

Chapter 6

["What have I done to deserve this?"]

(Vengeance.)

George Kelly was alone, shooting baskets in the gymnasium of the Drake Tower. Scotland Royce (Clyde) lived in the Penthouse on the top level of this thirty-two story high-rise. The soundproof gym, exercise room, Olympic pool, Jacuzzi, and sauna were constructed at the bottom level of the underground parking area.

When Royce entered the gym, Kelly shouted, "Clyde! Come on, let's play some one-on-one."

"I'd beat you too badly, Kelly. I was a big star in high school."

"You?" Kelly said walking up to him, bouncing the basketball, looking down at him. "You kidding me? Why you're only five and half feet tall. Wadja do--shrink?"

"I don't know, Kelly--guess my crazy dreams tell me falsities about my past."

"Musta been a big time football player too, huh?"

"Yep."

"Sure! Sure! Clyde, you better keep on going to that there shrink. Maybe he's got some kind of pill to get you back to sanity."

"Funny, funny, funny. Did you bring the photo?"

"Sure enough did. It's in that there envelope on the chair." Kelly pointed. "Over there. That's him, I'm sure."

Royce walked over to the bench, took the envelope, and slowly pulled out the photo: "Good work, Kelly! That's Romano all right." He chucked it to the floor in disgust--then fingered the scars on his nose.

"His name, that's all you had to tell me. Would have found him long ago--right--ain't that right, Clyde--ya shoulda told me." Royce nodded, shrugging his shoulders, and Kelly continued. "It's Phillip Romano, twenty-three, lives down there in Little Italy. Couldn't find that there Jeter. Must be his first name. Romano, he's the one you want anyhow--you told me this Jeter kid just watched."

"Kelly, I'm going to close down and secure this entire level for about a couple weeks. I want you to tail Romano, pick a good time, and bring him here--right down here--bound, gagged, and blindfolded." He pointed. "See that emergency exit over there? Call me on the cellphone when you get near here. I'll be right here, ready to open it for you."

"You ain't gonna torture him, are ya? I don't go for that kinda stuff."

"Kelly--because of this rotten bastard, I'm having horrible nightmares. It's so bad I can actually FEEL the pain--FEEL him jumping on my face. I must have closure or I'll really go crazy--or crazier. My memory is slowly, very slowly, coming back--mainly in dreams. Those wretched nightmares have got to go--gotta have closure."

"Well, get this, Clyde. If you kill him, I'm turning you in."

"Don't worry about that, I'm not stupid.... Take my valet, Rafer, on your search. He was once a bar-bouncer. I don't want you to take any unnecessary chances, Kelly--and NO COPS.... Oh, eh, by the way, grab that Jeter too."

"And just how in hell am I gonna do that?"

"Look, when you get hold of Romano, I'm certain he'll rat on this Jeter. Just scare him a little. You know, some of that good guy, bad guy malarkey."

Kelly bowed: "Your wish is my command, Clyde ole man....
Now, how about some one-on-one."

Royce grinned: "Sorry. Got things to do, places to go."
He flicked his hand as he departed. "See you later."

* * *

It was around midnight when Royce, in the Penthouse,
answered his cellphone. A voice simply stated: "The two
bundled packages will arrive in about thirty minutes."

Royce enthusiastically threw two coiled ropes around his
shoulders and headed for his private elevator.

He exited at the bottom level, into blackness. Using his
penlight to reach the main switch, he turned on all the lights.
There were flyers, posted conspicuously in the stairways and the
access elevators, stating: *Gymnasium Area Closed For
Renovation.*

The totally secured gym echoed from Royce's unlocking and
entering.

His footsteps resonated as he walked to one end.

He took one of his shouldered ropes and hurled it over and
between the basket-hoop and bank-board; then grabbed and pulled
both ends, and let them dangle.

Next, he walked across the court and did the same with the
remaining rope on the other basket.

Soon Royce heard a tapping on the Emergency Door.

He disengaged the siren and pushed it open.

