

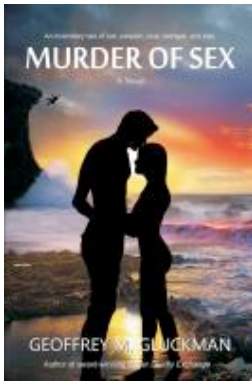
An incendiary tale of lust, passion, love, betrayal, and loss.

MURDER OF SEX

A Novel

GEOFFREY M. GLUCKMAN

Author of award-winning thriller *Deadly Exchange*



An incendiary tale of lust, passion, love, betrayal, and loss. Intimate sexual relationships may never be the same. When Josh Flagon, a professor of literature at a Nevada university, is drawn to an irresistible co-ed, Rebecca Reaper, little does he know it will take him on a lustful, passionate, life-changing ride. It will also jeopardize all that he values and all that he seeks - freedom. A haunting tale that weaves the literary with street smarts.

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Murder of Sex

Murder of Sex: A Novel

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This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, names, incidents, organizations, and dialogue in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Murder of Sex:

A Novel

Geoffrey M. Gluckman

Praise for Deadly Exchange

**Award-winner in fiction
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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to raise a toast to Henry Miller, as I have quoted a few lines from three of his works, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Sexus*, and *The Books in My Life*. Furthermore, I am grateful to the Henry Miller Memorial Library, in Carmel, California, for their assistance, excellent collection of Miller's works, and memorabilia. Finally, I am indebted to those who shared stories with me from times they spent with the real Henry Miller before his death. This included access to unpublished works by Miller.

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Finally, I am grateful to my readers, who make it all worth it.

“Before a man can achieve anything, even in worldly things,
he must lift his thoughts above slavish animal indulgence”

--James Allen

One

Prison

I looked around the small room. An array of full-length iron bars preceded my view out onto the walkway and cellblock D at the medium security facility in Central California. The bars were spaced so that even an anorexic woman couldn't slip between them. The other three walls consisted of cold, gray concrete. My cellmate and I had covered the walls with newspaper clippings, posters, photos, anything to make it feel more comfortable. After all, it had been my home for the last four years, more or less, but I don't know if anyone really gets comfortable on the inside, even Jorge, my cellmate. He made this life, my life inside, if one could call it that, possible. I kicked the small cardboard box at my feet. A guard had been nice enough to give it to me, to put my things in.

On the wall opposite the iron bars at about head-height was my sole opening to the rest of the world. I peered through the shorter iron restraints that defined the twelve-inch by twelve-inch portal and saw sparse white clouds drift across a blue California sky.

I'll be out beneath that sky soon enough, I thought.

True enough, I was finally leaving this ... this hellhole. Only four more days left. I got paroled early for good behavior. I had been a model prisoner, of course. It's not like I was some gang-banging thug straight out the hood. But I had made a grave error, one that any man could have made, probably many do.

About to toss the last book of the few I have into a box, I paused. The shadowy, naked form of a woman on the cover of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* caught my eye.

A knowing smile crossed my lips.

As I released the book, a sheaf of paper hovered to the gray concrete floor. I scooped it up and skimmed the sheet's contents. The handwriting was erratic, as if a product of an unstable mind. The date was from four years ago, near the beginning of my incarceration career. Written in pencil, all I had at the time. That time, I would never forget, in solitary confinement. Actually, Jorge had helped me to get paper and a pencil, perhaps lifesavers for an unbalanced scholarly scribe.

I recalled this beginning of word dissection, on my part. The marvels that lay beneath were nothing less than revelation. I had stripped the words of their outing coating, their bark, and glimpsed the inner essence shimmering within.

Curious, I read through the scrawling script, line by line.

"Heart's Desire: a seemingly innocuous juxtaposition of two simple, yet powerful words. In this order, they describe the union of the heart and the desire of lust. Passion plays the conduit for connection between the two. Nature or All Creation mirrors such unity. Through it, one discovers the return to the subtle essence of life. Wonderful stuff! Truly wonderful! Have I not come to this realization too late? By late, I mean the opportunity to fully live the expression of my heart's desire with the woman for whom I felt it. That utter joyful freedom has escaped me. Is it not me, who caused such destruction? Have I lost the possibility for that single greatest pinnacle of union within the grasp of any human: heart's desire?"

