

*Brim joins the Miami-Dade District Attorney's office. He becomes a target as he exposes a corrupt judicial system, murder of a federal judge, an attempted assassination and threats against his family. A headless body is the key to the resolution.*

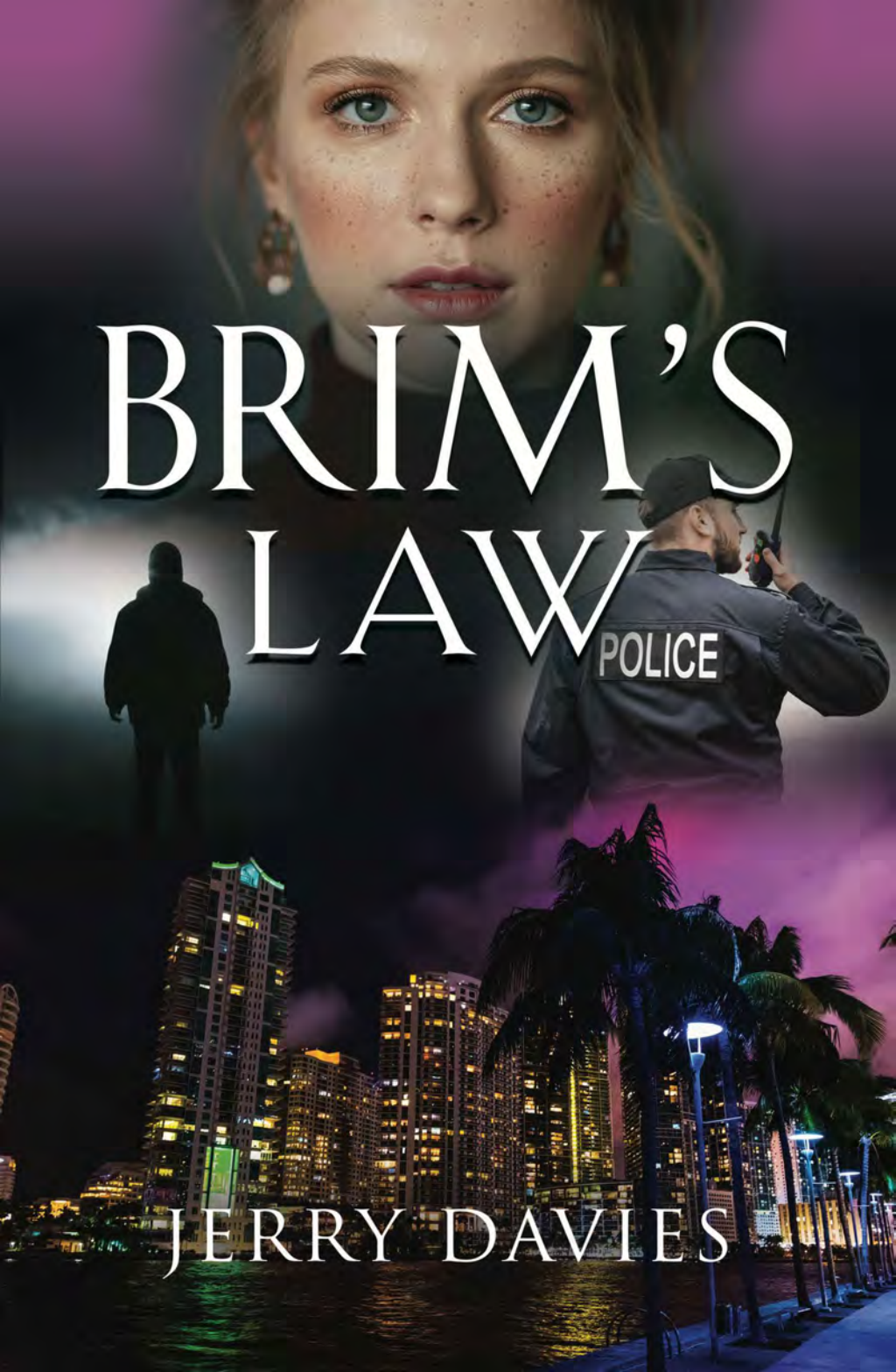
## **BRIM'S LAW**

By Jerry Davies

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# BRIM'S LAW

POLICE

JERRY DAVIES

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## Chapter 1

### Midnight, Thursday, January 11, 1962

A Miami-Dade Police truck with seven armed officers stopped two blocks from a rambling single-story mansion in North Miami Beach. The side doors opened and the officers, rifles at the ready, jumped from the truck and ran in single file along an eight-foot cement wall to the iron gate at the front of the driveway to the residence.

Lieutenant John Petruko, a fifteen-year veteran of the Miami-Dade Police Department looked through the iron ornament on the gate for guards or dogs. He signaled the team to set the ladder up to the top of the wall. Once in place, the officers climbed to the top and jumped over, hitting the grass and rolling quietly to the asphalt road leading to the circular drive to the main entrance of the mansion. They ran to a hedgerow surrounding a large fishpond and fountain in the center of the circular driveway.

