



# SUNSET PARK

**Albert J. Tiseo**



*SUNSET PARK is a fast-paced crime novel about living and surviving on the streets of 1980s Brooklyn. The story centers around two teenage boys and how youthful curiosity can lead to life and death decisions. Place and circumstance, a sadistic mobster, money and power and the will to prevail are tested by the characters in this black thriller. Greed, selfishness, and the depth of human depravity are displayed for the reader to examine.*

# SUNSET PARK

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# SUNSET PARK

**Albert J. Tiseo**

*'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh)  
dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present  
with me: but how to perform that which is good I  
find not. For the good that I would do not: but  
the evil which I would not, that I do.'* (7:18-19)

*Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*

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## Chapter 1

Teddy was tired of the game and the gangs that pushed them out of Sunset Park. As he straddled his bicycle, sweat ran down his forehead and dripped onto the front wheel. He almost heard his slowing heartbeat and stared at Carol Johnson's full pink lips, and sighed.

She stood with a hand on her waist, hip cocked, her sister Mary next to her. "Well," she said. "What are we going to do? You're coming, right?"

"Let me catch my breath," he said and licked his lips. "You know I am."

Teddy wiped his face with his t-shirt bottom. His friend Lester sat hunched forward on his own BMX, shaking his head.

"We'll meet you on the block," Carol said. "Haven't you outgrown that yet?"

"You know why I need it," Teddy gazed at Carol's full buttery legs under the soft glow from the street pole lights, and smiled. "Give me thirty minutes to take a shower."

"Give us an hour," Lester said. "We won't be long."

"What are you talking about," Teddy said. "We got to go home."

"I got to show you something real important," Lester pedaled six feet away, stopped, and glared at Teddy. "C'mon, man. We'll be right back."

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“More important than her?” Teddy head motioned at Carol.  
“You’re kidding, right?”

“You won’t be disappointed. We got the rest of the night to party with them.”

“It’s late already.” Teddy looked at Lester watching Carol. The same old shit again. He shook his head. Carol was his girl.  
“This is not a good idea.”

“If it’s longer than a few minutes we won’t be out.” Carol turned to her sister and they moved down the sidewalk. “Let’s go.”

“Carol,” Teddy called out. “C’mon.”

She waved him off.

“Fuck, Lester. It better be good.”

“Seeing is believing.” Lester laughed. “I never steered you wrong before. Just follow me.” He raced down the block, and cut between parked cars onto the street.

“All that running has warped your brain.” Teddy gave one last glance over his shoulder. The girls disappeared into the dusk. “Shit. I know this is a mistake.”

Teddy and Lester rolled down 41<sup>st</sup> Street, crossed Fifth Avenue then Fourth Avenue past men, women and children lingering on the sidewalk and stoops until they reached the elevated rumbling Gowanus Expressway where the locals disappeared and truck traffic rattled the night.

“This better be good for you to bring me here.” Teddy licked the sweat from his upper lip as he trailed behind Lester.  
“Or I’m gonna kick your ass.”

“Kiss my ass is more like it,” Lester shouted back. “Don’t be a pussy for a pussy.”

“I’m really going to kick your faggot ass.” Teddy sped up.  
“You’re messing up my whole night.”

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"That's right, catch me first." Lester held up the middle finger of his left hand, and shot across Third Avenue doing a wheelie on a yellow light.

"This is the last time I fall for his game," Teddy said to himself as he jumped the sidewalk onto the roadway. A speeding car and four screeching tires shrieked around him in a blur. Instant shock zapped his brain. One leg splayed out. One foot slipped the pedal.

"Stupid motherfucker," a male voice shouted. The car skidded to a stop, fifty-feet away.

"Fuck you," Teddy called back. The handlebars wobbled in his hands. He fought for balance, gained control and continued forward.

The driver jumped out. "Come here, you little bastard."

"Eat shit." Teddy hunched over, pumped his legs and picked up his speed.

Lester glanced back.

"I almost got killed," Teddy yelled to Lester. "You asshole."

"Don't be a chump. You're this far." Lester kept going. "C'mon man."

"You're dead meat," Teddy shouted as he chased after Lester. "Asshole."

