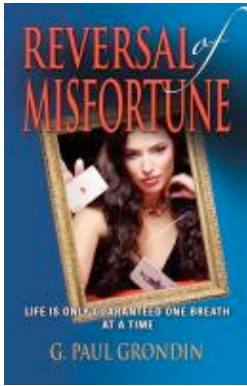


REVERSAL *of* MISFORTUNE



**LIFE IS ONLY GUARANTEED ONE BREATH
AT A TIME**

G. PAUL GRONDIN



Amber and Ivy run away from their abusive home life as teenagers and team up in Seattle to become high-class call girls. They dodge bullets trying to escape from a street gang, the Mafia and FBI. With disasters assaulting them at every major turn, they never give up searching for a new life where abuse and betrayal does not exist. But, their past is always catching up to them.

Reversal of Misfortune

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6457.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

G. Paul Grondin

Copyright © 2012 G. Paul Grondin

ISBN 978-1-62141-705-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2012

First Edition

1

IVY

SPRING EQUINOX 1990

“**A**nd the dealer has twenty, pays twenty-one,” said Angie, who dealt the cards at the high stakes’ blackjack table in Ryerton’s downtown Casino Royale.

Only one of the seven players at the table smiled. Actually, Stephanie Templeton smiled as well. She sat to Grant Kingston’s right. She had wagered a black \$100 chip and lost. Being down \$1,200 didn’t seem to bother her. Besides, she was there only because Grant was there. She coquettishly ignored Nick DiBart, who played at first base immediately to the dealer’s left.

Angie collected the bets from the first three players to her right. The third player was Joel Hutchins, the successful owner of Joel’s Hair & Beauty Boutiques scattered throughout Ryerton and southeastern Michigan. He turned his head to the right and smiled in Stephanie’s direction, but he was really smiling at the handsome Grant Kingston.

Stephanie’s appealing looks were complimented by an incredible body. One day soon, she hoped, her grandfather’s money would be hers—the Templeton fortune. *FORTUNE* magazine listed Archard Templeton as one of their Top 50 Wealthiest People in America.

Angie continued to take Stephanie’s chip and paid Grant’s \$1,000 bet. Archard Templeton lost his wager. Angie removed the two orange \$1,000 chips sitting inside the white square in front of Nick DiBart. With her right hand, she swept up the cards in one graceful motion placing them in the discard rack.

“Place your bets ladies and gentlemen,” said Angie sweeping her hand across the writing on the table, DEALER MUST DRAW TO 16 AND HOLD ON ALL 17’S.

Stephanie placed two twenty-five dollar green chips in the square in front of her. Daphne Bancroft, who sat between Joel Hutchins and her live-in boyfriend, Simon St. James, bet a \$100 chip. Four of the

G. PAUL GRONDIN

five gentlemen placed \$1,000 bets. Simon St. James excused himself saying he would return in a moment's time. He left his multi-colored stack of chips and headed to the men's room.

Angie swept her hand over the table for the second time. "No more bets." She drew the cards out of the black shoe with a steady rhythm of ease and grace focusing on perfect card placement.

The waitress appeared at the table asking if anyone wanted a drink. None of the men at the table and in the immediate area tried to camouflage their reactions. Ivy Cole wore dark nylons with a seam running up the back of her long shapely legs before disappearing underneath her high-rise black skirt. The blouse was a common white made from heavy cotton. It was almost too masculine in appearance, but not on Ivy Cole. It was the last thing to enter someone's mind when they were in her presence.

Having recently turned twenty-seven Ivy was the perfect height of 5'11", that is, according to fashion magazines. With the four-inch spikes, her legs appeared deliciously longer. If a man could break away from staring at her legs and perfectly proportioned figure, he was mesmerized by her eyes. Most men found themselves gawking with their mouths open. Her round and large eyes radiated with the deep dazzling green of emeralds—almost verging on the brink of appearing unnatural. Her high cheekbones, well-proportioned chin and full lips added a quality of sophistication and undeniable beauty to her appearance. Her soft flesh tones complimented her long light summer blonde hair cascading over her shoulders and ending in gentle sweeping curls framing the upper portion of her body as an angelic halo. She could only be described as stunning—absolutely magnificent—a definite work of art.

However, there was a sadness in Ivy's emerald eyes, but it was well-camouflaged by the dazzling effect of her overall appearance. An island of hidden emotional pain filled her eyes as well as intelligence. They always seemed to be waiting for something to happen, as if life was full of mysterious and unpredictable chaos. They had not reflected happiness, love and a sense of well-being since a few months before she had crossed the threshold into her teenage years. Her teenage years had been aborted before they were born.

After taking the drink orders Ivy departed from the table. Stephanie stepped away from Grant. He turned his head, but soon returned his attention to the game as Angie asked him if he wanted a hit on his ace and eight of spades. Since Grant was not paying attention Stephanie grabbed Ivy by the arm, placed a twenty-five dollar green chip

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

on her tray and whispered, "We're ready now." Ivy smiled and sashayed away ignoring her other tables.

Returning to her chrome and black leather stool Stephanie said to Grant in a low voice, "You must be up over twenty thousand." The amount was totally insignificant, but realizing what she had implied she added, "I know it's bad luck to count your chips. I wasn't trying to interfere."

She placed her hand on the back of his neck and momentarily played with his black hair in a fond gesture. She ran her hand along the side of his arm before removing it. Grant smiled arrogantly. Joel, the hairdresser, offered a subtle disapproving glance. Daphne Bancroft smiled, but only for social review. Archard Templeton, Stephanie's ninety-two-year-old grandfather, did not express any emotional involvement since he did not know if he could trust her to be honest with him.

On her way to the bar, Ivy noticed the twenty-six-year-old Pisces, Amber Nicholson, standing near the cluttered collage and annoying cacophony of the one-arm bandits. Amber's facial expression turned from boredom to a welcoming surprise as she turned to Ivy's voice. "Am, what are you doing here?"

Amber offered a weak smile. "Roger talked me into coming. When we got here he deserted me. He's over at the crap table with Karl and Dave losing their money."

Amber wore a red leather waist coat and matching mid-thigh skirt with a pink silk blouse and Italian hand-crafted four-inch heels. Her thick mahogany-brown hair with copper highlights, cutting slightly low across her wide forehead and gently flowing to her delicate shoulders, framed her heart-shaped face with high cheekbones and narrow chin, all perfectly symmetrical in smooth balanced proportions. Her bright light-blue eyes reflected high intelligence, but at the same time possessed a sadness similar to Ivy's eyes. Her lower lip was full, but her upper lip was thin and would have appeared out of proportion, but the right application of lipstick gave her mouth symmetry and fullness. Similar to Ivy, she stood at the remarkable and enviable height of 5'11".

