

Matt had gone to the cemetery to visit his parents' grave. He heard someone crying across the fence that separated the cemetery from "Potters' Field." It was in the county cemetery that he met little Stanley Wright. He was weeping over his mother's grave. Stanley's mother had been murdered and buried by the county . Her death had been written off as an overdose, and because she was poor it had not been taken seriously, but Stanley could not accept that. He knew how his mother felt about drugs. His brokenness touched Matt and he promised to find out truth for Stanley.

The Murder of Ms Nobody

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THE MURDER OF MS NOBODY

Don Falgout

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CHAPTER 1

"Mom, I can't help it. I'm hungry!" Complained the little red-headed eight year old boy. "Whatta' we gonna' eat? When are we gonna' eat?"

Stanley's mom softly answered him as she ran her fingers through his beautiful red hair, "Son, I ain't got nothin'. Momma's already told you that I called the church for some help with food. They're gonna' help, but it'll be after church tonight before we can get it. So, we've just gotta' be patient. You're not goina' starve," and she laughed, and slid her arm under her pride and joy and held him close and the two lay on the old makeshift bed. That was all she could do at this time. Son, you just rest. I'm going to ask Momma B to check on you while I go get us some food. You just close your little eyes and when I get back, we'll I'll wake you up and we'll eat.

Comforted with his mom's promise, Stanley drifted back off into his nap. Rita eased off the bed and gently. She pulled her old, faded coat over her jeans and dark blue blouse. She fastened the buttons on the front as she walked through her door and across to Mama's apartment. Rita was the kind of mother that would never leave her child unless all the arrangements had been made.

She knew that the large woman in her late sixties did not move very fast and it would take her a few minutes to get to the door. Everyone loved Mama. She stood all of five feet two inches tall and weighed close to two hundred pounds. When she walked, she waddled and her legs scraped together producing a scratchy sound, but all of that aside, Mama was wonderful. She was a transplanted Louisiana, a for real Cajun, and Rita and Stanley loved to hear her talk. Her words were wonderful, but when she wanted to she could talk just as good as anyone else. She just had to make herself slow down and her every word was clear as a bell. She and her husband came to Mount City for him to work in the mill. He never made much money and had no retirement. When he died suddenly, Mama was left with nothing but a small Social Security Check. Even though she had little money, she loved to do for people. She was just a natural born helper--which was sometimes a real hindrance to her.

She knocked softly and waited patiently and Mama finally got there and opened the door. Rita reached over and the two hugged as usual. The Rita began, "Mama I hate to have to ask, but can I ask you to do me a favor?"

"Why yew know that yew can chi. What can Mama do?"

So Rita began, "Mama I've gotta' go over to the church and get the food basket for us. Stanley is sleeping so good that I don't want to wake him up. Would you keep an eye out on him, and if he wakes up, I know that he'll come over here. Is it alright?" She paused, but she began again before Mama could answer her because she wanted to give this kind old lady an out if she had plans. So she dropped her head and said, "If you are busy or something, I can..."

Mama stopped her as she held up both hands and signaled for her to stop, "Honey, yew know I don't mind. Do yew wants' bring him over now?"

"No, I'll let him sleep. I'll be back before he wakes up."

"Yew be careful and take jew're time. Dat chi, he'll be O.K."

As she began walking toward the stairs, she glanced over her shoulder and saw Mama's door open. She had left it open so that she could hear Stanley. Rita couldn't

explain how she felt. She felt as if she were walking in a dark cloud. Something was wrong, but she couldn't understand what it was.

When she got to the stairs, she stopped again, but she didn't look back. She felt as if she was looking inside of herself and she was not sure what she was seeing. She couldn't understand why she was so hesitant about leaving. She walked down the steps to the front door, but she stopped before she opened it.

As she reached out to turn the knob, a cold chill shivered through her body. She could not escape that dark cloud. She had to have that food. That was reality. So, she pushed herself to go on. She told herself, you're being stupid. Nothing's wrong. You just don't wantta' go and ask for food. Your pride is wounded that's all.

She walked through the old weather scared door and on down the broken and ragged bricked front steps. As Rita walked slowly up the street, she felt like crying at how this whole eastern section of town had gone down. It had once been a proud family section of town. Now families had moved out and the buildings had run down. Windows were broken in many apartments, and they were left un-repaired because the landlords really didn't care anymore. This area had become Mount City's slum area.

She continued walking east away from her apartment toward the church. As she crossed Ninth Avenue, she thought, only three more blocks. Even though this was a changing neighborhood, she was not normally frightened to walk there after dark. Why was tonight so different?

She crossed Tenth Avenue. There was no traffic light but there was really no traffic that needed a stop light. She walked on down the block to Eleventh Avenue, and she stopped at the intersection to make sure that it was really safe to walk. As she stood there, she looked not only to her right and left, but this time she looked back over her right shoulder. A small dark car was approaching the intersection. As it slowly passed on through the intersection, she thought that it might be one of those Japanese cars, but she didn't know anything about models. It was just a small dark car. The car rolled slowly past her and then it made a U-turn just past the middle of the next block. When it completed the turn, it pulled to the curb and stopped.

She tried to not think about the parked car. In itself a parked car was not out of the ordinary, but she still slowed her pace and watched it carefully. This suspicious car did not help her dark sense of foreboding. It did not matter though because she knew that she had to go on. She had no choice. She would have loved to have turned around and run back to the safety of her home.

The daylight was quickly fading into night. It was the twilight of the day, that time of day that you can only see as if it were looking through a glass darkly. Some street lamps had come on and others were coming on, and others were not going to come on from either blown bulbs, or neglect of the city. The dimly lit street only deepened the dark feeling that she was experiencing.

She drove herself to proceed. Continue she would, but she would continue cautiously. Her apprehensiveness turned into out and out fear as she saw a light come on inside the car as the driver's side door opened. A dark silhouette of a man climbed out.

She took a deep breath and tried to calm herself as she slowed her pace a little more. Any slower and she would be standing still. The thought flashed through her

mind about the women from the poor sections of town who had gone missing and then found dead. There had never been any real investigation into it, and everyone on this end of town knew that there would never be any investigation. No one cared about them. The women were simply just declared to have been drug addicts who had overdosed. The word on the street was that they had been murdered. Rita shrugged her shoulders and thought who cared--we're just a bunch of nobodies anyway. Who cares?