On the east side of Third Avenue, a white woman, and a black woman, dressed in flimsy halter tops and miniskirts sauntered in a clipped circle under a pole light.

"Yo, baby. Sell that shit," Lester yelled. "I want a date."

"Check out your right hand, honey." The white girl put her fingers to her lips, spun around, and patted her rear. "Kiss this ass."

"Your mother," Lester shouted. "All night long."

"I said, wait up." Teddy scanned the darkened waterfront and felt a flutter in his stomach. To his left, he caught sight of a

man and woman in a junkie nod under an alcove next to a bodega.

Teddy caught up to Lester just short of First Avenue “I got to be an idiot to follow you. Didn’t you hear me? I almost got run over.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t.”

They continued on the sidewalks in the lusterless pole lights, and turned left by a brown painted building with its corner cut into an angle. The gloaming had turned to night when Teddy made out the quarter end of the red van with white block lettering, entering the opened garage door of the same brick building.

“We’re almost to the water front,” Teddy said. “It’s Friday night. Nobody’s here. This is the last time I listen to you.”

“Stop yelling. We’re almost there.”

Teddy followed Lester as they continued to 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and turned right.

“Hold it.” Teddy threw out his legs and skated his sneakers to a halt. “If you don’t stop, I’ll turn around right here and leave.”

“What?” Lester skidded to a one-eighty, walked the bike back to Teddy. “You’ve come this far, now you want to leave? What kind of stupid shit is that?”

“What are we doing here? This is not a good place to be.”

“Trust me. One more block. And we’ll be done.”

“I’m really pissed, man. I could have been hanging out with Carol. And you with her sister.”

“This is better. Believe me. It’s like having two pockets full of candy.” Lester got on his bike, pedaled away. “Let’s go.”

“That’s what you think.” Teddy sighed, shook his head, and followed.

At Marginal, perpendicular empty piers extended hundreds of feet into Gowanus Bay. Lester hung a right into a quiet and



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motionless industrial zone of old brick and metal warehouses, some six stories high. Teddy was right behind him.

Geometric light and dark shadows fell across the ground as the big box buildings crowded together, their rusted equipment, delivery vans, small shipping containers and metal barrels, filling the yards and clotting against the structures.

Lester threw up his hand to stop, jumped from his bike.

Teddy did the same. "The only good thing down here is the breeze from the bay. What's that noise?" He hunched his shoulders.

"It's just the metal sign." Lester pointed overhead. "Relax, man."

"Scared the shit out of me."

"Shush." Lester set his bicycle against a brick wall.

"This better be good."

"Breathe, walk and be quiet," Lester whispered loud. "You're talking too much." He continued ahead hunched over, Teddy behind him.

They hung another right into an alley that separated two six-story storage warehouses. High building lights cascaded in a yellow drabness onto the cracked and littered macadam.

Teddy rubbed the goose bumps on his arms and looked to his rear.

"What are we doing?" Teddy said. "You're aggravating me with all this quiet shit."

"You want everybody to hear you? Shsssh. This way."

"Shsssh. This way my ass." Teddy quick glanced over his shoulder, once, twice. "There's nobody here." He clenched his jaw and took short silent breaths.

"What do you expect, a ghost?" Lester said. "Wooooooo."

"You're an idiot." Teddy again glanced backwards.

The boys crept behind two rows of stacked pallets.

Teddy felt the sweat trickling down his face and neck.

Across from the pallets and parked parallel against a warehouse wall, Teddy saw a man slouching in the front seat of a big four-door Buick.

The man glanced towards the opened passenger window. Teddy and Lester ducked.

Teddy slowly rose up, peeked over the pallets and spotted a woman's head bobbing over the man's lap.

Lester nudged him with an elbow.

Teddy grinned, and understood the man was getting a ten-dollar blowjob. He should have guessed Lester's intent when they passed the two prostitutes on Third Avenue. He let out a long breath. How stupid could he have been to be afraid?

"You messed up my whole night for this shit?" Teddy whispered. "Fucking, Lester." He shook his head. "Let's go."

"Shssh." Lester placed a hand over Teddy's mouth. "Wait."

Teddy yanked Lester's hand away and spit. "For what? Let's go," he mouthed and jerked his thumb.

