

Missing Angel

by

Johnnie Mitchell

All rights reserved

Copyright 2012 by

Johnnie Mitchell

## Chapter 1

I'm standing here in our ultra modern kitchen whipping up a pop art version of a meal. You see, in the last year or so, I've become a junk food gourmet. I have whipped up a dish I call Left Over Delight. It consisted of two chopped up hot dogs, sliced boiled white potatoes, a dash of macaroni, and a half can of spaghetti without meat balls.

The reason I had been forced to such measures was because my writing partner, live in lady, and all around great cook, Grace Anderson was off in Tinsel Town for meetings centered around turning our bestselling book into a feature film.

I suppose I should tell you more about myself. Depending on how your vision works, I'm either a movie star handsome, or ruggedly handsome black man near forty, with an in shape, if not overly buffed body. My parents, for reasons they

never explained, stuck me with the odd, yet familiar to many, name of George Washington.

I was a Chicago cop for fourteen years. I never thought about becoming a writer until I became involved in investigating a murder case that grabbed national headlines. Even after the case was solved it lingered in my mind on an everyday basis. I started to jot events and aspects of the case down on paper in a haphazard manner. A few months later I found myself enrolled in a community college writing class.

The book probably would have never happened had not a local bi-monthly black oriented magazine requested an interview with me, of all people. Sure enough, the reporter they sent to interview was my future love, Grace Anderson. I found her to be a very attractive petite brownskinned cutie. As for the interview, which was partly about the high profile case, but mostly concerned the dilemmas and adjustments black cops in Chicago had to face while policing the streets.

The interview went well. I got along well with Grace. So in a couple weeks I set up a meeting with her to discuss the possibility of us collaborating together on a true crime book centered on the big time murder case. To speed things up, yes the book was written over a year and a half period, yes it was published, and amazingly became a huge hit. Even more amazing to me, Grace and I became a couple, fell in love, and moved in together.

I dumped my concoction of a meal into a bowl, secured a glass of orange juice, and sat at the kitchen table. I used the remote to snap on the mounted from the ceiling fifteen flat screen TV. I dialed around to the best movie I could find in the early morning hours. Five minutes into it I realized it wasn't destined to be a classic, yet I stuck with it because nothing else was on.

The ringing phone saved me from my bad meal, and even worst movie. I got up and answered the wall phone.

“Hello.”

“Hi George,” said a woman's voice. “Do you know who this is?”

“I kind of recognize your voice. But I can't get it.”

“This is Randi. Randi Blake.”

An erotic memory shot through my mind. I was standing, and there was Randi kneeling before me. In high school she was the first girl to ever give me a blow job, and I had never forgotten the incident.

We dated from my junior year to the middle of my senior year. About ten years ago I answered a burglary call and discovered Randi was the victim. Just like that we were dating again. It lasted six months, until the weird hours and demanding nature of being a cop caused us to split.

Randi told me she read my book and loved it. She was now a computer analyst. We joked a little about our high school craziness. Then came the reason for her call.

“I know you sometimes help people out. You know, with their problems and everything.”

“Sometimes. Whenever I can. If I can. What's your problem?”

“It's my roommate. She's been missing over two weeks.”

“Have you contacted the police?”

“Yes, of course. I did that three days after she disappeared. They did their usual stuff, but they didn't get any kind of line on her. I got the feeling they're just waiting for her body to show up somewhere.”

“But you think she's still alive.”

“I'm sure of it. I have no proof. It's just a feeling I have.....George, this thing is just driving me crazy. It really is. It's messing with my mind but good.”

“Uh. I don't know if I can help you or not. But I'll talk to you about it and see what I can do.”

“That's great, George. Thank you so much. I'll pay you and everything. I mean if you don't charge too much.”

“We don't have to talk money now. You want me to come over to your place?”

“Why don't you meet me somewhere where we can grab a bite to eat?”

“Okay. Where?”

“I just had a brain storm. Remember Lindy's?”

“Yeah. Everybody used to hang there. Don't tell me it's still open.”

“Well, not exactly. Lindy's son has turned the site into a MacDonald's.”

“Wow. Progress strikes again.”

“Yeah. Still it would be kinda fun to be at that spot again. I'll tell you what. I'll take a cab over there and you can come in your car.”