Kelly was carrying a squirming body dressed in black, followed by Rafer, with another bulkier package clothed in Levis and sweatshirt.

They hauled them to the center circle and let them drop.

Kelly bowed: "As ordered, Phillip Romano and Jeter Davis, all packaged up, as directed, oh powerful one."

"Good work Kelly, you too, Rafer. Strip them to the waist. Then take each to under the basketball nets. Hang them by their hands, just so their feet don't touch the floor. Then you can remove their gags and blindfolds. Any questions?"

No one answered as Royce headed for the exit saying, "I'll be right back."

Kelly and Rafer dragged Romano to the north end net and tied his hands to the dangling rope. They hoisted him up until his feet left the floor, and then secured the other end of the rope to a clamp on the back wall.

Next, they did the same with pudgy Jeter, under the south end net. Rafer removed Jeter's gag and blindfold--not a sound came out of him, only a frightened looking stare.

Kelly then walked across the court to Romano.

As soon as he removed the gag, Romano screamed, "HELP! HELP! What the fuck's going on here. HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME!"

"Shaddup, or I'll jam this cotton back in yer yap, scumbag. Ain't that what the mob calls 'em--like you--scumbags."

"HEY, you're that skid row cop! You can't do this. You're a cop. PUT ME DOWN! STOP THIS! You're a fucking cop! SOMEONE HELP ME..."

"No longer a cop, SCUMBAG," Kelly said as he stuffed cotton back into Romano's yapping mouth and wrapped it with masking tape. Then there was silence.

Royce entered. Both hands were affixed to the ends of a bamboo cane.

He echo-walked to the center circle.

Kelly and Rafer sat on the side bench to watch--both looking at each other--looking, shrugging, and wondering.

Romano and Jeter were hanging under the nets by their roped hands, both facing Royce, with bulging, fearful eyes.

Royce announced: "In Singapore, they punish unruly kids with slashes from a cane--like this one." He pointed it in the air like a fencing sword. "Great idea. You are about to be punished for what YOU DID TO ME. Both of you shall be CANED." His voice was fraught with anger.

Jeter was not gagged, but he remained silent.

Royce turned and walked toward Jeter: "You're first, Jeter."

Jeter finally spoke: "I didn't do nothin'."

"YOU WATCHED!"

Royce moved around to Jeter's naked back as gagged Romano looked on from the other end.

Like a baseball bat, Royce let him have it with two hits to his flabby back, each causing strips of red on the flesh.

Not one sound came from Jeter, only a grimacing face after each blow.

Royce moved to the other side and whacked him two more times rendering a couple large red X's on his soft fleshy back. Blood trickled from the slash intersections.

Again, there was no sound from Jeter's tightened lips.

Royce stepped around to face Jeter and whispered, "I've got to hand it to you, Jeter Davis. You got guts. I like that. I'm through with you. Now, watch and see how Romano handles it."

Romano stared in wide-eyed fear--somewhat defiant--as Royce approached him and said, "Phillip, your father, or whoever, surely beat you badly as a child, and you likely didn't deserve it. Well--I'm gonna beat you too--RIGHT NOW. Gonna beat you hard--and you GODDAMN well deserve it."

Royce first removed the tape around his mouth and pulled out the cotton: "You can scream all you want. Nobody but us can hear you."

Romano spoke fast and directly at Royce. "Hey, man, listen. I was all tripped out on acid that night. I swear. Didn't know shit. Ask Jeter over there?" Royce looked back to Jeter's nodding. "See, man, I was gone--gone. Out of it. I'm sorry--really sorry. I'm off that stuff. Cut me down. My arms hurt. Get me outta here."

Royce raised the blood-specked cane, grasping it like a golf club--then giving it a test swing: "Sure, sure, Phillip, I'll let go. Soon as I'm DONE WITH YOU."

He stepped around in position of Romano's slender back.

Royce whacked him so hard, the slash drew blood.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH," Romano screamed, tears pouring from his eyes.