Memories of those desolate weeks in solitary flooded my mind. My throat constricted, as if a bit of food had gone down wrong. Revulsion. It had been a horrific time—for my protection according to the warden. I hadn't done anything wrong, well not in prison. Actually,

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I had been attacked shortly after arrival. Anyway, the one obstacle that had blinded me ceased to exist any longer.

I'm free. Or am I? I wondered, seeing vertical bars in front of me. My eyes returned to the page.

"SHUNT."

When I wrote this I had crossed out the first consonant, leaving: "HUNT—that is all that remains."

Aren't we all on one? I thought.

My arrest and subsequent incarceration had given me time to review the hunts of my life—mostly women. I recalled how at the time of writing on that sheet, only weeks into my slated seven year sentence, the confinement had driven me crazy, at first. In that small space letters, words, phrases, and sentences overwhelmed me. I hadn't come to see the divine light that they shed, even though I had been a professor of Literature at a moderate sized university in Nevada. The power of letters, simple alterations to words, revealed worlds about many things, including myself. I returned my gaze to the evidence of my former ramblings.

The next line reminded me of what had led to my present residence.

"An 'A' added to HUNT in the right formation creates a nightmare: HAUNT. She had been cunning, that young woman. But I had hunted well, only to be haunted now. So cunning, why had she been so? My hunt was persistent, her cunning more so. My heart shunted. We had created a cunning hunt. Ah, the answer, the demon: my hunt for cunt. Like a haunted Hun seeking an enemy lurking in the shadows of a dark Middle Eastern night, I played my part well."

I smiled at my musings, the tinge of madness not escaping me. Well, that was part of the past, my past anyway. Those parts of me had existed, like gems waiting to be mined, before she was gone. In the end,

I had been left with only myself to face. I read the next line, which struck me as poignantly as it had upon writing it.

“CUNT—a mere consonant swapped with another, so innocent yet so treacherous, so innocuous yet so imprudent.”

Beneath that line on the page were stacked three monosyllabic words.

“SHUNT.”

“HUNT.”

“CUNT.”

Then I read the next line.

“Heart's Desire has three, a triumvirate. Of course! Of wisdom? Balance, like the scales of justice or the legs of a cauldron. Or possibly a triangle, the most stable object.”

Reading it now, four years later, the message was obvious, though enlightenment had come too late. In fact, the madness gave way to new insight, perhaps. Below those words, I considered the fragment that I had written by merely dropping another consonant: “SHUN HUNT CUNT.”

‘Hey professor Flagon,’ said a voice outside my open cell door. ‘Gettin’ ready to split? Whatcha got there? You gonna tell us another story?’

‘Just reading over some old papers,’ I said, smiling at the guard as he moved on. I had gained the respect of the guards by teaching them a bit of literature in my first year on the inside. I had started a book club, as well.

My eyes returned to the paper. You must realize that solitary confinement can drive one crazy, if one wasn’t already. All there is time, time to sleep, time to eat, time to exercise, all in a space the size of a closet, and I don’t mean one of those luxury home walk-in affairs. Day became night then day again, but often you don’t know when those shifts have occurred. The radiance of words and letters had given way

to reflection. And there was the task that Jorge had given me. But I'll get to that later.

Alternately, I wiped a sweaty palm on my prison uniform, and began to read again.

"Shall I lengthen my investigation? Shun the hunt for cunt. Seek Heart's Desire. If only I could have seen it before she was gone. When it mattered—eight or nine months ago. Though, I must be honest, it probably wouldn't have mattered. Some things have to play themselves out in life."

A grin graced my lips at the dialogue on the paper, glad that I was clear of that confusion. I read the next line.

"SHAME—a simple vowel dropped reveals the true essence of that word: SHAM. Why should I feel shame for anything I've done? She played as much a part as I. And what if the courts saw it in a different light? This world cries out for release from torment. Some think death brings that—such fools. Only the truth unveiled has that power. The truth unearthed to oneself through oneself."

I folded the paper in half and placed it back inside the Miller book, wondering if the prison psychologist had been right. Maybe I had been crazy. But then again, who isn't?