Three officers crawled across a short lawn area to the west wall, twenty-five feet from the dual wooden front doors. They crawled into the hedge along the wall. Looking around with night goggles, Petruko signaled, and seven officers ran to the left side of the front doors.

The officer carrying the hand-held battering ram ran to the front doors. Petruko raised his right hand with three fingers up. He counted down. Three, two, one—BAM, the doors flew open. “Hands up! Don’t move,” Petruko screamed as the team

spread out around the entrance room. They raised their automatic rifles and quickly pointed them around the room. Nothing. All was quiet as the officers pointed weapons at three closed double doors. One on the west wall and two on the east wall. The officers crouched down behind a long white couch and two stuffed chairs and a coffee table near the east door.

In the center of the entrance room was a bronze sculpture of a bucking thoroughbred and rider dressed in chaps, a wide sombrero, heavy shirt, and vest, holding the reins high as if he were holding on for dear life. Petruko and Sergeant Mac stood behind the statue.

Petruko signaled to two officers to open the west doors, then pointed to two officers near the east doors to open them. As the officers moved toward the doors, the west doors opened and three men dressed in black with automatic weapons blazing ran into the room, screaming. They hit the two officers in front of the doors as the five remaining officers opened fire. Two of the three men in black were hit and went down. The third kept firing and hit corporal Higgens in the shoulder. Higgens twirled and fell into the statue. The two officers down in front of the west doors had been hit in the legs and stomach. Two officers called for medics and ran to help them and corporal Higgens.

The shooter turned his pistol toward Petruko, but Sergeant Mac fired first. He hit the man in the chest. He dropped his weapon and fell. Two officers jumped on him, pinning him to the floor. Petruko stood and called for ambulances and backup on his walkie-talkie.

John Petruco spent four years in the Marine Corps before joining the police department. He received a purple heart fighting in the Pacific in 1944-45. He recovered in Camp Pendleton, North Carolina after the war, received an honorable

discharge, returned to Miami, married his high school sweetheart Maria, a nurse. One year later he joined the Miami-Dade Police Department.

Petruko signaled to two of his team to carefully go into the west entrance and search the west side of the building. He signaled for three officers to go in the east doors. Sergeant Mac threw open both west doors. He and officer Johns stood on the side of the doors waiting for any gunfire or a rush by any other gunmen inside. Mac nodded and went through the door on the left with an officer behind him.

The three officers at the east doors opened them quickly, shouted "Miami-Dade Police," and entered quickly through the doors into a hallway.

The ambulance arrived and two medics ran to Corporal Higgins and Officer Blake. They opened their medical packs, assessed the wounds, and placed compression packs on their wounds. Two medics pushing gurneys ran into the room. One was preparing IVs as the four carefully picked up the officers and placed them on the gurneys. They wheeled them outside to waiting ambulances.

Mac and Johns emerged from the west doors into the foyer with two men and two women with their arms in the air in front of them. "Halt," Petruko yelled. The men and women stopped. "On your knees now!" Petruchio ordered as officers surrounded and handcuffed them.

"Looks like we got them all," Sergeant Mac said. "The west side circles around and meets the east side. We met Hutchins and his team coming from the east side. We found a hidden room with these four characters hiding inside. They dropped their weapons and surrendered. We searched the room and found what looks like more than ten kilos of cocaine, plus heroin bags, marijuana sacks, and thousands in cash. Hutchins' group is searching rooms in the rest of the building."

“Incredible. Any sign of Herberts?” Petruko asked.

“No, sir. Herberts is not here,” Mac said. Sergeant Mac and Petruko were partners on nearly every bust the past ten years. Mac served in the Marine Corps with Petruko and moved to Miami from Ohio after the war.

“Damn. I’ll bet Herberts’ prints won’t be on the drugs either,” Petruko said. “I’ll call Detective Levy to get the Bureau of Narcotics out here to remove the drugs right away. The ambulance and medics are tending to the three perps that were shot. Looks like they didn’t make it, so the medics will take the bodies to the coroner’s office. Sergeant Mac, check on our officers who were wounded. Also, check closely with forensics and see if we can get an identity on the three down. There may be wallets or papers in the rooms. Let’s get these four characters into the truck and off to headquarters for questioning,” Petruko shouted to the drivers and guards of the patrol wagon waiting outside.

“Sergeant Garris, have you got a team searching the grounds?” Mac asked.

“Yessir. We have a forensics team and dogs searching the grounds. One interesting note. We found a backpack on the grounds near the pond in front. We called the bomb squad to check it out.”

“My God, this place is a den of evil,” Petruko said. “We’ll get these characters locked up, interrogate them, and work with forensics to see if they can dig up something inside or outside of this place on Herberts. Maybe, just maybe we can get something tangible. The guy is a frigging ghost.”

The police wagon moved past the fountain and up to the front door of the building. Four officers with pistols drawn escorted the four prisoners into the truck.