Lester grabbed his arm, tapped his forefinger to his lips.

Teddy pulled free, and craned his neck for one last look, or at least it was going to be a last look until Teddy saw a silhouetted figure emerge from a recessed doorway. In four quick strides, the stranger was at the Buick with a gun pointed into the passenger window.

The man behind the steering wheel shot up, hands fumbling in his lap. The woman sat, shrieked and covered her face. They both jabbered at the gunman, "What do you want...? Don't shoot. We got money."

"Shut up," the gunman hissed, and yanked the door open. "Shut up." He leveled the gun in the woman's face. "Shut the fuck up." The gunman quick scanned the alley.

Teddy cringed, and edged down, eyes above the pallets unable to look away, fingers squeezing the wood slat.

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Lester crouched behind him, digging his sharp fingers into Teddy's arm and waist.

A rush of confusion clouded Teddy's brain, run, stay, scream, hide? He felt Lester's hands slipping from his arm and reality slipping from his brain. Shit, shit, shit.

Teddy quick glanced back, saw Lester crawl away and disappear in between the barrels and pallets and knew too late that he should have gone with Carol.

Teddy stared at the gunman. There was something familiar about him. His eyes remained transfixed as if captured in a trance. He just wanted to choke the shit out of Lester for leaving him there.

The gunman leaned in, grabbed the woman's neck, jammed her against the dash and switched the weapon's barrel to the driver. The driver raised his hands to his face. "Wait, you don't want to do this. You know who I..."

Before he finished his words, a gun blast reverberated against the brick walls.

The driver's head lurched against the seat back.

Teddy flinched, and gritted his teeth.

Another shot followed the first.

Teddy stuck his fingers in his ears, pissed himself, and slipped onto his ass. Through the pallet slats, he watched the woman's hysterical glare as she fought to squeeze out from her seat between the gunman and the passenger door. On the pavement, she jumped up and down, screaming, throwing her arms and hands in the air.

"Shut up." The gunman grasped the back of her blouse, spun her around. "Shut up."

"Don't shoot me." She hunched over, cowering, covering her eyes with crossed forearms until she fell into mewling. "Don't shoot, please, please, don't shoot me," she cried. "Please. Please."

"I told you to shut the fuck up." He threw a swift vicious backhand to her temple that dropped her to her knees, and placed the gun to her head.

Teddy cringed, clenched his jaw, his fingers stuck in his ears. "Don't do it," he whispered to himself. "Don't do it." Impossible, the word stuck in his brain, it wasn't happening. Impossible. "No." And Lester had left him all alone to see it.

Another sudden blast, a short flash followed.

Teddy recoiled, sucked in a breath. The woman fell onto her face, arms tucked at her sides, the blood spurting from her skull.

The man stood over the dead woman. A chrome sparkle glinted at his side. His chest rose and fell with each breath. "Wrong place. Wrong time, bitch."

Teddy moved to his knees, legs trembling. A mouthful of bile regurgitated into his throat. He held his breath and grabbed his stomach. From his left, he heard the fast pattering of sneakers, the hollow clanging of an overturned metal drum. He bit his bottom lip, cursed himself for listening to Lester. Please Jesus, his brain cried out. Please Jesus.

With a hand clamped on his mouth, he choked down the acid mixed saliva, breathed deeply and watched the assailant turn his head towards the fleeing noise.

The gunman stared down the alley to the waterfront, then took off running towards the clattering tin.

Teddy moved on all fours from behind the pallets. The blood circle grew around the dead woman's head. He squatted, took deep breaths, and caught a view of the driver's opened mouth, the blood splattered across half his face onto the back passenger window of the big Buick.

In a low crouch, Teddy hurried in the opposite direction towards First Avenue and came to a locked fence and gate between the two buildings.

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He looked down the alley then at the barbed wire on the fence and listened. He calculated it all in seconds and ducked behind the barrels, pallets and rusted machinery, and found a twenty-yard dumpster half full with construction debris. He eased in, careful not to stir the broken two by fours, wood lathe and empty paint buckets.

He hid under some squares of cut drywall, the still warm piss burning his crotch. He closed his eyes, breathed long and deep. Construction dust joined the fire at the back of his throat. The intermittent Gowanus vehicle traffic whined from a distance, the heavy rumbling of trucks, a long diffusing car horn.