Royce hit him two more times, just as hard, which coated the yellow bamboo with red splotches.

"STOOOOOOOOOOP! HELLLLLLLLP! PLEEEEEEEEEEEASE!" Romano began whimpering.

Royce went to the other side and, with a crazed look, gave him two more vicious whacks, etching his lanky back with long lacerations, each oozing blood.

Disturbed Kelly shouted from the bench, "Come on, Clyde-- Jesus Christ, that's enough."

Upon hearing Kelly, Royce stopped another swinging thrust of the cane, just before it hit.

He dropped the cane, turned, and approached Kelly with vengeance in his eyes: "You must have Romano's switchblade, don't you Kelly? They're naked without one. Let me have it."

"Whaddaya want it for?" Kelly said, reaching in his pocket.

"Just GIVE it to me."

"Okay, okay. Here! Damn sadist. Better hurry up and get it over with, before they bleed to death."

Romano hung, twisting in agony, blood flowing all the way down around his silver-tipped boots--dripping blots on the floor.

Royce opened the knife as he walked back to face Romano. Romano looked at the razor-sharp knife in terror: "NO! NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

"A NOSE FOR A NOSE!" Royce said as he jostled the blade inside Romano's left nostril--then quickly yanked it.

Crimson poured from the slice, down across his lips, over the chin, and then dripped like raindrops to his belly.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" Romano screamed with pain, until he choked and vomited.

Royce walked over to Kelly and Rafer, both sitting on the bench with their heads between their hands and said, "Okay, it's over. Cut them down. I'll be right back with the Doc."

Royce left the gym.

Within minutes, Royce returned with a man dressed in white carrying a black bag. "This is Doc Shaw, folks, my personal physician," Royce shouted so all could hear. "He'll sew them up."

Doc Shaw rushed over to the kids, opened his bag and yelled to anyone, "Well, don't just stand there, get me some clean cloths and hot water. Bring those big pads over here."

Royce sat down next to Kelly when he returned to the bench and spoke softly, "When Doc Shaw finishes, bundle them up and take them back where they came from. Here. Put this money in their pockets." Rubber bands held two rolls, each containing twenty hundred-dollar bills.

Kelly took the rolls and stared away from Royce. "Yeah, yeah--sure--okay. I'll do that."

"Now, in a few weeks, when they're all healed, find them again. See what lessons they learned. Make amends. Get them good jobs, if they don't have any--better jobs, if they do. Somewhere in my enterprise. How about my Yacht Club?"

"Clyde ole man. Don't like this--but maybe, maybe--yeah, just maybe--you did the right stuff."

Flustered, Royce got up to leave, "Right stuff HELL. All I want is a good night's sleep--without rotten nightmares of that punk giving me a battering, with fucking realistic pain. Closure--that's all I want--closure."

Kelly stood up and shrewdly changed the subject: "Say Clyde, before you go, and speaking of yachts, got a quick question, where's yours?"

"My what?"

"Your yacht!"

"What yacht?"

"Look, they told me at your fancy Yacht Club. Said that some months ago your boat took off--never came back. Couple hundred thousand dollar yacht, they said. Gone. Pouf."

"My yacht?"

"Your yacht!"

"Not my yacht!"

"Yes, your yacht!"

"My yacht?"

"Yep!"

"I'll check it out. Oh--yes--eh--one other thing."

"What?"

"Susan."

"Susan?"

"Will you quit repeating me. Yes, Susan."

"Oh, yeah, Susan Richards--your discarded daughter."

"She's always trying to get hold of me."

"I know. Why don't you see her?"

"Do me a big favor, Kelly. Go have lunch with her. Give her anything she wants. Tell her to forget about me for a while. Tell her anything. Just keep her away, but please--keep tabs on her."

"Why?"

"Because."

"Because, why?"

"Just because. She has a good livelihood. I don't want to destroy it. Time cures all unpleasant family affairs."

Kelly stood up and bowed: "It can be done. It shall be done, oh great one."

"Wonderful. Now, tidy up around here before you leave."

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