

Acknowledgements

I was a lawyer once, and represented people charged with all sorts of crimes. Fortunately, I never had a client convicted of capital murder and sentenced to death. I never had to go to death row, never had to do the things the lawyers do in this story.

Since I despise research, I did what I normally do when writing a novel. I found lawyers with expertise, and I befriended them. I called them at all hours and picked their brains. And it is here that I thank them.

Leonard Vincent has been the attorney for the Mississippi Department of Corrections for many years, and he opened his office to me. He helped me with the law, showed me his files, took me to death row, and toured me around the vast state penitentiary known simply as Parchman. He told me many stories that somehow found their way into this one. Leonard and I are still struggling with the moral perplexities of the death penalty, and I suspect we always will. Thanks also to his staff, and to the guards and personnel at Parchman.

Jim Craig is a man of great compassion and a fine lawyer. As the Executive Director of the Mississippi Capital Defense Resource Center, he's the official attorney for most of the inmates on death row. He deftly steered me through the impenetrable maze of postconviction appeals and habeas corpus warfare. The inevitable mistakes are mine, not his.

I went to law school with Tom Freeland and Guy Gillespie, and I thank them for their ready assistance. Marc Smirnoff is a friend and the editor of *The Oxford American*, and, as usual, worked on the manuscript before I sent it to New York.

Thanks also to Robert Warren and William Ballard for their help. And, as always, a very special thanks to my best friend, Renee, who still reads each chapter over my shoulder.

ONE

The decision to bomb the office of the radical Jew lawyer was reached with relative ease. Only three people were involved in the process. The first was the man with the money. The second was a local operative who knew the territory. And the third was a young patriot and zealot with a talent for explosives and an astonishing knack for disappearing without a trail. After the bombing, he fled the country and hid in Northern Ireland for six years.

The lawyer's name was Marvin Kramer, a fourth-generation Mississippi Jew whose family had prospered as merchants in the Delta. He lived in an antebellum home in Greenville, a river town with a small but strong Jewish community, a pleasant place with a history of little racial discord. He practiced law because commerce bored him. Like most Jews of German descent, his family had assimilated nicely into the culture of the Deep South, and viewed themselves as nothing but typical Southerners who happened to have a different religion. Anti-Semitism rarely surfaced. For the most part, they blended with the rest of established society and went about their business.

Marvin was different. His father sent him up North to Brandeis in the late fifties. He spent four years there, then three years in law school at Columbia, and when he returned to Greenville in 1964 the civil rights movement

had center stage in Mississippi. Marvin got in the thick of it. Less than a month after opening his little law office, he was arrested along with two of his Brandeis classmates for attempting to register black voters. His father was furious. His family was embarrassed, but Marvin couldn't have cared less. He received his first death threat at the age of twenty-five, and started carrying a gun. He bought a pistol for his wife, a Memphis girl, and instructed their black maid to keep one in her purse. The Kramers had twin two-year-old sons.

The first civil rights lawsuit filed in 1965 by the law offices of Marvin B. Kramer and Associates (there were no associates yet) alleged a multitude of discriminatory voting practices by local officials. It made headlines around the state, and Marvin got his picture in the papers. He also got his name on a Klan list of Jews to harass. Here was a radical Jew lawyer with a beard and a bleeding heart, educated by Jews up North and now marching with and representing Negroes in the Mississippi Delta. It would not be tolerated.

Later, there were rumors of Lawyer Kramer using his own money to post bail for Freedom Riders and civil rights workers. He filed lawsuits attacking whites-only facilities. He paid for the reconstruction of a black church bombed by the Klan. He was actually seen welcoming Negroes into his home. He made speeches before Jewish groups up North and urged them to get involved in the struggle. He wrote sweeping letters to newspapers, few of which were printed. Lawyer Kramer was marching bravely toward his doom.

The presence of a nighttime guard patrolling benignly around the flower beds prevented an attack upon the Kramer home. Marvin had been paying the guard for two years. He was a former cop and he was heavily armed, and the Kramers let it be known to all of Greenville that they were protected by an expert marksman. Of course, the Klan knew about the guard,

and the Klan knew to leave him alone. Thus, the decision was made to bomb Marvin Kramer's office, and not his home.

The actual planning of the operation took very little time, and this was principally because so few people were involved in it. The man with the money, a flamboyant redneck prophet named Jeremiah Dogan, was at the time the Imperial Wizard for the Klan in Mississippi. His predecessor had been loaded off to prison, and Jerry Dogan was having a wonderful time orchestrating the bombings. He was not stupid. In fact, the FBI later admitted Dogan was quite effective as a terrorist because he delegated the dirty work to small, autonomous groups of hit men who worked completely independent of one another. The FBI had become expert at infiltrating the Klan with informants, and Dogan trusted no one but family and a handful of accomplices. He owned the largest used car lot in Meridian, Mississippi, and had made plenty of money on all sorts of shady deals. He sometimes preached in rural churches.

The second member of the team was a Klansman by the name of Sam Cayhall from Clanton, Mississippi, in Ford County, three hours north of Meridian and an hour south of Memphis. Cayhall was known to the FBI, but his connection to Dogan was not. The FBI considered him to be harmless because he lived in an area of the state with almost no Klan activity. A few crosses had been burned in Ford County recently, but no bombings, no killings. The FBI knew that Cayhall's father had been a Klansman, but on the whole the family appeared to be rather passive. Dogan's recruitment of Sam Cayhall was a brilliant move.

The bombing of Kramer's office began with a phone call on the night of April 17, 1967. Suspecting, with good reason, that his phones were tapped, Jeremiah Dogan waited until midnight and drove to a pay phone at a gas station south of Meridian. He also suspected he

was being followed by the FBI, and he was correct. They watched him, but they had no idea where the call was going.

Sam Cayhall listened quietly on the other end, asked a question or two, then hung up. He returned to his bed, and told his wife nothing. She knew better than to ask. The next morning he left the house early and drove into the town of Clanton. He ate his daily breakfast at The Coffee Shop, then placed a call on a pay phone inside the Ford County Courthouse.

Two days later, on April 20, Cayhall left Clanton at dusk and drove two hours to Cleveland, Mississippi, a Delta college town an hour from Greenville. He waited for forty minutes in the parking lot of a busy shopping center, but saw no sign of a green Pontiac. He ate fried chicken in a cheap diner, then drove to Greenville to scout the law offices of Marvin B. Kramer and Associates. Cayhall had spent a day in Greenville two weeks earlier, and knew the city fairly well. He found Kramer's office, then drove by his stately home, then found the synagogue again. Dogan said the synagogue might be next, but first they needed to hit the Jew lawyer. By eleven, Cayhall was back in Cleveland, and the green Pontiac was parked not at the shopping center but at a truck stop on Highway 61, a secondary site. He found the ignition key under the driver's floor mat, and took the car for a drive through the rich farm fields of the Delta. He turned onto a farm road and opened the trunk. In a cardboard box covered with newspapers, he found fifteen sticks of dynamite, three blasting caps, and a fuse. He drove into town and waited in an all-night café.

At precisely 2 A.M., the third member of the team walked into the crowded truck stop and sat across from Sam Cayhall. His name was Rollie Wedge, a young man of no more than twenty-two, but a trusted veteran of the civil rights war. He said he was from Louisiana, now lived somewhere in the mountains where no one could

find him, and though he never boasted, he had told Sam Cayhall several times that he fully expected to be killed in the struggle for white supremacy. His father was a Klansman and a demolition contractor, and from him Rollie had learned how to use explosives.

Sam knew little about Rollie Wedge, and didn't believe much of what he said. He never asked Dogan where he found the kid.

They sipped coffee and made small talk for half an hour. Cayhall's cup shook occasionally from the jitters, but Rollie's was calm and steady. His eyes never blinked. They had done this together several times now, and Cayhall marveled at the coolness of one so young. He had reported to Jeremiah Dogan that the kid never got excited, not even when they neared their targets and he handled the dynamite.

Wedge's car was a rental from the Memphis airport. He retrieved a small bag from the backseat, locked the car, and left it at the truck stop. The green Pontiac with Cayhall behind the wheel left Cleveland and headed south on Highway 61. It was almost 3 A.M., and there was no traffic. A few miles south of the village of Shaw, Cayhall turned onto a dark, gravel road and stopped. Rollie instructed him to stay in the car while he inspected the explosives. Sam did as he was told. Rollie took his bag with him to the trunk where he inventoried the dynamite, the blasting caps, and the fuse. He left his bag in the trunk, closed it, and told Sam to head to Greenville.

They drove by Kramer's office for the first time around 4 A.M. The street was deserted, and dark, and Rollie said something to the effect that this would be their easiest job yet.

'Too bad we can't bomb his house,' Rollie said softly as they drove by the Kramer home.

'Yeah. Too bad,' Sam said nervously. 'But he's got a guard, you know.'

‘Yeah, I know. But the guard would be easy.’

‘Yeah, I guess. But he’s got kids in there, you know.’

‘Kill ’em while they’re young,’ Rollie said. ‘Little Jew bastards grow up to be big Jew bastards.’

Cayhall parked the car in an alley behind Kramer’s office. He turned off the ignition, and both men quietly opened the trunk, removed the box and the bag, and slid along a row of hedges leading to the rear door.

Sam Cayhall jimmied the rear door of the office and they were inside within seconds. Two weeks earlier, Sam had presented himself to the receptionist under the ruse of asking for directions, then asked to use the rest room. In the main hallway, between the rest room and what appeared to be Kramer’s office, was a narrow closet filled with stacks of old files and other legal rubbish.

‘Stay by the door and watch the alley,’ Wedge whispered coolly, and Sam did exactly as he was told. He preferred to serve as the watchman and avoid handling the explosives.

Rollie quickly sat the box on the floor in the closet, and wired the dynamite. It was a delicate exercise, and Sam’s heart raced each time as he waited. His back was always to the explosives, just in case something went wrong.

They were in the office less than five minutes. Then they were back in the alley strolling nonchalantly to the green Pontiac. They were becoming invincible. It was all so easy. They had bombed a real estate office in Jackson because the realtor had sold a house to a black couple. A Jewish realtor. They had bombed a small newspaper office because the editor had uttered something neutral on segregation. They had demolished a Jackson synagogue, the largest in the state.

They drove through the alley in the darkness, and as the green Pontiac entered a side street its headlights came on.

In each of the prior bombings, Wedge had used a fifteen-minute fuse, one simply lit with a match, very

similar to a firecracker. And as part of the exercise, the team of bombers enjoyed cruising with the windows down at a point always on the outskirts of town just as the explosion ripped through the target. They had heard and felt each of the prior hits, at a nice distance, as they made their leisurely getaways.