Then she kind of chuckled as she thought to herself, "I'm walking so slow now that even the tortoise in the story "The Tortoise and The Hare" could pass me. But she could not force herself go any faster. There was something sinister and threatening about this car and the driver who was standing beside it. She could not see his face; she could feel his eyes staring at her.

She fixed her eyes on the figure that had now left his standing position beside his car and began a slow walk around to the front of his car and then onto the sidewalk. When he stepped up on the sidewalk, he turned in her direction!

Why? Why was he walking right toward her? Why could he not have walked in the same direction? She was getting paranoid. She fixed her eyes on his every movement. Her mind was in a whirl. Something like this would have never bothered her before. Why now?

She had walked many times after dark in this community and met many men—some even drunk and she had never felt like this before. At that moment she stopped and almost turned to go back home, but she must go on. She had to have that food. *There was nothing to fear*, she told herself and she began again, but this time she picked up her pace a little. She stood more erect and tried to exude a feeling of confidence, but it was hard.

Quit being so silly she exclaimed within herself! She laughed quietly as if it would take away the fear and give her the confidence that she needed to go forward.

Surely, no one would do anything here she continued to try to convince herself to go on without any fear, but she was fighting a losing battle. The sinister stranger slowed his pace to match hers. Now he was closer and she could see him better. He certainly did not look so menacing. He actually looked clean-cut and well dressed. He wasn't scary looking at all. In fact he reminded her of teachers that she had had when she was in school.

He was wearing a light looking -- maybe a gray sport coat; it may even be a muted check, she thought, but she could not really tell. The slacks were darker she could tell that, but she could not discern their color. They were just dark. He was so neat looking.

How he stood out in this neighborhood! He was really out of place in this neighborhood. This man was definitely not from here. This was a torn jeans neighborhood and not a golf shirt and sport coat neighborhood. This was not the country club side of town.

The closer he got the more she could see about this stranger. His sport shirt was open at the neck revealing a rather small un-athletic looking neck. He was not built like the laboring people who lived on this side of town. Now, she could see his face. It was a soft, kind looking face. He was not old. He could not be out of his thirties, and there was a boyish almost impish smile on his face. Rita was becoming more comfortable with his

appearance. She was calmer. She was more relaxed. She felt silly, and was glad that no one knew how she had been talking to herself. She returned to her normal walking pace. She was relaxed as he approached, and she began smiling at him.

As he approached within a few feet of her, he returned her smile, and greeted her with a friendly, "Hello."

She returned his greeting but then suddenly he bumped into her as if he had tripped and fallen into her. As she staggered to her left, she struggled to regain her balance and prepared help him as well as to offer an apology to him, but she never had that opportunity.

He staggered her again, but this time it wasn't his body that slammed into her it was his words. His words ripped right through her throwing her into shock.

"Don't move. I've got a gun in my pocket and it's pointed right at you."

She started to raise her hands, and he whispered frantically, "Don't raise your hands. Don't move. If you do just what I tell you, nothing will happen to you. If you don't, I'll kill you right where you stand. You understand that?"

She stood there paralyzed by his threat. She wanted to scream, but she didn't dare. She wanted to cry, but the tears were dammed up. They would not flow. She was just numb. She stood there staring at him. She couldn't say a word.

Then she forced herself to speak, "Listen, mister," she spoke with a quivering voice, "I ain't got nothing..."

"Shut up! I told you to keep quiet and do what I said. You understand?" He impatiently grunted.

His voice and actions did not match his appearance. How could someone look so nice and be so evil?

Rita began to whisper calmly, "Just tell me what you want me to do. Just don't hurt me; I've got a little boy at home to think about. Please just don't kill me. There ain't nobody to take care of him. Please just don't hurt me."

"Shut-up! Someone might hear you. Shut-up right now." Then his tone of voice calmed down as he continued to try to reassure her and to calm his prey down. "I'm not gonna' hurt you. I'll really help you if you'll just trust me."

Rita didn't believe a word that he said, but she did not dare try to break away. He sounded like a crazy man. He moved closer until he was only inches from her back. He had brought the gun in his coat pocket up into the small of her back. She was absolutely petrified! This could not be happening! This was not real! But it was real!

Her kidnaper ordered her to walk on his right side. They walked slowly toward the little car. They were close enough now that she could tell that it was a dark red color. He stopped when they got to the front of the car he spoke now loudly enough that anyone could have heard him had anyone been on the street, "Go in the front to the driver's side." When they got to his door, he opened it and said, "Get in and slide over to the other side. Don't even think of trying to run. You'll never make it."

Just to demonstrate his authority and power and to show her that no one was going to offer any help on that street, he took the pistol and shot out the street light on the corner. It just happened to be the only light on that corner. He was right. No one cared. No one even looked to see that a pistol had been fired. No one cared!

Rita eased herself into the small car. Using the steering wheel and the dash

board she lifted herself past the automatic gear shift in the floor and into the passenger seat. She put her hands onto her lap and sat silently as he slid into the driver's seat.

"Fasten your seat belt," he snapped and waved his pistol at her "don't want to not be safe."

As he held the pistol where she could see it, he explained, "I'm ambidextrous. Do you know what that means?"

Rita shook her head that she did not.

"That means that I can use either hand equally well. I can write with either and I can shoot with either. Now you know that I can shoot you with either hand if I want to. Right?"

Rita nodded yes.

He put the pistol in his left hand while he reached down with his right hand and turned the ignition key and the little four cylinder engine whined to a start. He then took the pistol from his left hand and cocked it and pressed it into her left side as he turned on the lights.

Rita sat motionless. Then with no warning he shoved the gun deeply into her side. God how it hurt! She was frozen in her seat. The barrel of the gun felt as if it had come right through her side. The pain was sharp, but she said nothing. She simply stared straight ahead. She hardly breathed. Then he removed the gun from her side and she breathed again.

He transferred his gun back to his left hand, and he uncocked it as he pointed it toward her explaining that he did not want it to go off accidentally. It was as if this explanation should make her feel safe, and that now she would be able to trust him. What an act! He reached down and put the little car in drive position, and with his right hand he turned the wheel and eased the car into the street. Not a car had passed. Not a soul had stirred on the street since this had begun.

