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MANUFACTURING DYSTOPIA

by

Lanny Larcinese

Friday, June 23, 1967

Sally Kavner's father Herb had said all along something was about to blow, and when it did, the city would empty faster than a high colonic. She thought of this as she watched the maitre d' escort Detroit's elite to their tables following the concert at the Ford Auditorium, her smiling demeanor, like so much else in the city, concealing something.

A man in the party of four trailing behind the maître d' turned and gave her a surreptitious wink as he passed Sally's hostess station. The others paid scant attention to the stunning, copper-haired young woman in the black dress and pearls also in his party, instead listening to the winking man hold forth that though the Detroit Symphony's Maestro had personally known Stravinsky, Sixten Ehrling still could not conduct the *Rite of Spring* as well as Paul Paray. Sally deflected the unwanted attention with a pasted-on hostess smile.

More crap. She'd rather be banging on her Olivetti, setting the keys on fire with stories about the city's hypocritical *noblesse oblige*, about how blue-bloods pontificated social ideals and pretentiously debated classical music in rococo rooms like the DeVille Room of the Book Cadillac Hotel, then retreated to gated enclaves as the great unwashed struggled to make it through another day, hatred crackling like bacon in smoky oil, their fuse awaiting an insouciantly tossed match. *Motor City Now* might even let her do a series.

MCN was a tiny, free weekly with wide circulation in the city's black ghettos. That the so-called racial renaissance was an illusion echoed loudly around *MCN*'s hallways, while the big dailies pandered to limousine liberals with booster stories about black progress: *Billions in Great Society Money for Neighborhoods*, crowed the headlines of the *News* and *Free Press*, along with editorials thanking God Earl Warren was still Chief Justice.

But something was seriously amiss in the land—an *Alice in Wonderland* quality—heightened agitation from burgeoning Viet Nam war demonstrators; the grim voices of Dr. King and the Black Panthers; Age of Aquarius peace and equality marches; and on the very cover of the cognoscenti's sacred writ—*New York Review of Books*—how to assemble a Molotov cocktail. Sally and her dad, a volunteer at the ACLU, had watched the social unrest with alarm and talked about it all through her journalism studies at Wayne State. Buffalo Springfield had it right, “*There's something happening here, what it is ain't exactly clear...*”

She scanned the reservation book to see whose name the party's reservation was under. *Roy Jackson*. Was he the one who winked at her? He seemed to be in charge, at least the most arrogant. The city's movers and shakers were fodder for good stories, especially if they had something juicy to leak. She reached for the phone and called Ricky Trupiano, the Book Cadillac's parking valet supervisor who could get more skinny than the FBI. “Trupe, me. Get me the license number of the party of four that just came in. Yeah, them. And rifle the glove box, see if there's anything in the car I can use.”

She returned her attention to the dining room's genteel hum. Her constant feeling that something was about to happen caused her to frequently scan the Savile Row and bejeweled Givenchy patrons engaged in gay, animated conversation as tuxedoed *sommeliers* displayed wine labels for scrutiny or waiters drew out velvet chairs or served food with a flourish and carved it or spooned it from impeccable sets of silver service. She just *knew* there were a hundred stories under all the smugness. Better yet, was it too much to ask that some blue-haired lady faint into a bowl of lobster bisque or captain of industry have wine thrown in his face?

The tap on her shoulder broke her wishful reverie. She turned and smiled reflexively at a young man. He was glancing over at the window table where Roy Jackson's husky voice went

on and on, dominating that corner of the room while others in his party looked at him with wide-eyed affirmation and the fixed smiles of people knowing who picked up the check.

“Aren’t you Sally Kavner?” the young man asked, turning his attention back toward her. Thirtyish. Some premature gray. Soft-spoken. Sleeves of his camel blazer a little too long. Black shoes looked plastic rather than the Gucci loafers that typically slid lightly over the red carpet of the DeVille Room.

“I’m Sally, but I don’t give autographs,” she quipped. “Table for one?”

“Not really. I didn’t come to eat. I only wanted to meet you and introduce myself. My name is Marc Davis. Sergeant Marc Davis, DPD.”

