

Chauncey McFadden, a Los Angeles PI, receives a frantic phone call from the president of a Miami-based cruise line. Two employees have been killed in port and Chauncey is hired to solve the crime and prevent further atrocities. MacFadden has little homicide experience, and things quickly fall apart as the body count climbs onboard ship and in Caribbean island ports of call. Smuggled drugs have disappeared from the vessel, which unleashes a terrifying, vengeful vendetta.

## **Death Cruise**

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A CHAUNCEY MCFADDEN MYSTERY

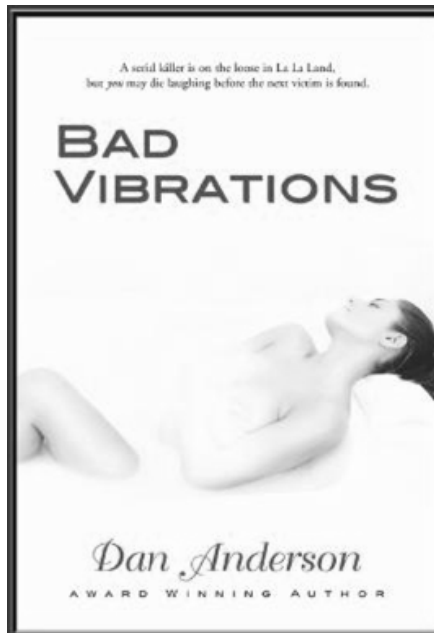
# DEATH CRUISE

The book cover features a stylized illustration. On the left, a large green palm tree stands on a sandy beach. In the foreground, a person lies face down on the sand, with a red pool of blood beneath their head. The person is wearing a yellow and green patterned tank top and blue pants. In the background, a large white cruise ship is sailing on a blue sea under a clear blue sky. A yellow banner with the text 'SECOND EDITION' is positioned in the middle of the cover.

SECOND EDITION

AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

**DAN ANDERSON**



The first book in the acclaimed series and recipient of five literary awards, including:

The Independent Publishers IPPY Book Award -  
Silver Medal, Best Regional Fiction (West-Pacific) for 2009



The Florida Writers Association Royal Palm Award -  
First Place, Published Mystery 2008



Books and Authors -  
Murder Mystery Book of the Year 2008

## Praise for

### *Bad Vibrations*

The concept of Dan Anderson's *Bad Vibrations* is unique, fresh, and totally unexpected. Mr. Anderson has created a captivating book with interesting characters who are well motivated from the beginning to the end. The front cover is eye-catching, with the titillating image of a woman on a stark white background. The title and author name are boldly displayed, making it easy for readers to locate. The blurb on the back is intriguing enough to compel readers to open the book, and the opening line will keep them turning pages. The characters are well drawn, and the dialogue is strong and natural to each person speaking.

—*Writer's Digest*

Boom Boom' Saperstein, an exotic dancer at one of North Hollywood's gentlemen's clubs, is found dead floating in her bathtub. Electrocuting by vibrator is the cause of death.

Chauncey McFadden, private investigator, is hired by Rubella Saperstein to find the killer of her niece, 'Boom Boom.' With the police not interested in the death of a stripper - it's clear if justice is to be had, it will have to be bought and paid for. The incredibly wealthy Judge Barrington then hires McFadden when the Judge's daughter, Justine, is also murdered by electrocution by vibrator. 'Boom Boom's' roommate is the next victim found murdered. McFadden's homicide experience is limited . . . actually, non-existent. He's a penny-ante player swept into a high-stakes game. He's playing with the big boys now and needs to find the vibrator killer before they strike again and he finds himself sleeping with the fishes. With his number one suspect now a victim, he must look deeper for the common denominator.

*Bad Vibrations* is a very well-written and entertaining mystery. It is creative and humorous with McFadden's wise-crack sense of humor and will have you laughing out loud several times throughout its pages. *Bad Vibrations* will

grab your attention from the very first sentence hold it all the way to the shocking whodunit ending.

—MyShelf.com

From *Amazon.com*:

**Hoping to see more of Chauncey**

By P. D. Cantrell "Potter fanatic" (GA)

I really enjoy Chauncey McFadden. He makes me laugh, but at the same time I find myself looking up some of the words he uses... I love a character with many sides. The story had just the right mix of colorful characters, good plot, humor, good setting and a mystery to solve as well. I found it easy to read and over much too quick. I hope that we will be seeing Chauncey (and Girtha too!) in the future.

**Chauncey McFadden is da man!**

By Willow (New Hope, PA, USA)

I enjoyed this book very much! Chauncey reminded me of Lawrence Sanders' Archy McNally or Rex Stout's Archie Goodwin - smart-alecks who fly under the radar, befuddle everyone and get the job done. Good plotting, funny dialog, and colorful, well-done descriptions. Well done!

**A thoroughly enjoyable read**

By S. C. Burnham

If you love mysteries you will not be disappointed with this cleverly written account of murders on the slightly zany side. The characters are colorful, the dialogue is humorous and the plot is clever. The solution to this bizarre murdering spree will keep you guessing and laughing until the very end. A thoroughly enjoyable read!

**A solid and unique mystery**

By Midwest Book Review (Oregon, WI USA) -

Murder isn't funny, but someone is obsessed with making it so. "Bad Vibrations" is about a serial killer who only targets women and does so in a way most would deem . . . strange at best. Chauncey McFadden is charged

with hunting down the monster, but must cut through a strange and entertaining cast of characters on both sides of the law. Hilarious and gripping, "Bad Vibrations" is a solid and unique mystery, recommended.

### **Bad Vibrations is such Good Reading**

By [armchairinterviews.com](http://armchairinterviews.com) (Minnesota)

"Woman Murdered with Vibrator"... a hilarious way to start the story, and the humorous twists and turns just keep coming with every flip of the page as author Dan Anderson takes readers through the daily life of a second-rate private detective.

The main character of Bad Vibrations is Chauncey McFadden—a short, balding PI with no money in his pockets until an amazing stroke of luck lands him in the middle of one of the most bizarre murder cases in the history of southern California. Within the same week, two unrelated and entirely different individuals hire McFadden to solve the murders of female family members. While searching for clues, Chauncey discovers that the victims have more in common than their means of demise, and a frighteningly funny tale begins to unfold.

McFadden is required to visit seedy motels, brave his way into conversations with the owner of the Glad Gland strip joint, and stand up to Lieutenant Del Dotto of the L.A. police department in his search for clues. With his reputation, and sometimes his life, on the line, McFadden struggles to find the connections between the murders he was hired to solve and the deaths that are continuing to occur.