But tonight would be different. Sam made a wrong turn somewhere, and suddenly they were stopped at a railroad crossing staring at flashing lights as a freighter clicked by in front of them. A rather long freight train. Sam checked his watch more than once. Rollie said nothing. The train passed, and Sam took another wrong turn. They were near the river, with a bridge in the distance, and the street was lined with run-down houses. Sam checked his watch again. The ground would shake in less than five minutes, and he preferred to be easing into the darkness of a lonely highway when that happened. Rollie fidgeted once as if he was becoming irritated with his driver, but he said nothing.

Another turn, another new street. Greenville was not that big a city, and if he kept turning Sam figured he could work his way back to a familiar street. The next wrong turn proved to be the last. Sam hit the brakes as soon as he realized he had turned the wrong way on a one-way street. And when he hit the brakes, the engine quit. He yanked the gearshift into park, and turned the ignition. The engine turned perfectly, but it just wouldn't start. Then, the smell of gasoline.

'Dammit!' Sam said through clenched teeth. 'Dammit!'

Rollie sat low in his seat and stared through the window.

'Dammit! It's flooded!' He turned the key again, same result.

'Don't run the battery down,' Rollie said slowly, calmly.

Sam was near panic. Though he was lost, he was reasonably sure they were not far from downtown. He breathed deeply, and studied the street. He glanced at his watch. There were no other cars in sight. All was quiet. It was the perfect setting for a bomb blast. He could see the fuse burning along the wooden floor. He could feel the jarring of the ground. He could hear the roar of ripping wood and sheetrock, brick and glass. Hell, Sam thought as he tried to calm himself, we might get hit with debris.

‘You’d think Dogan would send a decent car,’ he mumbled to himself. Rollie did not respond, just kept his gaze on something outside his window.

At least fifteen minutes had passed since they had left Kramer’s office, and it was time for the fireworks. Sam wiped rows of sweat from his forehead, and once again tried the ignition. Mercifully, the engine started. He grinned at Rollie, who seemed completely indifferent. He backed the car a few feet, then sped away. The first street looked familiar, and two blocks later they were on Main Street. ‘What kind of fuse did you use?’ Sam finally asked, as they turned onto Highway 82, less than ten blocks from Kramer’s office.

Rollie shrugged as if it was his business and Sam shouldn’t ask. They slowed as they passed a parked police car, then gained speed on the edge of town. Within minutes, Greenville was behind them.

‘What kind of fuse did you use?’ Sam asked again with an edge to his voice.

‘I tried something new,’ Rollie answered without looking.

‘What?’

‘You wouldn’t understand,’ Rollie said, and Sam did a slow burn.

‘A timing device?’ he asked a few miles down the road.

‘Something like that.’

★

They drove to Cleveland in complete silence. For a few miles, as the lights of Greenville slowly disappeared across the flat land, Sam half-expected to see a fireball or hear a distant rumble. Nothing happened. Wedge even managed to catch a little nap.

The truck stop café was crowded when they arrived. As always, Rollie eased from his seat and closed the passenger door. ‘Until we meet again,’ he said with a smile through the open window, then walked to his rental car. Sam watched him swagger away, and marveled once more at the coolness of Rollie Wedge.

It was by now a few minutes after five-thirty, and a hint of orange was peeking through the darkness to the east. Sam pulled the green Pontiac onto Highway 61, and headed south.

The horror of the Kramer bombing actually began about the time Rollie Wedge and Sam Cayhall parted ways in Cleveland. It started with the alarm clock on a nightstand not far from Ruth Kramer’s pillow. When it erupted at five-thirty, the usual hour, Ruth knew instantly that she was a very sick woman. She had a slight fever, a vicious pain in her temples, and she was quite nauseous. Marvin helped her to the bathroom not far away where she stayed for thirty minutes. A nasty flu bug had been circulating through Greenville for a month, and had now found its way into the Kramer home.

The maid woke the twins, Josh and John, now five years old, at six-thirty, and quickly had them bathed, dressed, and fed. Marvin thought it best to take them to nursery school as planned and get them out of the house and, he hoped, away from the virus. He called a doctor friend for a prescription, and left the maid twenty dollars to pick up the medication at the pharmacy in an hour. He said good-bye to Ruth, who was lying on the floor of the bathroom with a pillow under her head and

an icepack over her face, and left the house with the boys.

Not all of his practice was devoted to civil rights litigation; there was not enough of that to survive on in Mississippi in 1967. He handled a few criminal cases and other generic civil matters: divorces, zoning, bankruptcy, real estate. And despite the fact that his father barely spoke to him, and the rest of the Kramers barely uttered his name, Marvin spent a third of his time at the office working on family business. On this particular morning, he was scheduled to appear in court at 9 A.M. to argue a motion in a lawsuit involving his uncle's real estate.

The twins loved his law office. They were not due at nursery school until eight, so Marvin could work a little before delivering the boys and heading on to court. This happened perhaps once a month. In fact, hardly a day passed without one of the twins begging Marvin to take them to his office first and then to nursery school.

They arrived at the office around seven-thirty, and once inside, the twins went straight for the secretary's desk and the thick stack of typing paper, all waiting to be cut and copied and stapled and folded into envelopes. The office was a sprawling structure, built over time with additions here and there. The front door opened into a small foyer where the receptionist's desk sat almost under a stairway. Four chairs for waiting clients hugged the wall. Magazines were scattered under the chairs. To the right and left of the foyer were small offices for lawyers – Marvin now had three associates working for him. A hallway ran directly from the foyer through the center of the downstairs, so from the front door the rear of the building could be seen some eighty feet away. Marvin's office was the largest room downstairs, and it was the last door on the left, next to the cluttered closet. Just across the hall from the closet was Marvin's secretary's office. Her name was Helen, a

shapely young woman Marvin had been dreaming about for eighteen months.

Upstairs on the second floor were the cramped offices of another lawyer and two secretaries. The third floor had no heat or air conditioning, and was used for storage.

He normally arrived at the office between seven-thirty and eight because he enjoyed a quiet hour before the rest of the firm arrived and the phone started ringing. As usual, he was the first to arrive on Friday, April 21.

He unlocked the front door, turned on the light switch, and stopped in the foyer. He lectured the twins about making a mess on Helen's desk, but they were off down the hallway and didn't hear a word. Josh already had the scissors and John the stapler by the time Marvin stuck his head in for the first time and warned them. He smiled to himself, then went to his office where he was soon deep in research.

At about a quarter to eight, he would recall later from the hospital, Marvin climbed the stairs to the third floor to retrieve an old file which, he thought at the time, had some relevance to the case he was preparing. He mumbled something to himself as he bounced up the steps. As things evolved, the old file saved his life. The boys were laughing somewhere down the hall.

The blast shot upward and horizontally at several thousand feet per second. Fifteen sticks of dynamite in the center of a wooden framed building will reduce it to splinters and rubble in a matter of seconds. It took a full minute for the jagged slivers of wood and other debris to return to earth. The ground seemed to shake like a small earthquake, and, as witnesses would later describe, bits of glass sprinkled downtown Greenville for what seemed like an eternity.

Josh and John Kramer were less than fifteen feet from the epicenter of the blast, and fortunately never knew

what hit them. They did not suffer. Their mangled bodies were found under eight feet of rubble by local firemen. Marvin Kramer was thrown first against the ceiling of the third floor, then, unconscious, fell along with the remnants of the roof into the smoking crater in the center of the building. He was found twenty minutes later and rushed to the hospital. Within three hours, both legs were amputated at the knees.

The time of the blast was exactly seven forty-six, and this in itself was somewhat fortunate. Helen, Marvin's secretary, was leaving the post office four blocks away and felt the blast. Another ten minutes, and she would have been inside making coffee. David Lukland, a young associate in the law firm, lived three blocks away, and had just locked his apartment door when he heard and felt the blast. Another ten minutes, and he would've been picking through his mail in his second-floor office.

A small fire was ignited in the office building next door, and though it was quickly contained it added greatly to the excitement. The smoke was heavy for a few moments, and this sent people scurrying.

There were two injuries to pedestrians. A three-foot section of a two-by-four landed on a sidewalk a hundred yards away, bounced once, then hit Mrs Mildred Talton square in the face as she stepped away from her parked car and looked in the direction of the explosion. She received a broken nose and a nasty laceration, but recovered in due course.

The second injury was very minor but very significant. A stranger by the name of Sam Cayhall was walking slowly toward the Kramer office when the ground shook so hard he lost his footing and tripped on a street curb. As he struggled to his feet, he was hit once in the neck and once in the left cheek by flying glass. He ducked behind a tree as shards and pieces rained around him. He gaped at the devastation before him, then ran away.

Blood dripped from his cheek and puddled on his shirt. He was in shock and did not remember much of this later. Driving the same green Pontiac, he sped away from downtown, and would most likely have made it safely from Greenville for the second time had he been thinking and paying attention. Two cops in a patrol car were speeding into the business district to respond to the bombing call when they met a green Pontiac which, for some reason, refused to move to the shoulder and yield. The patrol car had sirens blaring, lights flashing, horns blowing, and cops cursing, but the green Pontiac just froze in its lane of traffic and wouldn't budge. The cops stopped, ran to it, yanked open the door, and found a man with blood all over him. Handcuffs were slapped around Sam's wrists. He was shoved roughly into the rear seat of the police car, and taken to jail. The Pontiac was impounded.

The bomb that killed the Kramer twins was the crudest of sorts. Fifteen sticks of dynamite wrapped tightly together with gray duct tape. But there was no fuse. Rollie Wedge had used instead a detonating device, a timer, a cheap windup alarm clock. He had removed the minute hand from the clock, and drilled a small hole between the numbers seven and eight. Into the small hole he had inserted a metal pin which, when touched by the sweeping hour hand, would complete the circuit and detonate the bomb. Rollie wanted more time than a fifteen-minute fuse could provide. Plus, he considered himself an expert and wanted to experiment with new devices.

Perhaps the hour hand was warped a bit. Perhaps the dial of the clock was not perfectly flat. Perhaps Rollie in his enthusiasm had wound it too tight, or not tight enough. Perhaps the metal pin was not flush with the dial. It was, after all, Rollie's first effort with a timer. Or perhaps the timing device worked precisely as planned.

But whatever the reason or whatever the excuse, the bombing campaign of Jeremiah Dogan and the Ku Klux Klan had now spilled Jewish blood in Mississippi. And, for all practical purposes, the campaign was over.