Was this an undercover thing? about a customer? the restaurant? something she wrote? Didn’t she catch him looking over at the Roy Jackson table?

“You write for *Motor City Now* don’t you?” he said. “That Sally Kavner?”

“I am.”

“Can we have lunch or something sometime? I’d like to tell you about my work,” he said, alleviating the tension that set up house in her shoulders when she smelled a story.

“Well lunch might be good. Not too sure about the something,” she said with a laugh and seductive smile.

“That’s great. How can I reach you?”

“Send out an APB. Kidding! How about I call you.”

He gave her a card. Police contacts were useful no matter what this was about.

Sergeant Marc Davis. Internal Affairs. Headquarters Building, Beaubien Street. She smiled at him and put it in her purse as he turned and left. She always hoped that her part-time

gig at the Book might lead to something more important than the buck-an-hour wage, but what the *hell* was this about?

* * *

Tuesday, June 27

The next morning, her call went directly to the switchboard of police headquarters. “Patrolman Hankowsky,” barked the answerer. She asked for Sergeant Davis in Internal Affairs, but hung up as her call was being transferred. Davis was IA okay, but what had he wanted? Maybe something she could sink her teeth into. He could have gone to the big dailies but didn’t. It better not be some kind of come-on. No, that wasn’t his vibe. He had something. She had run it by her editor at *MCN*. “Milk it,” he said. “Maybe it’s big.” It might also perk up her dad who was sick, the outcome of his stroke uncertain. He would be so proud if she broke an important story.

When she finally spoke with Marc she kept it casual though his conspiratorial tone made her curiosity itch yet more. They agreed to meet Thursday.

Something. He must have *something*.

She went to her closet and eyed her wardrobe. Nothing fancy for the rendezvous. Keep it simple. Jeans and a top. Pony tail. Light make-up. Put him at ease. Maybe her brown, pointy-toed boots. They had a nice heel. Make her taller. Look him in the eye. Take his measure.

* * *

Thursday, June 29

He was already there when she arrived at Ziggy’s Pierogi Factory in Hamtramck, a Polish enclave and virtual annex to the muscular and cavernous Dodge Main Assembly plant across the street. He was in uniform and looked intense. He stood to greet her, pulled out her chair, then sat.

“I love Hamtramck,” she opened with. “It’s so vital. We aren’t Polish, but many of my people were from Poland.” Unsaid was, *but suffered pogroms and didn’t make it through the Holocaust*. She was never comfortable in the little city of modest, bungalow-styled homes entirely surrounded by the City of Detroit—its street life happy as a polka but its favored duck-blood soup symbolic of the mother country’s sad history and oppressive present. You had to be blind not to see that beneath Detroit’s Midwestern friendliness and industrial might was a cancerous, ulcerated underbelly.

“Are you a native Detroiter?”

“Fourth generation cop.” His smile looked forced, not fake but trying hard. Whatever he had to get off his chest seemed urgent and small talk not his game.

“So why this meeting, Sergeant? Which of my pieces did you like in *Motor City Now*?”

“A few of them, but I looked you up because of what I saw between the lines, except I...I...” She looked at him expectantly. “I...I didn’t know you’d be so pretty.” He looked down and blushed. She was charmed he would say something clearly not easy for him. It wasn’t flirtatious, but a naïve forthrightness. “You wouldn’t say that if you saw me with no makeup, Marc.”

“I would!” he said eagerly.

“Thank you. It’s flattering.” She touched his hand. “What did you see between the lines?”

“Honesty, for one. The article about redlining opened my eyes.”

“Everybody knows what goes on. Some don’t want to admit it.”

“That’s what I wanted to talk about...”

She let the matter trail off. She sat looking at him, saying nothing, waiting for the awkward silence to cause his words to spew.

He finally decided to speak.

“I’m really a street cop. I love the street, catching bad guys, but I’ve been kicked upstairs to a desk job”

“Why a desk job?”

“I feel like I can trust you from your writing, but I want your word...”

“Take it to the bank, but...?”

“Okay, then, the reason they put me in IA is a keep-your-enemies-closer deal. I get jerk-off assignments like cops sleeping in cars or raising their voice or something. I write up their version. My reports to Lieutenant Steiglitz get scrubbed before they go to the Captain. It’s how they whitewash stuff for public consumption.”