Rita watched as her apartment building slowly passed out of her sight and she thought, "I'll never see him again." Tears began to come now, and she knew that this man was not going to let her go. She knew that death would be at her door. But what could she do? She was helpless.

After a few blocks he turned onto a county road. Rita knew that this road would lead them out into the deserted end of town and eventually out into the country. Nothing much was out there except a couple of new subdivisions and the farm of the Sheriff and several rich families. In her mind she thought that this would be the best place for a person to take someone that he was going to rape and kill.

Rape! What a scary thought. Rita could live with the rape if he would only let her live. But for some reason she knew that this man was not going to rape her and release her. As she rode, she tried to psyche herself up for what was coming. Her twenty-eight years had been hard. She had been reared in a comfortable home. Her parents were good hard working people. They provided for her and her two brothers as best as they could. Her father was never able to earn above a laborers pay, but he did always have work.

They always had the essentials of life, but they were never able to have any of the frills that would have made life easy. While everyone else had washers and dryers, they used a rub board in their bath tub to wash their clothes. They then hung them out on the

line to dry. She always hated the towels. They were always so stiff and felt rough to dry off with. For her a washer and dryer in the home meant that she had been successful.

Her mother and dad had long since died and her brothers had married and divorced and moved around so much that she had lost track of them. They had never been close to each other. She wouldn't even know how to get in touch with them if she needed to. She had met and married her husband before she finished high school, and she quit and tried to work some, but she was never successful at it. She had bounced around with her husband from job to job and town to town. She watched him get more and more depressed about his situation. Rita had also believed that he had some mental problem that needed to be treated beside his depression, but unfortunately they never had either the money or the insurance to deal with it.

She could feel him looking at her. She had once be a beautiful girl, but now her hair was now streaked with little bits of gray. Her face had lost its soft feminine look and had become hardened and almost crusty looking. Her rough hands lay on her lap as she wondered what was going to happen. Then she decided that she would be better off not even thinking about it. Her life was flashing before her! My, how she felt that she had failed. She was still miserable and poor. She felt that she was going to die that way. There was nothing she could do. She was trapped like an animal.

The car turned onto a bumpy dirt road. She watched him as they bumped down the road until they came to a deserted little shack. The man stopped the car and put the gear lever into the park position. He broke the long silence, "Sit still; don't you dare move or I'll kill you right there."

He eased himself out of the car and transferred the pistol to his right hand. After pulling the seat back into the forward position, he reached behind the seat and pulled out a large battery operated lantern. He snapped it on and light flooded the immediate area. He walked around to the front of the Toyota to the passenger side door. When he opened the door, he ordered her out of the car.

Rita eased her body out of the car and stood facing him. He took a step to the side and motioned with the gun for her to move. She walked slowly in front of him. The light was just enough to keep her from tripping. It was hard for Rita to believe that this was happening to her. It was like a bad dream. Surely she would wake up and find that it was untrue. She kept hoping that he would not harm her. She had always feared being raped, but now she would have gladly given him his "fun" if that was all that he wanted. It was the fear of the ultimate that was worrying her.

In front of her was a spooky looking cabin. It looked like it would fall down in the gentlest of breezes. Her heart was pounding so loudly that she knew that her captor could hear it. Her mouth was dry as cotton. As she got to the steps of the cabin, she stopped. They looked as if they would not hold her, and she was fearful at trying to walk up them.

As she stood there, she looked around. She hardly moved her head. She did not want him to suspect that she was even thinking about trying to escape. Then she noticed bushes close to the house. Maybe she could use them to help her escape. Her hands were free. What was she waiting for? Now was her chance. If she allowed him to get her in that cabin, there was no telling what would happen.

She took a couple of deep breaths as she got up the nerve to move. But she was

paralyzed with fear. Her mind was saying yes, but her body would not respond. She was frozen in her tracks. What could she do?

CHAPTER 2

Rita swallowed hard and lunged to her left as she swung her left hand around and hit her captor as hard as she could. She had intended to hit his gun hand; she missed and only hit his left shoulder which managed to knock him off balance. That gave her split second to react and that she did. She jumped in between the bushes and the rugged old shack. But she wasn't fast enough. As she got to the last bush her escape came to an abrupt halt.

The bang of the revolver and the sound of the bullet as it whizzed past her and dug into the dirt near her feet brought her to an immediate stop. She knew that she was totally at his mercy now. There was nothing she could do. How helpless she felt. She not only felt like a failure, but she even felt stupid.

"Don't try that again!" he screamed! "You're out in my country. Nobody can hear."

Just to emphasize his point he shot one more time into the air. He then chuckled sinisterly under his breath.

"Now, let's go on in," he said with a sinister slur.

Rita submissively stepped up on the first step; she opened the door and stepped inside. She could go no farther without light. He moved the lantern so that the light from the lantern lit up the room.

How bleak and horrid this place looked. The inside had not been finished and the studs in the wall, which were irregularly placed at best, were rotten looking, and exposed. There was an unusual smell about this place. It wasn't just the musty smell of mold or mildew with age, but there was the smell of death about this place.

How could anyone have ever lived in this place? Rita stood silently looking at her personal dungeon; maybe even her personal tomb. Her heart was pounding. Then suddenly she felt the hard cold steel of the barrel of the pistol ramming into the left side of her back telling her to go forward. She walked forward until she came to a crude, unfinished, handmade table and one chair.

"Stop," he demanded. "Just hold it, and don't try anything. Did you learn from your mistake a while ago?"

Rita managed to squeeze "Yes" out just above a whisper.

He moved cautiously around her and placed the lantern on the table. His lantern lit up an old mattress on the floor which was butted up against the wall. He moved over to the edge of the mattress, and stopped and looked back at Rita.

Rita's mind began to play evil games with her. She thought that she knew what he wanted. Her fear was not in being raped. What she feared was that sex was not all he wanted. She again tried to psyche herself up. She tried to tell herself that if she could get out of this by having sex with him, that she would gladly do it. She only wanted to live.

In an unemotionally villainous voice he whispered, "Come on over here by me." He waited for her to move, and when she did not, he became impatient and demanded, "Come over here now!"