Not a book for the easily embarrassed reader, Bad Vibrations is filled with adult humor and quirky scenarios. Anderson vividly describes his colorful assortment of characters and gives each their own distinct personality. I especially enjoyed the forgetful butler, Montrose, who never seems to remember what was just said in a conversation yet has an uncanny ability to describe past events from his murdered mistress's young years.

Author Dan Anderson has combined his love of comedy and mystery into an original work of art in Bad Vibrations. He currently resides in Orlando, Florida.

Armchair Interviews says: This book could be in all these genres: Mystery, Thriller, Fiction, Suspense, Drama, Comedy, and Adult Humor.

### **A Great Whodunnit**

By John J. White "J J White" (Merritt Island, Florida) -

A wonderfully written book that will have you scratching your head trying to figure out just who is the murderer. Written in the grand style of a Christie novel, yet with a contemporary twist similar to Stuart Woods's book. Like Woods, Mr. Anderson has written in his share of zany characters, not the least of which is Chauncey McFadden, an odd duck to be sure. It takes a chapter or so to understand the protagonist, but then you'll soon feel right at home with him, silently urging him take the correct path in the murderous maze. A good mystery in need of a sequel.

### **This book is a classic**

By Mystery Addict (Florida)

"Woman murdered with vibrator." That's how *Bad Vibrations* opens and with your attention captured, it never lets go. This book is, without a doubt, one of the funniest mysteries I have ever read. The humor is great, the characters are vividly drawn and the conversational exchanges will put you in stitches. You simply can't put the book down once you start reading it. The dialog is mesmerizing and catchy; it reminds me of Raymond Chandler in places. You get a double bonus-the book is very well written as well. The scenic descriptions of the Los Angeles area are beautifully painted and riveting. There are a number of scenes that you will reread several times because they are so poignant. I hope there are more Chauncey McFadden mysteries to come. This is a very original, creative piece of work.

### **Bad Vibrations is a great beach read**

By B. J. Macecsko "B.J." (Kenilworth, NJ)

I loved *Bad Vibrations*. Chauncey is an unusual PI that gets the job done. I'm a big fan of the Clark's mysteries but Dan Anderson puts a little more fun into his stories. Great read for a beach or a long ride. It's a great story line too.

From *Barnes & Noble.com*

**Bad Vibrations – 5 stars**

Bad Vibrations is one of the funniest, most well-written mysteries I have enjoyed in some time. The dialog is snappy, the characters are hilarious, and the descriptions of the scenery are memorable. This book is very creative in plot and style and is one of the most original mysteries I can recall. This book would make an excellent screenplay and someone should make a film of it. I hope we see many more from the author; please don't stop.

**One You Can't Put Down – 5 stars**

This book is a great mix of humor and mystery. Chauncey McFadden is an unlikely type to be involved in a serious murder investigation. The other characters involved are equally entertaining as we follow Chauncey through the investigation into the murder of 'Boom Boom' Saperstein. Hope to see more of McFadden in the future.

**A Fast Moving Intriguing Mystery That Will Prove Interesting to All Readers – 5 stars**

A diverse crowd of well developed characters provide a historically under-employed detective continuous challenges and intrigue. Fast paced, fun reading!

**Bad Vibrations – 5 stars**

I don't usually read mysteries but a friend raved about the book so much I had to give it a try. Am I glad I did! Bad Vibrations is one super-funny, well-written piece of work. The crazy characters, beautiful scenery descriptions, and humor are woven into a fascinating plot. That bar scene in Long Beach is a classic. This is one of the most entertaining books I have read in some time, and I hope that more are to come. Get this author on Oprah.

**A Mystery With Humor and Punch – 5 stars**

Four young and attractive women are found murdered in a most bizarre manner (No, I won't tell how), and the bored and stumbling cops don't seem to have a clue. So, it is up to our hero and protagonist, Chauncey McFadden, private eye, to unravel the complex case. Unfortunately, Chauncey is not too



swift himself, but as expected, he lurches forward and finally solves the murders after many detours into strip clubs and all night diners. This is a very funny (yet serious) novel by a new author. Chauncey is about 75% Guy Noir and 25% Mickey Spillane, so the reader has some idea of what a character this PI really is. The story is told in the first person through the eyes of Chauncey, which gives the novel a lot of added punch.

**Wow! This Book Is a Rare Gem. I Am a Fan for Life – 5 stars**

I picked up the book and was captivated from the first chapter. The turns and the twists of the plot were countless. The book was funny. The work is a cross of David Letterman, Get Smart and Sherlock Holmes wrapped up in a fun package. Recommended reading for anyone with a funny bone.

**Great Beach Read – 5 stars**

Wonderful use of descriptive phrases. Funny with pathos, serious with hilarity. I want to read more of Chauncey.

## DEATH CRUISE

Second Edition

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## CHAPTER 1

“HIS THROAT HAD BEEN CUT FROM ear to ear, McFadden—he was almost decapitated. If I live to be a thousand, I’ll never get over the police pictures of poor Lars Amundson, lying there with his head dangling from his body. I get nauseated just thinking about it.”

Not as nauseated as I was becoming. I wrapped the remainder of my sandwich in the Food section of the *Los Angeles Times* and tossed it into the wastebasket at my feet. Taking pains not to drop the telephone receiver I’d wedged between my cheek and shoulder, I tried to be empathetic.

“That’s understandable, Mr. Erickson.” I picked up my glasses and wiped away a mayonnaise smudge from the left lens. “It must have been a terrible shock seeing one of your most valuable employees under such tragic circumstances. Before you continue, let me grab a pen and some paper.”

“Speak a little louder if you will, McFadden. I’m calling from Miami, and the reception on my end fades in and out.”

“All right,” I agreed, several decibels higher. I was scribbling frantically with the second ball point pen I picked up to accelerate the flow of ink—if it worked at all. “You said your name was Anders Erickson, right? And that you are president and chairman of the board of directors of the Nordic Caribbean Cruise Line?”

“Yes. That’s correct.”

“And that this Amundson fellow was the chief officer senior of your ship, the *Oslo Aphrodite* . . . and he was brutally murdered two days ago in a bizarre fashion—”

“Right, and right again.” The replies were filtered through static.

“Before I go any farther, how did my detective agency come to your attention if I may ask? I’ve never done any work in South Florida.”

“Judge Alfred Barrington, one of our board members, is from Los Angeles. He recommended you. He told me how you captured the killers of his two daughters a couple of years ago and suggested I contact you.”

