

**MIKE
FARICY**



A Dev Haskell Novella

Mike Faricy

Bang

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To Teresa

“I’d like to hear her side of it...”

Bang

Prologue

It was years ago, way back in the mid-nineties, fortunately I didn’t have anything to do with it, but I knew all three guys. It became one of those seminal moments in life, maybe my first as a very young teenager, when the light suddenly goes on and perhaps you begin to realize that all the advice and direction your folks were constantly giving amounted to a series of shortcuts in life, a better route based on their hard won experience, and if you just had the good sense to listen, well, you could take the shortcuts. I, of course, knew better.

Arthur Goodwillie, Alan Kelly and Bobby Mason were the type of guys held up not as an example, but as a warning of what not to do. The kind of guys we were cautioned to stay away from, which of course made those of us who were slightly curious want to learn more.

They branded themselves with nicknames we all thought were cool. Arthur Goodwillie was “Junkyard Dog” based in large part on his personality. Alan Kelly was “Bang” because he had access to a .22 pistol that he actually carried from time to time. Both guys were maybe two or three years older than me, which, at age thirteen, seemed almost like another generation. Bobby Mason was the same as me, just thirteen and his nickname, perhaps prophetically, was “Dead”.

They’d been drinking that night, most likely something like root beer flavored schnapps or bottles of cheap red wine that was probably thick and sweet enough to double as pancake syrup. They didn’t share, telling me and the knucklehead with me that we weren’t cool enough to hang with them. Eventually they chased us off, thank God.

It wasn't quite five in the morning on what promised to be a gorgeous summer day, cloudless, with a slight breeze and for a change wonderfully cool. The three stooges hot wired an '85 Ford Crown Victoria parked in a neighbor's garage and took off. They caught the attention of the police when they sideswiped a passing squad car as they sped out of the driveway, their luck went downhill from there.

The chase only lasted about three blocks, brought to a conclusion when they slammed the Crown Vic head on into a phone pole. Of course no one was wearing seat belts, and then there was the gun, a pistol, Bang Kelly's .22, which at a range of about three inches could do a lot of damage, and unfortunately did.

Apparently the pistol fired when the car hit the phone pole, killing Bobby Mason instantly. Arthur Goodwillie and Alan Kelly were hospitalized. Kelly, due in part to his extensive juvenile record and the fact that it was his pistol was tried as an adult and went on to serve five years for manslaughter. Goodwillie was supposed to do six months in the Ramsey County Juvenile Detention Center. He escaped, got caught and was sent to the Red Wing Juvenile Correction Facility for a year.

My father woke me about seven in morning and by that time the story was already on the news. We walked the three blocks to the accident scene without talking. He had me take a good, long look through the passenger side window. You could see clumps of blood on the front seat and blood sprayed across the dash. Lots of blood, all over, along with bits and pieces of Bobby Mason's brain splattered across the roof of the car.

We weren't the only father and son team there that morning. Soft, but stern voices from the dad's and looks of stark disbelief on the faces of the boys.

Bobby Mason was buried three days later. Within months his father died of what I think was a heart attack and his mother had to sell their little two bedroom house later that fall. I heard she moved back to the small town in Iowa she was originally from, apparently Minnesota was filled with too much heartbreak for her to remain.

Chapter One

“Dev, Dev,” Heidi rolled over and whispered in my ear. It was early morning, but still dark outside. I figured it was about time, after all, I'd cooked her dinner and deliberately overserved her.

She had called about three in the afternoon complaining about her lousy week and looking for me to pick up the slack. I was only too happy to oblige thinking nothing like a good workout to get her back on a positive path.

We were in my back yard. I'd been listening to her go on and on about some investment fund that was turning sour and the jerky lawyer client who had made her life miserable for the past few days because of it.

While Heidi ranted I was grilling two porterhouse steaks, baked potatoes, mushrooms and red peppers to perfection.

"What's with you just drinking ice water?" she said, then drained her current glass and started to reach for the wine bottle.

"Here let me get that for you. Yeah, in this heat, and me working the grill I'll have a glass of wine once we sit down to eat."

It was an overcast day and I was seated on a lawn chair about fifteen feet from the grill. She gave me a quick look then focused on her refilled glass, took a hearty gulp and said, "Whatever. So anyway, this jerk is a real estate lawyer, not a very good one by the way, and he has no idea what in the hell he's even talking about." Then just to emphasize her point she took another hearty swallow and drained half her glass.

I'd laid in four bottles of her favorite pinot noir. I knew four was over kill, but I had plans. I hadn't seen her for the better part of three weeks and didn't want to leave anything to chance. I kept a steady eye on her glass and made sure it was never empty. By the third glass, as the steaks came off the grill she was finally starting to relax.

She was on glass five and we were halfway through our steaks before I realized some switch had suddenly flipped and I may have been a little too aggressive in the beverage department.

In the old days she would have pushed her plate to the side and suggested we head to the bedroom or maybe sexily licked a finger full of whipped cream from the strawberry shortcake while she leered at me.

Now, Heidi, ever the consummate professional took a generous sip and then attended to the business at hand. "What would it cost to have you arrange an unfortunate accident for Destin Quigley?"

Destin Quigley was the pain in the butt lawyer who had been making her life miserable for the past week. To be honest, he really did sound like a pain, but this was not the direction I had hoped the conversation was going to go.

"I suppose I could arrange to have a building fall on him or maybe tie him up and throw him in the tiger cage at the zoo."

She took another healthy sip and nodded like I had just presented a couple of logical solutions. “I like that tiger option. Think you could pull it off?” She didn’t sound like she was kidding.

“That bad?”

“Have you been listening to anything I’ve been saying? It’s a small group of a hundred individual investors. Everyone is supposed to put in ten grand every ninety days, once a quarter. For your information that’s forty grand a year,” she said having dealt with my math deficiency in the past.

“We all put that amount in the fund, well except this Quigley butt-head suddenly isn’t happy with the return and wants to pull out, even though everyone signed a contract and oh, God he’s just making my life miserable.”

“How about some dessert, Heidi? I made a special strawberry shortcake.” Actually, I’d grabbed two pieces off the half price shelf at the day old bakery hoping the whipped cream would get Heidi on a particular thought process.

Things sort of went down the drain from there. The whipped cream seemed to taste kind of funny and I pushed my piece to the side after the first bite. Heidi ate her piece then finished mine along with three more glasses of wine. I poured her into bed, just before she rolled over and began to snore she promised to, “*Catch me in the morning.*” I ended up going downstairs and watching a lousy movie on Netflix.

“Dev,” she whispered again as she shook my shoulder. I was just thinking this was going to be a great way to start the day when she said, “I think I’m going to be sick. Really, really sick.”

I ushered her into the bathroom where she hurried toward the toilet. I figured it might be better if things took their course in private. So, I went back to bed and fell asleep to the sound of Heidi retching down the hall. I woke alone in bed a little after seven.

“God it was either the wine or that strawberry shortcake you made. What did you put in that?” Heidi called to me from the bathroom.

“I think it might have been the two bottles of pinot you had.”

“That might be the reason for my headache, but I think your strawberry shortcake gave me food poisoning.”

“Maybe if you came back in here to bed, you know, just relaxed and tried to think about something else, maybe....”

“No offense, Dev, but right now the last thing I want to think about is going back to bed with you. Could you just bring my clothes in here? I think I better get dressed and try and make it home.”

“You sure? I really think if you just....”

“Are you listening? Please, don’t talk to me. Don’t even think about calling me. Bring. Me. My. Clothes.”

That’s the way the day started. Unfortunately, it turned out to be the highpoint because things certainly got worse from there.