“Get them downtown right away. I want them booked and put into interrogation. I’ll be in with Detective Levy and start questioning,” Petruko said. “I know they’ll probably have lawyers crawling all over headquarters soon, but maybe we can get something before their vultures arrive.”

The coroner’s wagon and two ambulances pulled up. Six medical assistants went into the building pushing gurneys and carrying body bags. Miami-Dade Police Detective Rubin Levy stepped out of his car and waved at Petruko. “I’ll get down to headquarters as soon as I can. A narcotics and forensic team will be here soon. I told forensics to give both ends of this house a thorough scan,” Levy said. “Fingerprints, footprints...I don’t give a damn—just find something.”

Detective Rubin Levy was a 12-year veteran of the police department. He served under Detective Tom Brim Junior for four years before Brim went to law school and after, became a Miami-Dade Assistant District Attorney. Levy was promoted to Brim’s Detective position.



## Chapter 30

“I’ll have undercovers on the Tiki bar ASAP,” Levy said. “That may be good for some leads to Herberts or Bartelli. Margarita is scared, and I hope he’s not planning on disappearing. I’ll have a tail put on him immediately and make sure we know where he goes and who he talks to 24/7.”

“Okay,” Gaynor said. “We can go see Santo now. The FBI has detailed Santo’s bank account, phone calls, and the purchase of the Cadillac. He has bank accounts in Miami and Orlando and made a nice deposit in his Miami account, at First Nation Bank I might add, shortly after the president of the bank was killed. We nailed the calls, too. There were several traced to Bartelli and one, just one, to Smarts.”

“Damn, this is getting crazy. Smarts? Bartelli? I don’t get what a two-bit gangster has to do with a gang and law firm,” Levy said.

“It looks like this guy Santo may be closer to the gang and somehow hit two people, the supermarket owner and the bank president, maybe under orders from the law firm?” Brim asked.

“Let’s go talk to this guy,” Gaynor said.

The guard in the prison Cell Block Two interrogation section greeted Brim, Gaynor, and Levy. “Gentlemen, Santo has his attorney in the room with him, a Mr. Monty Harrison, and he will be in there when you question Santo.”

“Did he say what law firm he represented?” Brim asked.

“Here is his card. Yes, Larson, Willkins, and Tamaroff law firm.”

“Thank you,” Brim said.

“Mr. Harrison and Santo are right through this door,” the guard said, leading them into the interrogation room marked 2C.

After introductions, Gaynor began the questioning. “Mr. Santo, I understand you may have known the grocery store owner Mr. Hemmings, of the Stulls Market on 95th Street, before he was killed last month?”

Santo looked at his attorney, who nodded.

“No, I never heard of the man,” Santo said.

“Did you not talk about the grocery business being very good to you when you were with friends at the Tiki Bar in North Miami Beach in the past two months?”

“No, I don’t remember ever saying that,” Santo replied.

“Mr. Santo, do you have bank accounts at First Nation Bank in Orlando and in Miami?”

“Yeah, I do business in both places.”

“Mr. Santo,” Gaynor continued. “You made a rather large deposit, over \$100,000, in your Miami First Nation Bank account last month on March 20, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, that’s my business account. Santo Imports. So what?”

“Your deposit was in three checks from a business, Olor’s Design in Orlando. Is that correct?”

Santo turned to his attorney and they spoke in whispers. “Yeah, I do business with them. They buy some imported Chinese statues and pottery from my business.”

“Mr. Santo, did you know the president of First Nation Bank during the time you’ve had your accounts there?”

“No,” Santo said.

“Mr. Santo, you are being held as a person of interest in two murders. If you have any information that you’d like to give us, now is the time. The investigation is underway on both the grocery store and bank murders. We also know that you have been in touch with Mr. Jacko Bartelli in Orlando. Is there anything you’d like to tell us about the Bartelli connection?”

Santo leaned over as his attorney whispered in his ear. He sat back up straight. “No, I don’t know any Bartelli in Orlando or anywhere,” Santo said.

“Okay, Mr. Santo. That wraps up our meeting. We will be in touch, Mr. Santo, you can count on that,” Gaynor concluded as Brim and Levy nodded. “You will be held for another twenty-four hours before being released through your attorney. If you would like to talk further with us, please advise your attorney, and we will be back to you right away. Mr. Harrison, I strongly suggest you advise your client not to leave town.” The three stood and exited.

“That jerk knows we are onto him,” Gaynor said. “His connection to Bartelli tells me there was a connection between the gang, the supermarket, and the bank that apparently they wanted to end. Thus, the killings. Crazy, huh?”

“What do we do with Santo once he’s released?” Brim asked.

“We’ll have a tail on him 24/7,” Gaynor said. “If he slips and heads to Orlando to Bartelli, we’ll be waiting for him.”

“Yeah, and it looks like the law firm is playing in all of the criminal stuff going on throughout South Florida. Any word on Smarts’ whereabouts?” Brim asked.

“I haven’t received any info this morning, but I’ll know more when I get back to headquarters,” Levy said.