“Okay. If it's not putting you out too much.”

“Not for a reunion,” Randi said.

“Okay. I'll see you there pretty soon.”

“Yeah. So long George. Thanks for helping. Bye.”

I drove to my old southeast side neighborhood until I reached the spot where Lindy's used to be. The golden arches had replaced a dingy looking building with a bright red door.

After I parked the car I stepped inside the fast food joint. Randi was seated at a table off to the right. As I got closer she stood and smiled.

Shapely and petite, Randi had a very fair complexion. Her jet black hair was cut short and angled from one side of her forehead to the other. Her features were caucasian-like except for her wide nose.

“How you doing, baby?” I asked. “You're looking great.”

“So are you.”

She stood on her tiptoes and kissed me on the cheek. Then she returned to her seat.

“I see you haven't ordered. What would you like?”

“Guess,” she said with a grin.

“HMMMMM, let's see. Could it be a cheese burger? And maybe a Coke.”

“You remembered after all this time.”

“I'll be right back.”

I went to the counter and ordered two Cokes and a cheese burger. Went back and sat opposite Randi at the table.

“I see you didn't order anything but a Coke.”

“I already ate just before you called.”

Actually, I was afraid of mixing in regular food with my Left Over Delight.

“Wow, this is really something,” beamed Randi, “Me sitting down and eating with a bestselling author.”

“It's something to me to think I'd ever have something to do with the writing of a book. Really, my partner did most of the for real writing.”

Randi sipped from her Coke. “I bet you never thought I'd become anything like a computer programmer.”

“I don't know. You were always pretty smart in school.”

“Hey, do you remember the time you caused that food fight at Lindy's?”

“I caused it. You were the one that caused it,” I countered.

“Oh yeah. How do you figure that?”

“If you hadn't been such a hot mama I wouldn't've stolen you from that other dude. And he wouldn't've gotten mad and dumped his milk on my head. And then I threw my pie at him and missed and hit somebody else.”

Randi laughed for several seconds. “I remember Lindy locked the door and made everybody help clean up the place.”

“If he did that now some fool would pull a gun on him.”

“I hear you.”

Randi took a couple bites out of her burger and sipped from her drink.

“I guess you better tell me something about your friend,” I said. “Like her name and the kind of work she does.”

“I didn't tell you her name, did I? It's Angel Mandrell. She's a high fashion model, and she does television commercials. You might've seen them. Now she has one out for a clothing store. And for a local health club.”

“Was it like her to take off without telling you where she was going?”

“No, not at all. She always told me when she was going out. And when she should be back. She didn't always say where. And, you know. I wouldn't press it.”

“Did you know where she was going on the day she disappeared?”

“Not exactly. She just said she was going out to see a friend.”

“Was it day, or in the night?”

“At night. I think she left around eight o'clock.”

I drank from my Coke. “What kind of person is Angel?”

“She's really something special. She really is. There's a sort of quiet calmness about her. Something almost mystical. And men. They absolutely love her.”

“Yeah. Did she date a lot?”

“No. She isn't like that. She's a one man woman. But she is kinda funny about men.”

“Funny how?”

“You know, it seems like she picks guys that are good at what they do, but are having some kinda trouble with it. She stays with them until their lives are turned around. Then she ends the relationship. They usually don't want her to go, but they can never make her stay.”

“Has she broken up with somebody lately?”

“No.”

“Is she seeing anyone?”

“Yes. But I don't know his name. She never talks about her men when she's with them. They never call and she never brings them to the apartment.”

“Hmp. That is strange. I guess it would be a good idea for me to look at your place. It might give me something solid to go on.”

I was at the wheel of my car heading for the Lake Shore Drive address Randi had given me. She was in the front seat next to me. She said:

“George, were you ever married?”

“No, I almost got married once. But uh, it fell through. What about you?”

“I was married for six years before it fell apart.”

“Did you have any kids?”

“No. That was one of the problems. He didn't want to have any kids. I guess I forgot to ask him about it before we got married. That was really stupid.” Randi took a bite from her burger. “I met Angel a few months after my divorce. We just happened to sit next to each other at Wrigley Field. The game was a dud, so we got to talking, and we got along good together. We exchanged phone numbers. I didn't think she would ever call me or anything. She was a successful model, and I was struggling on public aid at the time. But she did call. And you know, we did things together. She was the one that suggested I go back to school. A few months after that she asked me to come live with her. She's younger than me, but she was the wise one that helped me turn my life around.”