Chapter Two

For as long as I could remember I’d known him simply as Junkyard, which was short for his full nickname, Junkyard Dog. The type of guy you shouldn’t need to be told twice to stay clear of. He’d been a well traveled veteran of the Juvenile Court system by age fifteen. To my knowledge he never knew his father. His mother threw him out on his thirteenth birthday then fled the state for parts unknown fearing he might somehow find her. At sixteen, after the car crash, he escaped from the Red Wing Reformatory with less than two months remaining on his twelve month sentence. He was eventually caught, in a stolen car (again) and sent to St. Cloud for an additional twenty-four months. He’d gone on to do some serious time in a number of locations; Lino Lakes, Waupun, and Stillwater.

I hadn’t seen him since the night before the car crash twenty plus years ago. Apparently he was rubbing shoulders nowadays with the ”Swells.” I’d heard the governor had submitted his name to head up some sort of state board that helped reintroduce people back into society after serving their time then theoretically helped them stay on the straight and narrow. Who better to head something like that up than a former criminal who had apparently seen the light and turned his life around?

Now, he was standing on the opposite side of my desk dressed in an expensive suit and tie, answering to his given name, Arthur Goodwillie. There was still something about him that made one cautious, maybe a number of things.

You could start with the unblinking stare, his cold blue eyes, the curve and bump of his nose that suggested a difficulty with authority, the raspy voice, the words “”LOVE”” and “”HATE”” tattooed on the knuckles of either hand or maybe just his general overall perception.

He caught me staring at his tattooed hands, then narrowed his eyes for a brief moment before he slowly raised them as if in prayer. There was a little frilly sort of design beneath each letter. “It’s the choice we all have to make, to love or to hate. I’ve chosen a new direction on my path,” he said and then glared at me to drive his point home.

As he pulled the chair back and sat down I reminded myself to start locking the door to my office. Junkyard slowly glanced around the small, pathetic room. He took in the twelve dollar coffee maker, the mismatched filing cabinets, the client chair patched with duct tape, the picnic table that served as my office mate's desk, and the large bay window with the cracked pane of glass that looked onto the bus stop one story below. Then, he smiled and sort of spread his hands, palms up as if to suggest the reason for his seeking me out couldn't possibly be a problem. "I just figured with your resources, you wouldn't have any trouble finding him."

"I appreciate the faith you place in my ability, Junk ... er, ahhh, Arthur. It's just that, well see I'm sort of on a retainer at the moment. I've got a back log of job applications I'm wading through for an insurance agency and I just don't know when I'd have the time to find Alan Kelly."

I never, ever, wanted to see Alan Bang Kelly again, let alone try and find him. He was the guy who stole my lunch money from me every day for the better part of two years in junior high before he moved up the food chain and started stealing cars and from there to theoretically more profitable ventures. Not that his chosen profession ever worked out very well for him.

Alan Kelly, better know as Bang because he'd carried that gun from the age of about twelve until the night Bobby Mason was killed. No good could possibly come from having Junkyard as my client or locating Alan Bang Kelly.

"I just don't think I'd have the time to properly spend on your search." I reached for my rolodex and began to thumb through some cards. "I could probably give you the names of a couple of other firms you might want to check out. Maybe they'd be better disposed to...."

"Better disposed? You mean you're scheduled out pretty much all day from nine to five?"

Good, he got the message. "Yeah, exactly I'm afraid that's exactly my problem."

"Well then, that works out perfectly. I'll bet Bang usually isn't out of bed until around four in the afternoon. He'll just be getting his day started by the time you begin looking for him, and you'll have all night to keep looking. So it sounds to me like this will work out perfectly."

"Well, see, not exactly, I...."

"No, Haskell, I don't think you see. I need you to find him for me, and I need you to find him fast."

"I really don't think...."

"Stop right there, don't think. Just do it. You don't have to talk to him, you don't have to buy him dinner or even a beer, and you don't have to set

up a meeting. You just have to find him and then tell me where he is. I'll take care of things from there. Sound simple enough?" he said, then cracked the tattooed knuckles on his massive hands. He pushed the duct taped client chair back against the wall and stood.

"I, I suppose I could see what I can find out, but you're not giving me a lot to work with and like I said, I got this other insurance company gig."

"Not giving you a lot to work with? You know as much as I do and you're supposed to be the private investigator. I just gave you his last known address, if he's not there I'm sure you'll think of something. Nice to see you again, been too long. Don't worry, I'll be in touch," and with that Junkyard walked out of the office. I watched out the bay window as he crossed the street, climbed into a red BMW convertible and slipped on a pair of designer sunglasses.

I grabbed my binoculars and repeated his license plate number as he drove off then wrote it down on a paper napkin.

I looked at the used envelope he'd left on my desk. Bang's address was scrawled on the back in pencil. Maybe if I could just find Bang, Junkyard would sort out whatever business he had with him, I wouldn't have to be involved and no one would be the wiser.

Chapter Three

I was over on the East side of town. To say the area was rundown would have been an upgrade. I'd gone around the block twice looking for the address penciled on the back of Junkyard's envelope. I found it, sort of. I was on Division Street, looking for number 217, there was a vacant lot sitting between 215 and 219. I slowed down and pulled to the curb, climbed out and stared at the weeds growing on the empty city lot.

A few beer cans, all cheap brands, were scattered around. The rusty frame of a bicycle missing a handlebar, seat and wheels leaned against a couple of trash bags that looked like they'd been dumped there last winter. What was left of an old apple tree stood leafless and dead toward the back of the lot next to a rusty, dented washing machine lying on its side. The ground was sort of indented and through the weeds you could just barely make out the lines where some sort of structure had once stood.

A woman next door ignored me as she pulled weeds from along a picket fence badly in need of paint.

“Excuse me, can you tell me what happened to the house on this property?”

“It’s not there,” she said stating the obvious and not bothering to look up. She grabbed another handful of weeds, wrapped her fingers around them like she was strangling the things, then seemed to smile ever so slightly as she tore them out of the ground and crammed the handful into a black plastic bag.

This wasn’t going to be easy. “Yeah, thanks, I can see that the house is no longer there. Was it knocked down? A fire? What happened?”

She sort of sat back on her heels and finally looked over at me. “Two years ago, someone set that dump on fire, burned the place right to the ground.”

“Was anyone in it?”

“No, unfortunately they all got out. That wasn’t just the worst place on the block, it was probably the worst place in town. Dreadful, dreadful, dreadful, nothing but trouble, day in and day out, year after year, good riddance is what we all say. I think when the call went out that it was burning the fire department just decided to take their time, figuring the city and everyone in it would be a lot better served.”

“Did you know any of the people who lived there?”

She shook her head. “Everyone tried to stay as far away as possible from them, awful, simply awful,” she said and then went back to strangling another handful of weeds. Her description of the residents matched my perception of Bang Kelly.

I drove over to the property tax office. Even if the lot was vacant presumably someone was still paying real estate taxes on it. I walked into the lobby of a five story building directly across the river from downtown. The records office took up half of the first floor, had floor to ceiling windows on three sides and a long white Formica counter with a red and white sign that said ‘Customer Service’. I walked up to the counter and smiled.

“May I help you?” a guy about my age asked. He looked relaxed with a pair of wire rim glasses and sandy colored hair. He wore an open collar shirt and casual slacks and in about twenty-five years, if he kept his nose reasonably clean, and didn’t make too many waves he could retire with a very nice public service pension.

“I wanted to find out the tax information on a piece of property in the city.”

“Residential?” he asked.

“It was a rental property at one time, I believe the structure was destroyed in a fire a few years ago. The lot is vacant now. I’m trying to determine who owns the property.”

He nodded then asked, “Are you a subscriber?”

“A subscriber?”