"How was Grand Cayman?" asked Ivy.

"Business as usual," responded Amber, "but I did manage to spend an afternoon scuba diving. You have to come with me one of these days."

"I thought you couldn't take anyone with you."

G. PAUL GRONDIN

"I'm sure I could get Old Man Macmillan to agree," said Amber referring to her senior boss. "There's plenty of room on the jet. I doubt it would be a big deal. Interested?"

"Sure," replied Ivy smiling. "Just give me a week's notice so I can swap a few days off."

"What about Donny?"

"I'll tell him I'm visiting my mom in Spokane. Look Am, I have to run. I gotta get a birthday cake to a high stakes' table. Call me tomorrow. We'll do something in the afternoon. Donny's got something going on, so he won't be around."

"Call you at two."

"Yeah, I'll be up by then."

"We don't see enough of each other," added Amber.

Ivy ignored the sadness in Amber's eyes out of urgency. "We'll talk tomorrow. I've gotta run. Call me."

Amber offered a deeply felt smile as Ivy turned and stepped quickly toward the bar midst the constant dinging noise of the slot machines.

A man relaxed at the bar with a dark Mediterranean complexion. He was handsome and very continental in appearance with sharp angular facial features. His trimmed beard was a glue-on, but it was a perfect disguise. He wore a white brushed-cotton shirt opened at the collar, a dark loose fitting Giorgio Armani suit and Cole Haan loafers with no socks. He watched Ivy order the drinks telling the bartender to get out the birthday cake. The request for the surprise cake was passed on to the second bartender who responded immediately.

When Ivy started to leave the bar with the drinks and birthday cake the stranger looked shocked, but his facial expression relaxed with complacency when Ivy immediately turned back setting the tray on the bar.

"Forgetting something?" asked Carlos looking up from preparing an iced drink with tequila.

"There's supposed to be a fancy stir stick for this double Scotch." Carlos stared at her with a blank expression. "It's supposed to have Happy Birthday written across the top."

"Got me," said Carlos. "I ain't seen it." He asked the second bartender who knew nothing as well.

"Forget it, Carlos," said Ivy as she turned away. "No one's going to notice."

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

"Why don't you look for the stir stick in the box the cake came in?" offered the stranger with a friendly expression.

Ivy appeared surprised by the man's unexpected suggestion, but there were too many things on her mind to give it a second thought. After thanking the stranger Ivy said to Carlos, "Where's the box?"

She ignored his eyes traveling the length of her body. At that precise moment, his stare seemed tiresome, but she was immune to such occurrences. However, it served a purpose. It prevented Ivy from thinking how the stranger would know the fancy stir stick could be in the box the cake had come in. Ivy smiled at him and turned her head away, so he would not be encouraged to pursue what was obviously on his mind.

Carlos quickly stepped into the side room. He located the box and rummaged through the wax paper on the bottom.

"Here, it is," said Carlos returning to the bar. "It was wrapped in some tissue paper."

Ivy placed the fancy stir stick with the words, HAPPY BIRTHDAY, encircled in a red plastic outline of balloons in the double Scotch. Ivy gave an exasperated look as she remembered to light the fat candle in the shape of the number 36 before departing from the bar.

Meanwhile, Archard had finished buying \$10,000 in orange chips. He was down over fifteen grand. He called for a card on his sixteen and busted with twenty-three. The loss of the \$1,000, which was his regular bet, did not cause a reaction.

When Ivy arrived at the blackjack table Stephanie stepped aside allowing Ivy to surprise Grant with the birthday cake.

"Oh, wow, you got me. I wasn't expecting this... Am I really thirty-six?"

A few chuckles followed as the players, dealer and supervisory staff in the blackjack pit sang a chorus of Happy Birthday. Likewise, the onlookers in the immediate area joined in the singing giving them the feeling they were part of it all—a social interaction recreational gamblers craved. Grant blew out the candle, and the pit manager offered to take the cake and cut a piece for everyone.

Ivy had lent her sweet melodic voice to the singing of Happy Birthday. She was unaware of Nick DiBart's constant stare, as if he saw her for the first time. However, unknown to Ivy, a memory stirred in Nick's mind sealing her and Amber's fate.

Ivy served the drinks receiving tips from everyone, as if she was their muse of good luck. Grant slipped a hundred dollar chip onto Ivy's

G. PAUL GRONDIN

tray as gratitude for her good luck and delivering the unexpected birthday cake. Smiling vivaciously Ivy said, "Good luck, everyone," and departed heading to another table in the high-stakes area.

All of the seven players were connected by their past. Daphne Bancroft and Grant Kingston had been a hot item in college. Five years after college, their lust blossomed again in a secret affair ending on bitter terms. The two kept this to themselves, and none of the other five knew about it. They still ran into each other at the exclusive Ryerton Country Club, but that was as far as it went.

Stephanie had an affair with Grant when her marriage to her first and only husband became boring within the first year. At the time, Grant secretly slept with Daphne when her boyfriend, Simon St. James, was out of town on business with his mistress. Now Stephanie and Grant began to see each other again.

Nick DiBart and Archard Templeton had been partners in various business ventures and were still involved in a very lucrative ongoing business relationship. They were partners in the Casino Royale and Hotel.

Nick, Stephanie and Daphne had been friends in high school, but Stephanie and Daphne had been best friends. Currently, no one knew they were secret lovers. Also, Daphne and Joel had been friends in high school, before and after he had come out of the closet to proclaim his homosexuality to a few friends who had been girls.

Daphne had no idea her current boyfriend, Simon St. James, and Stephanie had been romantically involved with each other. To further intertwine the relationships, Nick had lusted after Daphne in high school, but she had been in love with the captain and quarterback of the football team—a guy by the name of Mike Jarrett.

Grant Kingston and Joel Hutchins were involved in an on and off relationship, which was only known to Daphne and a few select others. Although Joel was very busy overseeing his local hair and beauty empire, he still did the hair of a few wealthy clients including Stephanie and Daphne, as well as, his accountant, Amber Nicholson, who was Ivy's best and only real friend since their teenager years in Seattle.