“Ah, yes,” I replied, basking in the warm glow of remembrance. “That was an investigative coup of the first magnitude, if I may say so myself.” I saw no point in confessing that prior to the Barrington case, I had accumulated very little experience in the investigation of homicides; that my usual cases were mundane fare such as matrimonial infidelity, missing persons, evidence procurement, insurance fraud, surveillance, and background checks for pre-nups and child custody cases.

“Where was the body found and by whom?” I continued.

“The *Oslo Aphrodite* arrived at the Port of Miami two days ago and had cleared customs and inspection. The passengers and many of the crew had disembarked, pre-boarding maintenance had been performed, and provisions were being loaded aboard for our next departure. Lars’ body was found that afternoon . . . in a car at the port parking garage by a customer picking up his vehicle.

“And, here’s the scary part,” Erickson continued. “I’d no sooner returned to my office from answering questions at the Miami police precinct yesterday when I got a phone call . . .” He stopped speaking, in obvious hesitation.

“And . . .”

“That voice—I can’t get it out of my mind. It was a deep bass voice, it sounded like a man, and it rumbled, like it was coming through an echo chamber. It had a heavy accent that I couldn’t identify. It was sinister and . . . and chilling.”

“What did he say?” I asked on cue.

“He said . . . that . . . more of the crew would die . . . unless . . . Zunimba was appeased.” Erickson sounded shaken.

“Did it say who or what ‘Zunimba’ was? Did he mention what it might take to appease Zunimba?”

“No, he only said that one sentence.”

“So, the name Zunimba doesn’t mean anything to you?”

“No,” the president said before another pause. When he resumed, his voice had taken on a more businesslike tone. “McFadden, the problem is the *Oslo Aphrodite* sails day after tomorrow for a thirteen-day cruise of the Caribbean. If this Zunimba makes good on his threat, our company could suffer irreparable financial damage. This is the high season for the cruise business, and any adverse publicity could turn the *Oslo Aphrodite* into a ghost ship.”

“I’m surprised your ship is still in port. Wouldn’t it usually have sailed out the next day after arrival?”

“Normally, yes, that would be the case. However, three dozen passengers from the last cruise came down with a viral infection and we were impounded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We’re required to report to U.S. health authorities when cases of gastrointestinal illness exceed three percent of the ship’s population. We had to sanitize the ship from top to bottom which added a couple of days to port time.”

“A virus . . . which could have come from natural origins or possibly have been introduced aboard the ship deliberately. Did the caller say anything to make you believe you were a target for future sabotage or blackmail?”

“No. Again, the voice said only those few words. Listen, McFadden, if this Zunimba makes good on his threat, it could occur while the ship is at sea outside of U.S. territorial waters. The FBI won’t dedicate manpower to a cruise solely on the basis of a telephone threat, and the Miami police don’t have jurisdiction at sea. We have ship’s security, of course, but it’s minimal and Judge Barrington and I felt an outside private investigator may be more effective since he could move freely among passengers and crew without arousing suspicion.”

“Point well taken,” I said. “Did the Miami police share any information with you regarding their preliminary findings in the murder?”

“No, just the pictures taken of Lars’s body by the crime scene investigators. But, besides his head being nearly severed, there were two other things particularly disturbing about the body.”

“Go on . . .” My pen was poised to record the details of this morbid forensic melodrama.

“First, his shirt had been unbuttoned to his waist, and on his chest . . . a circle had been carved with a knife. Inside the circle were several strange markings—they were drawn with blood, presumably symbols of some sort.”

“That *is* macabre,” I agreed. “What was the other disturbing—?”

“He had a chicken—”

Static on the line drowned out the remainder of the sentence. I waited for it to subside and yelled, “Erickson, are you still there?”

“Yes,” he acknowledged, but his voice sounded distant and remote.

“You started saying something about a chicken?”

Some loud crackling and a few pops cleared up the transmission problem and the president’s voice came through loud and clear: “I said his tongue had been cut out, and the head of a dead chicken had been stuffed in his mouth.”

I dropped my pen and coughed nervously, while peering under the desk at the wastebasket—and the remainder of the chicken sandwich I’d been munching on when his call came in. “This sounds like some sort of cult-styled execution. Did Lars dabble in the occult?”

“Knowing Lars, I would strongly doubt it.”

These strange proceedings stirred my imagination. Quasi-facetiously, I said, “Perhaps he stumbled upon a secret ceremony in the steamy interior of some cursed island and escaped with his life, only to be hunted down by avenging assassins intent on punishing him for his sacrilege.”

“You’ve been working around Hollywood too long, McFadden,” Erickson snorted. “Lars was a square shooter; as good as they come. He wouldn’t be involved in anything like that.”

“Look, I’d like you to come to Miami right away. I want to know who murdered Lars and why. And, I want you to be on the *Oslo Aphrodite* when she sails. Maybe the threat by this Zunimba guy is a bluff, but I’d feel better having someone on board who had some experience in these matters. Will you take the case?”

I wasn’t too crazy about the risk that a homicide investigation might entail, but my income flow had been on sabbatical recently and I had to do something with the bills that were accumulating on the corner of the desk, something other than watch the stack grow taller each day.

“Well,” I said, thinking aloud, “there’s the question of my fee . . .”

“I’ll pay you \$3,000 for two weeks of your time, throw in a free cruise, and pick up any reasonable expenses.”

“You’ve got a deal. I’ll take the red-eye out of LAX and be in your office sometime tomorrow afternoon.” I decided to entertain a sudden thought: “Would you have any objections to me bringing a female operative along? Her presence will help disguise my true identity and cover up the intent of the mission.”

“Be my guest and . . . hey, can you hold a minute, McFadden? I’ve got an incoming call on my personal hotline.”

While he attended to his other call, I began to fantasize about the voyage. I had heard that cruise lines served eight meals a day and promised myself that I would strive for nothing less than perfect attendance at all seatings. Anything else would be a distinct disservice. My gastronomic euphoria was interrupted by a shout loud enough to make the receiver jump from my hand.

“McFadden!”

“What is it?” My daydream destroyed, I secured the phone in my hand and refocused. “You sound alarmed.”

“You better get here tomorrow,” Erickson shrieked, “*as soon as you can.*”

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“They just found another member of the *Oslo Aphrodite* crew—dead—murdered the same way as Lars!”

## CHAPTER 2

WE LEFT LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT at nine o'clock that night, which meant a scheduled arrival in Miami at five-thirty the following morning, Friday. The other half of the "we," my "female operative," was in actuality my girlfriend, Girtha Roote. For eons, I had been promising to treat us to a vacation, and this was an ideal opportunity to fulfill my obligation at someone else's expense.