“You pay a modest fee to obtain the owners information. The tax and property valuation are a matter of public record so that’s readily available, but you need to subscribe to get the owner’s information.”

“How much to subscribe?”

“You just want the info on the one piece of property?”

“Yeah,” I nodded.

“I think we can get that for you,” he said then clicked a couple of keys on a keyboard. “What’s the address?”

I told him and he clicked a couple more keys and hit a button, a moment later the printer at the end of the counter fired up. He walked over to the printer, picked up a single sheet of paper then came back and handed it to me. It had the property tax information along with the owner’s name and address.

“Anything else?”

“No, you’ve been quite helpful, thank you.”

Chapter Four

I was back at the office using my binoculars to scan the apartment building across the street for any sign of life. The two women in the third floor apartment didn’t appear to be home. I was still scanning when someone rattled the knob on the locked office door. I held my breath, fearful it might be Junkyard returning and already looking for results.

A moment later I heard the sound of a key being inserted in the lock, the door opened and my office mate, Louie Laufen stepped in. Louie practiced law, sometimes.

“Oh, you’re here, why’d you have the door locked?”

“Believe me, you don’t want to know.”

“Try me,” he said as he threw his computer bag on his picnic table desk.

I set the binoculars down then proceeded to tell him about Junkyard making me an offer I couldn’t refuse and how he wanted me to find Bang Kelly.

“Did you call the police?”

“And tell them what? I don’t like this, but there’s nothing about it that’s illegal. Besides, they’d just tell me not to do it. Course they don’t have some whack job like Junkyard hanging around their office.”

“And the address he gave you is a vacant lot.”

“Yeah, I put a call into the group listed as the owner but....” my phone rang.

“Haskell Investigations.”

“I’m returning a call regarding a property at 217 Division Street.” The voice on the line sounded just a little too cheery.

“Yeah, that was me who called. Thanks for getting back to me, you’re Mr. Arnold?”

“No, the Arnold partnership owned the property up until about twenty-four months ago. I hold the rights to the property now. How can I help you? If you’re interested in that lot I’m sure we could work something out.”

“Not really, I’m more interested in the tenants of the building that was there. Actually, one individual in particular, I’m trying to locate....”

His tone became decidedly cooler. “I really wouldn’t have any information on those individuals.”

“.... a gentleman by the name of Alan Kelly. I believe he was a resident of 217 Division Street.”

“Actually, as far as I’m concerned all the records were destroyed in the fire. I can tell you the best thing that ever happened to that property was that it burned to the ground and I didn’t have to deal with any of those people ever again. Good riddance is all I can say.”

“Do you know where the residents ended up? See, I’m trying to locate....”

“Perhaps I’m not making myself very clear. I wouldn’t have any idea where any of those individuals are and I certainly wouldn’t care to have anything to do with most of them.”

“I understand sir, I’m sorry, your name is....”

“Quigley. Destin Quigley.”

“I believe I’ve heard of you,” I said, not mentioning that he ruined my plans for last night by putting Heidi in one of the worst moods I’d ever seen her in.

“You might check with the police, I’m sure they’re familiar with the individuals who resided in that structure. I’m just glad I don’t have to deal with them and I pity whoever’s problem they are now,” he said and then hung up.

“That didn’t sound too promising,” Louie said.

“This is starting to be a real pain,” I said.

Chapter Five

Louie and I had adjourned to The Spot bar for a beverage about three hours earlier. It was now a little past eight and I pushed my empty glass across the bar for Jimmy to refill.

“Quigley’s always been a jerk and he has always seemed to have that effect on people, at least as long as I’ve known him,” Louie said and gave Jimmy a nod for another.

“She was really upset, course the food poisoning from that strawberry shortcake didn’t help.”

“Gee, sounds like the perfect date night, she’s ranting about Destin Quigley in-between bouts of throwing up.”

“Tell me about it, close to a hundred bucks in food and wine right down the drain, literally.”

“Have you talked to her since?”

“She was still green around the gills when she left, and one of the last things she said was ‘*don’t call.*’ I took her at her word.”

“Might make a mental note that discount whipped cream items maybe aren’t the best idea for a romantic interlude.”

“You’re telling me. Destin Quigley, how’d he get so flush?”

“I’m not sure, some of it was a trust, I think, but he’s parlayed that into some substantial real estate and more than one hedge fund. If it’s any consolation, he was a jerk even before he was so successful.”

I nodded thanks to Jimmy as he slid a fresh beer across the bar. “Not really any consolation. Heidi’s usually astute enough in business to stay focused and not let a personality get in the way, but this guy really has her wound up.”

“Like I said,” Louie took a sip. “That’s the effect he always seems to have on people.”

“Man, what a small world, he owns the last know address of Bang Kelly, God, talk about a headache. It makes Heidi’s situation look like a walk in the park. Right now, I’m looking out the window before I go anywhere just to make sure Junkyard isn’t out on the street waiting for me.”

“And he never told you why he wants to find this Kelly character?”

“I didn’t ask. Whatever it is, it can’t be good.”

“I’m still thinking a call to the police might get you an answer, or at least alert them that something’s up.”

“I know, I’m just not looking forward to making the call. At the very least I’ll be guilty just by association, and things will quickly get worse from there.”

Chapter Six

My luck didn’t seem to improve with the morning.

“Hi Heidi, just checking in to make sure everything is okay. Give me a call if you need anything. Hope you’re feeling better,” I said, and hung up.

Next, I called Aaron LaZelle one of my pals on the police force. “Hi Aaron, Dev Haskell, just wanted to....”

“Hello, Dev?”

“Aaron.” Typical I was hoping to just leave a message and avoid the third degree. “Gee, thanks for picking up,” I lied.

“What can I do for you, Dev?”

“I’ve got what I might call a questionable request yesterday. I wanted to run it past you.”

“A questionable request? If you’re calling me you probably already know the direction this is going to take.”

“The name Alan Kelly mean anything to you?”

“This the guy who likes to refer to himself as Bang? I think he’s been incarcerated longer than he’s been out in society.”

“Some things never seem to change. I knew him as a kid and he was a jerk even back then,” I said.

“And you’re looking for him why, exactly?”

“Actually, someone came into my office and asked me to find him.”

“Just a general observation, anyone who’s looking for Bang Kelly probably doesn’t have a positive motive in mind. Who’s looking for him?”

“Another guy I knew as a kid, we called him Junkyard Dog, real name’s Arthur Goodwillie.”

“Arthur Goodwillie,” Aaron said half to himself. “The Governor’s buddy? I thought he got religion and has been on the straight and narrow for a while, maybe the last ten years.”

“Could be, drives a nice car, but not the sort of guy you’d have over for dinner to meet your wife.”

“Of course, someone could say that about you, too.”

I ignored that last comment. “He never did tell me why he wanted to get in touch with Bang, just that he wanted me to locate him. You wouldn’t have any idea where he is, would you?”

“Kelly? No, is the short answer. I can tell you this, he was in a shoot out maybe four or five years ago. Unfortunately, miracle of modern medicine, they saved him. I don’t think he was ever charged with anything, last I heard he was getting around in a wheel chair. He may have recovered since, but I’m not aware of anything he’s been involved in the last few years.”

“You know where he is?”

“Haven’t the slightest idea. Since he hasn’t been on our radar I would guess he’s either out of state or quite possibly dead.”

Chapter Seven

Unfortunately it looked like Destin Quigley was going to be the best of all my bad options. I guessed he would have had to mail a settlement check to all the tenants of the building that burned, including Bang. Any more recent address for Bang would be better than the one I had.