This wasn’t news. Maybe it was a come-on after all. She opened her purse and put on her sunglasses. “All bureaucracies are a bitch.” She pushed her chair out. “Thanks for the coffee Marc, but I’m not your girl, you need to talk to Personnel.”

“Yeah, but there’s more.” She sat down and pushed her glasses onto her forehead.

“More what?”

“What they know but aren’t doing anything about.”

“Marc, do you know what blue-balls are?”

“We’re right on the brink.”

“Brink of what?”

“Do you mind if we order something. I’m starved.”

“Sure.”

He told her about the Clean-up Squads—burly detectives who pulled black people off the streets and worked them over in alleys, often beating them senseless.

“Police brutality is the best kept secret since the Bay of Pigs invasion,” she said.

“There’s more. You know the riots in Atlanta last year? Word on the force is that the FBI is investigating that anarchists are behind it.”

“Why, to justify the happy-talk of all the Motor City amity?” she said. She repeated the mantra, “Liberal mayor, Great Society money, et cetera. Do you have specifics that say otherwise?”

“There’s Detective Chaney and a guy named Roy Jackson. I saw Jackson at the Book when I stopped in to introduce myself to you.”

Finally! She pulled a notebook and pencil from her purse. “Spell.”

“C-H-A-N-E-Y, D-E-R-E-K. One of our black detectives. Clean as a bar of soap. He frisked some white kid four months ago up on Harper near Chalmers and brings the kid in for questioning. Later, IA gets a complaint that Chaney stuck his .38 up the kid’s rectum and caused serious tissue damage. Turns out the kid is the son of some VIP, this Roy Jackson. You don’t need me to spell Jackson.”

“The kid’s name?”

“George, aka Georgiecheeks, His father Roy is General Counsel for the Ford Dealers Association. He’s screaming for Chaney’s head but wants it kept quiet. Except IA discovers the kid is queer and a former boyfriend tells one of our guys it’s how he got injured, rough sex I guess, but they’re burying it so they can deliver Chaney’s head up to this big-shot Jackson.”

She remembered... last week...at the Book. Swanky party of four with a loudmouth host who droned on about the know-nothing Maestro and paid the check. She had asked Trupe to root around his car then forgot to follow up when she didn’t hear back.

“Can I talk to Chaney?”

“Not yet. I don’t want anybody to know I’m talking to you. You don’t know my people.”

“Why would they object? Investigating cops is what you do. I can be of help.”

“Yeah, sometimes I do it on my own. I tailed Jackson in the past, it’s why I recognized him when I saw him in the restaurant where you work. But my people won’t like that I’m trying to help Derek. Even he doesn’t know. But it’s not right that he’s being hosed.” Marc stirred his coffee so strenuously it splashed over and filled the saucer. When he set the spoon down, Sally saw his hand was shaking. “It’ll get ugly.”

* * *

Thursday, July 6

Sally and Trupe weren’t scheduled for duty at the Book until Friday evening. She left a message for him at his other job at Stevie’s Limousine. He called her back from the airport.

“I left a message for you but you never called back,” he said.

“I didn’t get it. Did you learn anything about that party I asked you to check on?”

“Yeah. I didn’t park the car, Phil did, but here’s the scoop...Lincoln Continental convertible, red, 340 horses, 462 cubes—

“Trupe, please?”

“Okay. The registration was in the glove box. Guy’s name is Roy Jackson. He uses esquire. Got your pencil?” He gave her Jackson’s addresses: Lahser Road in Bloomfield Hills and Ford HQ in Dearborn. “Seems he’s also involved in some flap with DPD. Lenny Goldblum, a bail bondsman I know knows a guy in the police union who mentioned it, but I couldn’t get any more. What’s this guy’s story?”

“Don’t know yet. Still lookin’ into it.”

“Let me know if it’s anything juicy. I can use it in trade.”

“You should sell rugs in a Turkish bazaar.”

“I think I did in another life. Okay, Sal, gotta go meet my arrival.”