“Our agents are looking for him as well,” Gaynor said.

“I’m getting a lot of media calls,” Brim said, “but I have the office tell everyone I am out and unavailable. I thought maybe Smarts would contact me. I’m thinking maybe he’ll send a message to me through one of the thugs that he or someone in the law firm hired to take me out. He’s hiding out somewhere, or maybe he needs protection? He could send a message to me, or, like you say, Detective, he has been eliminated.”

“Yes, the press reports are all claiming someone set a trap and tried to kill you,” Levy said. “You know, we did pick up two guys near the alley right after the bombing. They were sitting in a car two blocks south of the alley. We found a shotgun and two .357s in their trunk. So, we took them in. They are being interrogated, and, thus far, no news.”

Levy continued. “The bomb thrower guy that was killed has been identified as a thug from Orlando named Peter Moskell. We’ve conducted a thorough search of his home and talked with all of his acquaintances we could find. Plus, he has a sister in Pompano Beach. We have been unable to reach her. Apparently, she left her home right after her brother was killed.

We have an APB out for her. Her brother may be a member of Bartelli's gang."

Levy's pager buzzed. "Excuse me, I have to make a call," Levy said. He went to the desk on the main floor of the jail. Brim and Gaynor waited in the hall.

Levy talked briefly and hung up. He hurried to Brim and Gaynor.

"Brim, I just talked to Detective Haggarty at headquarters. He said one of the guys being held has confessed that orders to kill you came from a Mr. H.," Levy said.

"Wow, H? H for Herberts? Tell them to ream the guy good. Let's get to headquarters and talk with that guy, too," Brim said.

"They're all lawyered up, but they will be arraigned in a few days and charged. I think we should wait 'til the hearing is over, then get into their heads," Levy said.

"Good idea," Gaynor said. "Meanwhile, the FBI will continue a search for Smarts. When we get to talk to this guy, we may have some info on Sean and Sarah."

"Sounds good," Brim said. "But, if Haggarty gets any more information from the guy, please tell him to call you right away, Detective Levy."

"Absolutely, Haggarty will call. Brim, Chief told Haggarty to tell you he has assigned extra patrols to your home and your parents' home, and we have undercover watching you when you are out."

## Chapter 40

### The Morgue

“Gentlemen,” Doctor Howard Michels, Miami-Dade chief medical examiner, said as he waved them toward a gurney at the end of the hall. A body bag with a body lay on the gurney. The bag was closed.

“This, we believe, is the remains of Denton Smarts. We surmised that only from the license plate on his car. However, we are now searching for medical records to get the blood type and maybe identifying body marks. The body has a tattoo on the right upper arm. It has the letters ‘U.S.M.C.’ inside a Marine Corps emblem.”

“The FBI will get his service and business records from the law firms he worked for,” Agent Gaynor said. “Of course, medical records, if they are available, will tell us what we need to know about Smarts. It will be easy to find out if he was in the Marine Corps.”

“It really doesn’t make sense,” Brim said. “Why go to extremes to hide his identity? What the hell does it mean?”

The six men and Dr. Michels walked as two assistants pushed the gurney down the walkway to a double door, leading them to a room with a steel table in the middle. Sinks and trays and medical instruments surrounded the table.

The aides stopped the gurney beside the table. They unzipped the black body bag, reached in, lifted the body from the bag, and laid it on the table. Brim and Levy looked away.

“My God, it’s ghastly,” Chief McKinnon said. “This is something I haven’t seen in my career. I’ve seen auto, boat, and airplane accidents, but the deliberate mutilation of a body is something else.”

“As you also see, there is a large bullet hole in the center of the chest of this torso,” Dr. Michels said.

“Looks like he was shot with a rifle, or a magnum pistol. Maybe a .44 magnum?” Gaynor said. “Can you tell if the bullet is still in the body, Doctor?”

“Won’t know anything until I conduct a thorough autopsy.”

“It looks like a rifle hole to me,” Levy said. “How long until you complete the autopsy, Doctor?”

“I’m going to conduct it right away,” Dr. Michels said. “I should have the first thorough phase of the autopsy done in forty-eight hours. The toxicology report won’t be ready for ten to fifteen days.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” Brim said.

“I’ll head back to headquarters and make sure we are moving on finding medical and service records. Would you all like to join me?” Gaynor asked.

“Sure,” Brim and Levy nodded.

“I will have to get back to P.D. headquarters,” Chief McKinnon said.

“I’ll head to my office. I want to brief D.A. Harris,” Brittan said. “I’ll be available at the office.”

"Woofie, you come with us to FBI headquarters," Brim said. "I have something for you to work on after we get there. It could be very helpful."

Brim, Levy, and Woofie drove to FBI headquarters. Gaynor met them at the entrance, and they all went in together.

"Come into my office. I'll call around from there and see what we have going," Gaynor said. "I've got three teams working on finding records. I have a note here that Smarts' fingerprints are not in the FBI files, so it's boots on the ground to find information."

Gaynor's phone rang.

