the garage with a bunch of other stuff that I found interesting. Most of the stuff I thought made good unique decorations for the house, I even found an old bench set to a ford truck in the attic above the garage that made a decent couch. I didn't even bother to make something to eat; I was too tired to bother. I locked up the front door, leaned up on my makeshift couch, flipped on the old Zenith Television which was sitting out in the corner of the living room next to this odd lamp that came with the house. This lamp was just really different looking; I couldn't resist to hold on to it.

It wasn't long before I fell asleep that night, the television wasn't getting that great of a reception once again so I eventually just fell asleep over the blurred picture on the television. The dream I had that night was nearly the weirdest thing I had ever dreamed; I was right here on this couch and I woke up, I walked outside my house. The sun had just come up and I walked out on the front porch, everything was silent, I didn't see any cars driving down the streets or anyone walking like they normally would. I ran down the street looking for someone, anyone. But nobody was in sight, all of the sudden, a siren went off. Almost like a tornado siren, but louder. Birds flew over, and I saw one truck coming down Main Street as I stood there on the sidewalk in front of Uncle T's. It was like everyone dropped everything and left.

The truck sped down Main Street honking its horn as the sirens rang out through the town. I tried to wave down the truck but it was no use, he wouldn't stop. I had never seen this truck before it was black, even the rims were black, every bit of it was black even the bumpers. I ran back to my house to get in my truck and get out of here, I jumped in and tried and tried to start it quick as I could, but it wouldn't turn over. I kept pumping the gas pedal until she fired up, I quickly jammed it into reverse and whipped out of the driveway. I sped off out of town as fast as I could as a huge explosion rang through town; I looked back in my rearview mirror as a huge fireball filled the air behind me and swept across the open farmlands covering everything in its way. I knew I was done for; the explosion destroyed the town as I flew down the highway in my truck.

I figured this was it, I was done for; I was trying to think of what could have caused such an explosion. Only one thing came to mind as I pressed down on the emergency brake on my

truck and whipped it sideways on the old highway. I sat there just waiting for the explosion to reach me which didn't take long. As soon as the large cloud of fire and smoke reached me, I woke up.

It was one of the oddest dreams I had ever had. I was trying to figure out what would have caused me to dream such a thing. I couldn't remember what I had thought of that caused the explosion. I just sat there on the couch breathing heavily as that image of the explosion reaching my truck kept playing over and over through my mind. I turned around and looked at the clock on the wall; it read 9:12am. I had to get ready; Bill and I had to meet Gramps at Uncle T's in nearly 45 minutes.

I started the coffee maker as I jumped in the shower to get ready to go. It probably wasn't worth making coffee since we'd probably have some at Uncle T's but I made it by force of habit anyways. I poured the hot coffee in my travel coffee cup and set it on the built in wooden counter near my front door. I ran back into the kitchen to grab my hat which I left hanging on the back of the wooden chair that was halfway pushed in under the old wooden table.

I swung the hat onto my head as I walked to the front door and grabbed the coffee and my keys that were in the hubcap on that wooden counter near my door. When I walked out, the clock read 9:45am so I still had plenty of time to get to Uncle T's. If I know Bill, and I do, he'll probably show up right on the dot. Not any earlier, not any later but right on the dot.

I got in my truck, shut the door, and set the coffee down in the center counsel. I was surprised, because the truck fired up on the first turn of the key today. Normally I'd have to pump the gas and give it a few good turns before she'd turn over but not today.

I pulled out from my driveway and headed into town toward Uncle T's diner, by the look of all the cars out front it was more packed than usual. I saw Gramp's 41' Cadillac parked in the same spot it always was; he must get there pretty early on Saturdays to avoid the rush of people. I had to park across the street from Uncle T's in front of Dale's Hardware store, It looked like other people already thought of this idea as well as I did. I didn't see Bill's truck when I pulled in front of Dale's Hardware. I got out of the truck after I pulled the keys out and took the last few sips of my coffee to scope out for Bill's truck. I didn't see his truck so I began to walk inside thinking he was just running late.

When I walked in I saw Bill and Gramps sitting at a booth near the middle of the diner sitting there talking. Bill eventually saw me walk toward them and he began to scoot over on the bench to make room for me since Ethel and James were sitting together on the other side of the booth. I sat down and said hello to Ethel, James and Bill as I sat down and pulled off my cowboy hat. I then asked Bill where his truck was, he went on to tell me that he actually got a crate motor dropped into his 67' Camaro a few nights ago and he got it running like new. He pointed out the front window of Uncle T's to draw my attention to the Camaro that was parked just to the left of Gramp's Cadillac. The car didn't have any paint on it, most of the pieces just had primer and the bumper was not on yet along with the windows. "Basically it's just a engine and body" Said Bill as he drank a swig of the coffee that was sitting in front of him.