“She seems like a nice person.”

“Real nice.”

Then who would want to hurt or kill her? I asked myself.

Randi and Angel's apartment was located on the eighth floor of a twelve story orange-colored apartment building. When Randi and I got inside I found it to be spacious and colorful with a feminine touch to it. A lot of frills and lace covered the basically modern style furniture.

“You have a nice place here.”

“Thanks. Most of the stuff is Angel's.”

I noticed an eight by ten photograph resting on an end table near the sofa. It was of a tan complexioned woman with what looked to be long straight jet black hair. She had crystal clear looking hazel eyes, a sleek nose, and luscious thin lips.

“That's Angel, if you haven't guessed,” Randi said.

“She's almost as fine as you are.”

“Don't start no mess now. I guess you want to see her room.”

We moved left to an adjoining hallway. Two rooms ran parallel to each other. I followed her into the first one. The walls were pastel pink. The bed spread, carpet, and the cushioned chairs were covered in various shades of pink. There were two poster sized photographs of Angel near the corner of the wall opposite the bed. One was an obvious blow up of a magazine ad she had done for a brand of makeup made especially for black women. She looked incredibly beautiful and glamorous in the picture. And to top it off her facial expression reeked of pure sexuality.

The second poster was the one that fascinated me. It was a framed photograph done by an obviously fine artistic photographer. In the black and white photograph Angel was wearing a flowing white gown. The light hit her face head on. The background was dark except for a light halo that surrounded her head. The halo combined with her serene expression gave her an angelic quality that matched her name.

I moved over and stood near the poster. Angel's eyes seemed to connect with mine. I found myself wondering what it would be like to know her.

“You better watch yourself,” Randi warned. “You might fall victim to her charms.”

“What? Just by looking at a picture. That's crazy.”

“Famous last words.”

I moved away. “Did it seem like Angel took any clothes with her?”

“No. But she did take her a check book and a couple cards.”

“Maybe she was planning on leaving.”

“But why would she leave and not tell anybody where she was going?”

“Don't know. Since nobody knows where she might be I guess I'll have to start with her relatives and friends in town.”

“I have an address book of her's. She took her only cell phone with her.”

Randi went to the dresser and opened the top drawer. From the left corner she took a little green address book. She flipped it to a specific page.

“She doesn't really have that many friends in town. I guess she's acquainted with the people she works with, but she really doesn't socialize with them much. The information on the men Angel helped through their problems is on these two pages.

I took the book from her. Three names, addresses, and phone numbers were listed on the pages. Dr. Leon Bryant, Alfredo Menti, and Mark Garmon.”

“Is the Mark Garmon listed the one that plays for the White Sox?”

“Yeah. That's the one.”

I removed a pad and pencil and jotted the information down. “What's the name of her agency?”

“The JM Modeling Agency.”

I thumbed through the rest of the book. “Her mother's name is listed. Is she still with us?”

“Yes.”

“Is her address the same?”

Randi checked it out and nodded her head yes.

“Are there any clubs or restaurants or places that Angel frequented regularly?”

“Yes. We've been to the Black Bird a few times. She eats at Simon's sometimes. I'm always her guest. Their prices are too much for me.”

“Well, I better see if I can get in contact with some of these people.”

“The police talked to them all. They haven't heard from Angel since she disappeared.”

“I need them to talk about her. Maybe I can get a clue on how she thinks.”

First I got hold of Angel's mother and she agreed to see me right away. I got lucky and caught the three men home. I was surprised at how eager they were to talk about their long lost Angel.

Randi walked me to the door. “Good luck to you, baby.”

“You know what they say, It's better to be lucky than good.”

## Chapter 2

“I show do hope you can find my baby,” Mrs. Mandrell said.

She was a well preserved brownskin woman perhaps in her late fifties. I could see the resemblance between her and Angel. She may have equaled Angel during her younger days.

The apartment was rather smallish and seemed overly crowded with furniture. I was seated on a sofa and she sat on a full one directly opposite it.