"Hello, yes, Dr. Michels," he said. "What? Oh, crap. Okay, we'll deal with it. Please keep them out of the morgue and out in the parking lot. I will have Miami P.D. get on it right away." He hung up and turned to Levy, Brim, and Woofie.

"Dr. Michels said newspaper, radio, and TV reporters are all over the entrance to the hospital and morgue. He didn't let them in and said he told them he has no comment until the investigation is complete. He said one of the TV reporters asked if the body was that of attorney Denton Smarts, wanted for questioning in the attempted assassination of Assistant D.A. Brim."

"Oh, God, Jerry Crane, Channel 8," Brim said. "I'm glad Dr. Michels is holding them off."

"I am calling headquarters and getting extra patrol cars over to the hospital right now to make sure the press stays away from the morgue," Levy said. "I'll have Sergeant Johnson tell them we'll hold a briefing later and will notify them."

"I just got a note that two of our agents are on their way to Judge Hendricks' office right now to ask for subpoenas to take to the law firm and get Smarts' records," Gaynor said.



“Great,” Brim said. “Wish I could see Tamaroff and Brighton’s reaction. They probably have hidden relevant records. That’s why I asked Woofie to come here. Woofie, you have a good source in the law firm, right?”

“Yes, two, actually. One I dated for a while, and the other is a close friend of my sister. They are both very cooperative and have given me information on Bartelli and his gang’s thugs visiting the law firm.”

“Woofie, the FBI is there getting records. If Brighton and the gang have hidden or removed records, we wouldn’t know. I bet your friends there would know. Do you think you could talk to them and see if there was any crap going on with Smarts’ records or other information?” Brim asked.

“Sure, I’ll get on that right away.” He grabbed his backpack and hat off the table and went to the door. “I’ll call you if I find anything out.”

“Perfect,” Levy said. “Woofie is a good source, Brim. I’m glad you found him and put him to work with us.”

“Thanks,” Brim said. “It was my brother Sean who found Woofie and contacted Del. A great find.”

“It will be difficult to get a good identification on the body, but I’m going to offer Dr. Michels help from the most sophisticated crime lab in the world,” Gaynor said. “Our lab can double-check or actually do tests that Dr. Michels’ lab may not have the capacity to complete.”

“Wil, may I use your phone’s outside line? It’s past dinner, and I want to let Margaret know where I am and that I’ll be home as soon as I can,” Brim said.

“Sure, take my office phone inside,” Gaynor said.

“Hi, honey. I’m at the FBI headquarters right now,” Brim said as he shifted the phone from his right ear to his left. “You

won't believe what's going on." He filled her in on Smarts, his car, and the body.

"Oh my God. Tom, that is incredible. How in the world are they going to be able to identify the body for sure?"

"The FBI is working with the chief medical officer, Dr. Michels. Put those two labs together, and I have no doubt they'll come up with an identification of someone. It's going to be a wild chase identifying the body and trying to figure out who did it. I'll be here for a while. I'll call before I come home. Have we gotten a call from Mom and Dad?"

"Yes, I was going to tell you. They called from Venice. They're getting ready to see Saint Mark's Square, Saint Mark's Basilica, and the Doge's Palace. Knowing your dad, they'll probably be learning to speak Italian between sights."

"That's great. I'm glad they're having fun. I've got to go. Call you later. Love you. Kiss Ian for me."

**Thursday, June 8, 9:00 a.m.**

**The Wilkins, Larson, and Tamaroff Law Firm**

"Good morning, I'm FBI Agent John Tinsley, and this is Agent Steve Mershon."

"Yes, Agent Tinsley. I'm Samantha Jenkins. We got word you were coming. What can I help you with today?"

"Miss Jenkins, we are here with a subpoena to pick up all records of the law firm's attorney, Denton Smarts. Medical, professional, and personal records on performance if you have those."

"I see. Okay, if you will excuse me, I will be right back."

“Miss Jenkins, we would prefer to go with you to the records area.”

“Uh, okay.” She signaled two men standing by the door off the hall.

They came forward, and one said, “Yes, gentlemen. I am Howard Sideler, a member of the firm, and this is Johnathan Roy. We can take you to the HR office. If you will follow us.”

“Yes, thank you,” Tinsley said.

The four men entered HR. Sideler went behind the large desk and handed the clerk a note with instructions.

“Gentlemen, our HR team will gather all records of Mr. Smarts and bring them forward,” Sideler said.

“Thank you,” Tinsley said. “Agent Mershon would also like to take Mr. Smarts’ computer and records from his office. We will have a team of three agents downstairs to go with you and Agent Mershon.”

“Yes, if you would follow me,” Sideler said.

Sideler and Mershon were met by two agents in the front foyer and escorted to Smarts’ office. Sam Brighton was waiting at Smarts’ office door.

“Gentlemen, I am Sam Brighton, chief defense attorney. Please come in. We have unplugged Mr. Denton’s computer, and his files are in the boxes on top of his desk.”

“And these are all of his files?” Mershon asked.