I replied back to Bill to ask him who helped him with the engine, he said “I had my buddy Gator John help me drop that crate motor down in the Camaro, I don’t know if you met him before Ray but he owns a mechanic shop not too far from Fillmore.” Bill went on to talk about his Camaro, Gramps was very interested as well but Ethel was nearly dosed off over there in the corner listening to us talk about the car.

Bill said “I had Gator John tow the Camaro to his shop to drop the engine in a few days ago, we worked for a few days on her to get her runnin’ again but we did, she fires up and runs like new. All I got to do is get her painted up like she was before and as soon as Gator John gets the bumpers and all that delivered, we can start getting her lookin’ like new.”

The door to the diner swung open again as Phil Morris came strolling on inside with his dark sunglasses on and his backwards ball cap. Gramps just looked over glaring at him, he then went on to say “You know, that man should have been hung high in the town square for what he did.” Ethel then jumped in and said “Oh James, shush now. No need for words like that!”

Bill didn’t even look over at Phil as he passed our table to the counter of the diner. Bill spoke up and said “Alright James, we have some questions for you.” Gramps looked up from his coffee cup, made eye contact with Bill and said “Sure, sure Bill. I’ll be glad to help you out.”

Bill went on to explain about the “Little Sallies”. As soon as their name was spoken Gramps shook his head and said “Them damn bikers are back?! Lord, I thought they done left for good after what happened with their most valued member!” Ethel butted in again about Gramp’s language, but he didn’t pay any mind to what she was saying as he went on with his

story; “You see Bill, I know one of those Little Sallies. They called him “Wild Willie” even though his real name was Wilbur Worman. Of course I met him after he “escaped” the biker group, he was the only one of the Little Sallies to ever quit and live to tell about it!”

Bill was even more interested now after Gramps said that, I pulled out my small notebook and my pen and wrote down Wilbur’s name and nickname. I sat there waiting for more information to record down on the paper as Gramps continued his story;

“It was about 2 years ago nearly mid January when I first met Wilbur, I used to come to Uncle T’s around 6am because Me and Ethel would normally attend the 5:30am mass down at the church every day. Well, this one day Ethel wasn’t feeling too well so she stayed at home and I went on to continue our everyday routine. I walked into Uncle T’s greeted as always and sat down at the counter of the diner. Not too long after I sat down, this rough looking man with long gray hair and a huge beard tied at the bottom with a rubber band. He had a black leather jacket on with the crest on the right side that read “Little Sallies” with a flaming skull image under the words. I thought in my mind that I best hurry up, finish my coffee and get the hell out of there before more of those Sallies showed up. I had run into the “Little Sallies” on a road trip down to Alabama to see my brother before he passed away. They nearly tore us apart at this ol’ gas station, we were lucky to make it out with our lives so I had a reason to be skeptical of this man.

This man pulled out a cigarette and whipped out an old Zippo lighter to attempt to light his cigarette. After a few tries to ignite the lighter, he gave up and asked me for a light. I said

“Yeah sure” as I reached into my pocket and pulled out a pack of matches, pulled a match out then striking it on my worn down jeans. I held it up to his cigarette then waved the match out after I saw he got a light. The man was grateful for the light; he said “Thank you sir, you know not many would have done that for me because of my jacket.” I said back to him “I didn’t figure there would be any trouble, I don’t see no more of them “sallies” around.” The man laughed and said “I ain’t one of them anymore! I quit the group and they were madder than ever, I was the leader’s right hand man. Boy, were they mad when I took off.”

He reached over to shake my hand as he said “I’m Wilbur Worman, how’s it going buddy?” He seemed legitimate so I shook his hand and said; “Nice to meet you Wilbur, I’m James Gordon.”

We talked for a while after that, and then the topic of “How did you get involved with those Little Sallies” came up. He didn’t seem too offended by my asking and he went on to tell me the story; “The Sallies were never from around these parts, but they’d travel through time to time. I used to live down in a lower part of Alabama with my wife and a good paying job, one day everything went to pots. My job at the factory was replaced by some machine and I got laid off in an instant. Not too long afterward, me and my wife had to move into a smaller apartment and sell some of our stuff just to get by.

She didn’t take to that very well, nearly a week after we moved; she left a note on the counter that read “Wilbur, your nothing to me now. We can barely get by and I ain’t living long like that! If you want to find me, don’t bother!” That note had me at the lowest point in my life.