The flight was only partially booked and most people were sound asleep within an hour of takeoff. Girtha, struggling against repose, unfastened her seatbelt extender and cuddled next to me, squeezing my arm with anticipation.

"Oh, Chauncey, this is *too* good to be true," she murmured. "I can't believe that Cosmo gave me two weeks off on such short notice." Cosmo was her employer, the owner of an antediluvian neighborhood diner in downtown L.A.

"I suspect it's because you haven't had a day off since you've worked there," I commented dryly, unimpressed by Cosmo's generosity. "I'm sure you must have fulfilled the terms of your indentured servitude by now."

"Two weeks in the Caribbean. I just can't *believe* it," Girtha rhapsodized. "I'll have to do some shopping tomorrow afternoon, though.



I didn't pack enough to last two weeks. I even brought along an empty suitcase to hold clothes I'm gonna buy."

"Don't go overboard, no pun intended. I understand cruise ship cabins are small and don't have much storage space. We'll probably have to sleep curled up as it is."

Girtha pooh-poohed this notion and pulled a blanket over her short, plump frame. The excitement and events of the day had finally caught up with her and a yawn caused her large, green eyes to close and their long lashes to cease their constant fluttering. The monotonic drone of the engines and darkness at thirty thousand feet were all the sedatives she needed. In a moment, she was fast asleep, no doubt dreaming of white, sandy beaches caressed by warm tropical waters, coconut palms stirring gently in soft evening breezes, and an oversized moon bathing the paradise below in a passionate glow. I placed a pillow behind her short, brown hair and bestowed a good-night peck on her rosy, heavily dimpled cheek.

Not quite the romantic, I pulled out some books on ships, nautical terminology, and the city of Miami that I had salvaged from a used book store and began to brush up and research.

Several books later, we arrived at the Miami International Airport on schedule and took a taxi to the Sand Conch Hotel, where the cruise line's passengers were being quartered during the ship's sanitation delay. I got a little more than an hour of sleep before rising to quietly shower and dress. I wrote the still-sleeping Girtha a note and ventured downstairs to hail a cab outside the hotel. It was about 8:45 in the morning and already shaping up to be a hot, humid day.

The North American headquarters of the Nordic Caribbean Cruise Line was not far from my hotel or the Port of Miami. The offices were inside a tall glass and steel skyscraper that commanded a panoramic view of Biscayne Bay and was surrounded by fountains of dancing waters and ubiquitous Canary Island Palms. I located the cruise line listing in the lobby directory and hopped an elevator to the top floor, where a receptionist confirmed my appointment with a quick call and gave me directions to Anders Erickson's office. A short trudge later, I came across his personal secretary leaning back in a chair with her left leg elevated and outstretched, examining a run in her stocking.

"Is that Mr. Erickson's office you're pointing to?" I asked, nodding toward a nearby door opposite her big toe.

She blushed, then quickly lowered her leg and stood up.

I tried desperately to focus on the run in her stocking but my disobedient eyes kept drifting upward as she stood and smoothed her tight, short skirt.

"Please, follow me," she mumbled while avoiding eye contact.

She could walk point for me anytime. Judging from her figure, she must have been an underwear model moonlighting at the cruise agency to earn some extra coin. We entered an office and found a short, stocky man, hands clasped behind his back, pacing back and forth across a burgundy carpet. A red flattop and ruddy complexion gave his agitation a chromatic dimension.

"McFadden! You made it. Have a seat," he greeted. I shook his sweaty hand and parked myself at the end of an uncomfortable, burnt-sienna colored, leather chesterfield. As I sat, I noted that Erickson had already unbuttoned his collar and loosened his tie. I suspected, however, that the cause of his damp shirt was unrelated to the May humidity. He plopped down behind his desk.

"I see what Judge Barrington meant," he said, likely in reference to my five-foot-eight, two-hundred-forty-pound frame. "He said you didn't look much like a detective—but then, I don't truly know what a detective is *supposed* to look like."

"We come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and genders," I replied. "You can, however, be confident that my appearance, disarmingly deceptive as it may be, is supported by a keen mind. Let's get down to business," I suggested, changing the subject. "Why don't you start at the beginning?"

With a sigh, he tilted his head back and let his arms dangle over the sides of his chair. "The day before yesterday, I received a call from Captain Nelson informing me of the discovery of Lars Amundson's body in a parking garage."

"I believe you mentioned that Amundson is the chief officer senior."

"Yes, he's the second in command aboard the ship."

"And, I assume that 'Captain Nelson' is in charge of the *Oslo Aphrodite*?"

"That's right. The commander of a cruise ship is actually called the 'master,' but 'Captain' is so well entrenched in the public's vocabulary that everybody uses it."

"What did you do then?" I asked.

"I met Captain Nelson at police headquarters, where we answered some questions about Lars. Nelson had just come from the morgue after identifying the body. I'm still a little shaken as you can tell. I hired Lars years ago, myself, when I was head of human resources."

I noted that he tapped a folder on the top of his desk, which I hoped was a personnel file. "Who's handling the case for the Miami police?"

"A woman by the name of Alameda—Lieutenant Constancia Alameda," Erickson replied after glancing at her business card.

"What did she ask you?"

"Things like, did Lars have any family, how long had he worked for us, what was his job at Nordic Caribbean, how was his job performance, did he have any enemies, who were his associates . . . things like that."

"What did you tell her?"

"That Lars was thirty-two years old, a bachelor, born in Oslo, Norway; that he'd been with us for eight years, initially as first engineer senior, then as chief officer senior for the past three years; that he was from a wealthy Scandinavian family with large interests in a number of mining and manufacturing companies. Lars was very personable; he had no known enemies or bad habits—other than an occasional fondness for *akvavit*."

"I assume *akvavit* is either kinky sex, a game of chance, or Danish moonshine."

Erickson reacted with an ever-so-slight smile, probably his first in three days. "It's the last one."

"Did his drinking ever get him in any trouble?"

"Not directly," Erickson began. He wrinkled his brow and rubbed his chin. "But there was one incident . . ." He paused, obviously laboring over his next words. "He got into a little scrape in the Dominican Republic several months ago. It seems he became romantically involved with the daughter of a local magistrate, which didn't sit well with her family. You can see Captain Nelson for details."

Acting on my earlier suspicion, I asked if Amundson's personnel record was available. The president tapped the folder on his desk to confirm my hope. "May I see it for a moment?"

