

Chapter Thirty

Where the hell are those aspirins? Mick said to himself, as he feverishly rummaged through his suitcase, having awakened Friday morning with a splitting headache. And then, suddenly, he stood upright from where he knelt on the floor, as terror melded with confusion and shouted, "Holy shit, I was there, I heard everything he an' everyone else said. This is gettin' too frickin' freaky!" Running a hand through his disheveled hair, he thought to himself, there was no warning of his arrival this time; what if he pops out when I need me? What if it happens at a gig? Oh shit, it's gettin' worse, what the fuck am I gonna do?

Despite the magnitude of his dilemma, the headache demanded immediate attention and with great reservation, he made his way to the lobby. The flamboyant concierge, leaning over the counter

flipping through the pages of a magazine, appeared to consciously ignore him as he approached.

"Excuse me," Mick said, speaking softly in an effort to minimize his pain.

"Yes?" the concierge responded, with a lisp, as he appeared to ogle the brightly colored muscle man magazine.

"You wouldn't happen to have any aspirins, would you?"

"Sorry, not allowed to medicate guests. Try the drug store around the corner," he said, without looking away from the glossy pages.

"C'mon, man, I'm hurtin' and I don't think I can handle the bright sunlight."

He carefully closed the magazine and glared at Mick while removing a small rectangular tin from his pocket. "You know," he lisped, "it pays to be nice to people. You never know when you'll need them."

"Thanks," Mick said, as the concierge gently placed the tin in his hand, "sorry if I dissed you, man."

"Have a nice day, sir," he replied, sweetly, while sashaying out of sight.

Back in his room, Mick filled a water glass, popped four coated tablets into his mouth and swallowed while rubbing his neck. Shit, he thought, I can't blow the horn feelin' like this. His small accommodation left little space for roaming. The telephone's flashing red message light could be seen from all

quadrants and it quickly caught his attention. Pushing the appropriate button, he listened:

"Hey, man, it's Chips. Tonight's gig is canceled; the club had a kitchen fire and the fire Marshall closed the place down till it's all fixed. Real bummer, man, they ain't gonna pay us until they reopens ..."

Fuck, Mick thought, as he hung up the phone without listening through to the end of the message. As soon as my head calms down, I'm goin' over there. I'd better make sure he ain't lyin' to keep my share.

Twenty minutes later, after drifting off into a light sleep, the phone rang and he rolled over and lifted the receiver.

"Yeah, who is it?" he grumbled.

"It's me, mon, Griff. What hoppin', yah sound strange?"

In no mood to effect Ralph's accent, he simply said, "Bad headache."

"I hear yah, mon, so I'll do the talkin'. The guys want to meet the end of the week to talk about what we're gonna do. Can yah make it?"

"If you come an' get me."

"No worries, mon. I'll call and let you know when."

"OK," he replied and hung up.

He reawakened to the darkness of evening, pain free. Standing by the window, staring at the street lamps and fleeting red taillights of passing cars, he pondered his feelings of loneliness and vulnerability. More than once during the prior weeks he had thought of calling Melanie but in the end, rationalized that she had moved on and could not help with his feelings of despair. I need to fill in the blanks, he remarked to himself, I can't go forward until the past is clear. Ralph might have the answers but I can't get to him when I want, it's up to me. I need to find the Kerberos dude and figure out what he did to me but how am I gonna do that? He ain't gonna be listed in the yellow pages. But wait a minute, what about the flowers? Maybe all I need to do is find out where the jerks are sellin' the shit and follow 'em home.

With a renewed sense of purpose, he hurried past the hotel's front door and headed for the financial district. Half way there, however, a thought materialized from somewhere deep within his cortical archives and smashing his fist into the palm of his right hand, he said to himself, shit, they go home at sundown. After making a decision to activate his plan the following day, he continued on to the club only to find its entrance boarded up,

the intense odor of an extinguished fire wafting from within.
Well, I'll be dipped, he said to himself, Chips didn't lie.