"You have sixteen," said Angie to Grant as the gambling continued, while they waited for the cake to be served. "Would you like to split your eight's?"

"Always split aces and eights," said Grant confidently to himself.

Nick DiBart shot a curious glance at Stephanie when she took a small sip of Grant's Scotch. She tossed her long light-brown hair away

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

from the side of her face and handed the drink to Grant. "Here, this is too strong for my taste buds."

Grant took the glass, did not remove the fancy HAPPY BIRTHDAY stir stick and drank. Joel Hutchins had drawn twenty-four and broke. Daphne sat tight with eighteen. Simon St. James did not want to draw on a soft seventeen—an ace and six—but he was playing anchor. The table expected him to ask for a card. This was basic strategy—always hit a soft seventeen.

Grant took another drink of Scotch. Simon drew a six giving him thirteen. He busted when Angie hit his cards with a queen of hearts. She took the \$500 chip and placed it in her tray. She flipped over her second card, which was known as the hold card. It was a nine giving the dealer eighteen. Angie pushed Daphne's bet back to her for tying. She paid Grant four orange colored chips. Grant finished the Scotch as Stephanie swept his chips toward the three stacks in front of him.

Archard Templeton appeared somewhat concerned when Stephanie announced she felt dizzy.

"Did you want to leave?" asked Grant, who was up twenty thousand for the night.

"I don't know what's wrong," said Stephanie. "I think I'm going to be sick."

She stood knocking her stool over in the process. Everyone at the table locked their eyes on her. She leaned forward with both hands on the table for support. Her head tilted down. Her hair concealed her twisted facial features from her grandfather and Grant.

"Are you okay, madam?" asked Angie in a concerned tone. She was about to call her supervisor's attention to the table when Nick called to the pit-manager, "Dwayne, get over here," but no one at the table seemed to hear with the exception of Angie.

"This is awful," continued Stephanie. The compulsive cramping of her stomach caused her to gag as her facial expression twisted in pain. "Someone has to get me out of here." The spinning sensation of her mind increased as her eyes started to water.

Grant reached to hold her as he began to stand. He did not make it. It felt like someone had tied his insides into a hundred and one knots followed by an extreme burning sensation. Grant glanced at Joel Hutchins and then stared at Nick in total shock before he collapsed to the floor. Stephanie toppled over a second later.

2

Keeping her temper under control Ivy Cole stepped out of the Chevy that had seen better days at the modest one-level country home she and her boyfriend rented five miles northwest of Ryerton. The closest neighbor lived a half mile away. Usually, when Ivy arrived home she enjoyed the solitude of the isolated house. Now she was still shaken by what had happened at the casino as the harsh reality of what she had done sank deeper into her mind.

Impatiently, Donny Taylor waited in the kitchen. A half bottle of Kentucky bourbon idled in front of him. Only the almost melted ice cubes occupied his glass. He appeared slightly drunk, but his speech did not reflect it. It never did in the early stages. He had been celebrating what he considered to be his first big job.

“How’d it go?” asked Donny as soon as Ivy walked into the kitchen. His rapid fire interrogation left no doubt as to the level of his anxiousness and anxiety. “I’ve been walking the floors for the last three hours. What took you so long? Why didn’t you call me? They didn’t want you to keep working for the night, did they? What did the cops say? Anything?” He paused long enough to refill his glass. “Here, drink this and tell me everything. What did the cops ask you?” This was the first time since they had moved in together he was not asking about her tips.

Ivy became furious by how she had been played as a stooge. However, before she spoke, she had to evaluate Donny’s present condition. Anyone who showed any sign of personal weakness offended Donny, especially anyone whom he could easily intimidate.

Ivy was an easy mark for his alcoholic abusive behavior. She knew the bottle of Kentucky bourbon had been full when she had departed for work. Donny had promised a thousand times to cut down on his drinking. He became violent when he was drunk. She had threatened to leave him twice since they had moved in together eight months ago. Once she had made good on her threat, but when Donny had threatened to kill her only friend, Amber, who was like a sister to her, Ivy had returned.

“You know I don’t like hard stuff. Is there any coffee on?”

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

While the bourbon temporarily distracted Donny, Ivy removed the empty cigar box from the top of the fridge and deposited her tips of three hundred and twenty-nine dollars. This was low due to the short shift caused by the casino murder. She turned to the coffee machine and dumped the half day old coffee in the sink. She ignored the dirty dinner dishes Donny had promised to put in the dishwasher. The orderly appearance of the kitchen resulted from Ivy being a neat freak. She returned to the fridge and removed the finely ground mixture of Colombian and Kenyan coffee beans.

Normally, Ivy would have gone into the bedroom to change, but not tonight. She had something to say besides what Donny wanted to know.

"Look, you bitch! I've been waiting for hours for you to get back here. Now tell me what the hell happened!"

Ivy did not react to his predictable temper. She was used to it. Amber had told her she deserved better, and there were plenty of guys asking about her. However, Ivy did not take Amber's words seriously. As far as Ivy was concerned, she did not deserve better.

Ivy enjoyed these brief moments when she was in control. She never told Donny this. She never told anyone, except Amber. Now Donny wanted something, and Ivy had what he wanted.

She thought she had delayed long enough. She gave him a description of what had happened. He asked a few questions, but remained quiet for the most part. Ivy never equated the stranger at the bar who had told her to look in the cake box for the fancy stir stick with the fatal poisoning of Grant Kingston.

She stepped to the coffee machine and poured herself a fresh cup of coffee. She removed a new green, blue and yellow box of Brazilia cigarillos from the cupboard and lit one. She needed to relax. The smoke and black coffee were the only way to accomplish this. She leaned back against the counter, took a deep drag and inhaled, which she did not do very often.

"That stir stick had poison on it, didn't it?" asked Ivy more as an undisputed fact than a question. Her words had been calculated without emotion. She tried to control her temper. She wanted to break the bottle of bourbon over his head. Tomorrow, she would go to Amber's and hideout, if this was possible. What had happened in the casino was the final storm that had broken the dam, and Ivy had to escape before she drowned in a raging flood of chaos.

G. PAUL GRONDIN

Donny turned his head from looking out the window at the partially illuminated landscape under the watchful presence of the full moon at zenith. He refilled his glass and gave her a wry and arrogant smirk. "Who cares if it had poison on it? I did my part, and no one's the wiser."