Erickson passed me the file which I scanned in some places and closely read in others. "This file is pretty thorough," I complimented. "It even has his medical records."

“All officers have to take annual physicals. Their fitness is an evaluated component of their performance reviews,” Erickson explained.

A few minutes later, after mentally noting some pertinent data, I handed the file back to Erickson. “What can you tell me about Captain Nelson?”

“Isak Nelson is our most experienced master in the fleet,” he answered while opening one of his desk drawers and reaching in to pull out another thick brown folder. After opening it to an appropriate section, he used his finger to scan the pages.

“He first went to sea as a teenager in 1950. He served on a few tankers and some freighters for six years before spending two years in the Royal Norwegian Navy. He entered the Norwegian Merchant Naval Academy, graduated as a junior officer, and served on a variety of merchant ships until 1963, when he returned to the academy for his master’s certificate. Since 1964, he’s served as chief officer senior and captain aboard passenger ships. He joined the Nordic Caribbean fleet in 1971 and has served on all six of our vessels over the past eleven years.”

“It sounds like he can row a boat and tie a sailor’s hitch,” I deduced. “Moving on, over the phone you mentioned that a second crew member had met the ‘black camel’—”

“The ‘black camel’?”

“I beg your pardon,” I replied sheepishly. “It must be the climate. Charlie Chan once said that death is a black camel that kneels unbid at every gate. I was referring to the second murder.”

“Oh, I see,” Erickson said, suppressing any discernible excitement about Oriental philosophy. “Yes—the call I received yesterday, when I was talking to you. It was Captain Nelson. He’d just been notified that one of our waiters, Victor Dubonnet, had been found in the rear of a warehouse. His throat was cut, his head almost severed, and he had the same design on his chest, as well as a chicken’s head in his mouth.”

“What can you tell me about Dubonnet’s record?”

Erickson picked up a folder from underneath Amundson’s. “I just had his file sent over.” Again, highlighting with his finger, he determined that the waiter was twenty-six, unmarried, and a citizen of Haiti who had been employed by the cruise line for the past three months.

“Any family?”

Erickson flipped through the file until he located the employment application. “It says Victor was born in Port-au-Prince, but his parents and nine brothers and sisters now live in Plaine-du-Nord, Haiti. He applied for political asylum in this country several years ago and apparently received it. No spouse is indicated.” He closed the file and looked up. “The head of our food service staff said Victor was a good employee who got along with his co-workers. It’s hard to know any member of the wait staff very well because of their high turnover.”

“What kinds of background checks are performed on employment applicants?”

“The officers and senior staff typically have years of experience in their fields and are hired directly by the cruise line from Canada, the U.S., and Western Europe. They’re subjected to intense scrutiny and investigation.”

“How about the rest of the staff members?”

“Not as much as you might suspect,” Erickson acknowledged. “Over eighty nationalities are employed by Nordic Caribbean Cruise Line. Cruise ship staff members are only required to have C1/D1 U.S. Visas, which are little more than a formality. This type of visa is for seamen only, and allows them to enter the U.S. for a limited number of hours and days—primarily time when the ships to which they’re assigned are in U.S. ports. They don’t need a regular work visa or green card to work on most cruise ships since the majority of vessels are registered in other countries.

“It’s important to note that most of the rank-and-file cruise staff, like waiters and cabin stewards, aren’t employees of the cruise line. They’re hired by crewing agencies who forward the workers’ pay to their families while they’re at sea. They work on contract periods of three to six months.

“Most large cruise lines hire people from developing, third-world countries where earnings expectations are lower and employment regulations are lax.”

“So,” I said to sum up his discourse, “*you* do not screen most employees because they don’t work for the company, and it’s highly unlikely that the crewing agencies subject them to any kind of rigorous background check.”

“That’s about the size of it,” Erickson replied. “Plus, when you get right down to it, even if the agencies *did* do checks, how reliable would any of the information be that they uncovered in those countries?”

“Good point,” I agreed. “How often do deaths occur on cruise ships?”

“In the past few years, the cruise industry has experienced an uptick in passenger deaths because of the increase in the number of ships, growth in passenger volume, and expanded itineraries in economically challenged countries.

“The deaths that happen *onboard* are usually such events as accidental falls over the rails, suicide leaps, health problems—heart attack and stroke—and an occasional homicide. Actually, more deaths happen in the ports-of-call, frequently during shore excursions. We’ve had passengers drown while swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, using Jet Skis, and parasailing. Others have been killed while driving rented motorcycles and mopeds. Some also die on tour boats that capsize, tour busses that crash, and sightseeing helicopters that fall out of the sky . . . if you can have fun doing something, you can die in the process.”

That’s the way *I* always wanted to go, I thought. “But death threats made against ship personnel—I gather *that* is a new experience.”

“It’s new for our company. That’s why we’re so concerned,” Erickson said.

“Getting back to the victims, Amundson and Dubonnet . . . I don’t see any apparent connection between them . . .”

“Nor do I. They were from separate worlds—socially, culturally, financially, and racially,” Erickson agreed.

“So much for that. Where do we go from here?” I asked.

“Tomorrow afternoon at one, busses will pick you, your associate, and the rest of the passengers up at your hotel. It will take you to pier three, where the *Oslo Aphrodite* is berthed. I have your cruise schedule here someplace,” he said, rummaging through some papers on his desk. “Here it is,” he said, handing me the ship’s May 1982 bulletin, which reflected the following itinerary:

Day One	Saturday	Miami, Florida—Boarding—At Sea
Day Two	Sunday	At Sea
Day Three	Monday	Ocho Rios, Jamaica
Day Four	Tuesday	At Sea
Day Five	Wednesday	Willemstad, Curacao, Netherlands Antilles
Day Six	Thursday	La Guaira, Venezuela
Day Seven	Friday	At Sea
Day Eight	Saturday	Bridgetown, Barbados

Day Nine	Sunday	Fort-de-France, Martinique
Day Ten	Monday	St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
Day Eleven	Tuesday	Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Day Twelve	Wednesday	At Sea
Day Thirteen	Thursday	Miami

"Nice selection of islands and ports," I commented. "I hope nothing as tawdry as a murder pops up to spoil the cruise."

"I'll second that, McFadden," he said as he bent to rummage through a desk drawer. "As a matter of security, only Captain Nelson and a few other select individuals, such as the security officer, will be made aware of your mission. Not only is Nelson one of the finest officers who ever graced a bridge, but you'll need someone in high command who has the authority to provide you with any support you might need."