But as I've said that was the past. Four days, a scant ninety-six hours, stood between freedom and me again, though in my heart I am truly free—of my personal demon—of the delusions with which I entered this place.

Thinking of hitting the streets, being in public, I took another look at my face in the tiny, hand-held mirror affixed to the cell wall. My brown eyes searched the few lines that had etched themselves deeper. At least I still had a full head of black hair, though a few more hairs of gray tinged the temples. Overall, not bad for a man of almost forty-seven.

Geoffrey M. Gluckman

It was the visage of an educated man who had served time, of one who had fallen from grace due to his own falsity. Perhaps, the façade lies in the fallacy of the fall, or in the grace.

Two

The Tale Begins

An hour later Jorge entered with Stumpy, one of his cronies. I nodded at the Puerto Rican, who had been my cellmate and protector for the last four years. His thick black eyebrows matched his hair, which was crew cut. He had that sort of face that women call rough good looks, a few scars here and there. His body resembled a wrestler's, except he was taller, about five-foot nine. Overall, he appeared as any guy that had grown up on the streets, except for one thing: a series of small tattooed tears dripped from one eye. They added a certain mystery, especially to those who didn't know the significance.

'Chit man,' he said, 'can't b'lieve ju leavin', Josh.'

Stumpy, an African-American in for grand theft auto, numerous counts, pulled a long drag on a cigarette, singeing the filter, then stubbed it out between the bars of the small window. At five feet four, one hundred eighty pounds of pure muscle, the man literally looked like an incredibly short tree. He sauntered over to the lower bunk, my bunk, and laid himself out. Jorge sat on top of the desk, swinging his legs like a kid playing hooky.

'Hey prof, dis mean you ain't teachin' us no mo'?' asked Stumpy, whose real name was Fred Robinson.

'I guess I could always come back for special lectures.' I paused, 'But I doubt it.'

'Why don't you tell me and Jorge da story? Y'know, how ya got here.' He threw a glance at Jorge.

‘You don’t want to hear that story, Stump. Come on, I’ll tell you another....’

‘No dis chit es bueno,’ said Jorge, the only one in the whole penal institution that knew the whole story. In fact, he had played a great part in it never being told.

‘You owes us, muthafucker. After puttin’ up wid yo’ uppity white ass all this time.’ Stumpy was grinning.

‘Well....’ I kicked the cardboard box over to the wall, knowing that what he said was true. For a moment, I stared at the tattooed tears that fell permanently from the corner of Jorge’s left eye, a testament to his past, a dark one at that. Then I glanced at Stumpy, his hands behind his head, and a big grin on his round face.

‘It all started more or less out of vanity, trying to prove I could woo a female half my age. You guys don’t really want to....’

‘Shit, man, don’ be messin’ wid us.’ Stumpy lit another cigarette as a tall, lanky African American passed by. ‘Yo Dr. J, the prof gonna tell it.’

Julius stopped and looked at me. Other than the tight corn rows across his head, he did somewhat resemble the famed basketball star of decades past. Not trusting Stumpy, he looked at Jorge, then back to me, and said, ‘You shittin’ me, man? You best not be shittin’ me. Prof, that true, you gonna spill it?’

I nodded, so he joined Stumpy on my bunk. Since I had just begun, I repeated what I’d said so far.

‘Little did I know that it would lead to the biggest mistake of my life and to the most monumental revelation. I also didn’t know that she was married at the time, but ... well, I’m getting ahead of myself. Let me set the scene: early February, a new semester at the university. Newly fallen snow covered the ground. Per my professional position at the time, professor of Literature, I welcomed the new faces that littered the various old style pupil desks. The school was a moderate size state

institution with approximately 12,000 undergraduates and another 4,000 graduate students. It had earned a reputation for offering well-balanced liberal arts education over its seventy-year history. Surrounded by the Sierra Mountains, the town lay in a valley at the northern part of the state of Nevada. The transient student population boosted the town's population each school year, increasing the revenue of the local businesses as well. With abundant recreational options and a growing local arts community, what more could I want. So when I was invited to join the faculty in order to facilitate my research on Henry Miller's well-known and once controversial work, *Tropic of Cancer*, I accepted. I was only required to teach two classes on literature. The subsequent book from my research endeavors was to be entitled, *The Tropic of Miller: An In-depth Inquiry into a Classic and a Man.*'

'What?' said Julius, shaking his head. 'What the fuck did you just say?'