"No one's the wiser!" screamed Ivy at his stupidity. Immediately, she brought her voice under control. "One man is dead and that Templeton lady almost died." She felt relief when his temper had not erupted when she had screamed at him.

"Don't be stupid," said Donny tightening his grip on the glass. "The bartender poured the drinks. The cops won't suspect a thing."

"That's what you think. Carl Alvarez was behind the bar. He wouldn't hurt a fly."

"No big deal." His false sense of confidence grated on her nerves.

"Are you crazy?" Ivy's patience finally grew thin. Her voice rose a few decibels. Very unusual for someone who lived in constant fear. "You don't have a brain in your head. I'm a suspect. Do you hear me! A suspect! Donny, you're a complete jerk-off! You don't even have the brains you were born with!"

She had already made her decision. She did not know the law, but if she could, she would turn him in to the police for his part in the murder. The only reason she did not tell the police about this when they were questioning her earlier was that she was not sure if they would charge her with accessory to murder.

"I'm going to bed," added Ivy. "I'm not celebrating anything."

The thought she was always jumping from one frying pan to another trying desperately to avoid the fire entered her mind when she attempted to exit the kitchen. She was no more than one step past his position when he reached out, grabbed her by the upper arm and spun her around. He lashed out so fast she did not see it coming. His open hand smashed across the side of her right eye sending her spinning and crashing to the floor. The cup of coffee and mini cigar flew in different directions.

"I'll kill you! You bitch!"

The front doorbell rang, but in his fury, Donny ignored it. He was on her before she could do anything, but bring her hands up to her beautiful face hoping to weaken the impact of the next powerful slap to the head.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

"Donny! I have to see the police tomorrow for more questioning!" Her plea was a desperate attempt to avoid damage to her face that was difficult to hide even with the correct application of make-up. She was an expert at this. She did not have to see the cops tomorrow.

"I'll teach you to raise your voice at me and call me stupid!" He whacked her across the face twice using his open hand. The knuckles of his backhand always stung the most. "Now! Who's stupid! You whore!"

The third ring of the doorbell brought his attention away from the eye of his tempest. He knew who it had to be. Ivy's arms acted as a shield preparing for the next blow. She had not heard the doorbell expecting him to deliver a closed fist, or at least, a kick to her side.

"I have to go to work tomorrow." Again, she pleaded for deliverance. "I can't go there with a black eye."

She peered through her hands. He towered over her listening. She thought the plea had worked for one of the few times in her life. This time she heard the doorbell. She had no idea who it could be. Maybe the cops were coming to arrest her. She was not sure. Thinking about it a second time in a split second she knew this had to be true.

"You don't know how lucky you are," said Donny straightening his posture. He turned his attention away from the direction of the front entrance and stared down at her. "I've been expecting this. Now clean up that coffee you spilled and straighten your hair. I don't know if he'll want to come in or not."

He moved his hands through his hair trying to give it some semblance of normalcy. He stepped away from her tilting his head back, as if this was all it took to forget his role as a cowardly bully.

It wasn't Ivy's job to ask who was at the front door. It wasn't any of his friends, and it certainly wasn't Amber. They always came to the back entrance.

When he departed the kitchen she did as she was told. She was more than grateful for the reprieve. Now her resolve was cast in stone. She would escape from this nightmare tomorrow, before he got up in the late morning.

Ivy sat at the kitchen table holding an ice bag to the side of her eye. An earlier inspection in a hand mirror revealed it was not serious. Make-up would hide it. She listened to the continuous dull murmur of voices slipping down the hallway and into the kitchen. Were there more than two voices? Ivy became curious, but not enough to leave the kitchen. The last place she wanted to be was where she was not invited.

G. PAUL GRONDIN

She listened carefully. No, she was sure of it. There were only two voices. The second voice seemed familiar, but in the moment of confusion and pain, she could not place it.

When Donny returned to the kitchen a broad smile shone from his face, as if nothing had happened only a few minutes ago. Again, she felt grateful. She noticed a white business size envelope protruding out of his back pocket. Two steps behind Donny was the stranger from the bar. Ivy could not believe it, but her facial features did not betray her thoughts. The stranger wore the same Giorgio Armani suit. He appeared handsome in a curious way. Ivy deflected her eyes away from his stare. His eyes appeared foreboding like an omen of a pending disaster waiting to be released at a second's notice.

"Hey, Joey, want a drink to celebrate?" asked Donny ignoring Ivy as a subtle punishment for her earlier behavior. "It's Kentucky bourbon."

"No, not tonight. I have another errand to run," lied Joey.

Donny poured another glass of bourbon and went to the fridge to add ice. With his back turned, he said, "Oh by the way, this is Ivy, Joey, although the two of you already met at the casino."

Joey nodded his head in recognition of Ivy's presence. She said nothing offering a meaningless smile, while his mind became inquisitive.

Originally, Joey wanted to spend a few minutes getting to know Ivy. When he had entered, seeing her hold the ice pack over her eye, had given him second thoughts. When Ivy removed the ice pack he knew what had happened, but did not know why Donny had hit her. Initially, it was none of his business, but his second thought led him down a dangerous path. His hand slipped into the side pocket of his Armani suit. The tips of his fingers played with a pearl-handled switchblade.

Drawing his eyes away from Ivy he gave Donny a precarious look, while Donny retrieved the ice for his drink. Joey concealed his smile. How easy it would be to go into action. Other than a flash of motion, no one in the kitchen would know what had happened before the knife stuck into Donny's throat. Anyone who knew him never questioned how he had received his nickname, Joey the Knife.

Other people had plans for Ivy and Donny's future. Joey could not interfere with this as much as he wanted since seeing the damage to Ivy's eye. Nevertheless, he was not without his own unique sense of morbid humor. He decided to explore if he could become personally involved with Donny's precarious future.

"What happened to your eye?" Casually, Joey watched Donny turn from the refrigerator as he flashed a menacing stare at his girlfriend.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

Out of the corner of her good eye, Ivy caught Donny's be-careful-what-you-say look. She paused from answering directly. She felt the rising fear within her. There was something puzzling about Joey's question. Usually, guys who knew Donny or who were abusive did not ask such questions in Donny's presence.

Fearing Joey, Donny could not wait for Ivy's response. "She banged her head on a door just before you arrived."

In the silence that followed, Joey glanced from Ivy to Donny and back to Ivy who remained sitting at the oak table. "I was asking Ivy."