“I’ll do the best I can, Mrs. Mandrell. Can you tell me the last time you saw or spoke to Angel?”

“I talked to her on the phone the day she disappeared.”

“Did she seem troubled by anything?”

“No. She was her usual self. She’s not the type to tell other people her problems.”

“Speaking of problems, did Angel have any special problems during her childhood?”

“Childhood? What’s that got to do with anything now?”

“The more I can find out about her personality the better I can figure out what she might do if I know what situation she’s in.”

“Well, I guess that makes sense.” She locked her fingers together and placed her hands in her lap. “Angel never really had no big problems. Except with her father. That man could be something else. He was like day and night. He would be nice and sweet one minute, and mean and cruel the next. He would say things he really didn’t mean. After it was all over he would do something grand to make it all right again.”

“Did he ever get violent during his changes in personality?”

“No. He came close. I take that back. He did once. He came home drunk. Just out of the blue he took off his belt and started hitting me with it. Angel walked in on all the mess. She was around eleven at the time. It really shook her up. It turned her

off to him. It took him six months to win her back. He acted nice during the whole time. I thought he had finally straightened out.” She unlocked her hands and wiped her eyes. “We came home from downtown one day. Angel ran ahead to the bathroom. Her father was in there. He had. He had shot himself through the head. Blood was all over the place. I never will forget the look on my baby's face when she came running back towards me. Oh.....I haven't talked about this in a long time. You know. It took us awhile to get over his death. But Angel has come out all right. At first I didn't like the idea of her becoming a model. But now I'm proud of her.”

She fell silent, and I couldn't think of anything to say, or pull myself up to leave.

“My baby has been gone two weeks,” Mrs. Mandrell said. “Tell me the truth, Mr. Washington. Do you think she's dead?”

“It's possible. But I can't say for sure. I hope she's not.”

The first thing I noticed about Alfredo Menti's apartment was the variety of paintings he had hanging on the walls. There were landscapes, portraits, and abstract drawings.

“Those are pretty good,” I said. “Did you do any of them?”

“Yes, most of them,” he replied humbly.

“They look pretty nice. You ever sell any of them?”

“I get pretty good prices on some of them.”

“Oh. Are you a pro?”

“I do okay.”

“Oh. Sorry about that. I don't really keep up with what's happening in the art world.”

“That's cool. No sweat.”

He was a tall and skinny young white guy with a full head of shoulder length wavy brown hair. He had a Fu Manchu type mustache.

We moved to Menti's kitchen and sat at the table. Before us was a concoction of milk, strawberries and bananas that had been run through a high speed blender. It had sounded good when he suggested it, and it wound up tasting even better.

“What can you tell me about your relationship with Angel?” I asked.

“She's something else, man. She saved my life. You know, when it came to art, I was a sort of a boy wonder. I had my first big show when I was nineteen. I sold out the show. The critics raved about me. My second show did pretty well, but not as good as the first. But then. I just sort of ran out of steam. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't do any good work.” He took a long swig from his drink. “I tried dropping acid cause it was supposed to heighten your creativity. But all it did for me was push me into other stuff like coke and pills. After a while all I wanted to do was stay high. My friends started worrying about me. An artist friend of mine suggested I try a model he thought was really great, and might inspire me in some way. Guess who that was?”

“Angel.”

“Angel. When she showed up that first time I asked if she did nude modeling, hoping like hell she didn't. When she agreed I pretended I knew what I wanted to do. And then she took off her clothes. Oh man. Oh man. I've seen some pretty well built nude models. But there was something special about Angel. It wasn't that she was relaxed without her clothes on, but it was like she knew how fine she was, but it was just no big deal. I remember doing a sketch of her, and then starting to paint. But then I stopped painting and started doing an abstract sketch of her. I was suddenly thrown into a frenzy of going from one painting to the next. I went way over her time, but she didn't complain one bit. When she was finished posing

she got dressed and we sat and talked for about two hours. And then just like that she took off her clothes again. And this time we made love.”

“That must’ve really been something,” I said half sarcastically.

I found myself having jealous feelings over a woman I never had met in person.