He tensed at the sound of footsteps, a car door slamming, an engine turning over, the tick ticking of a lifter fading away towards Marginal. He'd never forget that sound or the woman's whining plea.

## Chapter 2

Sixteen blocks west of Marginal, Ray Leone paced the length of the bar inside Greenwood Tavern. He stopped at the end, and took out a Sacred Heart Mass card with a cross, protruding from its bright red center. He kissed it, leaned on the counter, and returned the card to his shirt pocket.

The Greenwood Tavern sat on the corner of Fort Hamilton Parkway and Chester Street and shared a demising wall with a one family apartment building. A four-foot alley and rear driveway ran on the side and back of both buildings.

“Mel,” Ray called.

“What?” The old bartender came over polishing a beer glass with a cloth towel.

“Where’s that kid? I didn’t see his bicycle in the back.” Ray’s head moved along with eyes as he scanned the premises and the host of patrons. He had to know where all his people were this evening.

“You gave him the night off,” Mel said. “Did you forget?”

“Shit,” Ray said. “I got too much on my mind.” But not enough to overlook things and not stay vigilant, Ray thought. No one was getting over on him.

“You got that kid riding all over Brooklyn.”

“He’s lucky he’s got a job. I was in the streets at his age.” And most of the time, Ray had to look out for himself. He

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survived by being calculating, and knowing the rules of the street.

“He’s a good kid,” Mel said.

“Did Larry call?”

“No. Relax,” Mel said. “Have a drink.”

“Don’t think I don’t know you and him got something going.” Ray took a liking to the kid. Maybe it was because he had no sons and saw the kid’s vulnerability. A kid without a father. Everybody needed a father.

“I got nothing going with Larry,” Mel said. The skin above his forehead creased. “What are you talking about?”

“Teddy.” Ray wondered why Mel had mistaken his implication. “Who do think I was talking about?”

“I’m just looking out for him. The kid deserves a break.”

“Sure. We all do.” Ray never considered himself a soft touch, but he’d given Teddy a job just because the kid showed up for week straight to ask about it.

“Larry?” Mel scoffed. “His own mother wouldn’t want him.”

“Listen. I got work to do tonight. Understand?”

“No problem.” Mel nodded, turned around, and moved down the line.

Ray gazed at Mel as he pulled the lever on a beer spigot and filled a few glasses. He’d never want Mel’s life, a sixty-something bartender without a pension, working for tips. But he was with Ray for many years, a guy he could count on, knew how to look without seeing or opening his mouth. Ray sucked in his lip, slapped the counter and stepped away. He maneuvered around a few tables and joined two members of his crew, Pete “the Limp” Barone and Danny Venezia, sitting in the back corner.

Ray pulled a chair, sat and crossed a leg over his knee.

"Are we gonna do that thing?" The Limp leaned in with a cigarette burning from the corner of his mouth.

"When I'm ready, I'll tell you." Ray slouched back with his arm draped over the chair, eyes focused on the overhead bar television as he spoke from the side of his mouth. "You don't get to ask me questions. We got that straight?"

"I thought Larry Boy was supposed to be here," the Limp said, tapping Ray's hand.

"Do you see him?" Ray snapped his head back from the television to Pete. "Don't stick your nose where it don't belong." He took in a deep breath and let it out slow.

"I mean, he's part of this crew," the Limp said and held up his hands. "I'm only saying."

"Don't say nothing." Ray stared hard at Pete. The numbskull was itching for a smack. Only Ray's infinite caution kept him from reaching across the table and grabbing his throat. Why people spoke shit at the most delicate moments was a mystery to Ray. Maybe it was nerves.

"Something's bothering you," the Limp said as if it were a fact that he'd uncovered. He took a deep breath, sat back.

"Yeah, you." Ray touched his shirt pocket where the mass card was as close to his heart as possible.

"I mean, you've been smoking and drinking like I never seen before."

"You ever read that book, Last Exit to Brooklyn?" This guy won't quit.

"Where that broad gets gang-banged in some shit-hole alley?"

"Say one more word, and this'll be your last fucking exit if you don't shut up." Ray stubbed out his cigarette, gave him a hard look that dared him to open his mouth.