I wasn't much of a drinking man, but that night I turned into one. I drove down to this old road house not too far out of town with the little bit of gas and money I had left to buy a few beers. I had to sell my truck after I got fired because I couldn't afford it. I bought a old motorcycle instead and I'd ride that wherever I needed to go.

I pulled in the parking lot to this road house and noticed a couple of other motorcycles lined up against the front of the building so I pulled in right on the end. I noticed some guys in black leather jackets hanging out by the door. They gave me an odd look when I walked in the bar. I walked in and ordered a beer at the counter, the band got back up on the stage and began to play again as I sat there drinking my beer. 10 minutes had passed before I heard the rumble of more motorcycles filling the parking lot. The people in the bar dropped everything they were doing and stared at the door as I sat there drinking away.

Soon, the door to the bar violently flung open knocking down something hanging on the wall. I didn't even turn around; I kept drinking what was left of my beer as everyone else was in fear of these guys walking in with guns. This big fellow with a sawed off shotgun walked up to the bar and said "Get me beers for all my guys!" as he waved the gun at the bartender's face. The bartender grabbed all the beers as these men came up and took them from the counter. They'd finish one and throw it down on the floor shattering the bottle at their feet. Out of the corner of my eye I saw some guy try to run from his seat to the door, he didn't make it very far before one of the men pulled a revolver out and shoot him right in the chest.

The big fellow who was still standing at the bar leaned over at me and said “Does anything shake you up boy?” as he pointed his sawed off shotgun to my head and cocked it. All I did was pick up my beer and take another swig. He looked surprised as he pulled his gun down and said; “We need a guy like you, a guy who ain’t afraid, a guy who don’t fear death, a guy who likes beer!” I turned to him and said “for what?”

He leaned closer to me and said “for the new age, times are changing... do you want to be left in the dust or do you want to be up to par with us, you won’t be disappointed! Join the Sallies!” I looked at him for a second; I drank the last swig of beer, set it hard down on the counter and said “Count me in.” He patted me on the back and asked for my name, when he heard Wilbur, he automatically said “That won’t do at all, you’ll be Wild Willie!”

After that, I was an official member of the Sallies and I traveled miles on miles with these guys, I was one of them. I had become something that I knew deep down I wasn’t proud of but it was something that gave me a rush inside, a feeling like I was actually doing something to make a change but in reality all I did was cause trouble with a gang of dirty looking bikers with tough attitudes and a sissy name.”

After I heard that, I could tell Wilbur was in a bad state of mind. He just became a Sallie because he had nothing left to live for. I then asked him how he quit without getting killed, he went on to say;

“Well, It took me a few days to build up the courage to actually leave the Sallies. In the short time I was with the Sallies they looked very highly of my cooperation in the group and I

basically was the leader's right hand man. The story behind the Sallies was very interesting, the group started out in the late 40's with a man who had his legs blown off in WWII and wasn't able to walk. He and his buddy wanted to travel the country and all they had the money for was a motorcycle with a side cart. I'm not exactly sure but they called the man Sallie back in the war but when his legs got blown off, they called him Little Sallie. Not very long after Little Sallie and his buddy hit the open road, they gathered more people to follow their lead on creating a convoy of bikes to travel the country.

They say another group of bikers intercepted Little Sallie and his group of bikers; they lost a lot of men that day including Little Sallie himself. The survivors of the attack vowed to avenge Little Sallie and get back at the group of bikers that nearly killed all the followers of Little Sallie. But this new group that formed didn't take up the same moral values as Little Sallie did. These new members named the biker group the "Little Sallies" after their fallen leader, but they were more violent and rebellious than Little Sallie himself would have liked.

After nearly a year with the Sallies, I decided to bail out for once and all. While I was a strong member of the group, someone tried to quit and he got caught. They tied him to a tree with his arms stretched out on the branches as they all took turns nearly beating him with whatever was laying around. Then they took him down, tied him up behind two bikes and pulled the guy down a highway at high speeds, he had serious road rash and surprisingly enough he was still alive. The leader of the group then came up to him with his sawed off shotgun and blew away his legs and left him there to die as the rest of the Sallies moved on.

I knew leaving would be risky considering I saw what happened to that man. I decided to leave them at night when they were all passed out around a bonfire with their empty beer bottles laying everywhere. I pushed my motorcycle out to a main road and started it there in order to make sure nobody heard the engine fire up. I then made my way out of Alabama; I thought I was home free. No way would they find me now I thought to myself as I cruised down that open highway. It was nearly the middle of the night and suddenly I heard the rumble of motorcycles behind mine, I looked back behind me and saw the whole gang of Sallies gaining on my bike.