I phoned Heidi to see if she had Quigley’s address and ended up leaving a message. Then I went on line and Googled the guy. A number of lawsuits where he had been or was being sued were listed. He’d been assaulted at least once, evicted from various city council meetings. He was apparently waiting to have his license to practice law reinstated after a two year hiatus. There were three articles and a newspaper photograph showing a neighborhood group picketing his office last fall and the caption beneath the photo was where I found his office address.

The office of the Quigley Group was located on the edge of downtown in a four story brick building. The office occupied a street level store front between The Poop Deck bar and a twenty-four hour check cashing place. Someone had apparently had access to a ladder because the sign above the large glass windows that said Quigley Group was followed by spray paint graffiti that read SUCKS in bright blue letters that were outlined in fluorescent orange just in case you missed them.

I had to knock on the door in an attempt to get the attention of an elderly receptionist applying polish to her nails. She was either ignoring me or hard of hearing. I knocked a number of times, each time a little harder. Just as she looked up and saw me some guy in a chocolate brown suit and a blue shirt

unbuttoned down to the middle of his chest stepped out of the office behind her and said something.

She looked up, smiled in my direction, nodded then buzzed the door and I heard a lock click. I pushed the door open and stepped inside.

“How can I help you?” they said in unison.

“I’m looking for Destin Quigley.”

The guy in the suit fled back into his office and locked the door.

“Who may I say is calling?” the receptionist smiled.

“I’m interested in purchasing a piece of property, a city lot actually, I believe it’s owned by the Quigley Group.”

She flashed a large smile just as the lock on the office door behind her snapped open and the guy in the brown suit stepped back out. “I’ll take this, mom. Hi, I’m Destin Quigley, president of the Quigley group. We’ve got a lot of properties available, all moving pretty fast, you sure wouldn’t want to drag your feet in this market.”

“I’m interested in a specific piece of property.”

“Then you’ve come to the right place, sir,” he said emphasizing his point by waving his index finger at me. He wore two large gold rings, one on each hand. His hair appeared to be dyed brown and receded almost to the back of his skull except for a strip about an inch wide that started at his forehead. The sides and back of his hair were pulled tight in a wispy ponytail. His sideburns were level with the bottom of his earlobes. “Very sleazy” was the first term that popped into my mind.

“Please, join me in my office,” he said then turned and walked back into the room he’d just come from. His office was adorned with a number of framed photos of him with various local celebrities; a bartender, the mayor, a news anchor, a professional wrestler, what looked like two female porn stars, and a shot of him shaking Ronald McDonald’s hand.

“Are you Mr. Quigley?”

“At your service, sir.” he said extending his hand. “And who do I have the pleasure of serving?”

“Haskell, Dev Haskell, pleased to meet you.”

“The pleasure is all mine, Mr. Hassle, please have a seat,” he said then picked up a stack of files piled on a chair in front of his desk and put them on a coffee table.

“Busy, busy, busy,” he smiled by way of explanation then settled in behind his desk and grinned. “You mentioned you were interested in a specific piece of property, here in town or out of...?”

“In town, actually now it’s just a vacant lot. 217 Division Street.”

He sat back in his chair like I’d just said something very offensive.

“Popular piece of property all of a sudden. Did we talk on the phone earlier? I thought you said you were looking to purchase.”

“I did.”

This seemed to come as a relief and he said, “Well I’d have to be honest and tell you that I’ve had a number of people inquiring about that property. It’s located in an area that’s almost back on the rebound, and the value will be increasing exponentially.”

I nodded like that somehow made sense and as I did I could suddenly feel a headache coming on.

“My understanding is the original structure was destroyed in a fire.”

“That’s correct,” he said then cast a wary eye and settled back into his chair. “You’re not looking to buy, are you?”

“Just wondering about one of your tenants, a guy by the name of Alan Kelly.”

“I wouldn’t have the slightest bit of knowledge on any of those people. As I believe I mentioned earlier, all the records were destroyed in that fire. Now, unfortunately I’ve got an important meeting to get to Mr. Hassle, can’t thank you enough for your time,” he said then stood and indicated the door with his hand.

“If you should hear anything about Mr. Alan Kelly I’d appreciate a call,” I said then took out a business card and placed it on his desk.

Chapter Eight

“**Not really all that surprising,**” Louie said then pushed his glass across the bar for a refill. Mike was tending bar.

“This guy was just pure sleaze and I have a very strong feeling he knows something. The Quigley *Group*, can you believe it? Group? God, he’s the only employee, well along with the receptionist, who happens to be his mother.”

Louie nodded then took a sip from his fresh drink. “Like I said, not really surprising. You hear anything from that other guy?”

“You mean Junkyard? No, but unfortunately I expect to hear from him in the very near future. I don’t know what I’m going to tell him.”

“Maybe just the truth, you know that you can’t find this Bang douche bag. The only reason that guy has you looking is because he probably ran into the same problem. He can try and intimidate all he wants, but at the end of the day if you can’t find Bang, well you can’t find him, simple as that.”

“I’m not sure anything is ever simple when you’re dealing with the Junkyard Dog.”

We finished our drinks, had another round, then another after that.

“I better head home,” Louie finally said. “I’m in court tomorrow at nine.”

“I should probably head home, too. God, what an absolutely horseshit day.”

“Things are bound to get better,” Louie said then patted his pockets in search of his wallet. “Oops, you got enough to cover me?”

“Yeah, I suppose. I gotta say, my karma seems to be at an all-time low.”

“Well, at least you made it through today,” Louie laughed then headed out the side door.

I threw a twenty on the bar, all the cash I had.

Mike rang up our tab then brought me the change, two quarters.

“Keep the change,” I said.

He looked at me like I was nuts.

“I’ll catch you tomorrow.”

Mike just shook his head and cleared away our empties.

I had parked my car out in front of the office and as I stepped out of The Spot I noticed I’d left the office light on. Climbing the stairs it looked like I’d apparently left the office door open, too, which really didn’t seem right.

As I approached the door a voice said, “Bout time, get the hell in here, Haskell.”

Alan Bang Kelly. At the sound of his voice my mind immediately traveled back twenty plus years to junior high and Bang stealing my lunch money every day.

“Go ahead and make yourself at home,” I said.

Bang was seated in the chair behind my desk looking out the window. As I entered the office he spun around in my chair and looked at me. It was the same guy, the same jerk, only twenty plus years later. But somehow I suddenly wasn’t intimidated.

“I think you’re in my chair, Bang.”

He half laughed, then said, “You bring your lunch money? A buck twenty-five if I remember.”

“I said you’re in my chair.”

He sized me up for a moment and sort of cocked his shaved head. “I hear you’ve been looking for me. Why is that?”

“I’m going to tell you one more time, you’re in my chair.”

“I’d watch my tone if I were you,” Bang said then slowly got up out of my chair.

I remembered him as a lot larger than me, stronger, but like I said that had been a good twenty plus years ago. He looked thin now, too thin, in fact almost fragile. He rose to his full height of about five feet two inches then raised his head and glared at me. His beady eyes were just about level with my neck.

“Amazing how things change, isn’t it, Bang.”

He stepped around me and slowly eased into the leather chair with the duct tape patch opposite my desk.

“Heard you turned into some kind of Special Forces assassin or something over in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

“You heard wrong. What are you doing here, how the hell did you even get in?”

“You gotta be kidding, with that bullshit lock you got on the door. Some old skills you never forget. A guy I know said you were looking for me. Why? I done nothing to you, least not for a long time. This some sort of macho payback for when we were kids?”

“No. Actually, I’ll be honest. I’m not looking for you, at least not in so many words. Someone else is though, an old pal of yours.”

“Who in the hell is that? I gotta tell you, I ain’t got many friends.”

There’s a surprise. “See if this name rings a bell? Junkyard Dog.”

“You mean Goodwillie? Arthur Goodwillie? Where in the hell did you run into him?”