Ivy maintained her silence as long as she could without raising Donny's temper beyond the breaking point. He would not do anything in front of Joey, but Ivy did not want to discover the first thing on his agenda after Joey's departure.

"It's like Donny said. I was bending over putting dishes in the dishwasher. When I straightened up I whacked the side of my face on a cupboard door that was open."

Joey did not have to check the location of the dishwasher and the probability of this happening to know she had lied. The smallest detail of the room had been committed to memory shortly after making his entrance. As a professional assassin who had managed to successfully evade the cops as well as the Feds on many occasions checking out new territory upon his arrival was second nature. Seeing the pleading look in Ivy's eyes Joey decided to drop his current interest, as if it had never started.

"Well, I have to be going."

Instantly, Ivy relaxed.

"I'll see you to the door," said Donny taking a step forward.

"No need," said Joey removing his right hand from the pocket containing the switchblade. "I know the way out." He offered an untranslatable smile barely breaking across his thin lips as he turned toward Ivy. "Maybe your boyfriend should be doing the dishes from now on." He started to turn away. "Take care. I'll be in touch."

"When?" asked Donny anxiously. He was finally in the big times.

Joey turned back facing Donny. "Soon. That's all I can say. There's still a few details that have to be worked out." He casually glanced at Ivy as he started for the kitchen's exit. "I'll give you a call when I have something concrete."

In a curious flash of intuition, Ivy had thought Joey had been addressing her. This seemed totally illogical to her.

"Sure, Joey," said Donny obediently. "Anything you say."

G. PAUL GRONDIN

Ivy was about to say, 'It was nice to meet you, Joey,' but her cautious mind blocked the automatic farewell from passing through her lips.

Donny remained silent as he listened for the front door to open and close. It was not difficult for Ivy to conceal what she was thinking. Now that she had met Joey there was absolutely no doubt in her mind she had to leave Donny and remove herself from his influence as soon as possible. When the sound of the front door closing reached them Donny tossed the white business size envelope on the table.

"Check this out." He beamed with pride.

Ivy hesitated. It could be a trick. It was not unusual for Donny to bait her during an interlude of peace between bouts of violence.

"Go ahead. Open it. It won't bite." Ivy cautiously reached for the envelope, while he continued on another tangent. "If you would stop causing me to hit you, I wouldn't do it."

Ivy ignored the lunacy of his statement. She drew back the flap of the envelope and could not believe her eyes.

"Go ahead 'n' count it."

Her actions portrayed a greater degree of confidence. She counted the money—twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Pretty good, huh?"

"Who gave you this?"

"Joey, stupid. He just dropped it off for my part in the murder. Twenty-five big ones. And all you had to do was make sure that stir stick was placed in the double Scotch. Now do you know why I didn't tell you any of the details? I knew you wouldn't tell the cops, if you didn't know nothing, and God knows you wouldn't tell 'em my name. This way I knew you would act surprised at what went down. It only made the cops believe you all the more. And I was right as usual. Hell, I'm so smart, it's frightening."

Ivy did not respond to his outward show of arrogance and stupidity. She came closer to blowing the whistle on Donny, and now that she knew who the stranger at the bar was, Joey, as well.

Ivy was not without intelligence. For someone who had not made it beyond grade ten, she was extremely intelligent. She was self-taught from all the books she constantly read. Also, there were the streets of hard knocks. However, this never matured into common sense when it came to male relationships, due to the unresolved abuse she had suffered during her early teen years.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

If she was to flee from Donny tomorrow, she would need more than the money in the cigar box on top of the refrigerator. Once she told the cops about Donny, she would need a lot more. She would have to give up her job at the casino. Now there was Joey to worry about.

Intuitively, she knew others were involved in this hideous crime. Ivy realized twenty-five grand was a lot of money for what had to be a minor role in the killing of Grant Kingston. The forces behind this murder were beyond her reckoning.

If the cops charged Donny with accessory to murder, according to Michigan law, he could be out on bail within twenty-four hours. Once Donny was out on bail, he would come looking for her. She knew beyond a shadow of a doubt she would be dead the minute he found her, and it would not be an easy death. Therefore, she could not get another job in the area to support herself. Now she realized the danger of hiding at Amber's. It would be the first place Donny would look. If Donny decided to hide the money, she would have to find out tonight where he hid it. Now it was imperative to escape with all the money and leave everything else behind, except the clothes she could stuff in a few bags for a quick getaway.

3

Ivy Cole had been told to stay put and that was exactly what she was doing. She sat on the sofa in her negligee. No one had told her she could not smoke, so she lit a Brazilia mini cigar. Due to being temporarily terrified—something beyond her normal everyday fear—she inhaled every drag. The man sitting across from her had no idea if this was unusual or not. Even if he did, what was it to him?

At six in the morning, full light splashed over the Michigan landscape. Everything had evolved into a nightmare.

Ivy glanced at the stranger still sitting across from her. Lou was a big man with broad shoulders, huge chest and massive hands with a large diamond pinkie ring. His suit appeared fashionable and expensive with no tie. His face appeared rugged with pocked marks, as if he had scratched the chicken pocks when he was a child. His neat black hair showed signs of premature gray at the upper edges of the sideburns.

She could not remember how long he had been sitting there, but he kept his vigil. The only time he looked away was when one of the other two men walked through the living room. She ignored them when they stared at her, and she did not pay attention to the few words they spoke to the stranger who acted as a guard dog.

Ivy began to lose contact with the present. One memory emerged from the revolving door separating her conscious mind from the subconscious reservoir of painful memories. There were times when she could push it back into darkness, but not now. Her psychological defenses had been weakened by the hideous thought of her pending doom. As far as Ivy was concerned, death had finally arrived on the threshold of her precarious and fragile life.

The memory of a similar predicament appeared from the caverns of her mind like the gear mechanisms of a finely tuned Swiss watch. When she was thirteen she could easily pass for seventeen, and eighteen was within reach with the proper make-up.

In Ivy's mind, the long ago image of sitting on the bed was vivid and painfully alive, as if it had happened only a few days ago. She clung to the sheet trying to cover herself as bewilderment and fear blurred the vision of her stepfather.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

In the nightmarish flashback, her large round green eyes, once full of gaiety and innocence, reflected inescapable fear as her stepfather towered over her, but where could she go? She sat on the bed still clinging to the sheet holding it in front of her like a defeated warrior's shield with her back against the wall. He blocked any escape to the door and out of the bedroom. He appeared like a giant monster from a child's fairy tale. Again, his hollowed voice sounded as if it was coming at her from out of the darkness of a nightmare.