“Yes, we have emptied his file drawers, as you see, and we have pulled all files and papers out of his desk and placed them in the boxes as well,” Brighton said.

“Thank you,” Mershon said as he and the two agents picked up the computer and boxes and took them to the front and out to a waiting van.

“Mr. Brighton, I would also like to go through Mr. Smarts’ desk and file drawers before we leave,” Mershon said. He signaled to the two agents to conduct a second search of everything in Smarts’ office. “Once we finish here, the agents will conduct a second search of the HR office, looking for any missed files. Thank you.”

Brighton shrugged his shoulders. “Suit yourself.”

“Let’s get this information to the lab,” Mershon said after the second searches were concluded. He handed one of the boxes to the van driver. “I just hope we got it all. Even though we found nothing in our second search, my guess is they may have done a run-through on this and pulled some files. We’ll see.”

### **Levy’s Office, 1:00 p.m.**

“Have you gotten any information from the pound on Smarts’ car?” Brim asked.

“No, nothing new besides the license plate and identification of the car, listing it as belonging to Denton Smarts,” Levy said.

“I just heard from our office that the team has picked up all of Denton’s records at the law firm, plus his computer. I’m heading back to headquarters and will call if I get further information,” Gaynor said.

“Thanks,” Levy said.

“Del and I are heading to our office,” Brim said. “I want to get back into the Nobello and Delgado files.”

“Good,” Brittan said. “Let’s fill Harris in on all that’s happened as well.”

Brim pulled out of the parking lot and headed east on Midway Avenue. He stopped at a light two blocks down.

“Del, I’m not paranoid or anything, but take a look. Don’t look back; look in the side mirror and tell me if that is a white pickup truck.”

“Whoa. Yes. It’s a white pickup, but I can’t see who’s driving or if there is a passenger in the truck.”

The light changed and Brim stepped on the pedal of his 1962 Ford Fairlane. He pulled into the right lane and looked in the rearview mirror to see if a white pickup was changing lanes to get behind him.

“It’s a white pickup with two men in it,” Brim said. “I can’t make out the license plate, but if he changes lanes and gets behind us, I’ll know it’s the punks that have been harassing me.”

Brittan pulled his .38 from its holster under his jacket.

“Slow down, Brim, and take a right at the next block,” Brittan said.

Brim slowed and turned sharply and stomped on the pedal. The Ford took off just as the white pickup turned the corner and aligned to follow Brim and Brittan.

“Call for backup,” Brim said. “I’ll speed up, turn left, and head back to Biscayne so we can get them to follow us on our way to the office.”

“This is car forty-six, we have a white Ford pickup following us. Need assistance. We are entering Biscayne Boulevard at Northeast 86th Street heading south. It’s a white Ford pickup with two men in pursuit of our car.”

“Roger, four-six,” came the response. “Assistance needed for car forty-six, Biscayne Boulevard, Northeast 86th heading south.”

“Car nine, Car eighteen, roger. We are in pursuit.”

“Brim get in the left lane. They’ll have to come up behind or next to us, but they won’t be able to push us off to the right. They won’t risk pushing us left because of oncoming traffic. It’ll expose them to the traffic,” Brittan said.

Traffic was light on Biscayne going north. The pickup got within twenty feet of the Ford. About four blocks behind the pickup, car nine was speeding with lights and siren on. Car eighteen was coming from the east to Biscayne. The pickup closed the gap, and Brim pushed the camera button several times as the pickup came within ten feet. Brittan raised his pistol, rolled the passenger side window down, and pointed his pistol toward the pickup. The pickup shot out to the middle lane and was speeding to catch upside-by-side with the Ford. Brittan looked beside the car to make sure there were no other cars side-by-side. He fired. The bullet hit the driver’s door under the mirror, and the pickup slowed and pulled back behind the car. The passenger in the pickup fired a shot back at the car, hitting the rear window panel and shattering glass. Cars on both sides of the pickup and car slowed and pulled over. Car nine came up a block and a half behind Brim’s car with siren screaming and lights flashing. The officer on the passenger side pulled his pistol out of the window and pointed at the pickup.

“The SOB is shooting at our tires,” Brim said. “Looks like one patrol car behind them. There are two more coming south, and I see one at the west intersection at the next street.”

“Damn,” Brittan said, firing a second shot at the pickup. The bullet hit the windshield on the passenger side, and the passenger screamed. The pickup driver turned a sharp left and

did a U-turn, hitting an oncoming car in the rear left fender. The pickup careened off, and the driver screamed, "Hold on!" He pushed the pedal to the floor. The pickup swerved right, then left, and then veered right as the passenger, holding his right shoulder, fell against the driver. The pickup went straight at a light pole on the corner of the next street. It jumped the curb and hit the pole square in the middle of the front of the pickup. Smoke poured out of the engine compartment, and a flame ignited. The two men in the seats were out cold and did not respond to the flame as it flared toward the passenger compartment.