TWO

Once the bodies were removed, the Greenville police sealed off the area around the ruins and kept the crowd away. Within hours, the premises were given to an FBI team from Jackson, and before dark a demolition unit was sifting through the rubble. Dozens of FBI agents solemnly began the tedious task of picking up every tiny piece, examining it, showing it to someone else, then packing it away to be fitted together on another day. An empty cotton warehouse on the edge, of town was leased and became the repository for the Kramer rubble.

With time, the FBI would confirm what it initially assumed. Dynamite, a timer, and a few wires. Just a basic bomb hooked together by a hack lucky enough not to have killed himself.

Marvin Kramer was quickly flown to a fancier hospital in Memphis, and listed as critical but stable for three days. Ruth Kramer was hospitalized for shock, first in Greenville, then driven in an ambulance to the same hospital in Memphis. They shared a room, Mr and Mrs Kramer, and also shared a sufficient quantity of sedatives. Countless doctors and relatives stood vigil. Ruth was born and raised in Memphis, so there were plenty of friends to watch her.

As the dust was settling around Marvin's office, the

neighbors, some of them storekeepers and others office clerks, swept glass from the sidewalks and whispered to one another as they watched the police and rescue people start the digging. A mighty rumor swept downtown Greenville that a suspect was already in custody. By noon on the day of the bombing, it was common knowledge among the clusters of onlookers that the man's name was Sam Cayhall, from Clanton, Mississippi, that he was a member of the Klan, and that he was somehow injured in the attack. One report provided ghastly details of other Cayhall bombings with all sorts of gruesome injuries and disfigured corpses, all involving poor Negroes, though. Another report told of the brilliant heroics of the Greenville police in tracking down this madman within seconds of the blast. On the news at noon, the Greenville TV station confirmed what was already known, that the two little boys were dead, their father was severely injured, and that Sam Cayhall was in custody.

Sam Cayhall came within moments of being released on thirty dollars' bond. By the time he was rushed to the police station, he had regained his senses and had apologized sufficiently to the angry cops for not yielding as they wished. He was booked on a very minor charge, and sent to a holding room to be further processed and released. The two arresting officers sped away to inspect the blast.

A janitor who doubled as the jail medic approached Sam with a battered first aid kit, and washed the dried blood from his face. The bleeding had stopped. Sam repeated again that he'd been in a fight in a bar. Rough night. The medic left, and an hour later an assistant jailer appeared in the sliding window of the holding room with more papers. The charge was failure to yield to an emergency vehicle, the maximum fine was thirty dollars, and if Sam could post this sum in cash then he would be free to go as soon as the paperwork cleared and the car was released. Sam paced nervously around

the room, glancing at his watch, softly rubbing the wound to his cheek.

He would be forced to disappear. There was a record of this arrest, and it wouldn't be long before these yokels put his name and the bombing together, and then, well, he needed to run away. He'd leave Mississippi, maybe team up with Rollie Wedge and leave for Brazil or some place. Dogan would give them the money. He'd call Dogan as soon as he left Greenville. His car was sitting at the truck stop in Cleveland. He would swap vehicles there, then head on to Memphis and catch a Greyhound bus.

That's what he would do. He was an idiot for returning to the scene, but, he thought, if he just kept his cool these clowns would release him.

Half an hour passed before the assistant jailer arrived with another form. Sam handed him thirty dollars cash, and received a receipt. He followed the man through a narrow hallway to the front desk of the jail where he was given a summons to appear in Greenville Municipal Court in two weeks. 'Where's the car?' he asked as he folded the summons.

'They're bringing it. Just wait here.'

Sam checked his watch and waited for fifteen minutes. Through a small window in a metal door he watched cars come and go in the parking lot in front of the jail. Two drunks were dragged to the desk by a husky cop. Sam fidgeted, and waited.

From somewhere behind him a new voice called slowly, 'Mr Cayhall.' He turned and came face-to-face with a short man in a badly faded suit. A badge was waved under Sam's nose.

'I'm Detective Ivy, Greenville P.D. Need to ask you a few questions.' Ivy waved at a row of wooden doors along a hallway, and Sam obediently followed.

From the moment he first sat across the dirty desk from

Detective Ivy, Sam Cayhall had little to say. Ivy was in his early forties but gray and heavily wrinkled around the eyes. He lit an unfiltered Camel, offered one to Sam, then asked how his face got cut. Sam played with the cigarette but did not light it. He'd given up smoking years earlier, and though he felt the urge to start puffing at this critical moment, he just thumped it gently on the table. Without looking at Ivy, he said that maybe he'd been in a fight.

Ivy sort of grunted with a short smile as if he expected this type of reply, and Sam knew he was facing a pro. He was scared now, and his hands began shaking. Ivy, of course, noticed all this. Where was the fight? Who were you fighting with? When did it happen? Why were you fighting here in Greenville when you live three hours away? Where did you get the car?

Sam said nothing. Ivy peppered him with questions, all unanswerable by Sam because the lies would lead to more lies and Ivy would have him tied in knots in seconds.

'I'd like to talk to an attorney,' Sam finally said.

'That's just wonderful, Sam. I think that's exactly what you should do.' Ivy lit another Camel and blew thick smoke at the ceiling.

'We had a little bomb blast this morning, Sam. Do you know that?' Ivy asked, his voice rising slightly in a mocking tone.

'No.'

'Tragic. A local lawyer by the name of Kramer got his office blown to bits. Happened about two hours ago. Probably the work of Kluckers, you know. We don't have any Kluckers around here, but Mr Kramer is a Jewish fellow. Let me guess – you know nothing about it, right?'

'That's right.'

'Really, really sad, Sam. You see, Mr Kramer had two little boys, Josh and John, and, as fate would have

it, they were in the office with their daddy when the bomb went off.’

Sam breathed deeply and looked at Ivy. Tell me the rest of it, his eyes said.

‘And these two little boys, twins, five years old, just cute as can be, got blown to bits, Sam. Deader than hell, Sam.’

Sam slowly lowered his head until his chin was an inch off his chest. He was beaten. Murder, two counts. Lawyers, trials, judges, juries, prison, everything hit at once and he closed his eyes.

‘Their daddy might get lucky. He’s at the hospital now in surgery. The little boys are at the funeral home. A real tragedy, Sam. Don’t suppose you know anything about the bomb, do you, Sam?’

‘No. I’d like to see a lawyer.’

‘Of course.’ Ivy slowly stood and left the room.

The piece of glass in Sam’s face was extracted by a physician and sent to an FBI lab. The report contained no surprises – same glass as the front windows of the office building. The green Pontiac was quickly traced to Jeremiah Dogan in Meridian. A fifteen-minute fuse was found in the trunk. A deliveryman came forward and explained to the police that he had seen the car near Mr Kramer’s office around 4 A.M.

The FBI made sure the press immediately knew Mr Sam Cayhall was a longtime member of the Klan, and that he was the prime suspect in several more bombings. The case was cracked, they felt, and they heaped accolades upon the Greenville police. J. Edgar Hoover himself issued a statement.

Two days after the bombing, the Kramer twins were laid to rest in a small cemetery. At the time, 146 Jews lived in Greenville, and with the exception of Marvin Kramer and six others, every one attended the service. And they were outnumbered two to one by reporters

and photographers from all over the country.

Sam saw the pictures and read the stories in his tiny cell the next morning. The assistant jailer, Larry Jack Polk, was a simpleton who by now was a friend because, as he had whispered to Sam early on, he had cousins who were Klansmen and he'd always wanted to join but his wife wouldn't stand for it. He brought Sam fresh coffee and newspapers each morning. Larry Jack had already confessed his admiration for Sam's bombing skills.

Other than the few bare words needed to keep Larry Jack manipulated, Sam said virtually nothing. The day after the bombing he had been charged with two counts of capital murder, so the gas chamber scenario occupied his thoughts. He refused to say a word to Ivy and the other police; same for the FBI. The reporters asked, of course, but didn't make it past Larry Jack. Sam phoned his wife and told her to stay in Clanton with the doors locked. He sat alone in his cinder-block cell and began a diary.

If Rollie Wedge was to be discovered and linked to the bombing, then he would have to be found by the cops. Sam Cayhall had taken an oath as a Klansman, and to him the oath was sacred. He would never, never squeal on a Klansman. He fervently hoped Jeremiah Dogan felt the same about his oath.

Two days after the bombing, a shady lawyer with a swirling hairdo named Clovis Brazelton made his first appearance in Greenville. He was a secret member of the Klan, and had become quite notorious around Jackson representing all sorts of thugs. He wanted to run for governor, said his platform would stand for the preservation of the white race, that the FBI was satanic, that blacks should be protected but not mixed with whites, and so on. He was sent by Jeremiah Dogan to defend Sam Cayhall, and more importantly, to make sure Cayhall kept his mouth shut. The FBI was all over

Dogan because of the green Pontiac, and he feared an indictment as a co-conspirator.

Co-conspirators, Clovis explained to his new client right off the bat, are just as guilty as the ones who actually pull the trigger. Sam listened, but said little. He had heard of Brazelton, and did not yet trust him.

‘Look, Sam,’ Clovis said as if explaining things to a first grader, ‘I know who planted the bomb. Dogan told me. If I count correctly, that makes four of us – me, you, Dogan, and Wedge. Now, at this point, Dogan is almost certain that Wedge will never be found. They haven’t talked, but the kid’s brilliant and he’s probably in another country by now. That leaves you and Dogan. Frankly, I expect Dogan to be charged anytime now. But the cops’ll have a hard time nailing him unless they can prove that ya’ll conspired to blow up the Jew’s office. And the only way they can prove this is if you tell them.’

‘So I take the fall?’ Sam asked.

‘No. You just keep quiet about Dogan. Deny everything. We’ll fabricate a story about the car. Let me worry about that. I’ll get the trial moved to another county, maybe up in the hills or some place where they don’t have Jews. Get us an all-white jury, and I’ll hang it up so fast it’ll make heroes out of both of us. Just let me handle it.’

‘You don’t think I’ll be convicted?’

‘Hell no. Listen, Sam, take my word for it. We’ll get us a jury full of patriots, your kind of people, Sam. All white. All worried about their little children being forced to go to schools with little nigger kids. Good people, Sam. We’ll pick twelve of ’em, put ’em in the jury box, and explain to ’em how these stinkin’ Jews have encouraged all this civil rights nonsense. Trust me, Sam, it’ll be easy.’ With that, Clovis leaned across the shaky table, patted Sam on the arm, and said, ‘Trust me, Sam, I’ve done it before.’

Later that day, Sam was handcuffed, surrounded by

Greenville city policemen, and led to a waiting patrol car. Between the jail and the car, he had his picture taken by a small army of photographers. Another group of these assertive people were waiting at the courthouse when Sam arrived with his entourage.