"Did you hear what I said?"

Ivy noticed his belt for the first time. It was clenched in his hand with the buckle dangling down. There was no mistaking this. The clarity of this memory was vivid. Whenever she sassed him he would drag her by her long blonde hair to the bedroom and force her to remove her jeans before whipping her until there were welts on her bare bottom and the back of her legs. Once she had screamed so loud, her mother entered the room demanding Ivy to be quiet, and take the punishment she deserved for misbehaving.

"Do you want a beating!"

"No..." Her voice was barely above a whisper. Although she thought she had said more than 'no,' the other words were no more than a soft guttural murmur.

"What did you say?"

"I said, no. I don't want a beating." Ivy had no idea how she found her voice, but she knew she would never survive a beating with the belt after what she had just gone through. "I won't tell anyone."

"That's my girl," said the stepfather smiling for a brief moment. He lowered his hand with the intimidating weapon in it. "Now get dressed and put some ice on that eye. I don't want you going out until its better. If it still looks bruised on Monday morning, you won't have to go to school. You're a very beautiful girl, Ivy. I've always said that about you. I don't want anyone to see you when you're not looking your best. Do you understand?"

"Yes." Her voice sounded as normal as it could from speaking one syllable.

"What did you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's better. We always speak with respect to one another around here. Otherwise, we're no more than animals."

"Yes, sir," was all she had to say in order for her stepfather to leave her alone with her incomprehensible and terrifying agony.

G. PAUL GRONDIN

There were a few times when she tried to resist her stepfather. However, it was not long before she realized it was useless trying to stop him. The beatings were extremely painful. Later, the pain lost its significance as part of her unquestionable survival instinct amidst the traumatic turmoil of emotional confusion—a devastating consequence on her psyche.

Ivy always cried from these experiences in low murmurs. She was terrified he would return with the belt to punish her further. In the beginning, it took two or three days for her to recover from such occurrences. During that time she did not speak, being mentally aloof, and she only went through the motion of eating during meal times.

In the early months of these experiences, her mother was at home either having coffee in the kitchen or watching TV whenever her husband decided to visit Ivy in her room. Her mother appeared totally indifferent.

Ivy's mother was the one who initially led Ivy to the bedroom and was told to do whatever her stepfather wanted. This was the ultimate betrayal in Ivy's life. Everything else was secondary, even the unexpected devastating loss of her father.

Neither mother nor daughter ever made eye contact after the first time with only one exception. During dinner Ivy constantly stared at her mother hoping for any sign of recognition or explanation of what had happened as she absentmindedly picked at her food. Her mother glanced into Ivy's eyes, but only for a fleeting moment. In that flash of exchange, mother and daughter felt like helpless victims.

Ivy's mother never overcame the shock of losing her first husband. A drunk driver smashed head on into the front of his car. Three days later, Ivy's father, who had not been wearing a seatbelt, died from complications in the hospital. She remarried quickly trying to fill the void in her life. When she realized she had married a monster in human form she silently surrendered herself to the psychotic fact it was better for her daughter to satisfy her second husband than it was for her to receive a beating for not pleasing him.

Complicating things further the stepfather went out that first Saturday morning before lunch. He returned with a very expensive sweater Ivy had wanted, but could never afford to buy for herself. Ivy knew why she had received this gift. Such gifts became a monthly occurrence serving to further twist her developing psyche. Raise up a child on a serpentine path and as an adult the walk will continue into hell.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

Now as always, whenever Ivy experienced these memories, it was as if she gazed into a cave where the scene would become alive. This always ended in the same manner. A steel door would lower over the opening of the cave, and the echoing of the metal hitting the stone floor would drive the memory far into the caverns of her subconscious mind.

Within a few seconds of the image disappearing, she lost all recognition of it happening. However, it was paradoxical. Off in the mysterious darkness of her subconscious mind, she recognized it without any association to its psychological pain, as if the event had happened to someone else. This final part transpired in a split second, before Ivy returned to whatever she was doing. However, in her later years and now, these memories returned to haunt her.

As Ivy continued to sit on the sofa her attention focused on her immediate and uncertain future. She did not think long about the in-between times—the times between her stepfather and Donny. What others thought to be a nightmare was part of Ivy's life since the innocent age of thirteen. For a young person, the onset of the teenage years was something to celebrate. Psychologically, it was the official break from childhood leading through the gate into adolescence. For Ivy, it passed unnoticed.

Now six and a half hours after the Grant Kingston murder, she sat in the middle of another nightmare. The problem was no longer Donny. The problem was not the money. The twenty-five grand idled in the cigar box on top of the fridge. Donny was so ecstatic about the money and his newly acquired success he became drunk and fell into a stupor as she had planned.

It was just as well, she thought.

After Mac had killed Donny, Gino helped Mac throw his corpse into a body bag, which was now sealed and in the trunk of the late model Cadillac including the .22 caliber pistol used to pump three bullets into Donny's skull—three shots in the head and Donny was dead. The .22 caliber bullets were not powerful enough to exit the skull allowing for a neat death without having to worry about excessive blood being left behind as a surviving souvenir for the police.

Now Mac and Lou sat across from Ivy. Mac had sent Gino to wait in the car. He grabbed a coffee for himself on the way through the kitchen and exited the back door.

Ivy had been so frightened she did not think to cover herself with the robe that was in the kitchen. Donny had taken that off her at the

G. PAUL GRONDIN

beginning of the celebration. He was not celebrating any more. Her mind began to refocus. She wondered why they had not killed or raped her by now. She knew she would be dead soon. It was only a matter of minutes. Finally, the end of all pain stood within reach.

Lou inspected his fingernails for any dirt. They were clean. Actually, he felt sorry for Ivy, but Mac was in charge. Mac, the older of the two Botticelli brothers, was in charge when they were together and that was almost always.

Silently, Lou approved of her smoking the mini cigar idling between her fingers. Although she no longer wore make-up and her hair needed to be brushed, she looked as appealing as she had when he had first seen her at Casino Royale. They had been with a lot of good looking prostitutes in the past, but nothing compared to Ivy. The soft semidarkness of the living room added to her mystique. He was thankful she only wore a negligee.

"It's time to tell her," said Lou.

"Yeah, I'll get to it." Mac wore tight-fitting black leather gloves that would prevent the tearing of his knuckles when he slugged someone.