Car eighteen pulled up to the curb at the corner. Two officers jumped out and ran to the pickup. They tried to open the passenger door, but they couldn't get it open. They ran to the driver's side and were able to get the door half open, enabling them to pull the driver through the door and out. The passenger side of the pickup was now engulfed, and there was nothing they could do for the passenger.

Brim pulled his car up next to the patrol car as two more patrol cars arrived. Officers jumped out of their vehicles to assist the two that had the driver on the ground. They moved him away from the pickup as it was completely engulfed in flame. The officers moved the driver another fifty feet from the pickup, fearing an explosion.

Brim ran to the two officers with the driver on the ground. The driver's face was severely burned, and the right side of his clothing had been on fire but was extinguished. An ambulance pulled up as Brim leaned down to try and identify the driver.

"Damn, his face looks familiar," Brim said as the ambulance pulled up and a medic ran with bag in hand to the driver.

"The driver looks mighty familiar," Brim said, looking down at the man lying on a blanket. "Damn, where have I seen this guy? Wait. Wait. I saw him at Tonya Brighton's party. Yes, the

school year-end party. Is he going to make it?" Brim asked the medic.

"He has what looks like third-degree burns on his face, torso, and right arm. We'll get him to the hospital and check him out. His pulse is weak, but he's breathing well. Won't know 'til we get him in."

They hooked an IV to the left arm of the passenger, raised him onto a gurney, and rushed him to the ambulance.

Brim walked to the pickup truck. The fire department had put the flames out and thrown a tarp over the passenger side to cover the body of the man there.

Brim showed his badge to the fireman standing near the body. "How bad is it?" he asked.

"Not much left. It'll take a lot of work by the coroner to get an I.D."

"Yep. Really something," Brim said as Detective Levy and Brittan came up to him.

"We got an I.D. on the driver. His license says he's Renaldo Guterrez. He lives in Miami. Don't know about his buddy. We also have company," Levy said, pointing to two television crews pulling up to the curb across from the accident.

Brim raised his hands to stop any reporter from approaching him at the scene. Levy waved at two patrolmen to keep the media back.

"Detective, I saw Guterrez at Sam Brighton's house at a U of Miami party held by Brighton's wife, who is the dean of the English department. She is Margaret's boss at the U. I don't think anyone was with him. He kind of stood off by himself. I didn't pay any attention to him and didn't speak with him, but he was there."



“This guy may be tied to Brighton,” Levy said. “Just how much, we don’t know, but let’s see him as soon as he can talk. I just got a message from Brittan over our phone. He is aware of the accident and some of the details. He said he would fill Harris in on everything and asked if you could stop by the office as soon as you can.”

“Sure, I’ll try to get there ASAP. I don’t want Jerry Crane to catch me and start throwing questions. I wonder if the guy in the passenger seat was at that party with Guitierrez?” Brim asked. “We need to get an I.D. on him as quickly as possible. Then we’ll put these guys together and see if we can’t take the info to Brighton and tie them around his neck. If they work for Brighton, then there is no doubt in my mind that that SOB wants me dead.”

“I’ll meet with Dr. Michels as soon as the body gets to the morgue. We’ll also put a patrolman on the driver’s room at the hospital. No one outside of the medical staff will be allowed in or out of his room until we talk to him and transfer him to the jail,” Levy said.

“Perfect,” Brim said. “I can’t wait to question that thug. He has stalked me for quite a while, and my guess is he’s working for Brighton. Can I get a ride in an unmarked to get away from this scene?”

“Sure,” Levy said, signaling to a patrolman. “Please take Mr. Brim to the D.A.’s office, Corporal. Brim, I’ll have someone drive your car to your office.”

“Thanks. Just tell him to park it in a visitor space on the third floor.”

Brim met with Harris and Brittan back at the office. He explained what had happened and how the accident ended.

“We have the I.D. of the driver and are running prints on the passenger,” Brim said. “I recognized the driver, Renaldo

Guterrez. He was at a party Margaret and I went to at Tonya and Sam Brighton's home. She throws a party at the end of each semester, and, of course, Margaret and I are invited. Tonya is the wife of Sam Brighton. Once I get a photo of the passenger with Guterrez, I'll be able to tell if he was at the party, too. That may also tie Brighton to the assassination attempt on me. As soon as Guterrez can speak, Levy will let me know, and we will go in and interrogate him."

"Pretty crazy," Brittan said. "Everything is exploding now. It's going to go fast and furious, so I suggest we get the task force together ASAP and give them a complete update."

"Good idea," Harris said. "Brim, the press will try to reach you, but don't say anything. If they call here, we'll tell them you aren't in and we don't expect you today or tomorrow. Do lay low."

"Will do," Brim said. "Channel 8 will probably have me identified as the police car driver, but since I got away from the scene fairly quick, I hope no one tells Jerry Crane or any of the media. I hope we can talk to Guterrez tomorrow."

"Hold on, I've got a call coming in," Harris said. He waved at his secretary and went to his desk.

"Yes," Harris said. "This is D.A. Harris. I see. Yes, we'll stop by first thing in the morning and sign the papers. I'll notify the FBI and get it started immediately. Thank you."