He appeared before the municipal judge with his new lawyer, the Honorable Clovis Brazelton, who waived the preliminary hearing and performed a couple of other quiet and routine legal maneuvers. Twenty minutes after he'd left the jail, Sam was back. Clovis promised to return in a few days to start plotting strategy, then he wandered outside and performed admirably for the reporters.

It took a full month for the media frenzy to subside in Greenville. Both Sam Cayhall and Jeremiah Dogan were indicted for capital murder on May 5, 1967. The local district attorney proclaimed loudly that he would seek the death penalty. The name of Rollie Wedge was never mentioned. The police and FBI had no idea he existed.

Clovis, now representing both defendants, successfully argued for a change of venue, and on September 4, 1967, the trial began in Nettles County, two hundred miles from Greenville. It turned into a circus. The Klan set up camp on the front lawn of the courthouse and staged noisy rallies almost on the hour. They shipped in Klansmen from other states, even had a list of guest speakers. Sam Cayhall and Jeremiah Dogan were seized as symbols of white supremacy, and their beloved names were called a thousand times by their hooded admirers.

The press watched and waited. The courtroom was filled with reporters and journalists, so the less fortunate were forced to wait under the shade trees on the front lawn. They watched the Klansmen and listened to the speeches, and the more they watched and photographed

the longer the speeches became.

Inside the courtroom, things were going smoothly for Cayhall and Dogan. Brazelton worked his magic and seated twelve white patriots, as he preferred to call them, on the jury, then began poking rather significant holes in the prosecution's case. Most importantly, the evidence was circumstantial – no one actually saw Sam Cayhall plant the bomb. Clovis preached this loudly in his opening statement, and it found its mark. Cayhall was actually employed by Dogan, who'd sent him to Greenville on an errand, and he just happened to be near the Kramer building at a most unfortunate moment. Clovis almost cried when he thought of those two precious little boys.

The dynamite fuse in the trunk had probably been left there by its previous owner, a Mr Carson Jenkins, a dirt contractor from Meridian. Mr Carson Jenkins testified that he handled dynamite all the time in his line of work, and that he evidently had simply left the fuse in the trunk when he sold the car to Dogan. Mr Carson Jenkins was a Sunday school teacher, a quiet, hard-working salt-of-the-earth little man who was completely believable. He was also a member of the Ku Klux Klan, but the FBI didn't know it. Clovis orchestrated this testimony without a flaw.

The fact that Cayhall's car had been left at the truck stop in Cleveland was never discovered by the police or FBI. During his first phone call from jail, he had instructed his wife to get his son, Eddie Cayhall, and drive to Cleveland immediately for the car. This was a significant piece of luck for the defense.

But the strongest argument presented by Clovis Brazelton was simply that no one could prove that his clients conspired to do anything, and how in the world can you, the jurors of Nettles County, send these two men to their deaths?

After four days of trial, the jury retired to deliberate.

Clovis guaranteed his clients an acquittal. The prosecution was almost certain of one. The Kluckers smelled victory, and increased the tempo on the front lawn.

There were no acquittals, and there were no convictions. Remarkably, two of the jurors boldly dug in their heels and pressed to convict. After a day and a half of deliberations, the jury reported to the judge that it was hopelessly deadlocked. A mistrial was declared, and Sam Cayhall went home for the first time in five months.

The retrial took place six months later in Wilson County, another rural area four hours from Greenville and a hundred miles from the site of the first trial. There were complaints of Klan harassment of prospective jurors in the first trial, so the judge, for reasons that were never made clear, changed venue to an area crawling with Kluckers and their sympathizers. The jury again was all-white and certainly non-Jewish. Clovis told the same stories with the same punch lines. Mr Carson Jenkins told the same lies.

The prosecution changed strategy a bit, to no avail. The district attorney dropped the capital charges and pressed for a conviction for murder only. No death penalty, and the jury could, if it so chose, find Cayhall and Dogan guilty of manslaughter, a much lighter charge but a conviction nonetheless.

The second trial had something new. Marvin Kramer sat in a wheelchair by the front row and glared at the jurors for three days. Ruth had tried to watch the first trial, but went home to Greenville where she was hospitalized again for emotional problems. Marvin had been in and out of surgery since the bombing, and his doctors would not allow him to watch the show in Nettles County.

For the most part, the jurors could not stand to look at him. They kept their eyes away from the spectators,

and, for jurors, paid remarkable attention to the witnesses. However, one young lady, Sharon Culpepper, mother of twin boys, could not help herself. She glanced at Marvin repeatedly, and many times their eyes locked. He pleaded with her for justice.

Sharon Culpepper was the only one of the twelve who initially voted to convict. For two days she was verbally abused and harangued by her peers. They called her names and made her cry, but she doggedly held on.

The second trial ended with a jury hung eleven to one. The judge declared a mistrial, and sent everybody home. Marvin Kramer returned to Greenville, then to Memphis for more surgery. Clovis Brazelton made a spectacle of himself with the press. The district attorney made no promises of a new trial. Sam Cayhall went quietly to Canton with a solemn vow to avoid any more dealings with Jeremiah Dogan. And the Imperial Wizard himself made a triumphant return to Meridian where he boasted to his people that the battle for white supremacy had just begun, good had defeated evil, and on and on.

The name of Rollie Wedge had been uttered only once. During a lunch break in the second trial, Dogan whispered to Cayhall that a message had been received from the kid. The messenger was a stranger who spoke to Dogan's wife in a hallway outside the courtroom. And the message was quite clear and simple. Wedge was nearby, in the woods, watching the trial, and if Dogan or Cayhall mentioned his name, their homes and families would be bombed to hell and back.

THREE

Ruth and Marvin Kramer separated in 1970. He was admitted to a mental hospital later that year, and committed suicide in 1971. Ruth returned to Memphis and lived with her parents. In spite of their problems, they had pressed hard for a third trial. In fact, the Jewish community in Greenville was highly agitated and vocal when it became apparent that the district attorney was tired of losing and had lost his enthusiasm for prosecuting Cayhall and Dogan.

Marvin was buried next to his sons. A new park was dedicated to the memory of Josh and John Kramer, and scholarships were established. With time, the tragedy of their deaths lost some of its horror. Years passed, and Greenville talked less and less about the bombing.

Despite pressure from the FBI, a third trial did not materialize. There was no new evidence. The judge would no doubt change venue again. A prosecution looked hopeless, but still the FBI did not quit.

With Cayhall unwilling and Wedge unavailable, Dogan's bombing campaign fizzled. He continued to wear his robe and make his speeches, and began to fancy himself as a major political force. Journalists up North were intrigued by his blatant race-baiting, and he was always willing to put on his hood and give outrageous interviews. He was mildly famous for a brief period, and he enjoyed it immensely.

But by the late 1970s, Jeremiah Dogan was just another thug with a robe in a rapidly declining organization. Blacks were voting. The public schools were desegregated. Racial barriers were being struck down by federal judges throughout the South. Civil rights had arrived in Mississippi, and the Klan had proven pitifully inept in keeping Negroes where they belonged. Dogan couldn't draw flies to a cross-burning.

In 1979, two significant events occurred in the open but inactive Kramer bombing case. The first was the election of David McAllister as the district attorney in Greenville. At twenty-seven he became the youngest D.A. in the state's history. As a teenager he had stood in the crowd and watched the FBI pick through the rubble of Marvin Kramer's office. Shortly after his election, he vowed to bring the terrorists to justice.

The second event was the indictment of Jeremiah Dogan for income tax evasion. After years of successfully dodging the FBI, Dogan got sloppy and ran afoul of the IRS. The investigation took eight months and resulted in an indictment that ran for thirty pages. According to it, Dogan had failed to report over a hundred thousand dollars between 1974 and 1978. It contained eighty-six counts, and carried a maximum of twenty-eight years in prison.

Dogan was dead guilty, and his lawyer (not Clovis Brazelton) immediately began exploring the possibility of a plea bargain. Enter the FBI.

Through a series of heated and angry meetings with Dogan and his lawyer, a deal was offered by the government whereby Dogan would testify against Sam Cayhall in the Kramer case, and in return he would serve no time in jail for tax evasion. Zero days behind bars. Heavy probation and fines, but no jail. Dogan had not spoken to Cayhall in over ten years. Dogan was not active in the Klan anymore. There were lots of reasons to consider the deal, not the least of which was the issue

of remaining a free man or spending a decade or so in prison.

To prod him along, the IRS attached all of his assets, and planned a nice little fire sale. And to help with his decision, David McAllister convinced a grand jury in Greenville to indict him and his pal Cayhall once again for the Kramer bombing.

Dogan caved in and jumped at the deal.

After twelve years of living quietly in Ford County, Sam Cayhall once again found himself indicted, arrested, and facing the certainty of a trial and the possibility of the gas chamber. He was forced to mortgage his house and small farm to hire a lawyer. Clovis Brazelton had gone on to bigger things, and Dogan was no longer an ally.

Much had changed in Mississippi since the first two trials. Blacks had registered to vote in record numbers, and these new voters had elected black officials. All-white juries were rare. The state had two black trial judges, two black sheriffs, and black lawyers could be spotted with their white brethren roaming the courthouse hallways. Officially, segregation was over. And many white Mississippians were beginning to look back and wonder what all the fuss was about. Why had there been such resistance to basic rights for all people? Though it had a long way to go, Mississippi was a far different place in 1980 than in 1967. And Sam Cayhall understood this.

He hired a skilled trial advocate from Memphis named Benjamin Keyes. Their first tactic was to move to dismiss the indictment on the grounds that it was unfair to try him again after such a delay. This proved to be a persuasive argument, and it took a decision by the Mississippi Supreme Court to settle the matter. By a vote of six to three, the court ruled the prosecution could proceed.

And proceed it did. The third and final trial of Sam Cayhall began in February of 1981, in a chilly little courthouse in Lakehead County, a hill county in the northeastern corner of the state. Much could be said about the trial. There was a young district attorney, David McAllister, who performed brilliantly but had the obnoxious habit of spending all his spare time with the press. He was handsome and articulate and compassionate, and it became very clear that this trial had a purpose. Mr McAllister had political ambitions on a grand scale.

There was a jury of eight whites and four blacks. There were the glass sample, the fuse, the FBI reports, and all the other photos and exhibits from the first two trials.

And then, there was the testimony of Jeremiah Dogan, who took the stand in a denim workshirt and with a humble countenance solemnly explained to the jury how he conspired with Sam Cayhall sitting over there to bomb the office of Mr Kramer. Sam glared at him intensely and absorbed every word, but Dogan looked away. Sam's lawyer berated Dogan for half a day, and forced him to admit that he'd cut a deal with the government. But the damage was done.