"Then do it now. One way or the other, I want to get out of here. Dinner is going to be over by the time we get back to the compound."

"Forget about it." Mac gazed at his watch. "Dinner's over. Hell, it's daylight."

"Just tell her so we can get out of here." Lou was not only cautious, but superstitious. He did not enjoy the idea of Donny's dead body in the trunk of the car with daylight upon them. They still had to meet up with Gino's brothers, Sal and Mario, who would dump Donny's body in Lake St. Clair, north of Detroit.

"I'll get to it, Lou." Mac turned to Ivy. "How'd you get that bruise next to your eye? It looks fresh." Mac was an expert.

"I tripped on the stairs and hit the side of my face." Standard response.

"Was the stairs moving?" laughed Mac.

Ivy glanced at Mac, emotionlessly, as if he was stupid. Out of the corner of her eye, she caught a glimpse of Lou, who had smiled. Her intuition told her, if it came down to the possibility of sparing her life, Lou would cast the deciding vote in her favor. She dismissed the validity of the thought as quickly as it had entered her mind.

Lou did not know what it was, but there was something different about Ivy. He knew Donny had beaten her. The reason was

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

inconsequential. The last thought to enter Lou's mind was that Donny deserved to be killed, if for no other reason than abusing someone like Ivy, regardless of the cause. Ivy was class. It was written all over her.

Ivy resigned herself to dying. She only wished they would get on with it. She reached over and placed the mini cigar in the ashtray. Its smoke continued to swirl upward in the semidarkness of the room. When she turned back to face her would-be executioners the memory of her stepfather flashed in her mind. It tried to take control, but this time she fought hard to push it down into its serpent's den.

"If you think you're going to rape me and then kill me, you're wrong," said Ivy.

"What 'n the hell did you say?" asked Mac not believing what he had heard.

Not hearing his question, there was no response from Ivy.

"Are you okay, kid?" asked Lou.

Lou had never seen anyone spaced-out like this before. Ivy's blank expression was almost morbid. She stared off at an unknown point in space as emptiness occupied her melancholy eyes displacing any form of animated awareness. It was as if Ivy had departed her body leaving behind an empty shell. Her eyes continued to appear lifeless.

On numerous occasions, Lou had looked into the eyes of a dead man, and this appeared to be the same. He turned to Mac before glancing back at Ivy slowly reaching his hand forward. "Hey, are you okay, kid?" His words sounded extremely gentle for someone with Lou's background.

"What?" asked Ivy, who shook her head, as if in that one single act, the experiences of the past were once again relegated to a distant corner of her subconscious.

Superstitiously, Lou brought his hand back quickly like it was bad luck to touch someone who had returned from the land of the dead.

"I know you're going to kill me, but you're not going to rape me," said Ivy with a tone of finality. "I'm going to give myself to you. It's free and clear. I don't want to be raped. After you have me then you can kill me. I have Restoril in the bathroom."

"What 'n the hell are you talking about?" asked Mac.

"You heard me," reaffirmed Ivy. "Restoril. Sleeping pills. I want to take them before you shoot me. I'd like the last few minutes of life to be painless." *There's just been too much damn pain. And right now I really can't take anymore.*

G. PAUL GRONDIN

Lou looked at Mac and started to laugh. "The boss was right about this one."

Ivy ignored the laughter. She was accustomed to insanity, especially male insanity. Unexpectedly, she stood.

"And where do you think you're going?" asked Mac leaning forward in his chair, as if he was agitated.

Lou felt a slight sense of relief when his older brother had not lashed out at her for the sudden move. There were a lot of thoughts roaming Lou's mind, thoughts he would keep to himself.

Ivy considered making a run for it, but decided against it. She did not know if a bullet in the back would hurt. Then again, they would most likely catch her and rape her and beat her all the more for trying to escape. For Ivy Cole, life was hell.

"I was going to the bedroom. I thought it would be more comfortable."

"Sit down, Ivy. I got a message for you." Mac was still doing all the talking for the two Botticelli brothers.

She did what she was told. She stared into Mac's eyes. They were cold, calculating and tinged with malice. She had seen these kind of eyes too many times not to recognize the imminent danger. The faces changed, but not the eyes. She knew if she was not about to be beaten, it was better to keep eye contact. Any sign of weakness could lead to dangerous consequences with a man like Mac.

Lou's eyes appeared different, as if there was a slight trace of gentleness in his facial expression. Immediately, she dismissed it as being totally false and absurd.

Ivy prepared her mind for what was to come. Similar to receiving a beating, she thought about being on a beach when she was a child with her real father before he was killed in the car accident and ripped from the screen of life. She would be alone with him. She would be holding his hand, and the sun would be shining. There were never any clouds in this illusive daydream unless they were off on the horizon as giant, friendly sentinels defining the boundaries of Ivy's fanciful reality. Usually, she would fall into unconsciousness thinking about this vision. The pain did not arrive until she awoke. The vision of her father and the beach would be faraway—lost to another nightmare in the recent past.

"The boss was right," said Mac reaffirming what his younger brother had said earlier. He smiled at Ivy's sense of courage.

"Damned if I can remember 'im ever being wrong," said Lou philosophically.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

"You had a message," said Ivy, who became impatient. The memory of her father began to build in her mind.

"Yeah, we got a message. Tell her, Mac."

"No one's going to rape you," said Mac. "The boss wants to see you. He said he knew you from somewhere. He's got a deal for you."

She had heard what Mac had said, but she did not believe there was a way out as she remained silent. When Ivy was fourteen she wanted to die before she turned fifteen. Since the age of fifteen she believed she would die before she was twenty-one. Now that she had reached twenty-seven and had gone beyond the year of her personal doomsday prophecy, it was moved to before she was thirty. The age really did not matter. Death was inevitable. A logical short conclusion to a torturous life filled with unsolvable emotional confusion and twisted evaluations of caustic reality.

She often considered herself a coward because she was too weak to commit suicide. The combination of personal nihilism and fatalism had a strange way of interweaving their poisonous vines around someone like Ivy.

She decided against not speaking. "What kind of a deal? The same one you offered Donny?"

"Hell kid, you got balls," said Mac.

"I don't think it's my balls you've been staring at for the last ten minutes."

After Lou began to laugh Mac's smile turned into a chuckle. Mac brought his attention back to business. He could not afford to be distracted.