“More like he ran into me, he came up here, to my office and said he couldn’t find you and wanted me to give it a try.”

“So, here I am.”

“Where are you living? Are you in town? Cops I talked to said since they hadn’t heard of you for a couple of years they thought you were either dead or had moved out of state.”

Bang suddenly looked very tired. “I been sort of taking it easy, paying attention to some other things, more important things.”

“What’d you do, get married?”

“Humpf, no, not quite. Actually, I got sick. Got me a cancer I been fighting on and off for the last five years. Pretty much beat it, too, at least for awhile. I was serving over in Waupun, did three years of seven then got paroled. They found the cancer while I was in there, signed me up for an experimental treatment.”

“Did it work?”

“I suppose you could say so. They give me sixteen to twenty-four months to live, that was about five years ago. Shit’s back with a vengeance

now, but I still scammed a couple extra years outta life.” He hacked a raspy cough.

“You want a water or something? I suppose we could go across the street and I’d buy you a beer.”

“I been sober for four years, one month and twelve days.”

“Junkyard wants to get in touch with you, you got a phone number or an address, some way he can reach you?”

“I don’t really need that guy calling me to make up. Tell you what, why don’t you give me his number and I’ll call him?”

“I would if I could, but he never gave me a number, he just told me he’d stop back. Other than that one day he was in here I haven’t seen the guy since we were kids. Well, except on the TV news.”

“How’d he look?”

“About the same, older I guess. Drove a nice BMW, sharp clothes. Looks to be making it okay.”

“Humph,” Bang said which quickly brought on a hacking cough.

“You okay?”

“I told you before, I’m dying, man.”

“So what do want me to do? I can tell Junkyard, if and when he shows up, that I couldn’t find you. Or, if there’s a way he can contact you I can give him that info, your choice.”

Bang seemed to think about that for a brief moment then said, “Tell him you couldn’t find me.”

“You sure.”

“Yeah,” he said and nodded to add some emphasis.

“Okay, you got it.”

“And you should probably get a new lock, that one you got on there now is completely worthless,” he said then stood and walked out the door.

I locked the worthless lock on my door and left the office five minutes later, wondering when I’d have the pleasure of Junkyard’s company.

Chapter Nine

I didn’t have to wait long, I noticed the red BMW coming up behind me just after I left my house the following morning. I pulled over to the curb and Junkyard did the same. I watched him in my side view mirror as he climbed out of his car, adjusted his tie and headed toward me. I pulled a snub .38 from under my seat and slipped it alongside my right thigh.

“What do you got for me, Haskell?”

“Nothing. Absolutely nothing. That address you gave me is no good, the place burned down a couple of years back. The guy who owned the property still owns the vacant lot. He said all the rental information went up in flames so he can’t help.”

“I talked to my contacts on the police force, they were familiar with Bang, but haven’t heard of him for at least three years. They figured he’s either dead or he moved out of state. Looks like a dead end. I don’t think I can help you any more than that.”

Junkyard seemed to ponder this for a brief moment then shook his head. “That ain’t good enough, Haskell I want you to keep looking.”

“Hello. Did you hear anything I just said, he’s nowhere to be found, Arthur. Given the lifestyle I’d say the cops first thought is probably right on the money. Bang is dead.”

Junkyard shook his head. “Nope, I want you to find him.”

“Okay,” I said having no intention of spending another minute of my time on a worthless cause. “But I gotta tell you, I think you’re up against a brick wall here.”

“Look, you probably know I’m about to be appointed by the governor to head up this new reintroduction board, once those legislature clowns get their ass in gear and confirm me. The very first guy I want to help is Alan Kelly.”

“That sounds really nice, Arthur, but he apparently doesn’t want to be found, or he’s already left the state, or like I said, he’s most likely dead.”

“Not unusual for an ex-con to try and stay under the radar, but I know I can help him. You just do your part and find him,” he said then gave me a glare before he walked back to his BMW and drove away.

I watched his car disappear around a corner, then thought there were only four people I dealt with yesterday: Lieutenant Aaron LaZelle on the police force, Louie my office mate, the guy in the tax records office and Destin Quigley. Bang had to have been in touch with one of them. Against my better judgment I decided to pay Destin Quigley another visit.

Chapter Ten

The following morning I approached the door to the Quigley Group carrying a white bakery box. Thankfully, Destin’s mother was staring out the

window at the occasional car passing by. As soon as I waved and raised the bakery box she waved back and buzzed me in the front door.

“Hi, great to see you again, Mrs. Quigley. I’m Dev Haskell. I was in the other day talking with Destin. I was just in the neighborhood, and thought you might like a little treat.”

“Oh, isn’t that sweet. Thank you. You know, I really shouldn’t,” she said, then looked from side to side presumably to see if anyone was watching before she opened the box.

“Oh my, isn’t that just gorgeous,” she said pulling out a large caramel roll. “How wonderful,” she said then took a large bite. “Mmm-mmm.” I waited while she chewed with a sinfully dreamy look on her face.

“Mmm-mmm, delicious. I’m afraid Destin isn’t here just know, he’s next door,” she half whispered through another mouthful of caramel then pointed ever so subtly in the direction of The Poop Deck bar.

“Maybe I’ll just pop in over there,” I said.

“I think he’s meeting with a client,” she cautioned.

“Then I’ll only stay a minute.”

Chapter Eleven

The Poop Deck lived up to its name, at least the first part. It was dark, dingy, in desperate need of both a cleaning and an airing out. At 8:20 on a weekday morning there were seven guys sitting a stool or two apart from one another, all staring straight ahead and attending to the day’s business. The business today and everyday at The Poop Deck was drinking.

Destin Quigley sat at the far end of the bar, nursing what looked like a mug of coffee. He wore a Hawaiian print shirt, bright red with a topless hula girl in a grass skirt on the left and right side of his chest. The bartender had a shaved head and appeared thin, almost frail. He wore a black T-shirt and jeans and looked an awful lot like Bang Kelly.

Quigley spotted me as I walked in the door. He suddenly jumped off his stool then sort of walked around in a circle once he realized he really had nowhere to go.

Bang sort of smiled and nodded when he saw me, probably thinking ‘*It figures.*’

I walked down the length of the bar toward the two of them.

“Gentlemen, please, have a seat, Mr. Quigley,” I said though not so much a

suggestion as it was an order. Then I stood there, glared and blocked any attempt he might have had to flee the scene.

Quigley reluctantly climbed back on his bar stool and stared into his coffee mug.

“Get you something, Haskell?” Bang asked.

“No, I just came in here for the enlightening conversation. Didn’t realize you two knew each other,” I said then stared at Quigley.

“Well, we really don’t, I just came in for a coffee, you know I like to support neighborhood business,” Quigley said.

“Don’t let him kid ya, he owns this dump,” Bang laughed. “So how in the hell do you know my broker?”

“Broker? You gotta be kidding me,” I said looking at Quigley.

Quigley began to quickly slide off his stool. “If you’ll excuse me, I just remembered a meeting I’m late for and....”

I grabbed him by the forearm and squeezed. “Hold on a minute.”

“Hey, ouch, ouch, okay, relax dude, okay.”

Bang looked at Quigley and you could suddenly see the wheels starting to turn inside his head.

At the same time I began to put two and two together. “This little get together you’re having with your broker here, it wouldn’t happen to have anything to do with a quarterly investment of ten grand, would it?” I said.

Bang shot a surprised look at Quigley then back at me, “Well, yeah it does, don’t tell me he’s got you in there investing, too.”

“No, I’m not investing, but I happen to know someone who is involved. Seems Mr. Quigley here is a little late with the last payment, a number of people aren’t too happy.”