The Limp drew a pinched forefinger and thumb across his lips, sat back and gazed towards the front window.



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“It’s almost time,” Ray said. “You guys go next door and wait there. I’ll bring him in.”

“We’re on it.” Danny rose to his feet. The Limp joined him.

Ray made a come here gesture with his finger.

Danny and the Limp skirted around the table and stood next to Ray.

Ray beckoned them to lower their heads. “Don’t go out the front. You hear me? I don’t want anybody to see you enter from the street.”

Danny and the Limp nodded and retreated alongside the bar towards the long rear hallway and door that led to the apartment.

Ray watched them disappear behind the door. He caught a look from Mel. Mel gave a slight nod. He blew out a long breath, got up from his chair, and exited the front door.

The tavern lounge faced Greenwood Cemetery across Fort Hamilton Parkway; the inspiration for the bar’s name, Greenwood Tavern. Crazy Joe Gallo, Ray’s gangster idol and former member of the Colombo crime family, rested forever in Greenwood.

Ray took a cigarette from his pack, flicked his lighter and inhaled.

A white 1975 Chevy Impala convertible pulled to the curb at Chester Avenue, two men got out, Tony Carducci and Mustang Gene Davis. Tony held a step back while Mustang Gene approached Ray and stuck out his hand.

“How’s it going, Ray-Ray?” Gene said.

“When the money’s right, it always goes good.” Ray shook his hand, took a long drag from his cigarette, exhaled through his nose and tossed the butt into the street.

“We doing the meet in the bar?” Gene asked.

“Too many eyes and ears in there. We’ll go next door.” Ray scanned the sidewalk and streets as he moved forward.

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Gene and Tony followed Ray to the front door of the apartment forty-feet to the left of the bar.

Tony hesitated at the entry, grabbed at his pockets. "My keys," he said. "I left them in the car. Don't start without me."

Ray waved him off. "Hurry up."

"I'll wait here." Gene half-turned towards a departing Carducci.

"We can't be in the street. Come on."

"For Christ's sake there's a cemetery across the way. Who's going to see us?"

"Yeah and it's full of dead people, C'mon, it's too quiet out here." Ray laughed at Mustang Gene to blunt any hesitation he might have. "Let's go, I'm getting goose bumps with all those ghosts." He had buried a few bodies in the cemetery, and let out a snort because he thought it clever, something Crazy Joe would have done. Except Ray wasn't planning to join Crazy Joe any time soon.

"Yeah you could say it's dead around here." Mustang Gene burst out laughing.

"See what I mean? Let's go inside." Ray led Mustang Gene in to a darkened kitchen immediate to the right of the entry. "Let me get the switch." He heard the Impala's ignition turn over, knew Carducci was leaving to report to The Pig.

Danny appeared from the near lightless living room, moving around Ray's bench press and weight set. Muffled voices and music seeped in from the bar. Stale cigarette smoke wafted in the room.

"Where the fuck did you come from?" Mustang Gene pulled back. "You're not in on this meet," he said and pointed at Danny. "What's the towel for?"

The Limp emerged from the kitchen corner, sidled towards Gene, and raised a silencer fitted old Walther .38.

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Gene reacted with a backswing, knocking the gun to the floor.

Danny jumped on Gene's back. The Limp grabbed his legs with both arms. They fought around the kitchen, toppling chairs, displacing the table, and slamming into walls.

"Son of bitch." Ray rushed to pick up the gun, and moved around the wrestling trio, trying to get close enough to put one in Mustang Gene's skull. He caught a shoe to the groin and dropped to his knees.

"You motherfuckers, I'll kill yous." Gene threw off the limp, punched down on Danny's head, and kicked him in the chest. "Fuck you, Ray, you gonna clip me?"

"Son of a bitch." Ray held his groin, rose to his feet, and aimed at Mustang Gene.

Danny grimaced and rolled onto his side, clutching at his chest.

The Limp danced around Mustang Gene, lunged in and received a shove in his chest.

Gene dodged, jumped, and skirted sideways, flailing his arms and kicking out. He zigzagged towards the side door, toppled over a side table, picked up a lamp and chucked it at Ray before he made his escape.