'It was the working title I had for the ... forget it. By the end of the first year, the research had gone well, though the book wasn't even close to being finished. Is this boring you guys? I can stop anytime.'

All three men shook their heads and motioned me to continue. But then, Julius held up a hand upon seeing Sammy the Scar walking by the open cell door. With an admirable economy of words, Julius explained what was going on to the wiry Mexican with a deep scar across his left cheek. Rumor had it that he was in for gang related activity, most likely drug-dealing. The Scar joined us.

I didn't mind. I had given mini-literature lectures to all of them while in prison, anyway. Besides, in a way, it felt good to tell the story.

Julius looked at me. 'Do it to it, professor.'

All right, where was I? Oh yeah, the class of students I encountered on that day in February wasn't exceptional save for one, Rebecca Reaper. I should mention that we had met before, in my first

year of teaching. I believe the course was, Introduction to Nineteenth Century Poetry. She had shown herself to be quite a gifted poet and very adept at poetry interpretation, so I knew she would bring much to the class. With dirty blond hair that fell straight to the middle of her back and flirtatious green eyes beneath well-groomed auburn eyebrows she radiated just the right mix of innocence and allure. Instantly, memories from the previous year filled my mind. In the heat of an Indian summer, she had worn short dresses, revealing slender legs that attached to sensual hips and ample breasts. Those attributes, shall we say, attracted my attention initially, of course, though I resisted my desires during that Poetry class. I was, after all, faculty.

Nevertheless, our interactions were intense, like gasoline on a roaring fire. It had taken all of my strength to resist the magnetic pull that pulsed between us, even though she made it clear she was available. She was a few years older than her classmates because of a trip around Europe just after high school that turned into two years of exploration. I guess her marriage occurred sometime between our first and second meetings, though I didn't know about it. Anyway, that winter semester, when Rebecca reappeared in American Literature Masters, I had a lover who satisfied my lustful indulgences, or so I thought. In fact, Kim, my girlfriend, was quite a tantalizing vixen. Not that I was thinking of settling down with her.

'Hey professor,' said Stumpy, 'why don't you educated guys just come out and say it as it is—you liked fuckin' her brains out, but you weren't getting no ring anytime soon. Shit man, you gotta make it all complicated and shit, like you ain't like the rest of us.'

'You're right Stump. I couldn't have said it better. That's what I was trying to show in revisiting Henry Miller's book: the sexual drive is innate to the human species, no matter one's position in society. That was part of Henry's genius.'

‘Yeah, well, you ain’t gotta be no genius to know dat,’ said Dr. J. ‘Get on wid da story. And Stumpy, shut the fuck up!’

‘Ah, but there is more to that story, and more to the illustrious Mister Miller. Okay, let’s see, while relationships between professors and students were frowned upon, they did occur. Yet, I knew I was above that, despite the fact that Kim was a grad student dropout. Whether the dropout part had occurred before or after the start of our relationship, I can’t remember. Since Rebecca’s last appearance in my class, I wanted to believe I’d grown, except for ... a question that burned in my mind. At forty-two, did I have what it took to woo a young woman in her early twenties? Twenty-four to be precise. No matter what I tried, Rebecca and her damn short skirts kept popping into my head.’ I nodded to Stumpy and added, ‘Even while fucking Kim, Rebecca would enter my mind.’

‘Esta mujer mus’ be da shit, ya?’ said Sammy, giving his plump belly a scratch.

Dr. J glared at him as I continued.

Like a gathering of dark clouds on an ocean horizon, a storm was imminent. About three weeks into the course unseasonably warm weather hit and a heavy rain began to fall. Rebecca asked to come to my office to discuss her most recent paper, an interesting effort and related to my work on Mr. Miller. I was intrigued.