Rita moved around the table and stood facing him. She could tell very little about him except that in spite of his almost feminine demeanor, that he still was an attractive

person. She wondered what had made him this way. Had his mother really wanted a girl? Maybe his father was not the man he was supposed to be? She didn't know. She did know that this warped person was threatening her sanity and even her safety.

"Turn around and take that coat off, let it fall right where you are" he commanded.

Rita turned slowly and began to follow his command. She unbuttoned the coat and slid it off but continued to hold it in her right hand and waited for further instructions.

"That's nice," he reassured her. "Now," he went on, "just drop it on the floor and don't move."

Rita obeyed this even though it was against her nature. She always hung her clothes up, but obediently dropped it and waited.

He moved in behind her. Then again she felt the barrel of his gun boring a hole in her back. That was not all she could feel. He began to rub his chest against her back. She wanted to throw up!

"Isn't this a lovely spot for it," he seductively whispered as he gently brushed his cheek over her ear and onto her cheek. He had slid the pistol around more to her right side as he caressed her left cheek. The pistol helped serve as a restraint that kept her locked in the right position. At least the position that he wanted her to be in.

She knew that rape had to be in his mind. She tried to rehearse all of the things that she had learned over the years that could help her get out of this alive. Virginity was certainly not an issue here for her. Life was the issue at hand.

There was a slight gasp as her captor's left hand had begun to slowly grope its way over her frozen body. He slowly moved his hand under her arm and around to her front.

I must not resist. I must not resist. Somewhere she had heard that to resist a rapist was to put yourself in great danger. So, she loosened her body hoping that he would sense that she was not resisting and that she was really not afraid of him.

His hand traveled around her body to places that were sensitive and private, but in this case she had lost all privacy and even her sensitivity. She just wanted to escape with her life.

As he moved over forbidden places, she tried not to move a muscle. But as he groped her, he pressed the point of the pistol deeper into her side and his small hand pressed hard over her body not missing anything that was private. How it hurt, but she tried to not move.

Tears of pain began to inch their way down her cheeks and drop down to her blouse. She held her head back as erect and as stiff as she could hoping that it would keep the tears from being detected. She just could not stand letting this animal think that she was crying. She didn't want him to know the amount of pain that she was experiencing. She didn't want him to have the satisfaction.

He slid his hand down to the top of her jeans and then he played around the edge of the top of her jeans until he stopped at the snap. Rita's heart stopped. She hardly breathed as he slid his hand under the snap down past her navel, and then he stopped as if he had hit a red light. Then he took a totally new direction. Rita took a breath and tried to pretend that he did not have his hand where he had his hand. Now he was gently rubbing her back from her shoulder to shoulder. Then he slowly began to move

down with his rubbing. Then he slid his hand in each of the back pockets of her jeans, but she never moved a muscle.

Why didn't he just do what he intended to do and get it over. Do it, she thought, do it and let me go. Why play these little evil insane games?

He then took his hand off her and moved back a step and began to laugh. "You thought that I was going to pop it to you didn't you? I could feel your thoughts. Oh, I can hear people's thoughts." Again he laughed a laugh that was bizarre and sick.

"Sit down on that mattress," he commanded.

Rita dropped down on the edge of the mattress but the stench of the urine stained; weathered, old mattress was almost more than she could endure. She felt her neck and face flush with the rush of blood. There was a queasiness that was working its way into full-fledged nausea. She tried to get back in control of her emotions. Now was not the time to give up and quit. Now was not the time to get sick. She had never been a person whose emotions controlled her. She controlled her emotions. She had to get control of herself, and finally she could feel herself slowly getting back to an uneasy normalcy.

He walked around the table and pulled the old chair out and drug it around to where he could sit with his back to the lantern with his face toward her. He sat here quietly staring at her. Even though she could not see his eyes, she felt them and that sensation sent a chill inside of her. Her lips began to move and then her chin began to quiver. He was gruesome. She had never been more afraid.

He sat there in silence. The sound of his heavy breathing was deafening. That and every sound of the night was amplified. The crickets chirping outside sounded as if each one had his own sound system.

Her mind raced from random thought to random thought. She then realized that she had to pull herself back into reality. Maybe if she could only find out about the man she would be able to help herself. So questions like what drove him to this? Where did he come from? What was his life like? What was his home life like? Could that give her a clue about this situation? Did she dare ask? Then it struck her that she didn't have anything to lose.

Her attention was changed to his movements. He settled back in the old chair and crossed his legs and laid his gun on his lap. She could still not see his face, but she could feel the piercing of his eyes. It was a horrible feeling. She felt as if he were undressing her with his eyes.

Then the whole tone of his voice changed. "You got any family," he asked in a very gentle tone.

"A little boy," she very quietly responded.

He nodded his head in affirmation that he understood, and then he asked, "How old?"

"He's about eight."

He uncrossed his legs and leaned forward and got very serious as he asked, "Where's his dad?"

"He's dead." She paused for a moment and then added, "He committed suicide."

"How long had he been depressed?"

She hesitated for a long moment his question startled her. How could he have

had such insight?

"What's wrong? Don't you know why he was depressed enough to kill himself? You don't do such a thing unless you're depressed."

"He couldn't find a job," she began, "And things just got worse and worse. He thought that he had no opportunity and that nobody cared..." Her voice trailed off and then she began again, "Then he just couldn't take it no more."

There was silence, and then she asked, "Do you feel alone?"

"You're not supposed to be figuring me out!" He shouted as he sprang from the chair grabbing the pistol off his lap. "I could kill you right now! I could blow your brains out!" As he moved over to her right side and bent over her and shoved the pistol up against the left side of her head.

Rita hardly breathed. He was changing from one personality to another. Her heart was pounding so hard that she thought that it was going to burst out of her chest.

Then he gained his composure again, and he withdrew the pistol from against her head. His actions were strange. It was almost as if he were two different people. What would come next?

It didn't take long to find out. He calmly reached into his coat pocket and pulled out something. At first she could not make out what it was in the dim light. Then she could see as part of what he held fell free. Then she finally could tell that it looked like hand cuffs. But they didn't look like regular ones that the police would use. These looked like they had some kind of padding or fur or something on them.