She drove straight to tony Bloomfield Hills to scout, maybe steal some mail. She parked near Jackson’s wrought-iron gate and wall of lilacs to watch for comings and goings. As she waited she puzzled over how she could get to the front door. Maybe it was easier to catch him at his work under the guise of a puff-piece, connect dots between him and the DPD, maybe the Prosecutor’s office, maybe higher.

As she reached into her handbag for her notebook, she was startled by a sudden banging on her window, causing half of the purse’s contents to fly out. A Bloomfield Hills policeman motioned for her to lower the window. She looked into her mirror. She hadn’t seen the squad car parked behind her with its reds and blues flashing. How long had it been there?

“Are you broken down, Ma’am?” the policeman asked.

“No, officer, I just pulled over to look for some things in my purse.”

He took her license and registration back to his car, then returned a minute later.

“Can you pull onto Woodward Avenue and do whatever you need to do?”

“Sure. Have I done anything wrong?”

“No, Ma’am, just move away from here.”

* * *

Saturday, July 8

Detective Derek Chaney was a large man with small, well-manicured hands and a thunderous voice. Divorced. Father ex-military; mother an elementary school teacher, both deceased. Sally met him at his apartment near the Greyhound Station at Trumbull and Porter where he lived with a girlfriend, Janice Roberts. He wanted to meet while Janice was at work.

“This whole incident gets her uptight,” he said. The apartment was impeccably clean and still smelled of Lysol. “Not much else to do,” he had said.

They went out to the porch and talked. He was in khakis and a blue oxford-cloth shirt. Sally thought he dressed well for a cop on suspension pending an investigation. Showed he still cared. She kept him talking about his youth, about growing up on Twelfth near Clairmont.

“I know white folks feel unsafe around here,” he said, “but if any of ’em spent a Friday night at Sawyer’s to hear Yusef or Charles Mingus, well, nobody cares what color you are. Only price of admission is you love music.” She wanted to buy into it, but no wishful thinking could sanitize the constant, ugly mayhem that terrorized white people as well as black, sometimes just to steal their sneaks. Often, worse.

“Was it a good place to grow up?” she asked.

“Even though Dad had been military, he was out by the time I came along. I’ll tell you this though, you had to be able to take care of yourself.”

“Meaning...?”

“Unpleasantness. Blind pigs all over. I stayed away from it but it went on.”

Blind pig, local parlance for private after-hours drinking places and shooting galleries—vice dens to cops who raided them—social clubs for the locals. “Sooner or later somebody tries to take your spot, or your money, or your woman, then’s when the cannons go off and you better know how to take care of yourself,” Chaney said.

“What made you become a cop?”

“There’s law and there’s order. I felt like I knew the difference better than most.”

Stripped of bias, most cops did, but that was a huge caveat in Detroit. As long as victims suffered in silence, the orchestra played, and Dungeness crab was plentiful, who gave a damn?

“Have you? Made a difference?”

“Not enough. When I made detective they sent me to white neighborhoods on the East Side, an integration image thing, wantin’ to show we all just brothers.”

“It hasn’t worked out so well, based on the Jackson case.”

“You have to keep this confidential...if word gets out I’ll deny I said anything...”

“It’s what we do, Derek, we protect sources.”

“Marc Davis says you’re stand-up...”

“I want to help.”

“A lot goes on,” he said.

“Why don’t you start with George Jackson?”

“Okay, well, him and another guy were in a four-seater Thunderbird in a dark parking lot behind the Via Appia restaurant up on Harper Avenue. Me and my partner, Henry Abbot, are in an unmarked car. It’s two a.m. when we spot the T-Bird. We park a distance away and Henry sneaks up and shines his light into the car and yells, ‘Police!’ Inside the car, two guys are having sex. When the light shines on them Henry goes around to the driver’s side. One of the men bolts out the rear passenger side, and get this, no pants, and runs off.”

“Geez, was he wearing shoes?”

“I don’t remember, but Henry takes off after him. Now, Henry looks like the Pillsbury Doughboy, so I’m not optimistic he’ll catch the guy. I have my hand on my piece and yell for the other guy to get out. It was George Jackson. My partner is gone for a good while. The guy gave him the slip and Henry tried to find him, thinking he couldn’t be too far away without pants, or so Henry said. Seemed like he was gone a real long time.”