Ray gave chase with the gun, as Gene slammed open the door into the hall, and bolted down towards the rear door.

Ray held the gun at his side and watched Gene escape into the alley. "Fuck," he cursed under his breath. He caught Mel's eyes from the bar. Mel looked away, moved to the other end, and wiped down the counter.

"You guys follow him out nice and slow." Ray, turned, and hurried away hunched over. Run all he wanted, Mustang Gene had to come out of the alley. "Pick up the towel." Then Ray took off through the front door, around the block into the mouth of the alley. He slowed at the corner, froze against the wall, and

felt his heart racing as he peeked around. A dog barked somewhere down the line. He counted to sixty without moving, and heard the slow crunch of footsteps. He held his breath, and raised the Walther.

Gene didn't see Ray when he stepped out from the night shadows and neither did he hear the shot that Ray put behind his skull. Gene fell fast and hard onto the concrete drive.

Danny and the Limp rushed over.

"Get that towel around his head." Ray looked up and down the alley, the neighbors' backyards, nothing but television sounds and the echoes of distant voices. "Danny, go inside and get the tarp."

They rolled Mustang Gene into a long tube.

"One of you come back later and throw a bucket of water out here."

The Limp and Danny hoisted Mustang Gene's body onto their shoulders.

Ray provided cover as he stood inside the hallway while Danny and the Limp carried Gene into the apartment bathroom.

"What's the matter with you two?" Ray closed the door and followed. "A simple job and you two almost fucked it up."

"We got him didn't we?" The Limp helped Danny unroll Gene from the tarp. "Son of bitch is big."

"Get him in the tub and strip him." Ray clenched his teeth. They'd gotten Mustang Gene Davis, the man whose lank brown hair resembled a horse's mane, all six-foot three inches of him.

"Bleed him out." Ray stared down at Mustang Gene and had the universal thought, better him than me. "And don't take any of his jewelry. You can keep whatever money he's got on him. But you better make sure everything else goes. Don't fuck it up."

The Limp and Danny stripped down to their trousers. Danny unfurled a canvas butcher's wrap with a few knives, and one

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cleaver. They both tied aprons around their chests. The Limp set a two-foot pruning shear against the tub. They tied Mustang Gene's ankles together and hung him from a hook over the tub. The Limp sliced a long gash across Mustang Gene's throat. Danny pumped his stomach.

They'd cut Mustang Gene into parts, put the pieces of who he once was into black trash bags, drop the bags in various safe locations around town, and Gene would wind up at the Fresh Kills Landfill in Staten Island, all accomplished in a perfunctory manner with no one to object. Ray had the method of disposal down to a science, albeit a vicious grotesque one. Life was what you made it. Ray snorted and turned away.

"We'll handle it." The Limp said.

"Just clean this place up when you're finished." Ray shook his head at the Limp. "Meet me in the bar when you're done getting rid of him." He couldn't get mad, not now, not with all the people in the bar. He stopped at side door. "Don't forget the water in the back." He clenched his jaw and blew out, and continued into the tavern to his table and chair.

Ray gazed to his right, took in the three men occupying the bar stools at the counter. Mel set down three fresh glasses of beer before them. The men drank and watched the fourth hour debut of the all news station, CNN. An older white-haired man and woman, regulars who lived on the block, shot pool in the corner. Cigarette smoke drifted through the stagnant air. A jukebox played with a singing male voice barely audible over the newscaster on the TV.

The lounge's limited stream of patrons saw nothing and spoke not a word of what they didn't see. It was an esoteric environ given to facial recognition and neighborhood claim. The three monkeys' axiom prevailed in the joint: see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. Ray made sure of that.

Collective jeering and cursing erupted when President Jimmy Carter appeared on the television screen as he sat at an oval table surrounded by his cabinet.

"Look at that phony smile," a female voice called out. "Bastard's got horse teeth. Somebody feed him oats."

Laughs, guffawing and chuckles rumbled through the room.

"Fuck that son of bitch," someone shouted.

"Tell him to take those Cubans to Georgia and eat peanuts," another male voice added. "Send them back."

"And take his drunk fuck brother too."