"See my little toys," he said in a childlike tone. "Here put these on." He dropped them on the mattress beside her. Rita watched them fall and she sat there motionless.

"I said put them on. I mean now!"

She reached down and put one on and then the other. These were the weirdest handcuffs that she had ever seen. They were encased over the outside with some kind of furry material and lined on the inside with soft leather padding. But they were still handcuffs. She was helplessly trapped. She had tried to keep her hopes up but now her hopes had faded into despair. She was dealing with a maniac. She was doomed and she knew it. She may as well as accept it. She was going to die. It was just a matter of when and how.

Then he returned to his chair again, and he settled back and crossed his legs, but this time he put his pistol on the table.

She thought maybe I've got a chance. Maybe all he wants is sex.

He began in a soft tone, "I'm not a bad person. I'm really nice. People just don't realize it. If they did, they would like me. They just don't give me a chance."

He stopped for a moment, and then continued, "You don't know how lonesome it is for me. Oh, yeah, people think that I've got it made. Good education, job, money, good family...but that's all I got! I wish that I had someone..."

While he was talking Rita listened but her mind flashed, I wish that I had a good education and a good job.

But her thoughts were interrupted as he leaned forward toward her and whispered just loud enough for her to hear him, but her pounding heart made it hard to hear his voice above he beat, beat, beat of her heart, "I wish I had someone like," he said, "...well like you. Could you like me?"

Then suddenly he changed again before she could offer an answer. He jumped from one personality to another! He was jumping from one topic of conversation to another. He sprang to his feet waving his pistol screaming over and over, "I can't have no body! I can't have nobody!" With each scream his voice tapered out to a faint sound; he then finally faded into silence as he just stared at her.

In desperation Rita tried to pick up on his loneliness maybe she could console him. Hoping against hope that his sanity would return before it was too late she said softly, "I don't believe that no one likes you. I bet if you gave girls a chance that they would like you. If you gave me a chance I could like you."

"You little trap! You little nothing tramp! You're just like her. You think everything is my fault. It's not my fault. They ought 'a' like me. It their fault!" He screamed. Then he paused and took a deep breath and when he spoke again it was in quieter tones as he concluded, "You're just like her. You're just like her."

Rita did not know what to say now. She was trying to think, but her mind was in such a whirl that it was almost impossible to be reasonably and stay in reality. Somehow though she had to get her thinking straight. Being called a "Bitch" had so offended her also. But still she had to get back control of her thinking. Maybe he had given her a real clue into his personality. She just had to focus on it.

So she tried to settle back and think through this. She had no idea who the her was that had been in his life or even if the her was real. The way he was acting it could be that he had really never had a real girlfriend. It may be that he only had a make believe girlfriend. She knew one thing, though, whoever it was she had warped his mind. He was crazy. She was going to die! She knew that now. She could only think of Stanley. How she wished that she had not gone out, or had she just taken him with her. No she thought, no, if she had brought him, then both of them would die. No she was glad that he was not here, but she could see his little face smiling at her, and she sank into that thought for comfort.

He then stood suddenly stood and turned his back to her and faced the table and took his coat off and took something from his inside coat pocket and then placed his coat neatly on the table.

God, she prayed silently, thank you for Stanley. Oh God, please give him a chance in life. I wish I could see him grow, but I know I can't, but you'll watch over him. God, he's so sweet. Don't let him be too hurt over my death."

The words stuck in her throat even though she was not speaking them aloud. Now her assailant had completed his task, but she could still not see what he had done.

As he turned, he began to speak slowly. "I don't want to hurt you. I really would like to help you." He paused as he walked toward her with something in his hand.

"Listen," Rita said calmly, and reassured, "you don't have to hurt me. I'll be your friend. I'll listen to you. Let's..."

"Shut-up! You don't want to be my friend. You're just trying to live."

"I am trying to live, but I am concerned about you too. You would see if you would just give me a chance."

"Hush!" he snorted. "I knew that you would start begging."

"I'm not begging..."

"I said shut-up. I know what you're doing and it won't work."

There was silence in the lantern lit room. Rita didn't know what else to say and he just paced back and forth in front of her between the mattress and table still holding something in his hand, but she couldn't tell what it was. It looked long and slim, but she couldn't make it out very well.

He then stopped in front of the old mattress and faced her and spoke softly at first, "You just don't understand. You think that I'm here to hurt you, but I'm not."

Then he became excited and waved his arms around as he exclaimed, "God has spoken to me and called me to help women like you! I'm here to help you!"

His tone changed again and he settled down and sounded consoling as he spoke softly, "I'm gonna' do you the biggest favor that's ever been done for you. You just don't understand. I'm gonna' give you freedom woman. Freedom like you've never experience."

Then suddenly he knelt down beside her and she could see what he held in his hand. It was a syringe.

Rita struggled to get to her feet, but she could not. She was trapped like a helpless animal in a trap. He grabbed her and pulled her backward and threw her down on the mattress. As she tried to sit up he hit her with his fist. His left hand slammed into her right cheek. Blood flew from her mouth. A steady flow began to ooze out the corner of her mouth and make a little red river down her chin. The blow knocked her back against the rugged wooden wall. Pain shot through her whole body and the warm salty taste of blood lingered in her mouth. She ran her tongue around her teeth, and found them intact. But her jaw burned and stung.

She could feel herself blacking out. She knew that she could not allow that to happen. She tried to stop the darkness from flooding over her. She was still conscious but only just slightly. She could feel the flow of blood coming out of her mouth, but the flow was now a trickle and not a river. It still left a salty taste in her mouth.

Her assailant was now kneeling beside her. He had locked her arm under his and had jerked her blouse sleeve up to her upper arm above her elbow. She wanted to fight him but she was just barely conscious, and too weak to do so. She knew death was close.

He hurriedly wrapped a rubber tourniquet around her upper arm. It hurt as he pulled it tight. She felt the prick of a needle as it invaded her skin and found its way quickly into the vein. Then there was a sudden rush of warmth.

She was sick. My how she was sick. She lay back over the stinking mattress; her senses were so dulled the stench of the mattress didn't matter. She could no longer keep her eyes open or sit upright. He had taken the cuff off her hands, but she was sinking into unconsciousness, but as she did her right hand grasped something round and she pulled and it came loose and found a nest in her hand. She faded on out into eternity.