It was of no benefit to the defense of Sam Cayhall to raise the issue of Rollie Wedge. Because to do so would be to admit that Sam in fact had been in Greenville with the bomb. Sam would be forced to admit that he was a co-conspirator, and under the law he would be just as guilty as the man who planted the dynamite. And to present this scenario to the jury, Sam would be forced to testify, something neither he nor his attorney wanted. Sam could not withstand a rigorous cross-examination, because Sam would be forced to tell one lie to cover the last.

And, at this point, no one would believe a sudden tale of a mysterious new terrorist who'd never been

mentioned before, and who came and went without being seen. Sam knew the Rollie Wedge angle was futile, and he never mentioned the man's name to his own lawyer.

At the close of the trial, David McAllister stood before the jury in a packed courtroom and presented his closing argument. He talked of being a youngster in Greenville and having Jewish friends. He didn't know they were different. He knew some of the Kramers, fine folks who worked hard and gave back to the town. He also played with little black kids, and learned they made wonderful friends. He never understood why they went to one school and he went to another. He told a gripping story of feeling the earth shake on the morning of April 21, 1967, and running in the direction of downtown where smoke was drifting upward. For three hours, he stood behind the police barricades and waited. He saw the firemen scurry about when they found Marvin Kramer. He saw them huddle in the debris when they found the boys. Tears dripped down his cheeks when the little bodies, covered in white sheets, were carried slowly to an ambulance.

It was a splendid performance, and when McAllister finished the courtroom was silent. Several of the jurors dabbed at their eyes.

On February 12, 1981, Sam Cayhall was convicted on two counts of capital murder and one count of attempted murder. Two days later, the same jury in the same courtroom returned with a sentencing verdict of death.

He was transported to the state penitentiary at Parchman to begin waiting for his appointment with the gas chamber. On February 19, 1981, he first set foot on death row.

FOUR

The law firm of Kravitz & Bane had almost three hundred lawyers peacefully coexisting under the same roof in Chicago. Two hundred and eighty-six to be exact, though it was difficult for anyone to keep score because at any given moment there were a dozen or so leaving for a multitude of reasons, and there were always two dozen or so shiny, fresh new recruits trained and polished and just itching for combat. And though it was huge, Kravitz & Bane had failed to play the expansion game as quickly as others, had failed to gobble up weaker firms in other cities, had been slow to raid clients from its competitors, and thus had to suffer the distinction of being only the third-largest firm in Chicago. It had offices in six cities, but, much to the embarrassment of the younger partners, there was no London address on the letterhead.

Though it had mellowed some, Kravitz & Bane was still known as a vicious litigation firm. It had tamer departments for real estate, tax, and antitrust, but its money was made in litigation. When the firm recruited it sought the brightest third-year students with the highest marks in mock trials and debate. It wanted young men (a token female here and there) who could be instantly trained in the slash-and-attack style perfected long ago by Kravitz & Bane litigators.

There was a nice though small unit for plaintiffs'

personal injury work, good stuff from which they took 50 percent and allowed their clients the remainder. There was a sizable section for a white-collar criminal defense, but the white-collar defendant needed a sizable net worth to strap on Kravitz & Bane. Then there were the two largest sections, one for commercial litigation and one for insurance defense. With the exception of the plaintiffs' work, and as a percentage of gross it was almost insignificant, the firm's money was earned by billable hours. Two hundred bucks per hour for insurance work; more if the traffic could stand it. Three hundred bucks for criminal defense. Four hundred for a big bank. Even five hundred dollars an hour for a rich corporate client with lazy in-house lawyers who were asleep at the wheel.

Kravitz & Bane printed money by the hour and built a dynasty in Chicago. Its offices were fashionable but not plush. They filled the top floors of, fittingly, the third-tallest building downtown.

Like most large firms, it made so much money it felt obligated to establish a small pro bono section to fulfill its moral responsibility to society. It was quite proud of the fact that it had a full-time pro bono partner, an eccentric do-gooder named E. Garner Goodman, who had a spacious office with two secretaries on the sixty-first floor. He shared a paralegal with a litigation partner. The firm's gold-embossed brochure made much of the fact that its lawyers were encouraged to pursue pro bono projects. The brochure proclaimed that last year, 1989, Kravitz & Bane lawyers donated almost sixty thousand hours of their precious time to clients who couldn't pay. Housing project kids, death row inmates, illegal aliens, drug addicts, and, of course, the firm was deeply concerned with the plight of the homeless. The brochure even had a photograph of two young lawyers, jackets off, sleeves rolled up, ties loosened about the neck, sweat in the armpits, eyes

filled with compassion, as they performed some menial chore in the midst of a group of minority children in what appeared to be an urban landfill. Lawyers saving society.

Adam Hall had one of the brochures in his thin file as he eased slowly along the hallway on floor sixty-one, headed in the general direction of the office of E. Garner Goodman. He nodded and spoke to another young lawyer, one he'd never seen before. At the firm Christmas party name tags were distributed at the door. Some of the partners barely knew each other. Some of the associates saw each other once or twice a year. He opened a door and entered a small room where a secretary stopped typing and almost smiled. He asked for Mr Goodman, and she nodded properly to a row of chairs where he was to wait. He was five minutes early for a 10 A.M. appointment, as if it mattered. This was pro bono now. Forget the clock. Forget billable hours. Forget performance bonuses. In defiance of the rest of the firm, Goodman allowed no clocks on his walls.

Adam flipped through his file. He chuckled at the brochure. He read again his own little résumé – college at Pepperdine, law school at Michigan, editor of the law review, case note on cruel and unusual punishment, comments on recent death penalty cases. A rather short résumé, but then he was only twenty-six. He'd been employed at Kravitz & Bane for all of nine months now.

He read and made notes from two lengthy U.S. Supreme Court decisions dealing with executions in California. He checked his watch, and read some more. The secretary eventually offered coffee, which he politely declined.

The office of E. Garner Goodman was a stunning study in disorganization. It was large but cramped, with sagging bookshelves on every wall and stacks of dusty files covering the floor. Little piles of papers of all sorts

and sizes covered the desk in the center of the office. Refuse, rubbish, and lost letters covered the rug under the desk. If not for the closed wooden blinds, the large window could have provided a splendid view of Lake Michigan, but it was obvious Mr Goodman spent no time at his window.

He was an old man with a neat gray beard and bushy gray hair. His white shirt was painfully starched. A green paisley bow tie, his trademark, was tied precisely under his chin. Adam entered the room and cautiously weaved around the piles of papers. Goodman did not stand but offered his hand with a cold greeting.

Adam handed the file to Goodman, and sat in the only empty chair in the room. He waited nervously while the file was studied, the beard was gently stroked, the bow tie was tinkered with.

‘Why do you want to do pro bono work?’ Goodman mumbled after a long silence. He did not look up from the file. Classical guitar music drifted softly from recessed speakers in the ceiling.

Adam shifted uncomfortably. ‘Uh, different reasons.’

‘Let me guess. You want to serve humanity, give something back to your community, or, perhaps, you feel guilty because you spend so much time here in this sweatshop billing by the hour that you want to cleanse your soul, get your hands dirty, do some honest work, and help other people.’ Goodman’s beady blue eyes darted at Adam from above the black-framed reading spectacles perched on the tip of his rather pointed nose. ‘Any of the above?’

‘Not really.’

Goodman continued scanning the file. ‘So you’ve been assigned to Emmitt Wycoff?’ He was reading a letter from Wycoff, Adam’s supervising partner.

‘Yes sir.’

‘He’s a fine lawyer. I don’t particularly care for him, but he’s got a great criminal mind, you know. Probably

one of our top three white-collar boys. Pretty abrasive, though, don't you think?

'He's okay.'

'How long have you been under him?'

'Since I started. Nine months ago.'

'So you've been here for nine months?'

'Yes sir.'

'What do you think of it?' Goodman closed the file and stared at Adam. He slowly removed the reading glasses and stuck one stem in his mouth.

'I like it, so far. It's challenging.'

'Of course. Why did you pick Kravitz & Bane? I mean, surely with your credentials you could've gone anywhere. Why here?'

'Criminal litigation. That's what I want, and this firm has a reputation.'

'How many offers did you have? Come on, I'm just being curious.'

'Several.'

'And where were they?'

'D.C. mainly. One in Denver. I didn't interview with New York firms.'

'How much money did we offer you?'

Adam shifted again. Goodman was, after all, a partner. Surely he knew what the firm was paying new associates. 'Sixty or so. What are we paying you?'

This amused the old man, and he smiled for the first time. 'They pay me four hundred thousand dollars a year to give away their time so they can pat themselves on the back and preach about lawyers and about social responsibility. Four hundred thousand, can you believe it?'

Adam had heard the rumors. 'You're not complaining, are you?'

'No. I'm the luckiest lawyer in town, Mr Hall. I get paid a truckload of money for doing work I enjoy, and I punch no clock and don't worry about billing. It's a

lawyer's dream. That's why I still bust my ass sixty hours a week. I'm almost seventy, you know.'

The legend around the firm was that Goodman, as a younger man, succumbed to the pressure and almost killed himself with liquor and pills. He dried out for a year while his wife took the kids and left him, then he convinced the partners he was worth saving. He just needed an office where life did not revolve around a clock.

'What kind of work are you doing for Emmitt Wycoff?' Goodman asked.

'Lot of research. Right now he's defending a bunch of defense contractors, and that takes most of my time. I argued a motion in court last week.' Adam said this with a touch of pride. Rookies were usually kept chained to their desks for the first twelve months.

'A real motion?' Goodman asked, in awe.

'Yes sir.'

'In a real courtroom?'

'Yes sir.'

'Before a real judge?'

'You got it.'

'Who won?'

'Judge ruled for the prosecution, but it was close. I really tied him in knots.' Goodman smiled at this, but the game was quickly over. He opened the file again.

'Wycoff sends along a pretty strong letter of recommendation. That's out of character for him.'

'He recognizes talent,' Adam said with a smile.

'I assume this is a rather significant request, Mr Hall. Just what is it you have in mind?'

Adam stopped smiling and cleared his throat. He was suddenly nervous, and decided to recross his legs. 'It's, uh, well, it's a death penalty case.'

'A death penalty case?' Goodman repeated.

'Yes sir.'

'Why?'

‘I’m opposed to the death penalty.’

‘Aren’t we all, Mr Hall? I’ve written books about it. I’ve handled two dozen of these damned things. Why do you want to get involved?’

‘I’ve read your books. I just want to help.’