He hung up the phone, stood, walked around his desk to the coffeepot, and poured a cup. Brim and Brittan sat and watched. Harris took a sip of coffee and walked back to the desk and sat.

"Gentlemen, Judge George just gave us the phone taps on the law firm principals. We'll be on-line with them in twenty-four hours. I'll call Gaynor right away, and we'll all meet in the

judge's chambers tomorrow morning at nine for full orders to implement."

"That's great," Brim said. "We're on our way." He went back to his office to check messages. He picked up the coffeepot, poured a half cup, and sat down.

"Mr. Brim," Martha said from his office intercom. "Attorney Lance Franks is on line one from the law firm."

"Hello, this is Tom Brim."

"Mr. Brim, this is Lance Franks. I would like to meet with you personally, but with such little time left before the Nobello hearing, I thought, if you don't mind, we could chat on the phone."

"Yeah, no problem, Mr. Franks."

"Good. As you know, I will be representing Alberto Nobello at his pre-trial hearing."

"Yes, I am aware that you will defend Mr. Nobello. I hope you have received all of the pre-trial information from my office, outlining our hearing motions, actions, and witnesses we will call when the trial date is set?"

"Yes, I received all of your info so far. Mr. Brim, our office will be sending our pre-trial information to you this week. Mr. Nobello has quite an upbringing story to tell, and we will defend vigorously. If a trial is set, we will have witnesses as well. But we will pursue dismissal of charges at the pre-trial hearing."

"We assume that, Mr. Franks," Brim said. "But as I stated clearly to Denton Smarts when he visited me before he disappeared, we will be prosecuting Alberto Nobello to get the maximum sentence under the law, based on his charges and previous record."

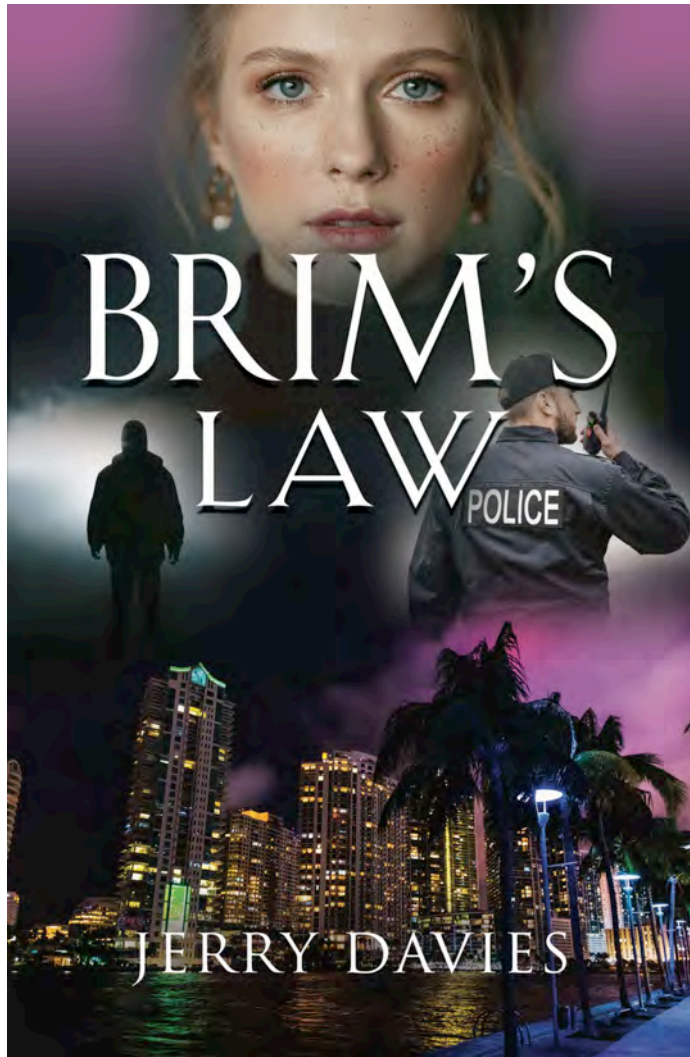
“Mr. Brim, we will motion that any pre-evidence against Mr. Nobello not be admissible.”

“Mr. Franks, I expect you to do that. But I am not giving away the store when I tell you there is nothing that stops me from pointing out that he has a very volatile personality, which has been displayed in the past and is brought forward as evidence in this trial.”

“We shall see, Mr. Brim, we shall see. Well, thank you for your time. We will see you in court.”

“Yes, you will, Mr. Franks.”

Brim set the phone in its cradle gently. “Damn, that guy is a piece of work,” he whispered. He lifted himself off his chair, twisted his body from left to right five times, and then sat back down.



*Brim joins the Miami-Dade District Attorney's office. He becomes a target as he exposes a corrupt judicial system, murder of a federal judge, an attempted assassination and threats against his family. A headless body is the key to the resolution.*

## **BRIM'S LAW**

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