The shadowy murderous figure of a man took his hand cuffs off her wrists, and he stood and put the hand cuffs on the table. He pulled her blouse sleeve back down and buttoned it. He took her jacket and carefully put her arms back through the armholes and pulled it around her body. He sat her upright and leaned the dead body back against the wooden wall while he buttoned her jacket. He slid the empty syringe into her right hand pocket. As he did, he never noticed that she had something clutched tightly in her right hand.

Then he stood up and returned to the table and took his coat and put it on. He

picked up the hand cuffs and tourniquet and put them in his pocket. He put his pistol in the waist band of his trousers. He turned the chair around and slid it back neatly under the table. He then went and pulled Rita's body up as if it were nothing but a sack of potatoes and threw her over his shoulder.

He picked up the lantern, and walked slowly toward his car. He put his lantern on the hood of the car and opened the passenger side door and carefully sat Rita's body on the seat. He eased the seat back so she would look like she was resting if anyone saw them. He did not worry about this car because it was his special car. No one knew that he owned it. Except the courthouse where it was registered, and they were no threat for him. He never drove it unless he was about his mission of freedom and mercy—his call from God. After fastening her seat belt, he closed the door, picked up the lantern and returned to his side of the car. He was pleased that things had gone so well. He was sure that God must be pleased with him. He listened to the radio in case he had any more messages from God.

It was now time for him to take his chosen one to the spot that he had chosen earlier. Actually the place was not far from where he had picked her up. He thought that it would look like she was doing business in her neighborhood. That she was just another prostitute that had gone bad.

Finally he was there. He pulled the little Toyota up passed the entrance to the alley and then cut his wheels sharply and began backing it up into the deserted alley between two former warehouses.

He backed down to where there was a pile of boxes and he stopped. He waited for a moment as he looked around to make sure that he was alone. He slowly exited the car and walked around the front of the car to the other side. He strutted as if he were a satisfied man. He took one more look, and when he was satisfied that nobody was there; he leaned into the car, unbuckled Rita, and he pulled her feet out. Then he pulled her body up and over his shoulder again. When he got to the spot where he wanted to lay her, he was not so careful in putting her down. He dropped her on the cement. He stood there for a moment and admired his work, and he turned and walked back to his car. He was satisfied with himself. His mission was complete.

As he cranked his car and eased his car toward the street, he never saw the boxes next to the wall move a little. There nestled in his cardboard bed was an old drunk that claimed that spot for his home. He never made a sound and was too drunk to care whether he slept with a dead body or not. But he did see what happened. He did see the legs and feet of the man who had left, as well as a glimpse of the tag on the little car although to his drunken mind it was only a blur. Even though he saw, he could not keep his eyes open. He slipped back into the oblivion of drunken darkness.

The darkness of night was passing quickly into the first grays of the day. The dark Toyota disappeared into the gray dawn. Rita lay dead. She was just a nobody. And nobody would care that a nobody was dead.

CHAPTER 3

Stanley was awakened by the sharp raps on the door, and a voice calling "My Chi! My Chi!" He recognized the Cajun accent of Mrs. Bourgeois who lived across the hall from them, but he could not make his little body jump out of bed.

Mrs. Bourgeois was a nice lady. She was round and plump and so jolly. Most of the time she spoke just like other people, but then there were times that she would fall back into her Cajun accent. Stanley did not understand why she did that, but he had noticed that when she was alone with him, she spoke in Cajun English, and when she was with Rita, she spoke just plain ole American. At least that's what she did most of the time. When she used her Cajun Accent, it was hard to understand her, but Stanley knew one thing and that was that he trusted her and so did his Mom. By now she was knocking harder on the door, and he could ignore her no longer.

"I'm O.K.," he called out to her as he stretched and yawned.

"Jew mama not come back jzet?" she questioned.

"No mam," he answered.

"Jew open thessss dooo and let me in Chi. It's too late foo a chi to be by himself. Bet jew ain't had nothin' to eat, uh?"

Stanley struggled up off the make shift bed because she had used the magic words--food. So, he got up and opened the door. Mama "B" was standing there smiling down at him. She reached out and pulled him close, hugged him and then directed him to her apartment. As far as he was concerned, staying with her as always a treat. And a meal with her was an even greater treat. He couldn't pronounce some of the things that she cooked, but he loved to eat them.

"Wonder why mom's taking so long?" he asked as they crossed the hall.

"Chi, I don't know, but she's O.K. jeu mom is a grown woman. She can take care of herself. Now, don't vorry jew little head. Jes come on in and eatta jew supper."

The aroma of New Orleans Red Beans and Rice filled the room. He sat down at her table with his feet hardly touching the floor. She dipped him a generous helping and as she turned and walked back to the table with his bowl, he watched her waddle and it amused him, but he would never make fun of her. She sat his meal before him and then turned to get him a spoon from the drawer near the sink. While she was over at the big cabinet, she took a large glass and poured it full of milk. When she had everything that he needed before him she patted him on the shoulder and said, "Now, jew eat."

Mama "B" then made her way to her favorite chair. The middle of her chair was compacted from the yeahrs of her heavy duty sitting. It was just a hollow round place in the middle of the chair. Watching her sit down in that chair was always fun. She would stand directly in front of the chair. She would then look over her shoulder so she could position her body just in the right place. Then with her knees bent just enough to allow her caboose to aim at the seat of the chair, she would with precision movement reach back with her hands and grasp the high arms of the old chair, and then with a great swish she would land that big body. She always followed the landing with a wipe of her brow and a breathy "Whooooo!"

Stanley ate until he was full. He could eat no more, but he hated to say anything

because mama "B" would insist, as always, that he eat just a little more. He sat and piddled with the food that was left. His mind was not really on the food. He was beginning to get worried about his mom. He knew that it was not like her to be gone from him any longer than she had to.

"Now chi," she consoled him, "don't be so worried about jeu mom.

"Recon' we can call the church and see if she's still there?" he asked.

Mama "B" said, "Get me dat phone book, chi."