“Now hold on, you just hold on for a damn minute will you, Hassle. Don’t rush to any conclusions, Kelly. I just wanted to make sure you were getting the best return on your investment, that’s all. I didn’t like the numbers they were giving me, thought they should be performing better for you is all. I’m just looking out for your interest making sure you’re not getting cheated and losing a bunch of money.”

“Or, on the other hand, maybe he’s stealing your money,” I said.

“I’d say that’s just a little extreme,” Quigley whined.

“You didn’t pay them the ten grand I gave you?” Bang said, then raised his voice. “That was the deal, damn it, you were supposed to front for me, Quigley. You were going to cover for me, get me invested so I’d have some funds I’m going to need down the road.” Bang looked at me. “I figured with my record there wasn’t a snowball’s chance in hell they’d let me invest.

And, well, with me just working here in exchange for rent it would be pretty hard to demonstrate any form of revenue stream.”

“You work here in exchange for rent?”

“Now that was our deal, fair and square. You’ve got that apartment upstairs, and you don’t have to pay a dime for it,” Quigley said.

“Actually it’s just one room and I think I’ve spent a couple of years in cells that were bigger.”

“You own this joint?” I asked Quigley, then sort of glanced around, taking in the dingy establishment.

“I own the entire block, here, my office, the check cashing store on the other side of my office and I’ve got some ladies about to open up a nail place right next to that. It’s my own little monopoly board,” Quigley bragged.

“So what about my investment? I gave you cash, damn it,” Bang said.

“Just a misunderstanding. In fact, ahhh, that was the meeting I should be on my way to now. Except you’re holding me up, Hassle” he said looking at me and frowning.

“Oh, so you’re going to see Heidi Bauer, is that right?”

Quigley’s eyes widened at the mention of her name.

“Tell you what, let me just touch base with her. I know she’s awfully busy so I’ll just call and set it up so she can make time to see you. Hang on just a minute,” I said as I pulled out my phone.

“Yeah, Heidi, Dev Haskell here.”

“Look, you know I’m sorry *you* didn’t get anything the other night. If you’ll remember I was sick, very sick after eating that dreadful strawberry....”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m just calling to make sure you can spare a minute to meet with Destin Quigley, he’s coming over with that late payment.”

“Please tell me you’re not kidding. Seriously?”

“Yes, I’m talking to him right now. I think he would like to apologize for any inconvenience,” I raised my eyebrows at Quigley.

Quigley rolled his eyes.

Bang glared at him.

Quigley swallowed hard and nodded reluctantly.

“He should be there within twenty minutes if he leaves now and hurries,” I said and indicated the door with a nod of my head.

Quigley jumped off his stool and hurried toward the front door.

“I want to see you just as soon as you get back, and it better be all good news, Quigley,” Bang shouted after him.

“He’s really coming?” Heidi asked.

“Yeah, just heading out the door now, looks like he’s on his way. You call me if he doesn’t show or he gives you any problems,” I said as the door closed behind Quigley.

“Oh Dev, how did you do it? I can’t thank you enough, I don’t think I can ever make it up to you.”

“I might be able to think of some ways.”

“You can count on it,” Heidi said and hung up.

Chapter Twelve

Bang looked up at me, gave a sort of raspy cough and said, “I been in and out of jail my entire life, seen a lot jerks, sometimes been one myself, but I been straight and clean for the last four plus years and I gotta tell you, that bastard is one of the biggest sleaze balls I’ve ever met.”

“No argument from me.”

“Well, I really appreciate your help, Haskell. Not like you owe me or anything. I know sometimes I was a real asshole when we were kids and all.”

“Don’t stop there,” I said.

Bang glared up at me for a half second before a smile slowly crept across his face. “Sorry, I really was, wasn’t I?”

“Yeah, hey I still got Arthur Goodwillie asking about you. What do you want me to do?”

“Tell you the truth, I ain’t seen him since he shot Bobby Mason the night we stole that car. I don’t know what in the hell he’d...”

“He shot Bobby Mason? But, that was your gun, wasn’t it? You were the guy they sent to jail. I remember my Dad woke me up, walked me down there and made me take a look. I must have been about thirteen. It straightened me out. Me and a couple of other kids who thought you clowns were cool. Sometime later that year I got introduced to girls and, well, let’s just say my attention became directed elsewhere. Anyway, didn’t you shoot Bobby? I mean I know it was an accident and all, but...”

“Yeah, it was my gun. No, I didn’t shoot Bobby. The cops were right behind us, we were racing down the street, there was that curve right after the railroad tracks, remember? I was passing the gun over to Junkyard, he was driving and was gonna throw the piece out the window. Bobby was in the middle of the front seat. Anyway, Junkyard grabbed the gun from me

just as we went over the tracks and the thing went off. He lost control of the car, we hit that phone pole and Bobby was dead.”

“But you did the time, what was it, four years?”

“I only wish, actually it was five years, a full five. That sentence just served as a finishing school for my career choice. Course, you can see how well that worked out,” Bang said then sort of glanced around the dingy bar populated by the crowd of early morning drinkers.

“Why didn’t you say something?”

“Junkyard was scared to death about doing the time. I decided it would be really cool to act macho and do it for him. I figured it would really give me the tough guy rep. Let me tell you, first of all no one cared. Second of all, it really didn’t work because I wasn’t all that tough.”

“You ever see him, see Junkyard?”

“I saw him once, briefly, just about a week after Bobby’s death. We were being transported to the city jail. That was when he told me he was afraid, didn’t think he could handle prison. Poor bastard was crying, so I called him a pussy and told him I could do the time standing on my head. I did the time, alright. That was the last time I saw the bastard, believe me, I got nothing to say to him some twenty years on.”

“I got a feeling he’s gonna keep looking, Bang, no matter what I tell him.”

“I’ll most likely be dead within the next twelve to eighteen months, anyway. So let him try and find me. Like I said, this far down the road I don’t think it really matters.”

Chapter Thirteen

Heidi phoned me later that afternoon. “I didn’t see any bruises, so you must have just scared the hell out Quigley. He could not have been nicer. He also couldn’t wait to get away from me once he made the payment.”

“Let’s just hope his check is good.”

“Actually, he paid in cash.”

“Cash? Really? Ten Grand?” No doubt cash from Bang.

“Well, yeah, I mean he is a little screwy.”

“More than a little and he’s a lot more things besides screwy.”

“No argument from me. Anyway, I wanted to say thanks and I do intend to make good on my end of the bargain.”

“I’m counting on it,” I said, but Heidi had already hung up.

I didn't have a phone number for Junkyard, but I did have his license number and I had a contact at the Department of Motor vehicles.

"Thank you for calling the DMV. How may I direct your call?"

"Donna at extension four-one-three, please."

After two rings a cheery voice said, "This is Donna, how may I help you?"

"Hi Donna, Dev Haskell."

Dead silence, I waited for a painfully long moment then wondered if the line had been disconnected. "Hello. Hello, Donna?"

"I've lost count of the times I've told you never, ever to call me. This is nothing short of harassment."

"Oh, you mean like the harassment you gave those college interns when you got the hotel room? Or, did you just mean like the harassment when you took that intern up to your lake place for the weekend?"

"I've told you before, they were all of legal age, over eighteen and besides nothing ever happened."

"I'm sure your husband will be pleased to know they were of legal age. Talk about a naughty momma, Donna. What will the neighbors think?"

"You wouldn't."

"I might if you don't help me. I just need an address."

"I could lose my job," she hissed into the phone.

"You certainly will if the state finds out about your after hours tutoring program, complete with benefits."

"Give me the information."

I gave her Junkyard's license number, then said, "Do you want to call me back."