I sped up and tried to lose them, but they were still hot on my trail as I tried my best to take every gradual turn in the road at high speeds. I knew there was a town up this road not very far and I thought if I could make it that far I'd be able to lose them in one of the roads that branches off from the many roads in the town.

I could hear the Sallies yelling and firing their guns into the air as they chased me down the open highway. I saw red flashing lights not too far up the road, it was a eighteen wheeler pulled over to the side in front of this road that branched off to the right. I thought I could make it look like I was taking that road by making a wide turn and hiding behind the eighteen wheeler as the Sallies went to follow the way they thought I went.

I attempted to do what I planned; I made a wide cut across the highway and pulled the bike along the middle of the cab and the trailer of the eighteen wheeler. The Sallies went right on by and headed down that side road that it looked like I went down instead. It was very dark

alongside the eighteen wheeler, there was no way they could see me there. The only chance they would have of seeing me is right as they made the corner, and that's if they were actually looking, they just thought I went down that ol' road."

Bill interrupted; "Is this Wilbur still alive or around town anymore?" Gramps answered with little hesitation; "Yeah, yeah Wilbur has been a good buddy of mine ever since that day. He lives in that ol' trailer park off of highway 34; it's nearly right out of town. Wilbur and I shoot billiards at McCoy's every Thursday night; he's really a swell guy."

It looks like we needed to find Wilbur; gramps did a good job of telling us about the Sallies enough so we can confront Wilbur about and ask him more questions about his past with the Sallies.

Ethel began to speak; "So how are you boys coming along with the crimes?" Bill answered very quickly "Oh, it's coming right along Mrs. Gordon, don't you worry!" he took a sip of his coffee right away after he said that. Not sure what that was all about, but there's Bill for you, sometimes you can't explain his actions but they always mean something.

We moved on to a casual conversation between all four of us as the waitress came back around to refill our coffee cups. Not too long after all that, Bill thanked the Gordons for their time and walked out to have a smoke. I saw him walk out toward his Camaro; he just ran his hand along the primer covered body and just stood there. I could tell Bill was happy to have it running again; his pop would be surprised out of his mind when Bill would finally show him the car.

I saw Phillip walk toward the main entrance to Uncle T's and walk out to his car which was nearly right next to Bills. I saw his mouth moving as he walked toward the Camaro; Bill turned his and then looked back down t the grille of the old Camaro.

I stood up from the booth we had been sitting at and said; "Excuse me, Mr. & Mrs. Gordon." I walked out of Uncle T's quick to where all the cars were parked in a line right in front of the diner. As soon as I got near Bill's Camaro Phil said; "Oh look Paulson, it's your stupid partner." I looked right at Phil and said "I didn't know Worley finally un-glued you from his ass." Bill flicked out his cigarette and laughed, so did I after Bill started to laugh. Phil just stood there looking at Bill's Camaro, he finally said "Paulson, how about a little wager? How about my Mustang vs. your crappy Camaro."

I know what Phil had a 1970 Mustang Boss 302, but it had nothing on Bill's Camaro. Phil got that Mustang brand new from his grandfather before he passed away. Phil thought he was the thing in that car; he was always trying to impress people, especially the ladies.

I knew Bill would say yes to Phil's offer and sure enough he said; "Alright Phil, where do you want to do this race?" Phil said; "There's a road that runs right between the strip mines, nobody ever uses that road. I suggest we go there and race."

Bill agreed and he got in his Camaro and fired it up right in front of Phil. The sound of the revving echoed down the street as people in Uncle T's started walking outside. Someone yelled "What are ya'll doing!" Phil yelled back "We are going to race out by the strip mines, if you want to see a old man get toasted by me I suggest you show up!"

Everyone who was there jumped in their cars and got ready to follow Bill and Phil out to the strip mines. I was about to walk to my truck but Bill said; “Ray! Where you goin’ bud? You have to ride along with me, you won’t regret this ride, and this car can do a quarter mile in ten seconds flat!” Phil was in for a Big surprise, Bill leaned out the window, popped his head above the car to and yelled to Phil; “Hey Phil, what’s the wager? I ain’t wasting gas on you for nothing.”

Phil was nearly in his car, but he stopped and thought for a second “Alright Paulson, if I win, I get your car and if you win you get mine.” Bill slid on his sunglasses and said “Right on buddy, right on!”