Goodman closed the file again and leaned on his desk. Two pieces of paper slid off and fluttered to the floor. ‘You’re too young and you’re too green.’

‘You might be surprised.’

‘Look, Mr Hall, this is not the same as counseling winos at a soup kitchen. This is life and death. This is high pressure stuff, son. It’s not a lot of fun.’

Adam nodded but said nothing. His eyes were locked onto Goodman’s, and he refused to blink. A phone rang somewhere in the distance, but they both ignored it.

‘Any particular case, or do you have a new client for Kravitz & Bane?’ Goodman asked.

‘The Cayhall case,’ Adam said slowly.

Goodman shook his head and tugged at the edges of his bow tie. ‘Sam Cayhall just fired us. The Fifth Circuit ruled last week that he does indeed have the right to terminate our representation.’

‘I’ve read the opinion. I know what the Fifth Circuit said. The man needs a lawyer.’

‘No he doesn’t. He’ll be dead in three months with or without one. Frankly, I’m relieved to have him out of my life.’

‘He needs a lawyer,’ Adam repeated.

‘He’s representing himself, and he’s pretty damned good, to be perfectly honest. Types his own motions and briefs, handles his own research. I hear he’s been giving advice to some of his buddies on death row, just the white ones though.’

‘I’ve studied his entire file.’

E. Garner Goodman twirled his spectacles slowly and thought about this. ‘That’s a half a ton of paper. Why’d you do it?’

‘I’m intrigued by the case. I’ve watched it for years, read everything written about the man. You asked me earlier why I chose Kravitz & Bane. Well, the truth is that I wanted to work on the Cayhall case, and I think this firm has handled it pro bono for, what, eight years now?’

‘Seven, but it seems like twenty. Mr Cayhall is not the most pleasant man to deal with.’

‘Understandable, isn’t it? I mean, he’s been in solitary for almost ten years.’

‘Don’t lecture me about prison life, Mr Hall. Have you ever seen the inside of a prison?’

‘No.’

‘Well I have. I’ve been to death row in six states. I’ve been cursed by Sam Cayhall when he was chained to his chair. He’s not a nice man. He’s an incorrigible racist who hates just about everybody, and he’d hate you if you met him.’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘You’re a lawyer, Mr Hall. He hates lawyers worse than he hates blacks and Jews. He’s been facing death for almost ten years, and he’s convinced he’s the victim of a lawyer conspiracy. Hell, he tried to fire us for two years. This firm spent in excess of two million dollars in billable time trying to keep him alive, and he was more concerned with firing us. I lost count of the number of times he refused to meet with us after we traveled all the way to Parchman. He’s crazy, Mr Hall. Find yourself another project. How about abused kids or something?’

‘No thanks. My interest is in death penalty cases, and I’m somewhat obsessed with the story of Sam Cayhall.’

Goodman carefully returned the spectacles to the tip of his nose, then slowly swung his feet onto the corner of the desk. He folded his hands across the starched shirt. ‘Why, may I ask, are you so obsessed with Sam Cayhall?’

‘Well, it’s a fascinating case, don’t you think? The Klan, the civil rights movement, the bombings, the tortured locale. The backdrop is such a rich period in American history. Seems ancient, but it was only twenty-five years ago. It’s a riveting story.’

A ceiling fan spun slowly above him. A minute passed.

Goodman lowered his feet to the floor and rested on his elbows. ‘Mr Hall, I appreciate your interest in pro bono, and I assure you there’s much to do. But you need to find another project. This is not a mock trial competition.’

‘And I’m not a law student.’

‘Sam Cayhall has effectively terminated our services, Mr Hall. You don’t seem to realize this.’

‘I want the chance to meet with him.’

‘For what?’

‘I think I can convince him to allow me to represent him.’

‘Oh really.’

Adam took a deep breath, then stood and walked deftly around the stacks of files to the window. Another deep breath. Goodman watched, and waited.

‘I have a secret for you, Mr Goodman. No one else knows but Emmitt Wycoff, and I was sort of forced to tell him. You must keep it confidential, okay?’

‘I’m listening.’

‘Do I have your word?’

‘Yes, you have my word,’ Goodman said slowly, biting a stem.

Adam peeked through a slit in the blinds and watched a sailboat on Lake Michigan. He spoke quietly. ‘I’m related to Sam Cayhall.’

Goodman did not flinch. ‘I see. Related how?’

‘He had a son, Eddie Cayhall. And Eddie Cayhall left Mississippi in disgrace after his father was arrested for the bombing. He fled to California, changed his name,

and tried to forget his past. But he was tormented by his family's legacy. He committed suicide shortly after his father was convicted in 1981.'

Goodman now sat with his rear on the edge of his chair.

'Eddie Cayhall was my father.'

Goodman hesitated slightly. 'Sam Cayhall is your grandfather?'

'Yes. I didn't know it until I was almost seventeen. My aunt told me after we buried my father.'

'Wow.'

'You promised not to tell.'

'Of course.' Goodman moved his butt to the edge of his desk, and placed his feet in the chair. He stared at the blinds. 'Does Sam know -'

'No. I was born in Ford County, Mississippi, a town called Clanton, not Memphis. I was always told I was born in Memphis. My name then was Alan Cayhall, but I didn't know this until much later. I was three years old when we left Mississippi, and my parents never talked about the place. My mother believes that there was no contact between Eddie and Sam from the day we left until she wrote him in prison and told him his son was dead. He did not write back.'

'Damn, damn, damn,' Goodman mumbled to himself.

'There's a lot to it, Mr Goodman. It's a pretty sick family.'

'Not your fault.'

'According to my mother, Sam's father was an active Klansman, took part in lynchings and all that. So I come from pretty weak stock.'

'Your father was different.'

'My father killed himself. I'll spare you the details, but I found his body, and I cleaned up the mess before my mother and sister returned home.'

'And you were seventeen?'

‘Almost seventeen. It was 1981. Nine years ago. After my aunt, Eddie’s sister, told me the truth, I became fascinated with the sordid history of Sam Cayhall. I’ve spent hours in libraries digging up old newspaper and magazine stories; there are quite a lot of materials. I’ve read the transcripts of all three trials. I’ve studied the appellate decisions. In law school I began studying this firm’s representation of Sam Cayhall. You and Wallace Tyner have done exemplary work.’

‘I’m glad you approve.’

‘I’ve read hundreds of books and thousands of articles on the Eighth Amendment and death penalty litigation. You’ve written four books, I believe. And a number of articles. I know I’m just a rookie, but my research is impeccable.’

‘And you think Sam will trust you as his lawyer?’

‘I don’t know. But he’s my grandfather, like it or not, and I have to go see him.’

‘There’s been no contact –’

‘None. I was three when we left, and I certainly don’t remember him. I’ve started a thousand times to write him, but it never happened. I can’t tell you why.’

‘It’s understandable.’

‘Nothing’s understandable, Mr Goodman. I do not understand how or why I’m standing here in this office at this moment. I always wanted to be a pilot, but I went to law school because I felt a vague calling to help society. Someone needed me, and I suppose I felt that someone was my demented grandfather. I had four job offers, and I picked this firm because it had the guts to represent him for free.’

‘You should’ve told someone up front about this, before we hired you.’

‘I know. But nobody asked if my grandfather was a client of this firm.’

‘You should’ve said something.’

‘They won’t fire me, will they?’

'I doubt it. Where have you been for the past nine months?'

'Here, working ninety hours a week, sleeping on my desk, eating in the library, cramming for the bar exam, you know, the usual rookie boot camp you guys designed for us.'

'Silly, isn't it?'

'I'm tough.' Adam opened a slit in the blinds for a better view of the lake. Goodman watched him.

'Why don't you open these blinds?' Adam asked. 'It's a great view.'

'I've seen it before.'

'I'd kill for a view like this. My little cubbyhole is a mile from any window.'

'Work hard, bill even harder, and one day this will all be yours.'

'Not me.'

'Leaving us, Mr Hall?'

'Probably, eventually. But that's another secret, okay? I plan to hit it hard for a couple of years, then move on. Maybe open my own office, one where life does not revolve around a clock. I want to do public interest work, you know, sort of like you.'

'So after nine months you're already disillusioned with Kravitz & Bane.'

'No. But I can see it coming. I don't want to spend my career representing wealthy crooks and wayward corporations.'

'Then you're certainly in the wrong place.'

Adam left the window and walked to the edge of the desk. He looked down at Goodman. 'I am in the wrong place, and I want a transfer. Wycoff will agree to send me to our little office in Memphis for the next few months so I can work on the Cayhall case. Sort of a leave of absence, with full pay of course.'

'Anything else?'

'That's about it. It'll work. I'm just a lowly rookie,

expendable around here. No one will miss me. Hell, there are plenty of young cutthroats just eager to work eighteen hours a day and bill twenty.'

Goodman's face relaxed, and a warm smile appeared. He shook his head as if this impressed him. 'You planned this, didn't you? I mean, you picked this firm because it represented Sam Cayhall, and because it has an office in Memphis.'

Adam nodded without a smile. 'Things have worked out. I didn't know how or when this moment would arrive, but, yes, I sort of planned it. Don't ask me what happens next.'

'He'll be dead in three months, if not sooner.'

'But I have to do something, Mr Goodman. If the firm won't allow me to handle the case, then I'll probably resign and try it on my own.'

Goodman shook his head and jumped to his feet. 'Don't do that, Mr Hall. We'll work something out. I'll need to present this to Daniel Rosen, the managing partner. I think he'll approve.'

'He has a horrible reputation.'

'Well deserved. But I can talk to him.'

'He'll do it if you and Wycoff recommend it, won't he?'

'Of course. Are you hungry?' Goodman was reaching for his jacket.

'A little.'

'Let's go out for a sandwich.'

The lunch crowd at the corner deli had not arrived. The partner and the rookie took a small table in the front window overlooking the sidewalk. Traffic was slow and hundreds of pedestrians scurried along, just a few feet away. The waiter delivered a greasy Reuben for Goodman and a bowl of chicken soup for Adam.

'How many inmates are on death row in Mississippi?' Goodman asked.

‘Forty-eight, as of last month. Twenty-five black, twenty-three white. The last execution was two years ago, Willie Parris. Sam Cayhall will probably be next, barring a small miracle.’

Goodman chewed quickly on a large bite. He wiped his mouth with the paper napkin. ‘A large miracle, I would say. There’s not much left to do legally.’

‘There are the usual assortment of last ditch motions.’

‘Let’s save the strategy talks for later. I don’t suppose you’ve ever been to Parchman.’

‘No. Since I learned the truth, I’ve been tempted to return to Mississippi, but it hasn’t happened.’