“What did George Jackson say?”

“He tried to talk me down. Said they weren’t doing anything wrong. Said could I give him a break, that if his father found out he’d be severely punished, that his father was a prominent man. Said I’d be better off if I let him go. He was really afraid.”

“Why didn’t you? Let him go I mean. Doesn’t sound like a major deal.”

“I found powder and a needle in the car. Looked like heroin. I cuffed him, put him in our car, and waited until Henry got back. He finally came back empty handed.”

“Then what?”

“Took Jackson to the station. We’re grilling him about the other guy and the dope. In the middle of the interrogation, the Lieutenant comes in and tells us the kid’s lawyer is out front. I find out later that the kid alleged that I stuck my piece up his rectum. Maybe he didn’t want his father to know he’s homosexual. Now the FBI is involved.”

“Why? The arrest was routine, wasn’t it? Even the brutality claim, right?”

“The kid’s father must have pulled strings. He wants to establish that I abused the kid. His allegation is racial animus, stuff like that. But the Department is resisting. It doesn’t want press about a black cop harming a white kid. So Jackson keeps going up the ladder and I’m on the bottom rung.”

“Didn’t your people find out from someone that he got hurt from rough sex?”

“Yeah, but the father won’t hear of it. So, now, they can’t find the kid who gave them that story. They can’t find their notes. They can’t find shit.”

* * *

Sunday, July 9

Sally cruised a few dozen blocks around the Twelfth Street ghetto. She eyed the small shops—shoes, clothes, furniture, bakeries, storefront churches—the usual suspicious looks and

thrum of racial antipathy silent behind steel-shuttered doors. Up and down Linwood was a wall of poorly maintained apartment buildings. Strings of worn-out sneakers hung from telephone wires above the tiny tornadoes of wind-blown litter on the decrepit sidewalks below. Dressed-up church ladies in fancy hats strolled down the street, some holding babies as they walked, some with freshly scrubbed kids in ill-fitting suits, running and cavorting ahead of them.

Sally pulled in front of the Twelfth Street address where Derek Chaney was reared. She rang all six bells, two responded. She told each she was doing a profile of Derek, one of the few black detectives on the DPD, and needed to find out what kind of child he had been. Did they know him back then? Did they feel better that the DPD was hiring more Negroes? Yes, they remembered Derek. Yes, they would like more black police, “If you po’,” said one, “white police treat you like shit, and they ain’t no call for that. We fed up.”

* * *

Wednesday, July 12

Her press credential allowed access to the morgues at both the *News* and the *Free Press*. The “racial incident” files were multiple volumes. Sally shook her head in disbelief as the story over time unfolded. Many of the articles involved vandalism by white people in black neighborhoods, or colored people assaulted by white people, seldom the reverse, and racism frequently insinuated even in the absence of evidence. A lot of the reporting was about ham-handed policing, calls for mayoral action, and we-cannot-allow-this-here editorials, their tone glibly underscoring victimhood. It didn’t compute. It was pseudo-appeasement and she wondered if it was in part the basis for so much delusional self-satisfaction by the city fathers at the expense of real progress and goodwill. She put the material back. This wasn’t right. Newspaper-world was different from real life, and her stomach roiled in frustration that the city

was a powder keg and Mayor Cavanaugh, instead of being another JFK as was his press, was instead a snickering Wile E. Coyote lighting a wooden match.

She took her notes to Marc. “Look at this pandering bullshit. I’m waiting to see if they’re gonna say the riot in Newark is outside agitators.”

“Yeah, and when the black people really *are* the victims, I have yet to see any cop punished for brutality. Except for Derek. By the way, word is that he’s going to be dismissed and prosecuted. I don’t know if he knows yet.

“How is he supposed to defend himself?” Sally asked.

“The Fraternal Order of Police will help, but he’d get more help if he was white.”

“The people down at Twelfth & Linwood talk about him like he’s Hans Christian Andersen,” she said.

“What kind of relationships did he tell you he has in the squad room?” Marc asked.

“Cordial.”

“That’s bullshit! Most cops are like brothers to each other. In this environment ‘cordial’ is a left-handed compliment and means you’re crap. I don’t wonder if his partner didn’t do it on purpose, the night of the Jackson incident, being gone so long looking for the other perp, leaving Derek to handle things without a backup. Maybe it was part of a set up.”