"Good lord, you've got to be kidding, and leave an audit trail? Absolutely not." she whispered. "Just hang on for a min ... here it is now, a BMW, red, the owner is a Mr. Arthur Goodwillie."

"You got an address for him?"

"I'm telling you, I could lose my job," she whispered again.

"Donna."

"Alright, alright," she said then barely whispered Junkyard's address to me. "There, satisfied?"

"For the moment."

She hung up.

Chapter Fourteen

It looked like Junkyard had done pretty well for himself over the past ten years. A nice three-story brick colonial with white pillars and a wrought iron fence around the swimming pool in the back. The gently curving brick path from the street up to the front door was bordered on either side with hosta plants.

I walked up to the glossy red front door with a brass knocker, pushed the doorbell and heard it chime inside the house. An attractive dark haired woman opened the door a minute later.

“Yes?”

“Hi, I’d like to see Mr. Goodwillie, please. My name is Dev Haskell and I’m working on a project for him.”

“If you wouldn’t mind waiting for just a moment, sir,” she said, then closed the front door and left me standing out there. The door opened again a few minutes later.

“Haskell? You found me. What the hell are you doing here?” Junkyard asked. He held a cut crystal glass with what looked like bourbon or scotch. He wore dark trousers and a starched blue and white striped shirt. The collar was open, but a tie bar was still clipped to the front of his shirt. Once he finished with the friendly greeting he took a sip from the glass, clinking the ice cubes and making no effort to welcome me inside.

“Hi Arthur, great to see you, too. Hey, look I’m here just to demonstrate I can actually find people. But, the thing is, I’m running into a brick wall looking for Alan Kelly. I’m sorry, but I can’t find him, and well, I just can’t.”

“Then you had better look harder, damn it.”

“It’s not quite that easy. What I would suggest is, once you are appointed, maybe you could make some sort of public service type of announcement, you know, asking anyone with information to contact you. That could be great press, get a lot of folks talking and it wouldn’t cost you or the state a dime.”

He looked down and swirled his glass clinking the ice cubes, then took another sip. “What you’re suggesting just isn’t a viable option at this stage. I want you to keep looking.”

“And I want you to listen, I can’t find him. I’m not going to charge you for my time, but I’m off the search, effective now.”

“I can think of a whole lot of potential opportunities here that you seem to be willing to pass up, Haskell.”

“And I can see an awful lot of wasted time, my time. I’d rather it was time saved. Short of knocking on every door in the state, I’ve pretty much

exhausted any possibilities. He doesn't turn up on any tax rolls, arrest reports, hospital lists or obituary notices going all the way back four years. I think I've done more than enough pro bono work here."

"Pro bono? You're damned right there, because I sure as hell don't intend to pay you for this botched job. You've accomplished absolutely nothing, a big fat zero. Can't thank you enough for your time," he said then closed the door and left me standing out on his front stoop.

Chapter Fifteen

I headed for the Poop Deck first thing the following morning. I didn't check to see if anyone was following. There were only a half dozen regulars in the joint, all seated at the bar staring at their shots and beer, and just like the day before no was speaking. Then again it was just a little after eight, the place had just opened and everyone was still on their first round.

Bang was in his black T-shirt and jeans, tending bar. He directed me to the far end of the bar with a nod of his head, then followed me down carrying a mug of coffee. Destin Quigley was nowhere to be seen.

"So how'd it go?" he asked.

"With Junkyard?"

"Yeah."

"About like I expected, he wasn't happy with my decision, but in the end what was he going to do? I told him once he got the Governor's appointment he could make some sort of public announcement about how he was looking for you and he would end up getting all sorts of free advertising."

"Oh shit, I don't know if I like that."

"I wouldn't lose any sleep over it. He said that wasn't an option. To tell you the truth, he talks a good game, but I can't see him doing anything along those lines. I'm thinking he just maybe has something else in mind and isn't looking to give you a helping hand. Anyway, he can find someone else to chase after his dead ends."

Bang nodded, took a sip of coffee then looked down the length of the bar to see if anyone needed anything.

"Hey, let me ask you something. If we hadn't known one another as kids would you have broken into my office the other night?"

"No, not a chance."

"And what are the odds that your broker, Destin Quigley just happened to be stiffing a friend of mine?"

“Yeah, small world, and I get what you’re saying. I just don’t want Junkyard anywhere near me. I think that bastard is still dangerous, still a loose cannon. Get you something?”

“How ‘bout just a coffee, and let me use the can,” I said looking around.

“Back there, on the far side of the jukebox, cream or sugar with that coffee?”

“Black is fine.”

The door to the men’s room creaked as I pushed it open. A couple of bare bulbs were attached to the remnants of a ceiling light fixture, one of the bulbs was burned out. The one small window in the room had frosted glass with a set of bars over it. I wasn’t sure if the bars were supposed to keep people in or out.

The restroom stall was covered with a couple of pairs of hand drawn boobs and lots of phone numbers to call ‘*For a good time.*’ The door to the stall had been torn off and leaned up against a wall. The mirror over the dirty sink was fingerprinted and cracked. The faucet handle on one of the water taps was missing and a steady stream of water ran into the sink. The urinal looked about a hundred years old, probably hadn’t been cleaned in all that time and was filled with crushed ice. The grey linoleum floor was peeling away from the walls. It looked like the place was in desperate need of some sort of industrial disinfectant.

I ran my hands under the water tap, careful not to touch anything, then noticed the paper towel dispenser was empty. Just as I pulled the door open using one finger I heard raised voices coming from the barroom.

Two guys were walking very quickly out the front door, leaving their unfinished drinks on the bar. The three or four people still seated at the bar were sitting very still with both hands resting on top of the bar. Bang was standing behind the bar with his hands raised.

A tall guy in nice slacks and an expensive looking golf shirt was wearing a stocking cap over his face and holding a gun in his hand. “I told you to give me the damn money,” he shouted.

“Take it easy, man I’m going” Bang’s voice was cut short by the gun shot. He got this surprised look on his face, and his eyes raised up toward the top of his head. A line of dark blood began to dribble down his forehead, slowly running along the side of his nose, and then he dropped behind the bar.

I jumped at the sound of the gun just as he yelled. “Don’t no one move, you hear me,” the shooter rasped then he glanced over his shoulder at me when I bumped into a chair. He seemed to take one quick look, thrust his gun in my direction and fired.

I was already ducking, pulling a snub .38 out of the small of my back. I kept firing as he ran out the door until I heard the third or fourth empty click, my revolver was empty and he was long gone.

The remaining guys at the bar were suddenly out the door. I hurried behind the bar, felt Bang's neck for a pulse but couldn't find one.

I'm not sure how long I was there next to Bang before I heard the sirens. I didn't call the cops, I hadn't even thought of it. But someone must have called because they were there, in force. They had me cuffed and on the floor for awhile before they took the cuffs off. My pal Aaron LaZelle, the homicide lieutenant arrived maybe a half hour later.

Chapter Sixteen

We were seated at a distant table, the one furthest away from Bang's body and I was giving Aaron my statement. Two guys were still shooting video of the scene and taking pictures. Bang remained on the floor behind the bar, but if I glanced over I could see one of his feet sticking out.

"What the hell does anyone think they're gonna get knocking off this joint first thing in the morning? It doesn't make any sense," I said, not for the first time.

"Who knows, some folks are just desperate," Aaron said.

I guessed it was a detective who walked in the front door at that point and headed over to our table to speak to Aaron. He had a badge and an ID hanging around his neck and he was wearing a pair of blue latex gloves. "We're gonna try and pull that stocking cap off, LT. You want to come and check him out?"

Aaron gave me a raised eyebrow look and rose to his feet. "Want to see your handiwork?"

"You're kidding me, you mean you got him, arrested him?"