Stanley jumped up and ran over to where she was sitting and reached under the table beside her chair. She could have reached it, but it would have been a major undertaking. He handed her the phone book, and she looked up the number of the church where Rita had gone to get her groceries, and she took the phone that was beside her big chair and dialed the number and waited patiently. The phone rang and rang. Just as she was about to hang up a breathless woman answered, "Hello, fellowship hall, may I help you?"

"Yes, we're calling to see if Rita Wright has been there and gone?"

"No, she did not show up, and we wondered what had happened to her." She paused and then went on, "We've still got her food. Is Stanley alright?"

"Yes, but he's worried about his mom."

The look in her eyes and the wrinkled look of puzzlement on her face frightened the little boy, and he began to sniff the tears back. Mama "B" tried to comfort him, but she could not. She just knew that something bad had happened. She could just sense it in her bones.

She offered to call the only hospital that Mount City had. If there had been an accident, that's where they would have taken her. With that suggestion Stanley lost the battle of the tears. His tears flowed into rivers from his eyes.

The tender touch of mama "B" helped ease his fear. She motioned for him to sit on her lap. He sat on her knee. She did not have much of a lap, but it was nice to lean back against her soft body. She sat there holding him for what must have felt like an eternity, when in reality it was only a few minutes.

Stanley hardly moved a muscle. Then he slowly eased himself away from mama and walked over to her window. This window faced the street that had taken his mom away. It was as if he thought that it might bring her back. He starred out the window into the night. He had never felt so alone.

Mama could stand it no longer. The sound of silence was almost deafening. She reached over and turned her kind of music on. She loved country music. Stanley stood motionless in the window as the music spoke of lost loves and marriages that should have never happened. The music was not much consolation, but it did interrupt the silence. Slowly the minutes dragged into an hour and then the hours brought on midnight.

Mama "B" grabbed the phone with no warning and began to dial 911. She said, "I've waited long enough. I'm gonna' call the police."

"Mount City Emergency. How can we help you?"

Mama tried to explain to policeman what had happened, but the combination of Cajun and excitement made it impossible for the emergency dispatcher on the other end to understand, and Mama could not control herself enough to make herself talk just

plain American. Finally in exasperation she handed the phone to Stanley with the injunction for him to explain.

Stanley moved from his perch in the window over to her side and took the receiver from her hand and began to explain. In one breath he pushed out, "Sir, my mom went out to get some food and bring it back, and she hasn't come back yet. I know that something's happened to her. Can you find my mom?"

"Wait a minute, son. Just calm down. We don't know that anything's happened to her. Let's not jump to conclusions. Just wait. Let me put you through to a policeman who might can help you. This line is for emergencies. Now you just hold on." The officer put him on hold and referred him to another officer.

The new voice responded, "Hello, I'm Sergeant Cook. Son, I understand that your mom has disappeared. Is that right?"

"Yes Sir," Stanley answered as bravely as he could.

"Well, I need some information about your mom. First what is her name?"

"Rita. Her name is Rita Wright."

"How old is she, and how much does she weigh?"

"I don't know. Let me ask." With that he turned to mama and asked if she knew. They whispered back and forth for a moment and then they decided that she was twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old and that she weighed about one hundred and twenty-five pounds.

Painstakingly the Sergeant extracted all the information that he could. Then he tried to reassure Stanley by saying, "Son, I bet that nothing has happened to your mom. I bet that she just found a friend and made a night out of it. Why don't you go to sleep and try not to worry and we'll look for your mom."

Stanley agreed with him out loud, but inside he knew that his mom would never do something like that. His mom would never leave him alone without telling when she would be back. She said that she was going to the church and he just knew that she had gone there.

Mama "B" waited impatiently for some word of their conversation. When Stanley explained what had transpired, she became inflamed. She just knew that this was another one of those cases that if it had taken place over in the Woodmere Section, they would have already called out the National Guard, but let it happen here on the poor side of town and nothing would be done. Maybe they would find her and then maybe not. Who would care?

The piercing sound of police sirens drew Stanley back to his window. He stood there and watched two cars whiz past the apartment house and down the street out of sight. He wondered where they were going. He only hoped that it was not for his mom.

The two police cars reached their destination. It was an alley between two old abandoned buildings. One car pulled down into the alley and flashed their lights upon a garbage heap on the left side of the alley. Just at the edge of the garbage lay a darkened form. The adrenaline pumped as they saw it. They did not have to get out of the car to know that they had found a dead body. They sat motionless for a moment until their back up unit had stopped behind them. All four officers exited their vehicles and began walking cautiously toward the dark form. At that point they did not know whether it was a man or woman; and even though they knew in their hearts that the lifeless form lying

there was truly lifeless, they had to approach it as if it were still alive and dangerous. The officer who was driving the car knelt down and reached his hand down to the body's neck to check for any signs of life. There were none.

"Forget calling rescue. She's dead." The tone of his voice was that of business as usual. He showed no emotion toward this body lying there. To him she wasn't a person. She was just a corpse. He continued, "Better check in with the dispatcher and get him to call doc. This one is already cold."

The officer grumbled to himself under his breath all the way over to the patrol car. His partner who was still kneeling asked, "What'd you say?"

"Nothing." He sat down in his side of the car and reached for the radio and began to call, "Car twenty-eight calling dispatch. Over."

There was a pause and then the response crackled through the radio, "Go ahead two-eight. Over."

"Corpse. Forget about rescue. Just send doc."

"What is it?"

"A female about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. Late twenties anyway. Caucasian with a bad bruise on her left cheek. No other apparent cause of death."

Things went silent for a while, and then the dispatcher came back on line. "Doc will be there as soon as he can. Block things off and mark the crime scene for him. You know doc. He'll be there in his own time. Just sit tight. Over."

"Car two eight copy. Over and out."

They turned off the lights on their cars and used their flashlights as they began to work the crime scene. They blocked off the alley with bright orange tape. They had not searched any farther than the body because they were satisfied that all that was there was rubbish. Nothing else was evident, and they were not in any mood to search anyway. This was at the end of a tiring shift. All that they wanted to do was get off and go home. So, they settled into the last patrol car to talk and share the last of the coffee as they waited on Doc.

The old tramp squeezed his way through the cardboard boxes with not even a ripple. This was his home turf and he knew every grubby inch of it. He knew that he did not have to go out their way. He had a secret passage. He silently inched along the side of the darkened building until he got to the wooden fence. There he quietly eased two of the wide planks loose and carefully without making a sound slid them over far enough for him to escape.