‘It’s a massive farm in the middle of the Mississippi Delta, not too far from Greenville, ironically. Something like seventeen thousand acres. Probably the hottest place in the world. It sits on Highway 49, just like a little hamlet off to the west. Lots of buildings and houses. The front part is all administration, and it’s not enclosed by fencing. There are about thirty different camps scattered around the farm, all fenced and secured. Each camp is completely separate. Some are miles apart. You drive past various camps, all enclosed by chain link and barbed wire, all with hundreds of prisoners hanging around, doing nothing. They wear different colors, depending on their classification. It seemed as if they were all young black kids, just loitering about, some playing basketball, some just sitting on the porches of the buildings. An occasional white face. You drive in your car, alone and very slowly, down a gravel road, past the camps and the barbed wire until you come to a seemingly innocuous little building with a flat roof. It has tall fences around it with guards watching from the towers. It’s a fairly modern facility. It has an official name of some sort, but everyone refers to it simply as the Row.’

‘Sounds like a wonderful place.’

‘I thought it would be a dungeon, you know, dark

and cold with water dripping from above. But it's just a little flat building out in the middle of a cotton field. Actually, it's not as bad as death rows in other states.'

'I'd like to see the Row.'

'You're not ready to see it. It's a horrible place filled with depressing people waiting to die. I was sixty years old before I saw it, and I didn't sleep for a week afterward.' He took a sip of coffee. 'I can't imagine how you'll feel when you go there. The Row is bad enough when you're representing a complete stranger.'

'He is a complete stranger.'

'How do you intend to tell him —'

'I don't know. I'll think of something. I'm sure it'll just happen.'

Goodman shook his head. 'This is bizarre.'

'The whole family is bizarre.'

'I remember now that Sam had two children, seems like one is a daughter. It's been a long time. Tyner did most of the work, you know.'

'His daughter is my aunt, Lee Cayhall Booth, but she tries to forget her maiden name. She married into old Memphis money. Her husband owns a bank or two, and they tell no one about her father.'

'Where's your mother?'

'Portland. She remarried a few years ago, and we talk about twice a year. Dysfunctional would be a mild term.'

'How'd you afford Pepperdine?'

'Life insurance. My father had trouble keeping a job, but he was wise enough to carry life insurance. The waiting period had expired years before he killed himself.'

'Sam never talked about his family.'

'And his family never talks about him. His wife, my grandmother, died a few years before he was convicted. I didn't know this, of course. Most of my genealogical research has been extracted from my mother, who's

done a great job of forgetting the past. I don't know how it works in normal families, Mr Goodman, but my family seldom gets together, and when two or more of us happen to meet the last thing we discuss is the past. There are many dark secrets.'

Goodman was nibbling on a chip and listening closely. 'You mentioned a sister.'

'Yes, I have a sister, Carmen. She's twenty-three, a bright and beautiful girl, in graduate school at Berkeley. She was born in L.A., so she didn't go through the name change like the rest of us. We keep in touch.'

'She knows?'

'Yes, she knows. My aunt Lee told me first, just after my father's funeral, then, typically, my mother asked me to tell Carmen. She was only fourteen at the time. She's never expressed any interest in Sam Cayhall. Frankly, the rest of the family wishes he would quietly just go away.'

'They're about to get their wish.'

'But it won't be quietly, will it, Mr Goodman?'

'No. It never is. For one brief terrible moment, Sam Cayhall will be the most talked about man in the country. We'll see the same old footage from the bomb blast, and the trials with the Klan marching around the courthouses. The same old debate about the death penalty will erupt. The press will descend upon Parchman. Then, they'll kill him, and two days later it'll all be forgotten. Happens every time.'

Adam stirred his soup and carefully picked out a sliver of chicken. He examined it for a second, then returned it to the broth. He was not hungry. Goodman finished another chip, and touched the corners of his mouth with the napkin.

'I don't suppose, Mr Hall, that you're thinking you can keep this quiet.'

'I had given it some thought.'

'Forget it.'

‘My mother begged me not to do it. My sister wouldn’t discuss it. And my aunt in Memphis is rigid with the remote possibility that we’ll all be identified as Cayhalls and forever ruined.’

‘The possibility is not remote. When the press finishes with you, they’ll have old black-and-whites of you sitting on your granddaddy’s knee. It’ll make great print, Mr Hall. Just think of it. The forgotten grandson charging in at the last moment, making a heroic effort to save his wretched old grandfather as the clock ticks down.’

‘I sort of like it myself.’

‘Not bad, really. It’ll bring a lot of attention to our beloved little law firm.’

‘Which brings up another unpleasant issue.’

‘I don’t think so. There are no cowards at Kravitz & Bane, Adam. We have survived and prospered in the rough and tumble world of Chicago law. We’re known as the meanest bastards in town. We have the thickest skins. Don’t worry about the firm.’

‘So you’ll agree to it.’

Goodman placed his napkin on the table and took another sip of coffee. ‘Oh, it’s a wonderful idea, assuming your gramps will agree to it. If you can sign him up, or re-sign him I should say, then we’re back in business. You’ll be the front man. We can feed you what you need from up here. I’ll always be in your shadow. It’ll work. Then, they’ll kill him and you’ll never get over it. I’ve watched three of my clients die, Mr Hall, including one in Mississippi. You’ll never be the same.’

Adam nodded and smiled and looked at the pedestrians on the sidewalk.

Goodman continued. ‘We’ll be around to support you when they kill him. You won’t have to bear it alone.’

‘It’s not hopeless, is it?’

‘Almost. We’ll talk strategy later. First, I’ll meet with

Daniel Rosen. He'll probably want a long conference with you. Second, you'll have to see Sam and have a little reunion, so to speak. That's the hard part. Third, if he agrees to it, then we'll get to work.'

'Thanks.'

'Don't thank me, Adam. I doubt if we'll be on speaking terms when this is over.'

'Thanks anyway.'

FIVE

The meeting was organized quickly. E. Garner Goodman made the first phone call, and within an hour the necessary participants had been summoned. Within four hours they were present in a small, seldom used conference room next to Daniel Rosen's office. It was Rosen's turf, and this disturbed Adam more than a little.

By legend, Daniel Rosen was a monster, though two heart attacks had knocked off some of the edge and mellowed him a bit. For thirty years he had been a ruthless litigator, the meanest, nastiest, and without a doubt one of the most effective courtroom brawlers in Chicago. Before the heart attacks, he was known for his brutal work schedule – ninety-hour weeks, midnight orgies of work with clerks and paralegals digging and fetching. Several wives had left him. As many as four secretaries at a time labored furiously to keep pace. Daniel Rosen had been the heart and soul of Kravitz & Bane, but no longer. His doctor restricted him to fifty hours a week, in the office, and prohibited any trial work.

Now, Rosen, at the age of sixty-five and getting heavy, had been unanimously selected by his beloved colleagues to graze the gentler pastures of law office management. He had the responsibility of overseeing the rather cumbersome bureaucracy that ran Kravitz &

Bane. It was an honor, the other partners had explained feebly when they bestowed it upon him.

So far the honor had been a disaster. Banished from the battlefield he desperately loved and needed, Rosen went about the business of managing the firm in a manner very similar to the preparation of an expensive lawsuit. He cross-examined secretaries and clerks over the most trivial of matters. He confronted other partners and harangued them for hours over vague issues of firm policy. Confined to the prison of his office, he called for young associates to come visit him, then picked fights to gauge their mettle under pressure.

He deliberately took the seat directly across the small conference table from Adam, and held a thin file as if it possessed a deadly secret. E. Garner Goodman sat low in the seat next to Adam, twiddling his bow tie and scratching his beard. When he telephoned Rosen with Adam's request, and broke the news of Adam's lineage, Rosen had reacted with predictable foolishness.

Emmitt Wycoff stood at one end of the room with a matchbox-sized cellular phone stuck to his ear. He was almost fifty, looked much older, and lived each day in a fixed state of panic and telephones.

Rosen carefully opened the file in front of Adam and removed a yellow legal pad. 'Why didn't you tell us about your grandfather when we interviewed you last year?' he began with clipped words and a fierce stare.

'Because you didn't ask me,' Adam answered. Goodman had advised him the meeting might get rough, but he and Wycoff would prevail.

'Don't be a wise ass,' Rosen growled.

'Come on, Daniel,' Goodman said, and rolled his eyes at Wycoff who shook his head and glanced at the ceiling.

'You don't think, Mr Hall, that you should've informed us that you were related to one of our clients? Certainly you believe we have a right to know this, don't you, Mr Hall?' His mocking tone was one usually

reserved for witnesses who were lying and trapped.

‘You guys asked me about everything else,’ Adam replied, very much under control. ‘Remember the security check? The fingerprints? There was even talk of a polygraph.’

‘Yes, Mr Hall, but you knew things we didn’t. And your grandfather was a client of this firm when you applied for employment, and you damned sure should’ve told us.’ Rosen’s voice was rich, and moved high and low with the dramatic flair of a fine actor. His eyes never left Adam.

‘Not your typical grandfather,’ Adam said quietly.

‘He’s still your grandfather, and you knew he was a client when you applied for a job here.’

‘Then I apologize,’ Adam said. ‘This firm has thousands of clients, all well heeled and paying through the nose for our services. I never dreamed one insignificant little pro bono case would cause any grief.’

‘You’re deceitful, Mr Hall. You deliberately selected this firm because it, at the time, represented your grandfather. And now, suddenly, here you are begging for the file. It puts us in an awkward position.’

‘What awkward position?’ Emmitt Wycoff asked, folding the phone and stuffing it in a pocket. ‘Look, Daniel, we’re talking about a man on death row. He needs a lawyer, dammit!’

‘His own grandson?’ Rosen asked.

‘Who cares if it’s his own grandson? The man has one foot in the grave, and he needs a lawyer.’

‘He fired us, remember?’ Rosen shot back.

‘Yeah, and he can always rehire us. It’s worth a try. Lighten up.’

‘Listen, Emmitt, it’s my job to worry about the image of this firm, and the idea of sending one of our new associates down to Mississippi to have his ass kicked and his client executed does not appeal to me. Frankly, I think Mr Hall should be terminated by Kravitz & Bane.’

‘Oh wonderful, Daniel,’ Wycoff said. Typical hard-nose response to a delicate issue. Then who’ll represent Cayhall? Think about him for a moment. The man needs a lawyer! Adam may be his only chance.’

‘God help him,’ Rosen mumbled.

E. Garner Goodman decided to speak. He locked his hands together on the table and glared at Rosen. The image of this firm? Do you honestly think we’re viewed as a bunch of underpaid social workers dedicated to helping people?’