Ray shook his head, disgusted with the constant images of Cuban refugees broadcast on the television news, streaming across the Florida Straits from Mariel. This was what he abhorred, people shitting all over his country and a weak-willed, bible reading asshole who said that lusting after women in his heart was just as wrong as infidelity. What kind of a moron was he? Was he saying that basic human desire was a sin? If that were a fact then all of humanity would meet in hell. Maybe they were living in hell already. Now that he thought about it, he could have become a great philosopher, well maybe an adequate one.

"For Christ's sake," Ray said. "You got a hundred-thousand people storming Key fucking West. Escaping like refugees from a civil war."

"That's a good line," someone said.

"They should send them to redneck heaven," the pool player shouted. "Right to Plains, Georgia and that idiot Carter's house."

"Castro's emptying his prisons," Ray said. "Look at that smiling fool. You'd think he'd know that Castro's playing him." Then the television screen panned over to a refugee, a lanky young man with an athletic build whose dark brown

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piercing eyes, and hard set jaw, stared at the camera, as he shouted “*Yo so Armando Diaz. Estados Unitas por siempre.*”

Ray looked back at Armando Diaz and grudgingly thought, even if he didn’t care for what President Carter was allowing Castro to do to the country, that Armando Diaz had balls to come to America with only hope in his heart. Behind Armando Diaz, Ray read the name painted on a big cabin cruiser, ‘**And Then What.**’ Ray shook his head. “Will you look at this,” he said under his breath. That was a Brooklyn term. He needed guys with hunger on their face, the face of Armando Diaz to fill out his crew.

“The next thing he’ll do is give them food stamps and new apartments in Little Havana?” A male patron said. “Might as well send them to Sunset Park. It might improve the neighborhood.”

Ray let his eyes linger on the television, then gazed over his shoulder, caught Mel’s attention. “Double Chivas,” Ray called out.

Mel came over, placed a half tumbler of Scotch in front of Ray. He picked up the empty beer glasses, wiped the towel over the table, and returned behind the bar.

Ray tossed the liquid down his throat in one gulp and waved the empty tumbler at Mel. Mel nodded.

Ray reached into his shirt pocket, produced a pack of Benson and Hedges, and lit one up. He also removed the laminated Sacred Heart Mass card, and touched it to his forehead.

\*

Twenty-five years ago, Ray had quit high school and started a teenage loan shark operation that turned into a full time job. A decade later, he muscled his way into a partnership with the owner of the bar before he named it the Greenwood Tavern and became connected with a wise guy named Genaro Pignatali.

*ALBERT J. TISEO*

The bar owner found it prudent to sell out his interest to Ray the first and only time Ray asked. It helped that Genaro “The Pig” Pignatali had stood behind him the day Ray made the demand. A week later, Ray put the Greenwood Tavern’s ownership in his uncle’s name and nominated his attorney as a corporate officer and official registered agent. That’s the way things got done in some parts of Brooklyn.

Since then, he put in a lot of hard work, making the moves that brought him closer to his goal, earning big money for the bosses and positioning himself to become a made man. At first, the Capo regimes treated him like a personal banker without recourse. No matter how much green he passed up, it never satisfied their unyielding need. He never quit, though, because that’s not who he was. This life, he knew and learned from childhood in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn; the best damn neighborhood in America.

With two decades in the life, the penchant for killing became second nature for Ray. Death by committee exculpated no one. Getting rid of the bodies was an arrangement he devised on his own after watching a butcher section out half of a cow, hanging from a meat hook. The carcass had disappeared into rib roasts, steaks, and ground chuck.

Tonight, he’d lost Mustang Gene Davis by his own hand, one of the organization’s most prolific pornographic film makers, but unfortunately for Gene, some of the films he produced were too vile and unacceptable. Ray would have to find someone new to direct and produce the movies and replace the money he’d lose now that Mustang Gene was no more.





*SUNSET PARK is a fast-paced crime novel about living and surviving on the streets of 1980s Brooklyn. The story centers around two teenage boys and how youthful curiosity can lead to life and death decisions. Place and circumstance, a sadistic mobster, money and power and the will to prevail are tested by the characters in this black thriller. Greed, selfishness, and the depth of human depravity are displayed for the reader to examine.*

# SUNSET PARK

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