Finally about half an hour later their coffee was gone, their nerves were on end and their kidneys were full blown and wanting relief. As they were discussing the method of kidney relief, they noticed the headlights of a car moving slowly toward them. It had to be doc. He never did get in a hurry. Then the right turn signal flashed a hello and the vehicle slowed to a stop at the entrance to the alley.

One of the patrolmen walked to the big black Ford Wagon and was ordered to move the vehicles so he could pass. The patrolman stood and ordered his buddies to move the patrol cars. He took the tape down and stood to the side and allowed them to make the moves, and they backed the cars out of the alley and parked them on the street.

Doc swung the big black wagon into the alley and pulled it as close as he could to the body and stopped. He opened his door swung his fat leg out of the car, and pulled his

partly frame up from the unit. As he did, he growled in his normal tone of growl, "Just had to get me up. Couldn't wait a couple of more hours. It ain't like she's going somewhere." He took a deep breath and grabbed his bag and the huge flashlight on the seat. He took a couple of steps toward the nearest officer and then continued his grumbling, "You'll have walked all over the evidence I guess."

"No, Doc. We marked it off and stayed back until you came."

"The chief come yet?"

"No sir."

The Doc, who was known for his dirty mouth, spewed out some well-chosen curse words and then continued, "If I'm gonna be yanked out of bed, so is that sorry good for nothing sack...." and Doc's voice just trailed off in his smutty language. The he spoke us loudly, "Get him on the phone and get his highness out here!" He continued to punctuate every sentence with the vilest expletives as he slowly moved toward the body.

"Get them rubber gloves on and start playing like policemen. You ain't much of a police force, but you're all I've got. So, act like you know what you're doin' even if you don't. So, get your butts in gear and start earning that big money that we're paying you."

Doc bent forward and dropped his black bag close beside the head of the body. He took his light and examined the head. Then he looked at her and slid the sleeve of her coat up past her elbow and discovered the fresh puncture mark. He grunted and muttered and called for two officers to come over and help bag her.

"I've seen enough. Another one of those drug ODs. Look, here's all of her junk with her," spewed as he looked in her pockets. He paused and then continued in his usually crass voice, "Just where do these folks get the money for stuff like this." No telling what she shot up with. Most of these junkies don't care what they shot themselves up with. I think that most of'em wantta' die." He uttered some other things under his breath that it was better that no one heard.

He stood and looked around, but never made a move. Then he shouted at the officers, "Augh get you're sorry carcasses back here and scrap her up. Whatever it was that she took, took her out of this world."

The patrolmen were standing around at the Coroner's Wagon looking at Doc.

Doc looked up at them and cursed and said, "What are you waiting on. Get the sack, and sack her up. Don't forget all this drug stuff: the needles and syringe."

With that he bent over and got his bag and walked back to the wagon. He waited at the back of the wagon until they had sacked her up and carried her over to the wagon. He kind of chuckled at how hard they had worked. He didn't tell them to get the stretcher. All he told them was get the sack and that is all they got.

Doc could stand it no longer. He had to ask about the Sheriff. He and the Sheriff didn't get along well. Doc thought that the sheriff was an imbecile and the sheriff thought that Doc was the most arrogant one human that he'd ever met. So Doc informed the officers, "His highness, the chief, ain't made it yet. If I've gotta' come out here for a stiff, he outta' be here."

No one uttered a word. They didn't want to argue. The Chief and Doc never did see eye to eye about things. Doc had been on his case about the number of suicides that had taken place down in this section of town. He and the Chief could really argue.

Doc opened the back door of the wagon and said, "Well, boys you did it the hard

way. You could have gotten the stretcher."

"Doc, you didn't tell us about any stretcher," answered one of policemen.

"Well just what school did you graduate from--the Sheriff's School of Stupidity. I shouldn't have to tell you bright young officers that a Coroner's Wagon comes equipped with a stretcher. What 'a you think I haul in this thing? Kiddies this thing ain't not grocery wagon. It a death cart equipped with a stretcher that you put stiffs--you know--dead folks. Now if you don't mind little ones just pull it out and dump her on it."

Two of the policemen reached for the stretcher in disgusted silence.

Doc knew that they were upset and said in a pacifying kind of way, "Now, gentlemen, I fear that I have upset some of Mount City's Finest." He took off his hat and put it over his heart and bent forward at the waist and bowed as if he were a gentleman, and spoke, "Please forgive me if that is the case."

The policemen gave him a chuckle and took the body and put it on the stretcher and rolled it into the back of the wagon. After they had locked it down, Doc eased the big wagon back on the main street and headed to the morgue.

As car twenty eight rolled on to the street, the driver said to his buddy, "You had much experience with dead bodies?"

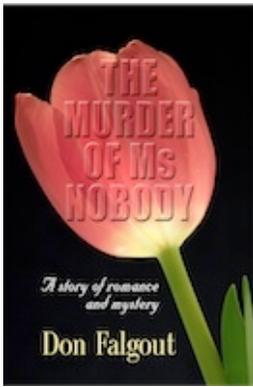
"One or two. Why?"

"Me too, but did you think that Doc did much investigating back there?"

"Nope, and we didn't do much either. If anyone is even looking for on this one, I'll be surprised. Heck, it wasn't murder anyway. It was just another 'junkie' getting OD'd."

"I know, but it seems like we've been getting a lot of these poor women like this. I know that it looks simple, but I got a feeling down in my bones. I think that there's something more and we just don't know what it is."

"Aw, common' you're just upset or something. Don't start that 'bones mess' with me. Let's get back to the station and get this written up and get home!"



Matt had gone to the cemetery to visit his parents' grave. He heard someone crying across the fence that separated the cemetery from "Potters' Field." It was in the county cemetery that he met little Stanley Wright. He was weeping over his mother's grave. Stanley's mother had been murdered and buried by the county. Her death had been written off as an overdose, and because she was poor it had not been taken seriously, but Stanley could not accept that. He knew how his mother felt about drugs. His brokenness touched Matt and he promised to find out truth for Stanley.

The Murder of Ms Nobody

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