"In a manner of speaking, come on you can see for yourself," Aaron said.

"I'd like to do a hell of a lot more than that," I said, and followed him across the dingy room and out the front door. There was a crowd of people milling around in front of The Poop Deck. A couple of uniformed officers held them back by maybe twenty feet. A city bus was parked right in front, a woman I guessed was the bus driver sat off to the side in the back of an ambulance with an oxygen mask over her face. She looked pale and pretty

upset. One of the paramedics was talking to her with his arm around her shoulder.

“Stupid bastard just ran out the door and straight into a passing bus. Just guessing we might know the guy. Based on the tats I’d say he’s been around. No id on the bastard,” the detective wearing the latex gloves said as we crossed the sidewalk.

“Tattoo’s?” Aaron asked.

“Yeah, nice enough job, but still homemade, probably got them in the big house somewhere,” the detective said then stepped off the curb and knelt down next to a body and got ready to remove the stocking cap.

The shape of the guys head reminded me of a melon someone had dropped out a second floor window. The stocking cap looked like it held crushed ice only instead of melting it was seeping blood. His legs and one of his arms were at strange angles. Both legs had an extra ninety degree bend about six inches above the knees. It looked like he had two sets of knees and the left arm was twisted strangely.

“Oh shit, this ain’t gonna be fun,” the detective said then took a deep breath and got ready to pull off the stocking cap.

“Wait a minute, don’t do that,” I half-shouted.

He didn’t have to pull off the stocking cap, at least not on my account. I suddenly knew who it was and half under my breath said, “Jesus, Arthur Goodwillie, it’s Junkyard Dog.”

Aaron shouted, “Wait a minute.” Then turned and looked at me. “You know this guy?”

“Yeah, it’s Junkyard Dog. The hands, I recognize those tattoo’s, the ‘LOVE’ ‘HATE’ with that frilly sort of design under the letters. It’s Junkyard Dog, Arthur Goodwillie.”

Chapter Seventeen

It was on the news of course and it was big news. After all, Junkyard had been given the nod by none other than the State’s Governor to head up that committee or task force or whatever it was supposed to be. So much for paying your debt to society and turning over a new leaf or as Junkyard had so eloquently put it, “*A new direction on my path.*”

Louie served as my legal counsel while I was being questioned, and to tell the truth, I’d had worse interrogations, a lot worse. There were four

witnesses, all early morning drinkers, who corroborated my version of events.

I went on to tell the cops how Junkyard had more or less coerced me into trying to find Bang. I passed on the little tidbit Bang had dropped about Junkyard actually grabbing the gun when it went off and killed Bobby Mason two decades ago.

Everyone sort of arrived at the same conclusion: Junkyard was afraid Bang would go public with that fact, and at the very least that would scuttle his appointment by the governor.

Over the course of the next couple of days things began to return to normal. I was able to put both Bang and Junkyard into a far corner of my mind and more or less close the drawer.

Heidi called and brought over dinner a couple nights later. I laid in some nice bottles of wine. I was wearing flip flops, my Ramones T-shirt and grubby shorts when she arrived.

“That’s what you’re wearing?” she said as she strutted in the front door in stiletto heels, a very short skirt and a gorgeous silk top. After a few glasses of wine and some Thai curry her blouse was unbuttoned. After another glass I went into the kitchen for a new bottle. When I returned her bra and thong were on the floor under the coffee table.

“So, I take it you like the wine,” I said.

She just held out her glass, smiled and said, “I suppose I still owe you after getting that creep-o Quigley to make the quarterly payment. But now, if he was just fronting for this Bang person, I’m thinking I probably won’t ever hear from him again.

“That going to be a problem?”

“Not really, to tell you the truth that fund is suddenly performing, modestly, but indications are they’re in line for some government contracts. I think I’m going to push your friend Mr. Quigley out the door and we’ll just get the next person in line on board, and believe me the line is starting to form.” Then she took a healthy sip, set her glass down on the coffee table and said, “Which brings us to our next order of business, my debt.”

Chapter Eighteen

Heidi kissed me good-bye the following morning. My cellphone ringing an hour or two later woke me.

“Hello, ahem, I mean ahhh, Haskell Investigations,” I said and then coughed.

“That’s how you answer the phone? God, no wonder you don’t have any business,” Aaron LaZelle said.

“Please tell me you don’t have any more questions regarding Bang Kelly or Junkyard Dog. I’m trying to forget the entire episode.”

“Actually, that’s why I called. We did some checking, then had a little two on one conversation with your friend Destin Quigley.”

“Why in the hell does everyone think that jerk is my friend?”

“You are known by the company you keep,” Aaron said.

“Thanks, mom,” I said then sat up in bed resigned to the fact I was apparently finished sleeping.

“Actually, when you mentioned Quigley paid ten grand in cash to that investment fund it didn’t sound quite right.”

“Well, yeah, Quigley was investing that dough for Bang Kelly. To tell you the truth I was surprised he actually made the payment and didn’t try and keep it. The guy was sick, Bang I mean, he told me he had cancer.”

“Partially correct, yeah he was sick, very sick as it turns out, according to the autopsy he didn’t have much more than two or three months. But, that’s not why I called. Quigley made payments, plural. Where do you think Kelly was getting that money?”

“I don’t know I guess his job or....”

“He just got the free rent, never got a paycheck that we can tell,” Aaron said.

“But he put ten grand every three months into that fund, how in the hell....”

“Interestingly enough, Arthur Goodwillie withdrew ten grand every three months over the past nine months from a fund he had, strange coincidence.”

“Are you suggesting Bang was blackmailing him?”

“We’ll never know for sure, but it looks like it. Oh, by the way, dead eye, Arthur Goodwillie, the autopsy results found no trace of a bullet or a bullet wound. Might want to think about spending some time on the range, looks like you missed, with each and every shot.”

Epilogue

I went to Bang Kelly's funeral, such as it was. There were eight or ten folks, counting me, the undertaker and a woman who looked like she might be a newspaper reporter. The thing was held in a small room at the funeral home. Bang's ashes rested in an urn on top of a card table covered with a white table cloth. No one sent flowers or a card. No one said anything, we just sat there on some metal folding chairs. I didn't see anyone shedding tears and after ten minutes I got up and left.

For some strange reason I drove over to Oakland Cemetery, I think it's the oldest cemetery in town or certainly one of the oldest. A nice lady in the office gave me directions and I parked back in a far corner and then walked in a half dozen rows.

Bobby Mason's dad had a government headstone, white and rounded at the top like you see in the national cemeteries. It said he'd been in the navy during Viet Nam. Bobby was next to him, a small gray granite stone with just his name, Robert L. Mason, his birth date, and the date of the accident, June 5, 1995. The date felt like it was a hundred years ago.

"So Bobby, you probably know Junkyard and Bang are on their way. Not sure if they'll end up the same place you are, pretty sure Junkyard won't. The little I know, they never really changed, and I guess it never really worked out for either one of them." Then I said a little prayer for Bobby and walked back to my car.

I drove out to my dad's grave, it's in a little country cemetery maybe forty minutes away. I wanted to thank him for caring enough to walk me down to that stolen car wrapped around the phone pole on a summer morning all those years ago. Thank him for making me look at the wreck, see the blood, and just maybe think about what could happen.

Then I made a promise to him that I wouldn't end up like Bobby, Junkyard or Bang.

The End

Thanks for subscribing to my mail list and thanks for taking the time to read **Bang**. All the Dev Haskell tales are available on Amazon, along with my stand alone titles and beginning in September 2015, the first in my new series, **Corridor Man**. If you haven't read them yet, don't miss **Twinkle Toes** and **Russian Roulette**, both are **FREE** on Amazon.

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Many thanks and enjoy the reads!