“Henry Abbot is white?”

“Yep, and never wanted to partner with Derek.”

* * *

Wednesday, July 19

It was hot for a Detroit July, ninety-four degrees on the day Derek Chaney barricaded himself in his apartment and was stormed by the FBI and DPD’s Special Reaction Team. They

took him down after he fired on them from a third floor window instead of giving himself up to be placed under arrest for the denial of civil rights, sodomy, battery, and host of other charges surrounding the detainment of one George Jackson.

Derek was flat-out assassinated. Sally knew it. So did Marc.

Marc had called Sally as soon as it came over the radio. By the time she got there Derek Chaney was dead, his body not yet brought out. Three hundred or so people had stood behind the perimeter and watched the take-down. Sally tried to interview them between their angry shouts. She counted ten blue and whites, a couple dozen cops in uniform, and a dozen in plain clothes with shields dangling around their necks, all ignoring the angry and indignant shouts from the crowd. Bottles not thrown at the police were smashed to the ground—sharp, glinting shards as piercing as the icy glares of the still-gathering crowd. Four more wagonloads of police in full riot gear arrived and formed a phalanx between the crowd and scene investigators. Sally tried to get interviews. She changed her tack and said, “I knew Detective Chaney, did you know him? What can you tell me about him?”

“What he do the whole army come after him?” many wanted to know.

When the crowd became suddenly quiet she turned and saw Derek’s body being wheeled out on the gurney, blood soaking through the sheets. The crowd moaned collectively. The shouting got louder and fist-shaking more angry. Young men threw stones and bottles toward the coroner’s van as it pulled away. The riot police charged, wrestled them to the ground, and cuffed them. More bottles flew. The police retreated back, then formed a V-shaped wedge and again charged into the crowd swinging batons, dividing it and yelling for everybody to go home, the show was over.

Sally and Marc went straight to Cross's Tavern on Adams Street facing Grand Circus Park and drank themselves silly. They sat at the bar, side by side, occasionally saying things like, "Man," or, "I can't believe it," or, "Shit," or, "This place is so fucked up," the pall too heavy to curse the city that allowed it to happen, caused it to happen.

"I feel like I'm stuck in a Hieronymus Bosch painting," she slurred after four Stroh's and numerous rounds of Old Hickory.

"Who's he?"

"You don't wanna know."

"All the guys at headquarters were saying stuff like good riddance," Marc said.

"I wanted a story," she said, "but this is awful. I don't think I can touch it. I'd rather be upside-down in a barrel of worms."

He looked at her, weaving on his barstool. "Don't give up on this," he slurred. "We can change the narrative on the whole mess."

"How, Marc? What can we do? Can't you see how deep this goes?"

"I thought you told me you had your father's never-quit."

"What, like Superman? What did it do for my dad? It put him in the hospital with a fucking stroke." Marc had no answer he could pull together. They ordered another round.

"You know," he finally said, "I looked you up because when I read your stuff, I... I... dunno, I saw something, somebody 'd stick their neck out with me, somebody 'd look up and see hope instead of a guillotine."

"How're we gonna keep a lid on? How?" she asked

"'s easy, don't worry about lid, do what's right."

“I need a break,” she said, “I need time to think. I need to pee. I’m gonna go home now and hug my cat and cry. Sunday I’m gonna go to Ann Arbor and see my dad in the hospital, talk to him about things. Maybe he’ll have some advice. Or something.” She slid off the stool with one hand on the bar to steady herself.

“I’ll drive you. You’re too fucked up to drive.”

“Right, she grinned,” and you’re Bill Wilson. How about this, how about we share a cab?”

“Okay, but would you put me up? I’m way too messed up to make it home.”

“Yeah, the couch.”

“What, you don’t want comfort?”

She understood. She understood his need to know there was still love in the world, his need to be anchored to human touch and warmth in the midst of a rabid sucking maelstrom. Just for one night

“Okay. C’mon over.”