She arrived clad in hot pink running tights that clung to her shapely legs, as if painted on, and led up to shapely hips and curvaceous buttocks. She stood just inside the doorway to my office. Almost beyond my control, my eyes fixed upon the front of her pelvis. I was uncontrollably drawn to her mount. I flushed and faced my desk, shuffling some papers, though motioning her in. She took a seat in the chair next to my oaken monstrosity of a desk. Perkily, she placed the rough draft of her paper on my desk. I glanced at the title: Anais Nin: Dionysus Resurrected.

“Do you mind if I move the chair around, so we can be side by side?” she asked.

I shook my head, afraid to speak for fear of what I might blurt out. An exhilaration I’d never known gripped my innards. It spread upward from my groin into upper abdomen. Forget butterflies, this was a falcon in full flight.

While exploring her writing, I noticed her wedding ring and regained some of my composure. I focused on the words she had put on the pages, which helped remind me of my professorial duties. For awhile it all went very well, though I found myself sneaking peeks at her delicate aquiline profile while she reviewed a passage or two. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the chemistry from our past interaction had not died despite her marriage and my relationship with Kim. She emanated a heat, a vibration from a source I couldn’t identify and certainly one I’d never noticed with Kim. My groin throbbed, though not fully erect. Then it struck me, and I asked, “Did you just finish a run before you came over?”

“No,” she said, in a voice filled with silk and seduction. “I’m going to go after this. Wanna come?”

The question hung in the air between us, like the mist of some foregone innocence.

“Oh, well ... I ... uh ... have these papers to grade.” I placed a heavy hand on a stack at the corner of my desk nearest the window.

“Come on, professor, ya gotta keep the bod functioning, especially in a sedentary occupation like this.”

Stumpy stood up from my bunk bed, and blurted, ‘You gots to tell me that you didn’t turn that down.’

‘Well guys,’ I said, eyeing my cadre of cellblock listeners, ‘upon reflection, it may have been that one comment that ignited my subsequent actions, that drove me to answer that question lingering at the back of my mind. I went running with her that day, in the cold and

the rain, and another deluge, of sorts, began. Don't get me wrong. We had a fabulous time. Admittedly, I wanted to show her that I was not a flabby, out of shape, has-been of a male. I wanted to show her that I still had what it took physically. Most importantly, as I ran behind her, I realized she had something that seemed to elude me. She possessed some spark that I couldn't quite put my finger on. And that mystery would lead me down a dimly lit path of self-delusion. Following her on a paved trail through some low-lying woods stoked my innate human desire to have her, to have her attention directed toward me. Even more, the beginnings of a strange desire ignited within, one I think common but no less insane. It set in that day and began to gnaw at me, like some virus mutating in a host body.'

'I know whachu mean. Da same t'ing happen with my girl, Marta,' said Sammy the Scar, lighting a cigarette. 'So, qué pasó, eh amigo? D'you fuck her, eh?'

'Let the man tell it, huh,' said Julius.

'Well, what happened was....'

At that moment, throughout the prison a bell sounded for lunch.

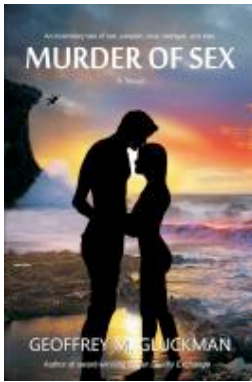
Julius came over, grabbed my shoulder with a powerful hand, and said, 'Don' know 'bout dese fools, but afta lunch, you and me, back here again.'

'Fuck you fool, who you callin' fool,' said Stumpy, shoving Julius out of the way.

'Hey cabrones, we here después la comida. Okay, mang?' said Jorge with the usual quiet authority I had become accustomed to over the years. Some said he wielded even more power than the warden. Perhaps it was true.

I nodded as Jorge waved a hand for us to follow and we did.

The break would do me good, anyway. Besides, I felt famished for some reason.



An incendiary tale of lust, passion, love, betrayal, and loss. Intimate sexual relationships may never be the same. When Josh Flagon, a professor of literature at a Nevada university, is drawn to an irresistible co-ed, Rebecca Reaper, little does he know it will take him on a lustful, passionate, life-changing ride. It will also jeopardize all that he values and all that he seeks - freedom. A haunting tale that weaves the literary with street smarts.

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