Having located the target of his search, he closed the drawer, stood, and polished an object against the leg of his trousers. Satisfied, after a third glance, he handed me a shiny gold object. "This badge will identify you as a ship's inspector. Keep it on your person and flash it if your authority is questioned."

"Thanks." I got to my feet, pinned the shield to the leather in my wallet over my PI license, and prepared to leave. "If any further news regarding either murder should break after we've left port, be sure to let me know."

"Also, please forward your passenger list to Lieutenant Alameda and ask her to run the names through the FBI and Interpol databases. If Zunimba does have anything planned this trip, it would be good to know who the players are. You can contact me with the results as soon as they're available."

"Will do," Erickson promised as we shook hands. His palms were less sweaty and he appeared to be much more relaxed than when I arrived. "We've got cablegrams and ship-to-shore radio telephone service. And McFadden . . ." he added as I reached the door. "Be careful. I don't want any burials at sea—and that includes you."

"My sentiments, as well. But I do have one concern: Zunimba would have a field day finger painting a mural on a stomach the size of mine."

## CHAPTER 3

WHEN I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL ROOM, Girtha was stepping out of the shower. I pointed out a nearby mall from the hotel window and suggested she do her shopping while I took a taxi to the local precinct to look up Lieutenant Alameda. I'd concluded after leaving Erickson's office that Miami police and I might forge a better relationship if we knew each other.

When I arrived, I was informed that Alameda was giving a deposition in a criminal court trial so I slouched in the waiting room for the better part of an hour reading articles from *True Detective* magazine. I was on the last page of a lurid story about the mutilation of a migratory farm worker in an Indian River orange grove when a pleasant voice interrupted its resolution.

"I understand you've been waiting to see me?"

I looked up into the largest pair of brown eyes I had ever seen. Their owner was an almond-complexioned woman of above average height whose curvaceous figure was ill-disguised by a dark blue skirt and jacket. Her coal-black hair was long, straight, and lustrous, and nearly matched the shade of her partially concealed shoulder holster.

"Lieutenant Alameda, I presume?"

"In the flesh."



I stood and shook her hand, admiring the flesh that I could see. “I’m Chauncey McFadden, a PI from Los Angeles. I’ve been retained by the Nordic Caribbean Cruise Line to look into the murders of their two employees. I’d appreciate a few minutes of your time, now if possible, since we sail tomorrow.”

She glanced at her watch. “I can spare you twenty minutes. Come back to my office.”

Following her was not hard duty. She had long well-toned legs, a compact derriere, and a walk that would have diverted any randy Hamlin rat from the Pied Piper’s entourage.

Her corner office was relatively spacious for her rank. The light gray walls were covered with framed diplomas, advanced degrees in criminology and sociology, and certifications in specialty areas of police science from state and federal law enforcement authorities. Interspersed among those academic accolades were a number of framed articles from the *Miami Herald* in which her career exploits were prominently featured.

“Would you care for some coffee?” she asked. She slid into her chair, her split skirt enabling her to cross her legs effortlessly. Still, I almost managed to maintain direct eye contact. I declined her offer and she punched a button on her intercom. “Brannigan—bring me a cup of java, in my mug.”

A moment later, a tall man in a deputy’s uniform sauntered in with a steaming cup that had the word “*reina*” emblazoned on the side in bold letters. He set it on her desk and left. His facial expression indicated that he wasn’t too thrilled with this aspect of police work.

“So, what’s on your mind, McFadden?” she asked with more than a tinge of suspicion in her voice.

“As I mentioned, Nordic Caribbean Cruise Line—in particular, Anders Erickson, the company president—has asked me to investigate the murders of his chief officer senior, Lars Amundson, and a waiter by the name of Victor Dubonnet. I’m sailing on the *Oslo Aphrodite* tomorrow at one o’clock and would appreciate any information you may have uncovered on these homicides.”

She looked at me warily. “You’re not at all what I expected. When they said a PI was waiting for me, I had a different image in mind.”

“Let me guess: an ex-professional football player, forced into early retirement by injuries, who sports a jaw of granite, fists of steel, and biceps the size of frozen turkeys.”

She smiled. “Something like that.”

“Guys like that may be camera friendly, but the advent of the pistol gave blokes like me a level playing field. You can’t tell a detective wannabe from a real detective by sight alone.”

She continued her visual evaluation for a moment and then, her mind apparently made up, resumed. “Erickson requested that my department extend you every professional courtesy. Since your inquiry will be beyond our borders, I have no objection.” She then added, “Don’t take it personally, McFadden, but I’m glad your visit to our colorful little burg will be a brief one. I have enough problems without having a dick under foot.”

Her double entendre didn’t go unnoticed, but since our time was limited, I wanted to get back on topic. “Regarding Amundson and Dubonnet—”

“Doesn’t Erickson think the Miami police department is capable of investigating those murders?” she asked sarcastically. “We *may* have a high crime rate in Miami, but we also have one of the highest solved crime ratios in the country for a city our size . . .”

I jumped into the conversation to assuage her suspicion. “The competence of your department’s not in question, lieutenant. But because of the telephone threat he received, Mr. Erickson is afraid that additional murders may be in the pipeline—and that those murders will occur at open sea, on the decks of the *Oslo Aphrodite* and outside your jurisdiction. I’m simply looking for information that might help me anticipate such events and more adequately discharge my responsibilities after we leave port.”

Assured that I was not the professional threat she had initially perceived, the lieutenant seemed to lower her guard. “We suspect the murders were committed by followers of Zunimba, and that—”

“Excuse me,” I jumped in, “but I’m particularly interested in learning about these followers.” Based on the censorious stare that followed, I doubted I would interrupt her again.

“Zunimbism is a cult that sprang up in the remote areas of Haiti about twenty years ago,” she told me without lowering the stare. “Since then, it’s spread throughout the Caribbean basin. It represents a merging of two

powerful influences—pagan religion and organized crime—and specializes in drug sales and distribution.”

I started taking notes as she leaned back in her chair and assumed a professorial posture.

“I’m a little puzzled, lieutenant, by this fusion you speak of. Religion and crime don’t normally swap spit.”

“From an affluent, industrialized, Western, Judeo-Christian standpoint—no, they don’t. But, to ignorant, superstitious souls wallowing in abject poverty, the distinction isn’t nearly so clear.”

“In other words, Zunimbism offers the poor a way to attain both secular comfort and spiritual salvation.”

“Something like that.”

I sensed her agreement to my oversimplification was reluctant.