From her view on the sofa in the living room, Ivy caught a glimpse of the clock on the kitchen wall. It was 6:17 AM. Amber would not call her until two. Usually, Ivy arrived home at 4:30 AM from the swing shift. If Donny did not wake her earlier to run an errand, she would sleep until one in the afternoon.

Her mind searched for an escape route.

"Donny's got a big mouth," said Mac. "It's nothing to do with you." He paused for a reaction.

Ivy remained silent. She had no idea it was the best possible response.

Lou had summed up Ivy as a smart kid. At least, she did not appear to be too upset about Donny's murder. Now she had a sense of humor when she thought she was going to die. Yes, the boss had been right as usual.

G. PAUL GRONDIN

"Who's the boss?"

Mac hesitated.

"Tell her, Mac. What harm is there? If she rejects the offer, she takes his name to the grave."

"It's Nick DiBart."

So this was whom Donny had referred to earlier. Ivy knew the name immediately, but it was a complete surprise to know Nick DiBart was high up in the Mafia. Donny had been right for most likely the first time in his life. He had been on his way up from petty crimes. Donny had not done anything except write a few bad checks and holdup a convenience store somewhere in northwestern Ohio. He was not even good at hustling pool with suckers causing Ivy's funds to constantly dwindle. However, he did like to play the big shot, but Ivy paid for his fantasies. She had no idea Donny dealt in drugs since he had never dealt out of the house. Nor did she know Donny had lost his money gambling as fast as he had made it.

"The Nick likes your style," said Lou breaking the ominous silence. "He said you reminded him of someone."

Mac gave Lou a be-careful-what-you-say look.

"Okay," said Ivy resigning herself to a few more hours of life.

This was not much of a choice, but at least she was still alive. Then again, she did not really believe it, not in the fullest sense. They could still kill her somewhere else.

"Okay, what?"

"She's coming with us, Mac."

"Lou, I'm asking her."

"I'll need a few minutes to get ready," said Ivy with a tone of closure.

"The Nick doesn't want you bringing anything with you except your purse and the clothes on your back."

"Then I better get dressed." She stood cautiously.

In the past, there had been a few times when she had erroneously assumed it was safe to move when there was violence present. Then a hand would strike her for no apparent reason. In the brutal aspects of Ivy's world, logic was not part of reality, where the abnormal had become the normal.

"Wait," said Mac.

Ivy froze, but there was no fist or flying object coming at her.

"Are there any guns in the house?" asked Mac.

REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

"Donny has a gun in the drawer in the bedroom. It's a twenty-two pistol. I doubt if I could hurt you two with it. Even if I did manage to shoot you."

Lou laughed, but Mac absorbed the information seriously. There was something about Ivy he did not trust.

"Lou, tell Gino to call The Nick on the cell and tell him we're leaving with the merchandise. Then check the baggage in the trunk. I don't want any problems when we transfer the merchandise."

Lou disappeared outside. He checked the body bag by giving it a quick look.

Meanwhile, Mac followed Ivy into the bedroom. He secured the .22 pistol from the drawer of the nightstand next to the unmade bed. She asked what the boss would like her to wear. Mac said it was up to her. She selected a leather outfit—knee high boots, mesh nylons, high-rise skirt and dark red blouse. She would grab her matching leather jacket on the way out. She did not wait for Mac to leave the room. He would not be the first stranger to ever watch her dress.

When she arrived in the bathroom he guarded the entrance staring at her. She took her time putting on her make-up. She was not totally convinced she would still be alive by noon. *Who knew? Lou and Mac knew.* Ironically, she smiled at the thought.

Mac asked what was so funny. He thought she was laughing at him because he could not stop staring at her.

"I was thinking if you killed me, at least, I'll go looking the way I want."

"That's funny?"

She turned and flashed her large round emerald eyes offering an irresistible smile. "From my point of view, it's funny."

"You're weird, kid."

And you're not? thought Ivy. *You come here and kill Donny. Not that I care about you killing Donny. Amber wanted me to leave him anyway. And then tell me the boss wants to see me. If I refuse, I'm dead. Damn, Mac, you're not only weird, but you're most likely a psychopath.*

Ignoring what had been on her mind she said, "Mac, you have to be weird, crazy or both to be alive nowadays."

"I'm not weird, and I'm not crazy."

She perceived Mac's tone as threatening. She froze, but only momentarily. "Weird as in unusual or unique," offered Ivy with a gentle quality in her voice.

G. PAUL GRONDIN

Mac paused to seriously think about this. "Oh yeah, I see what you mean... Are you almost ready?"

Ivy snapped the top onto the lipstick tube and gazed into the mirror for a last second check. "Okay, Mac, I'm ready."

Ivy slipped into the bedroom hoping Mac would not follow. He didn't as he stood over the toilet. Quickly, Ivy grabbed Donny's money belt, strapped it on under her blouse and met Mac coming out of the bathroom as he pulled up his zipper.

She had discovered something fascinating about Lou. There was a charm, not many brains, but a raw form of charisma. Her surprise at still being alive had not left her. She remembered they were under orders from Nick DiBart. She began to entertain the idea she would be alive at high noon. After that, she would have to wait and see. The never-ending nightmare that had started when she was thirteen turned in the revolving door of her mind.

Just before the front door slammed shut, "Wait guys. I forgot something."

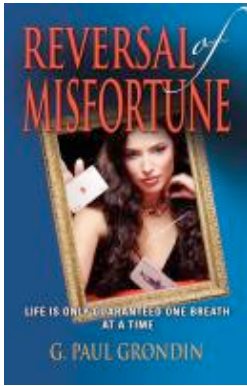
Mac looked at Lou, as if to say, 'Now what?'

"I'll only be a sec. Come back in with me, if you want, but I've got to get some tampons." She gave Lou a pleading glance with her emerald eyes.

Mac hesitated looking at his brother.

"Hurry up," said Lou causing Mac to accept his decision.

Ivy was down the hallway and into the kitchen looking over her shoulder. No one followed. In less than a minute, she had the twenty-five thousand stuffed in the money belt. By the time she was at the front door her blouse appeared normal.



Amber and Ivy run away from their abusive home life as teenagers and team up in Seattle to become high-class call girls. They dodge bullets trying to escape from a street gang, the Mafia and FBI. With disasters assaulting them at every major turn, they never give up searching for a new life where abuse and betrayal does not exist. But, their past is always catching up to them.

Reversal of Misfortune

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/6457.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**