“Yes it was. It was one of the most beautiful moments in my life. After that I painted her in about every conceivable way almost every day for a month. By that time I had fallen hard for her.” He sipped from her drink. “My big mistake was starting to work on other subjects. To her it must’ve meant I was over my problem. Just when I was gonna ask her to marry me. She said it was over between us. That I didn’t need her any more. Oh man. I didn’t want to believe it. I couldn’t. I would call her, and she wouldn’t answer the phone. I finally went over to her place and begged her to let me in. When she refused it dawned on me that she was serious about it being over.”

“When was the last time you saw Angel?”

“About two months ago. She came to one of my shows. She even bought a painting. I convinced her to have lunch with me. To me it was like we picked up where we left off from the last time I saw her. But to her it was like we hadn’t seen each other in ten years. I realized it was pointless to try and rekindle what we had before. Still, I went home that night and dreamed about her over and over again.” Menti almost came to tears. “You gotta find her, man. She’s something special.”

Dr. Bryant lived in a two story brick house in a fashionable section of the South Shore district. It was a little after dark when we greeted me warmly and ushered me inside. He offered me a drink from the bar in the corner of the room and I accepted a shot of gin. As it turned out he had read my book and said he found it “quite interesting.”

Dr. Bryant, a thin lightskinned man with close cut dark brown hair, and baby-faced features, paced across the floor, occasionally downing some of his drink. Even at home he was wearing a shirt, tie, and dark slacks. He said:

“I came to meet Angel during a very disturbing time in my life. I’m a surgeon and I had lost several patients in a row. I was beginning to lose confidence in my abilities. Plus my personal life was a disaster. My wife and I had separated. So I took off to Mexico to try and relax. It wasn’t working until I happened to meet Angel. I won’t go into details, but I will say we became very close during my stay at the resort. I told her about the problems I was having. She encouraged me to get my life back in order. Other people had tried the same thing, but she had a way of putting things that made you believe in her, and yourself at the same time.” He finished his drink, went over and poured himself another one. “We saw each other for a time when we both returned to Chicago. But then I. I returned to my wife, so of course our relationship had to end. She took the break up quite well. She even consulted me about medical advice on a few occasions. Of course, that’s been several months ago. ....I sincerely hope you locate Angel. But I unfortunately don’t believe I can help you. I guess that should be it.” He checked his watch. “My wife and kids are due back pretty soon. I think it’s best that you be gone when they arrive.”

That, at least, explained why he hardly let me get a word in.

“So you’re George Washington, huh. I thought you’d have a white wig with a red ribbon attached.”

That was what Mark Garmon had said as he let me inside his apartment. He had rugged features, broad shoulders on a football running back type body. In fact, he sort of favored ex-NFL player Emmitt Smith.

The place was a typical bachelor style apartment with expensive, yet cold and impersonal sparse furnishings that could easily be straightened up if you were inclined to do such a thing.

Mark led me over to a picture window that gave you a great view of the beach and lake. “I get a pretty good view in the day time. Sometimes I whip out the binoculars and check out the ladies. I’ve even gone down and scored with a couple of them.”

“With the kind of year you’re having, you shouldn’t have to worry about the ladies.”

“I have to admit I ain’t been having too much trouble lately,” he said with a grin.

“You guys are playing pretty good ball now. What happened at the beginning of the year?”

“You know, we had some problems. Our pitchers started out slow. And a couple guys were out with injuries. When we brought my man Jackson up from the minors it really got us going. I think we can finish close to five hundred this year. And next year, look out!”

“I can feel it. Especially if you keep playing the way you have been.”

“Hey man, to tell the truth, I owe it to Angel. I guess you know I had a pretty good rookie season. I was doing pretty good my second year when I got hit in the helmet with a high inside fast ball. I wasn’t hurt or nothing like that, but I got this mental block about inside pitches. I would bail out and have a weak swing at the ball. It didn’t take long for the word to get out around the league. It seemed like every pitcher in the league had a way of taking advantage of my weakness. Hell, it worked like a charm too. My average fell from around two-ninety to under two hundred. Pretty soon everybody was on my case. The fans. The press. Even my mother wanted to know what was wrong with me.”

“That must’ve been rough.”