“Its followers seem to find what people everywhere demand of their religion: comfort in the present existence and hope for a better life in the hereafter. The cult’s been hard to stamp out, primarily because of the difficulty of infiltrating it with any success. Its members are very close-mouthed. They’re brainwashed into believing that if they reveal anything about their secret organization or its activities, they’ll be stalked and viciously murdered, and their souls will suffer eternal damnation.”

“Is Zunimbism anything like voodoo? I mean, since they both have their origins in Haiti . . .”

“Yes and no. Voodoo’s pretty harmless. It’s no more than a folk religion that was born on the slave plantations of eighteenth-century Haiti. It brought together and blended several major strands of Central and Western African religion and later, elements of French Catholicism. Its concerns were venerating ancestors and dealing with the dead—since the followers believe that those who have died influence the lives of those who are living.

“Voodoo’s a powerful and intimate religion because it focuses on transpossession—an altered state of consciousness in which a spirit can speak and act through a family member. Followers also gather at ritual ceremonies, where people sing and dance, during which spirits will occasionally take possession of someone, usually the priest or priestess. The attendees can then talk to the spirit and receive advice.”

“This isn’t the voodoo I’ve seen portrayed in the movies,” I said.

“No, it isn’t. Voodoo’s been the victim of negative stereotyping. True voodoo has no such thing as zombies—‘living dead’ raised from the grave to become mindless servants to some sorcerer who’s gained an evil power over them. Neither does it promote the use of voodoo dolls—pushing pins into a victim’s image to inflict pain and suffering.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” And, I was. “And Zunimbism . . .”

“Zunimbism also claims to have roots in West African culture. While the founders of Zunimbism borrowed much of their terminology and concepts from their voodoo neighbors on the island, it is far from an innocuous folk religion. Zunimbists do not believe in a god, per se, however, they do worship *loas*—spirits that exist in natural elements such as earth, water, wind, and fire.

“As long as an individual stays in harmony with these spirits, he or she will achieve the supreme goal, which is the attainment of pleasure and protection from pain. Zunimbists do have priests and priestesses—*oungans* and *mambos*—who are believed to have powers of sorcery and black magic; but they use those alleged powers to influence the spirits in rewarding or punishing mortals. And they can direct the use of violent means to achieve their objectives.”

“This is fascinating, but how does it relate to the two murders?”

“Legend has it that a cocaine smuggler fleeing from Haitian police got lost in the mountains around Ville Bonheur a couple of decades ago. There, he stumbled across a *lien saint*, or holy place, where a Zunimba ritual happened to be taking place. He only managed to avoid execution by sharing a little of his ‘cargo.’ The white powder filled the ritual participants with such a *loa* that all their past *loas* paled in comparison. Needless to say, it didn’t take long for the candy man to have the *oungans* and *mambos* eating out of his hand. Over the following years, he organized and trained a gang that’s become second to none when it comes to drug trafficking.

“In no time, the smuggler even became the *oungan rexis*, or head priest, and has now become known as Zunimba. Before long, he was using the natives’ newly acquired addiction to cocaine and their longstanding fear of the powers of the *oungans* and *mambos* to develop a loyal group of unquestioning subordinates.

“This *oungan rexis*, or Zunimba, is brutal in his treatment of rivals as well as those he believes guilty of betrayal. His band of *oungans* and

*mambos* and their disciples have no fear of personal danger as long as their acts occur in the service of Zunimbism. As long as they don't feel intimidated by death, they feel invincible—a competitive advantage in a cutthroat business that's allowed them to make substantial inroads into the drug trade in this part of the hemisphere.”

“Any idea who this messiah of murder is? I hope he doesn't get his own evangelical show on the religious channel.”

She shrugged. “No, but we suspect he spends a good deal of his time in Miami.”

“Why is that?”

“Zunimbism is too big an operation to be run from a Caribbean island. Plus, drug dealers flock to Miami like ticket scalpers to the Super Bowl. Most of the flow of illegal drugs into this country is coordinated from South Florida.” She leaned back in her chair and, ignoring her short, split skirt, plopped her feet on her desk.

This time, I managed to maintain eye contact. “Have autopsies been completed on Amundson and Dubonnet? If so, what was given as the cause of death?”

“Let's see what the ME says,” she replied. She lowered her legs to my disappointment, swiveled around to the credenza behind her, and rummaged through a stack of folders, pulling one out of the middle of the stack and another from the bottom. By the time she turned back around to face me, she was flipping through the pages. “Ah, here's the medical section . . . According to this, we don't have all the results in yet, but the medical examiner says that in both cases the cause of death was exsanguination, a fancy name for the victim bleeding to death.

“The report says, ‘A preliminary look at the velocity and type of blood splatters indicates that severe arterial truncation occurred.’” She looked up and, for my benefit, explained: “Arteries spurt freely, resulting in a linear and cascading splatter pattern.” Satisfied that she'd demonstrated her intellectual superiority, she glanced back down at the folder and continued reading. “‘The wound appears to be a homicidal incision administered by an assailant who was behind the victim.’ The ME knows this because the cut started high up on one side of the neck near the ear, swept downward across the front of the throat, and up the opposite side,” she paraphrased. I saw her flip through a few photos and study some sketches before she spoke again. “The path was left to right so we know

the assailant was right-handed. The depth and angle of the cut, and the fact that only one incision was made, indicates that the assailant was taller than the victim, strong, and used a heavy knife. There were no cuts on the arms or hands of the victim which indicate that the coup de grâce was accomplished so quickly that the victim didn't have time to put up a defense."

"Good summary," I complimented. "My next question may call for some speculation: why do you suppose the murders were executed in such a brutal, ritualistic way? What's the significance of this *modus operandi*?"

"We don't have a lot to go on here. Apparently, the head is sacred to Zunimbists—it's considered to be the residing place of the soul. After a killer dispatches an enemy, severing his head condemns him to eternal damnation."

"Sounds like overkill to me. What about the markings?"

"The circumscribed symbols painted on the victims' chests haven't been deciphered by cryptologists yet. They could be a warning to others or they may be an explanation of why the victim was killed. Possibly, they're instructions regarding how the deceased is to be treated in the hereafter."

"If this keeps up, it's going to give graffiti a bad name. How about the bit with the chicken's head?" I asked. "Got anything on that yet?"