Phil was the first to head down to the strip mines, and then Bill and I followed in the Camaro leading a convoy of people from uncle T’s diner along behind us including Grams and Gramps following in their Cadillac Coupe. On the ride there I asked Bill; “Do you really think you can beat him?” Bill said quickly; “There is no doubt that I can beat him, that Mustang has a stock 302 cubic inch 5.0 liter V8. This Camaro has a 454 cubic inch 7.4 liter LS4 big block V8, plus it’s supercharged. If I thought there would be a race here, I wouldn’t have put my car on the line. I already pulled a ten second quarter mile with this car a few days ago after Gator John helped me drop that engine in. I ain’t doin’ this to impress anyone, I’m doin’ this to shut Phil up.”

Bill seemed like he knew what he was doing as always. We were almost to strip mine road, Phil was already there waiting at the sign that said “55mph”. Some folks in pickups were

heading down the road, Phil said; “We’ll race to the old barn down on the end of this road, it’s nearly three quarters of a mile down that way. Them pickups are heading down there to assure there ain’t no lying.”

Bill pulled his Camaro to the right side Phil’s Mustang. Nearly everyone from the diner was there as the cars sat there idling on the empty highway. Phil revved up his engine as it echoed across the highway, bill sat there in the driver’s seat with his left hand on the wheel and his right hand on the stick. His left boot was pressing down the clutch as the right was pushing on the brake as he revved up his engine.

Those few seconds before the race started seemed like forever, the windows in Phil’s Mustang were rolled down as he yelled “You ready Paulson?” Bill had no windows on his Camaro since he was still working on it, but he yelled right back at Phil and said “Let’s do it buddy, I’m ready.”

The waitress from Uncle T’s walked in between the two cars and held up a makeshift flag someone made out of a white T shirt and a golf club. She held it up in the air, the engines were revving up as the flag was high in the air. She waved the flag down, the engines roared as we pulled away from the sign. Both cars spun the tires; Bill kept the car even with Phil off the line as we made our way down the highway. I could tell Bill hadn’t even gunned it all the way yet as he held the car even with Phil’s for the first stretch of the highway, as soon as we passed the end of the first strip mine Bill said; “Hold on man.” And pinned the accelerator to the floor and whipped it into 3rd gear to speed away from Phil. Phil was fading fast as we sped down the

highway. Bill had it at 120mph and he was only in 4th gear, he had 2 more gears to go. The Mustang was far behind a Bill glided into 5th gear and the speed kept increasing. The wind was whipping in our face because there was no windshield. Bill had his hat hanging from the bottom of the stick shift as the car roared down the highway. I had my hat in my hands as the wind pushed against my face. Bill was nearly going 160mph now as we finally glided into 6th gear. Phil was long out of sight now as we got closer and closer to the old barn down strip mine road.

We were nearly 500 feet from the finish line as Bill hit 185mph in the Camaro, Bill had won the race by a landside Bill gradually slowed it down after we passed the line. We passed the line nearly five seconds before Phil even was in sight from the old barn. Bill swung the car around and parked it up where everyone was standing as Phil showed up and passed the line. Phil did the same as what Bill did; he pulled around where everyone was standing and got out of the car. Bill was leaning against the front of the Camaro having a smoke. Phil walked over and tossed Bill the keys to his Mustang, Bill held them for a second and then tossed them back and said; "I ain't going to take you car" after he said that he began to walk away toward the rear of the Camaro. I knew Phil would have taken Bill's car in an instant if he would have won instead of Bill. Bill just wasn't like that, he may look tough and act it as well, but he was a nice guy deep down.

Everyone was herding around Bill now; they were all asking questions about the car or asking to drive it. I walked over to the driver's side door of the Camaro; I still couldn't believe how fast that car really was. Bill must have put some serious work on it in the last few days.

Bill then walked back around and popped open the driver's side door and got in. He pulled his hat off the shifter and swung it onto his head as he slid on his dark sunglasses as well. He said; "Let's head back into town Ray, we got to check out Wilbur's place." I jumped in the passenger side and Bill fired up the engine. Everyone was still standing around out behind us, Phil's car was still on the side to, Phil was sitting in the driver's seat with his head down on the steering wheel banging on the dashboard. People were all kind of walking behind Bill's Camaro and cheering him on.

Bill slowly pulled away from the group of people and headed back down the road into town. We had to head over to the trailer park on Highway 34 and talk to Wilbur. I didn't expect this whole race thing to take place but it sure added some excitement to the day. I said to Bill; "Nice job back there, I was a little worried at first when he was keeping up with us." Bill replied; "Thanks, I was a little unsure at first if I should stretch her as far as I did down the highway but she had more, my foot wasn't even down all the way."