“You ain’t lying.” Mark moved off toward the center of the room. “It got so bad I turned into a semi-recluse. A friend of mine talked me into going to this party. That’s when I met Angel. We hit it off pretty good right from the start. She wasn’t really into baseball that much. But she had read about my problem in the paper and she said she was sorry I was having trouble. After that we started going out together. Then you know, we went on this road trip, and man, it was a disaster. My average was down to about one-fifty. Some washed up dude was playing in my place against right handers. Trade rumors were flying everywhere.” He sat in a chair and I went to a sofa and took a seat. “As soon as we got back to town I raced over to Angel’s. I was looking for a shoulder to cry on, but instead she came on all happy and gay. Then she told me she had a way for me to solve my problem. You would never guess what it was.”

“What was it?”

“She bought a bunch of these plastic balls that kids play with. She had me stand like I was hitting with a bat in my hand. And then she stood in front of me and threw the balls at me. So even when she hit me it really didn’t hurt. Pretty soon I wasn’t worried about the ball hitting me. I saw what she was trying to do, but I didn’t know if it was gonna work out or not. But guess what. It did. In the first game of the home stand I got doubles my first two times up. The dude pitching came inside on my a couple times, and then tried to go outside. I just went with the pitches and I smacked then right down the line. Then the last time I came up this relief pitcher was in. He had this curve that breaks real sharp. I figured he was gonna try and sneak it inside on me. When he did the ball hung a little, and I slammed that sucker into the upper deck. After that I was on my way back. Man, that honey saved my life. She really did. I gotta admit that I fell for her harder than I ever have for anybody. But a funny thing happened. The better I played the

further away Angel drifted away from me. I got scared I was gonna lose her. So I asked her to marry me.”

“What did she say?”

“Ain’t it obvious? I ain’t married to her now. She said we should break it off because our careers would clash. I don’t think that was the real reason. I think it was just her way. She’s something else, man. I’ve never seen another one like her.”

I was in my car driving. So far I had learned that Angel Mandrell was a cross between Florence Nightingale, Halle Berry, and Oprah. Clearly the men in her life didn’t want it to end between them. That switched me to another line of thinking. Maybe one of them had decided if couldn’t have Angel no one could.

### Chapter 3

It was late afternoon when I got back home. I headed for the shower and got myself all soaped up. I thought about the last time Grace and I showered together.

It was on a lazy Sunday morning, and we had time to really shower, and then get a little freaky. At one point I grabbed her from behind and backed her to the wall in the shower. First I caressed her breasts and peppered her neck with kisses. Then I flipped her about. She placed her palms on the wall and stuck her butt outward. I took her from behind slow, fast, and at a fever pitch. I stepped back, and Grace whirled about and planted a heavy kiss on my lips. We made out little a pair of teenagers in the back seat of her car. That's how it was with our sex life. It could go from one extreme to another with everything about it being cool.

After my shower I changed into a pair of black dress pants and a light gray silk shirt. I was on my way out the door when I was hit with a wave of hunger. I raced to the kitchen and opened the refrigerator with hopes of locating a quick snack. Not only was there nothing quick to consume other than a third of a carton of orange juice, but the thing was pretty much barren all together.

I moved to cabinets positioned about the sink and stove. I opened the door to a shelf stocked with canned goods. And there it was, my quick meal. It was a can of spam-like meat. Some would say the stuff barely qualified as an edible food for human beings. But since it was the only game in town, I opened the can and tossed the contents into a frying pan.

The Black Bird was a dance club-bar located on the near southwest side of Chicago. It was the kind of rare club that catered to an up and coming crowd of black, white, and latin professionals. It had a dress code, and off duty cops working security in hopes of limiting the young, crazy, and armed youngsters from invading the place.

Coming through the entrance you had to cross the main dance floor with its flashing colored lights, swinging and swaying arms, bouncing and twisting feet, and every man's favorite, jiggling boobs, to get to the separate bar area. On my

way there I witnessed a shapely redhead in a very short school girl plaid skirt do the drop it like it's hot move, revealing that she hadn't bothered to wear any panties. I was weaving my way to the bar entrance when a sister girl with a huge rear end lost her balance and banged big butt into me. She apologized. I said think nothing of it.

The bar section of the Black Bird was sound proof, and had its own alternative music system. Bruno Mars' Grenade with being piped through the bar at the time I walked in. Round white tables large enough to sit four people were scattered about the room. A bar counter with stools ran the length of one wall. Three bartenders were on duty, and it seemed like four waitresses in light gray sleeveless t-shirts and thigh high shorts were working the place.