* * *

Sunday, July 23

Sally left the city at seven-thirty a.m. to visit her father and arrived in Ann Arbor at nine fifteen. She followed the long green line through the maze of the Hospital of the University of Michigan to the Neurology wing. An aide was feeding him lunch. The brutal sagging asymmetry of the left side of his face looked like a waxen bust left too near a radiator. She pulled a chair to his bedside and solemnly nodded to her mother who sat on the other side of the bed.

“Hi Daddy. How do you feel today?” He could only grunt and nod. Soup and spittle leaked out of the side of his mouth. Sally looked at her mother who was holding his hand. Her

mother smiled stoically. “Your dad’s doing really well,” she said, with the kind of hospital happy-talk intended to boost the spirits of the sick yet bear the crushing weight of fear and despair. Sally sat quietly until he was fed, and watched her once-strong and proud father, a man of ideals and fire in the belly, reduced to the dependency of a baby.

“I need your advice,” Sally finally said. Droopy eyelid and all, his eyes met hers with the same dependable gaze that saw her through so many crises in her young life, which she long ago learned was his needing to help as much as her needing it from him. She went on to unfold the Roy Jackson story and Derek Chaney’s death, that she was stymied as to where to go from there. When she was done he couldn’t speak, could voice no advice. Instead he pushed his tray table aside and grunted a loud, forceful grunt sending soup and spittle spraying onto her blouse, and with fire in his eyes, held a tightly clenched fist up to her and speared it into the air, then grunted more loudly yet and thrust the fist upward again, this time higher. Her eyes welled with tears. She looked at him and said, “I won’t, Daddy, not ever.”

As she headed back to Detroit on the Ford Expressway the golden sun on her face bathed her in welcome respite from grief and frustration. The visit had quelled much of her depression about the city she loved so dearly, and in the car’s cocoon she felt more able to think, inspired that her father’s rabid spirit still stirred inside its broken vessel and inside her. But she still felt like she bore the weight of the world. The times were so troubling: Anti-Viet Nam demonstrations, riots in Atlanta and Newark—so much chaos giving birth. To what? And her home town, the town of her home, teetering on the brink, its Panglossian movers and shakers deaf to crying voices, the flickering needle of their moral compass leading them to the eighth circle of hell reserved for frauds.

Yet Detroit would remain standing, or so it seemed. After all, she and her father and maybe Marc took their cue from JFK—idealists without illusions.

Sure the city had its share of hypocrites, and who knew how many victim constituencies spawned demagogues fomenting discontent or worse, anarchy. Even the Detroit dailies had agendas, subtly puncturing journalism's ideals like a screw through a steel-belted radial. Except their mind-control games gambled with lives and they seemed incapable of asking: what if we're wrong? But Detroit was still the Motor City, a robust town of a million and a half, and she and her father and Marc and people like them would help clean it up with goodwill shouted from its mountain top of problems and with hearts the size of billboards.

She assumed traffic on the expressway was thin because it was Sunday. The sound of sirens disrupted her thoughts. She looked up above the embankment of the sunken expressway and saw a plume of smoke and heard the clang of fire engines.

She resumed her reverie. The problems were formidable. Look at Marc, like many Detroiters of goodwill, heart in the right place but trapped in a system. Maybe hope was all there was.

Then she heard more sirens and tried to see over the inclined berm.

Another fire—huge—judging from the giant column of billowing smoke.

She exited the freeway and parked in front of her apartment building. More sirens in the distance. She was amused recalling the difficulty she and Marc had a few nights ago, drunkenly trying to get the key in the door. He passed out before he got lucky. That was okay, she covered his naked body and lay beside him, her arm around his chest, a lifeline for them both.

She threw her purse and keys onto the table and turned on the radio. A blind pig had been raided by the police during the night and a crowd had gathered. "Jesus, again?" she moaned. She

turned the volume down as she picked up the phone. It was three p.m. She hadn't eaten since yesterday. Her head pounded. She was exhausted and famished. She called Gaetano's for pizza. The phone rang a half dozen times before anybody picked up. Busy this time of day on a summer Sunday?

“Yes, I'd like a small pizza delivered please. Pepperoni.”

“Are you insane lady? We're closed. Don't you know there's a riot going on? The whole fuckin' town is on fire.”

###End###