‘Or how about a bunch of nuns working in the projects?’ Wycoff added helpfully, with a sneer.

‘How could this possibly hurt the image of our firm?’ Goodman asked.

The concept of retreat had never entered Rosen’s mind. ‘Very simple, Garner. We do not send our rookies to death row. We may abuse them, try to kill them, expect them to work twenty hours a day, but we do not send them into battle until they are ready. You know how dense death penalty litigation is. Hell, you wrote the books. How can you expect Mr Hall here to be effective?’

‘I’ll supervise everything he does,’ Goodman answered.

‘He’s really quite good,’ Wycoff added again. ‘He’s memorized the entire file, you know, Daniel.’

‘It’ll work,’ Goodman said. ‘Trust me, Daniel, I’ve been through enough of these things. I’ll keep my finger on it.’

‘And I’ll set aside a few hours to help,’ Wycoff added. ‘I’ll even fly down if necessary.’

Goodman jerked and stared at Wycoff. ‘You! Pro bono?’

‘Sure. I have a conscience.’

Adam ignored the banter and stared at Daniel Rosen. Go ahead and fire me, he wanted to say. Go ahead, Mr Rosen, terminate me so I can go bury my grandfather, then get on with the rest of my life.

‘And if he’s executed?’ Rosen asked in the direction of Goodman.

‘We’ve lost them before, Daniel, you know that. Three, since I’ve run pro bono.’

‘What are his chances?’

‘Quite slim. Right now he’s holding on by virtue of a stay granted by the Fifth Circuit. The stay should be lifted any day now, and a new execution date will be set. Probably late summer.’

‘Not long then.’

‘Right. We’ve handled his appeals for seven years, and they’ve run their course.’

‘Of all the people on death row, how’d we come to represent this asshole?’ Rosen demanded.

‘It’s a very long story, and at this moment it’s completely irrelevant.’

Rosen made what appeared to be serious notes on his legal pad. ‘You don’t think for a moment you’ll keep this quiet, do you?’

‘Maybe.’

‘Maybe hell. Just before they kill him, they’ll make him a celebrity. The media will surround him like a pack of wolves. You’ll be discovered, Mr Hall.’

‘So?’

‘So, it’ll make great copy, Mr Hall. Can’t you see the headlines – LONG-LOST GRANDSON RETURNS TO SAVE GRAMPS.’

‘Knock it off, Daniel,’ Goodman said.

But he continued. ‘The press will eat it up, don’t you see, Mr Hall? They’ll expose you and talk about how crazy your family is.’

‘But we love the press, don’t we, Mr Rosen?’ Adam asked coolly. ‘We’re trial lawyers. Aren’t we supposed to perform for the cameras? You’ve never –’

‘A very good point,’ Goodman interrupted. ‘Daniel, perhaps you shouldn’t advise this young man to ignore the press. We can tell stories about some of your stunts.’

‘Yes, please, Daniel, lecture the kid about everything else, but lay off the media crap,’ Wycoff said with a nasty grin. ‘You wrote the book.’

For a brief moment, Rosen appeared to be embarrassed. Adam watched him closely.

‘I rather like the scenario myself,’ Goodman said, twirling his bow tie and studying the bookshelves behind Rosen. ‘There’s a lot to be said for it, actually. Could be great for us poor little pro bono folks. Think of it. This young lawyer down there fighting like crazy to save a rather famous death row killer. And he’s our lawyer – Kravitz & Bane. Sure there’ll be a ton of press, but what will it hurt?’

‘It’s a wonderful idea, if you ask me,’ Wycoff added just as his mini-phone buzzed somewhere deep in a pocket. He stuck it to his jaw and turned away from the meeting.

‘What if he dies? Don’t we look bad?’ Rosen asked Goodman.

‘He’s supposed to die, okay? That’s why he’s on death row,’ Goodman explained.

Wycoff stopped his mumbling and slid the phone into a pocket. ‘I gotta go,’ he said, moving toward the door, nervous now, in a hurry. ‘Where are we?’

‘I still don’t like it,’ Rosen said.

‘Daniel, Daniel, always a hard ass,’ Wycoff said as he stopped at the end of the table and leaned on it with both hands. ‘You know it’s a good idea, you’re just pissed because he didn’t tell us up front.’

‘That’s true. He deceived us, and now he’s using us.’

Adam took a deep breath and shook his head.

‘Get a grip, Daniel. His interview was a year ago, in the past. It’s gone, man. Forget about it. We have more pressing matters at hand. He’s bright. He works very hard. Smooth on his feet. Meticulous research. We’re lucky to have him. So his family’s messed up. Surely we’re not going to terminate every lawyer here with a

dysfunctional family.’ Wycoff grinned at Adam. ‘Plus, all the secretaries think he’s cute. I say we send him south for a few months, then get him back here as soon as possible. I need him. Gotta run.’ He disappeared and closed the door behind him.

The room was silent as Rosen scribbled on his pad, then gave it up and closed the file. Adam almost felt sorry for him. Here was this great warrior, the legendary Charlie Hustle of Chicago law, a great barrister who for thirty years swayed juries and terrified opponents and intimidated judges, now sitting here as a pencil pusher, trying desperately to agonize over the question of assigning a rookie to a pro bono project. Adam saw the humor, the irony, and the pity.

‘I’ll agree to it, Mr Hall,’ Rosen said with much drama in his low voice, almost a whisper, as if terribly frustrated by all this. ‘But I promise you this: when the Cayhall matter is over, and you return to Chicago, I’ll recommend your termination from Kravitz & Bane.’

‘Probably won’t be necessary,’ Adam said quickly.

‘You presented yourself to us under false pretenses,’ Rosen continued.

‘I said I was sorry. Won’t happen again.’

‘Plus, you’re a smart ass.’

‘So are you, Mr Rosen. Show me a trial lawyer who’s not a smart ass.’

‘Real cute. Enjoy the Cayhall case, Mr Hall, because it’ll be your last bit of work for this firm.’

‘You want me to enjoy an execution?’

‘Relax, Daniel,’ Goodman said softly. ‘Just relax. No one’s getting fired around here.’

Rosen pointed an angry finger at Goodman. ‘I swear I’ll recommend his termination.’

‘Fine. All you can do is recommend, Daniel. I’ll take it to the committee, and we’ll just have a huge brawl. Okay?’

‘I can’t wait,’ Rosen snarled as he jumped to his feet.

'I'll start lobbying now. I'll have my votes by the end of the week. Good day!' He stormed from the room and slammed the door.

They sat in silence next to each other, just staring across the table over the backs of the empty chairs to the rows of thick law books lined neatly on the wall, listening to the echo of the slamming door.

'Thanks,' Adam finally said.

'He's not a bad guy, really,' Goodman said.

'Charming. A real prince.'

'I've known him a long time. He's suffering now, really frustrated and depressed. We're not sure what to do with him.'

'What about retirement?'

'It's been considered, but no partner has ever been forced into retirement. For obvious reasons, it's a precedent we'd like to avoid.'

'Is he serious about firing me?'

'Don't worry, Adam. It won't happen. I promise. You were wrong in not disclosing it, but it's a minor sin. And a perfectly understandable one. You're young, scared, naive, and you want to help. Don't worry about Rosen. I doubt if he'll be in this position three months from now.'

'Deep down, I think he adores me.'

'It's quite obvious.'

Adam took a deep breath and walked around the table. Goodman uncapped his pen and began making notes. 'There's not much time, Adam,' he said.

'I know.'

'When can you leave?'

'Tomorrow. I'll pack tonight. It's a ten-hour drive.'

'The file weighs a hundred pounds. It's down in printing right now. I'll ship it tomorrow.'

'Tell me about our office in Memphis.'

'I talked to them about an hour ago. Managing partner is Baker Cooley, and he's expecting you. They'll

have a small office and a secretary for you, and they'll help if they can. They're not much when it comes to litigation.'

'How many lawyers?'

'Twelve. It's a little boutique firm we swallowed ten years ago, and no one remembers exactly why. Good boys, though. Good lawyers. It's the remnants of an old firm that prospered with the cotton and grain traders down there, and I think that's the connection to Chicago. Anyway, it looks nice on the letterhead. Have you been to Memphis?'

'I was born there, remember?'

'Oh yes.'

'I've been once. I visited my aunt there a few years ago.'

'It's an old river town, pretty laid-back. You'll enjoy it.'

Adam sat across the table from Goodman. 'How can I possibly enjoy the next few months?'

'Good point. You should go to the Row as quickly as possible.'

'I'll be there the day after tomorrow.'

'Good. I'll call the warden. His name is Phillip Naifeh, Lebanese oddly enough. There are quite a few of them in the Mississippi Delta. Anyway, he's an old friend, and I'll tell him you're coming.'

'The warden is your friend?'

'Yes. We go back several years, to Maynard Tole, a nasty little boy who was my first casualty in this war. He was executed in 1986, I believe, and the warden and I became friends. He's opposed to the death penalty, if you can believe it.'

'I don't believe it.'

'He hates executions. You're about to learn something, Adam – the death penalty may be very popular in our country, but the people who are forced to impose it are not supporters. You're about to meet

these people: the guards who get close to the inmates; the administrators who must plan for an efficient killing; the prison employees who rehearse for a month beforehand. It's a strange little corner of the world, and a very depressing one.'

'I can't wait.'

'I'll talk to the warden, and get permission for the visit. They'll usually give you a couple of hours. Of course, it may take five minutes if Sam doesn't want a lawyer.'

'He'll talk to me, don't you think?'

'I believe so. I cannot imagine how the man will react, but he'll talk. It may take a couple of visits to sign him up, but you can do it.'

'When did you last see him?'

'Couple of years ago. Wallace Tyner and I went down. You'll need to touch base with Tyner. He was the point man on this case for the past six years.'

Adam nodded and moved to the next thought. He'd been picking Tyner's brain for the past nine months.

'What do we file first?'

'We'll talk about it later. Tyner and I are meeting early in the morning to review the case. Everything's on hold, though, until we hear from you. We can't move if we don't represent him.'

Adam was thinking of the newspaper photos, the black and whites from 1967 when Sam was arrested, and the magazine photos, in color, from the third trial in 1981, and the footage he'd pieced together into a thirty-minute video about Sam Cayhall. 'What does he look like?'

Goodman left his pen on the table and fiddled with his bow tie. 'Average height. Thin – but then you seldom see a fat one on the Row – nerves and lean food. He chainsmokes, which is common because there's not much else to do, and they're dying anyway. Some weird brand, Montclair, I believe, in a blue pack. His hair is gray and oily, as I recall. These guys don't get a shower