I sat in the area of a tall slender black guy with very thinning hair because I guessed he was the veteran of the group. When he came over I ordered a beer. When he delivered it I said:

“Hey brother. I might need your help with a little something.”

“Are you a cop?” he asked suspiciously.

“Hell naw.”

“You walk like a cop. You smell like a cop. You even talk like a cop.”

“Okay. You got me. I used to be a cop.”

“Yeah. What happened?”

“Nothing out of the box. I wrote a book that did well. So I retired from the force.”

The bartender looked at me like I had a neon sign flashing across my forehead. “Now I know. I saw you on TV promoting your book. A Death on 58<sup>th</sup> Street. Am I right?”

“Yeah. That's it.”

“I read part of it once at the library. I’ll have to check it out, and read the rest.....So what you wanna ask me about?”

“A babe that maybe comes in here.”

I took a 3x5 head shot of Angel from my wallet and handed the photograph to the bartender. He held it close to his face.

“Oh yeah. I know her. You wanna know her name?”

“It’s Angel Mandrell. What I’m interested in is the dude she’s been coming in here lately with. Do you know his name?”

“Let me see. Let me see,” he grinned. “It’s right on the tip of my tongue.” A twenty dollar bill from my wallet helped his tongue tip. “The dude’s name is Edward Range.”

“What does he look like?”

“He’s about my color. Somewhere in his forties. He’s got gray hair at the temples. It’ll cost you if you want more.”

“Can you tell how he acts when he’s here?”

“Sure.”

I parted with another twenty.

The bartender smiled. “He’s cool when he’s here with Angel.”

“Who else does he come here with?”

“A couple dudes sometimes. Also his wife. And another chick he’s messing around with.”

“Are you sure about the wife part?”

“Yeah.”

“Hey man, are you working or not?” said one bartender.

The bartender went down and took care of three customers. He returned.

“Where were we?”

“You were getting ready to tell me how Range and Angel act when they’re here.”

“Oh yeah. Angel seems like a great babe. She doesn’t seem like the type be running with somebody that’s married. I know Range is probably hitting it. But she acted more like he was her father.”

“How does Range act?”

“He’s cool and under control. But he can be something else when he’s here with his wife, and the other babe.”

“In what way?”

“He bitches about how the drinks are made. He gets loud. Sometimes he’s ready to fight like they do in some low class joint. Especially when he’s with his other lady.”

“How does she come off?”

“She’s just your average pretty good looking high yellow girl. She has her hair dyed in that blonde and orange kind of thing. She seems more up front raunchy than classy.”

“What’s her name?”

“Her first name is Betty. I never did get the last.”

“Do you know Range’s home or work address?”

“Nope. Never came up in the conversation.”

“When was the last time he was here with Angel?”

“Uh. Let me see. Maybe three weeks or a month ago. Anything else you want to know?”

“Yeah. Where’s the bathroom?”

I had to truck down to the Loop to reach a restaurant called Simon’s. It wasn’t a ritzy black tie, awesome atmosphere type place. However, it was larger than the average restaurant, served great food, and had a varied menu. The Loop lunch time crowd loved the place.

Even at night the place was heavily populated. Like I did with the bartenders, I surveyed the joint and discovered a waitress that seemed familiar with a host of customers. I searched out a table in her work area and took a seat.

The waitress was a woman that seemed to be in her late forties, buxom and big boned with short curly black hair. Pat was the name on her clip on tag. I ordered a turkey sandwich when she came over.

Before she left, I said:

“Hey Pat. Have you got a break coming up soon?”

“Yeah. Why?”

“I wanna talk to you about something.”

“Why should I spend my break talking to you?”

“How does a twenty dollar tip sound to you?”

“It grabs me good, baby. See you in a minute.”

As I had hoped, Pat knew Range. She confirmed the information I had gotten from the bartender. I did learn that Range was an architect for a downtown firm. She remembered Betty’s last name was Turnipseed due to the fact that she had come in half smashed one night, and had kept saying: “I’m Betty Turnipseed, goddamnit! And I don’t take no shit from no damn body.”

I paid Pat and headed home for the night.