"It seems that chickens are held in low regard by the Zunimbists—possibly because of their skittish behavior or the fact that they're scavengers of a low order, since they'll eat just about anything on the ground. The Zunimbists also act out a little superstition called *passé poul*, which means 'to pass the chicken.' Once the assassin has completed his work, he rubs a dead chicken all over his own body. Any impurities or evil spirits are transferred to the chicken through this bodily contact. The act, in effect, purges the Zunimbist of his transgressions. Decapitating the chicken and stuffing its head in the corpse's mouth condemns the victim to serve as a substitute in an eternity of torment and anguish."

"The chicken's probably not too crazy about this procedure, either. Remind me not to buy a KFC franchise in Port-au-Prince. One final question, lieutenant. If members of this gang are so secretive, how did you manage to find out so much about them?"

"I'm an adjunct professor and guest lecturer at Miami Dade Community College where I teach criminology with an emphasis on the Caribbean and Central and Latin American regions. I've been gathering a

lot of research on the subject and hope to write a book.” She paused as she pointed to a framed certificate on the wall beside me. “I was also appointed to head a Zunimba Task Force that is comprised of representatives from law enforcement agencies throughout Florida. We’re in the process of expanding our information base on Zunimbism. To date, most of what we know has come from FBI bulletins and our own street experience. It’s been difficult getting information from Zunimbists because they’ll commit suicide rather than be captured.”

“Why? Are they afraid they’ll be served chicken as their last meal on death row?”

“Actually, you’re on the right track—not about the chicken but death row. The one fear they do have is the death penalty for a couple of reasons. First, they believe the electrical interference generated during an electrocution destroys their ability to receive spirits. Second, once executed, their bodies can only be released to licensed morticians, not fellow cult members who’d whisk the corpses away to jungle locations to perform three-day spiritual ceremonies before burning them in a funeral pyre.”

“Digressing for a moment, I wasn’t aware Florida had a death penalty.”

“We didn’t have one for fifteen years, but it was revived in 1979 after a favorable Supreme Court ruling three years earlier. We now use an electric chair, ‘Old Sparky’ as it’s affectionately called. I’m afraid its days are numbered, though.”

“Why is that?”

“Criticism from right-to-lifers has been mounting, and the attorney general’s office in Tallahassee has been giving some consideration to lethal injections. I don’t think that’s a good idea, though.”

“Because . . .” I prompted.

“Lethal injection, or what I’ve read of it, appears to be a complicated, nasty process that has plenty of issues all its own,” she replied, her voice tinged with skepticism.

“How’s it different from any other shot with a needle? Pardon my ignorance but we still use gas pellets in California.”

“According to what I’ve read, the prisoner is first injected with sodium pentothal, which is pumped throughout the body by the heart and induces sleep. Then pancuronium bromide, a muscle relaxant, is

administered to paralyze the diaphragm and lungs and halt breathing. The final step is a third injection of potassium chloride, which stops the beating of the heart.”

She glanced at her watch before resuming with some impatience. “Getting back on topic, we did manage to corner a Zunimbist a while back while trying to serve a warrant. He wrecked his car during a police chase but survived, and we were able to get him to a hospital for treatment and interrogation.”

“Was it difficult obtaining a confession?” I asked.

“That was actually the easy part,” she confided. “All we had to do was walk in the hospital room, waiving a long knife and a plucked chicken.”

“And he spilled his guts . . . in a manner of speaking,” I finished with a laugh. “If you have no objections, lieutenant, might I borrow your chicken? I’d like to question the prisoner.”

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible,” she replied.

“Oh? So, he died later?”

“No.”

“He was released on bail?”

“No.”

“Then what?”

“He grabbed a male nurse’s scrubs from a linen closet and escaped. As he was crossing the street, he was hit by a truck carrying live chickens to a poultry processing plant.”

“If you live by the chicken,” I philosophized, “I guess you die by the chicken.”

After briefly pondering the little ironies of life, I was preparing to leave when I thought it advisable to ask about my weapon. “I brought a firearm with me to Florida, a .38 Smith & Wesson. Will that cause anyone a problem?”

Alameda sniffed derisively. “Are you kidding? Florida is a pistol-packer’s paradise. We call it ‘the Gunshine State’ instead of the Sunshine State. You don’t need a license or permit to purchase a handgun, rifle, or shotgun in this state. If you’re twenty-one, you can buy a handgun from a licensed dealer. If you’re eighteen, you can buy from a private party. Our waiting period is only three days, and the criminal background check is a joke.



“Furthermore, firearms don’t have to be registered with the police and can be kept in the home without any type of permit. You can even carry a firearm in your vehicle without a permit or concealed-weapons license as long as it’s ‘securely encased’ such as in a glove compartment or someplace where it’s not immediately accessible. You can go to any school in Dade County and find more guns than lunchboxes and backpacks.”

At that, Alameda buzzed Deputy Brannigan who again lumbered in without relish.

“Take my cup and wash it out,” she commanded.

He reached over, picked up the mug, noticed that the contents hadn’t been touched, and left.

“Lieutenant Alameda, if you’ll permit a suggestion. Authority, once acquired and established, doesn’t have to be so blatantly exercised.”

“Excuse me?”

It wasn’t that she hadn’t heard me; she was just surprised that I had challenged her.

“And, what do *you* know about authority?” she asked rhetorically. “Tell me: *what* do you know? I’ve got three strikes against me. First, I’m a woman working in a man’s world. Second, I’m of Cuban origin, working in a city whose power structure is still adjusting to being overrun by Hispanics. The Mariel boatlift in 1980 brought 125,000 Cubans to South Florida, many of them hardened convicts released by Castro from his worst prisons. Bias against Cubans has been a fact of life ever since. Third, I’m smart—smarter than most of the guys in this department who resent it.

“I’ve worked like hell to get where I am, and I’ll be damned if I’ll give anyone the upper hand again. Chauvinistic abuse at the police academy didn’t stop me; crooks who didn’t take me seriously until I cuffed them didn’t stop me; police commissioners who patted my ass and called me ‘honey’ didn’t stop me. So, don’t tell me how to handle authority, McFadden. I’ve had to buck it every step of the way in my career.”

I rose gingerly from my chair. “Well, I believe my twenty minutes are up. Thanks for the information, lieutenant. I hope you get whatever it is you want, and I hope it’s everything you want it to be.”

Chauncey McFadden, a Los Angeles PI, receives a frantic phone call from the president of a Miami-based cruise line. Two employees have been killed in port and Chauncey is hired to solve the crime and prevent further atrocities. MacFadden has little homicide experience, and things quickly fall apart as the body count climbs onboard ship and in Caribbean island ports of call. Smuggled drugs have disappeared from the vessel, which unleashes a terrifying, vengeful vendetta.

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