

PROLOGUE

In a dark room, someone spoke. "Where do I begin?" Darkness turned to light. A man sat in a room, both hands handcuffed to a black table. Coffee cups sat on the table, some finished and some not. He looked straight at them. His eyes were bloodshot from a lack of sleep, his dark hair messy and out of place. He had not shaved for days. He was exhausted and drained. He was wearing a dark T-shirt and jeans. The room was lit by a single light above him. The walls were dark-red brick with a single barred window to the left. He kept looking at the window and back. A voice in front of him spoke. "What are you looking at?" The man, looking ahead, said, "Is it midday? What time is it?" A male voice replied, "Why? Do you have to be somewhere tonight?" The man yelled, "Just tell me the time!" A second voice spoke. "Calm down. It's twelve thirty in the afternoon. Are you okay with that?" The man dropped his head and took a gulp of air. "Thank God. I hate to have this conversation at night." A second voice spoke. "Why are you afraid of the dark?" He giggled. The man glared at the second man. "Know why you are here?" The first man said, "Okay, okay. Both of you, relax. Do you 'I should know. I used to be the one sitting where you guys are and did the interrogating myself."

"What day is it?" The first man replied, "Very good, detective. One more ques--"

"It's November 1."

"Very good, Detective. Now that we have cleared that up, let's begin. Tell us what happened last night."

"I honestly don't remember," the man answered. The first man said, "You don't remember any of the events from last month. Are you kidding me? This is a very serious situation. Your career and pension are on the line! If you don't tell us something, you will lose it all, and that I guarantee you, detective!" "I've already lost so much. What's the point now?" The second man said, "The point is that only we can decide your fate, depending on whether you tell us the truthful events of last month or not. My god, the entire neighborhood wants to pin a medal on you. They even started a GoFundMe to bail you out. They think you're a hero." "I'm not a hero." "Okay, so you're not. But you have been under the radar since all this got started, so I ask you again, what happened and why? Don't leave out any details because I promise, if you do, this will be a very long night for you." The man looked up; eyes wide open. "We can't do this all night. I'll talk. We have to get this done before nightfall. The moon will be out tonight, and I cannot have that!" The first man said, "There is no full moon tonight. It will be cloudy with a chance of rain." "Cloudy? But my charts-" "For the love of

God, are you going to give us the weather report now?" the second man interrupted. "Hey, calm down," the first man said. "Sorry, he gets a bit agitated when he hasn't eaten. Okay, detective. So, what's it going to be?" With his head down, he again took a deep breath. Then he looked up and said, "From the beginning?" "Let's hear it, then." "From the beginning." The first man turned on the digital recorder and leaned over to turn the DVD recorder. Satisfied, he took a deep breath, looked at them both, and began. He closed his eyes, and his mind went back, way back to another time in his life before this hell started.

My name is Detective Daniel Marco. My friends call me Danny. I was born on June 16, 1985, and raised in Brooklyn, New York. I'm thirty-three years old. I'm six foot four inches and weigh 247 pounds. I was raised in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. My girlfriend's name is Marie Marconi. My parents are Peter and Ellen. They own a family pizzeria, which my grandfather opened, called Marco's Pizza. I have two sisters, Mrs. Gina Marco-Dolori, and my younger sister is Theresa Marco. As far back as I can remember, I've always wanted to be a cop. My childhood friend Paul Corillo and I, at thirteen years old, made a promise to become police officers for the NYPD. It all started one day on our way home from school. We stopped by the local store near where we lived on Seventy-Second Street and Thirteenth Avenue. I was in the mood for a candy bar. We walked into the store. There was no one up front, and we didn't know what to think. Then at the end by the coolers, we heard people talking. "I don't think we should be here," said Paul. "Wait," I replied. "Listen." The voices grew louder and louder. Then we heard, "You knew I was coming today, and you don't have anything for me? I take that as an insult." I slowly walked around the shelf and saw the store owner. It was Mr. Chin Lei. He was the friendliest guy ever. This was his store, and he was proud of it, but the two guys, one in front of him and one behind, were not so friendly. "When we come, you pay. You don't pay, then there is a serious problem. Do you understand?" back. The second guy behind Mr. Chin gave him a punch in his lower back.

Mr. Chin was in pain from the sound of his voice. He was seventy years old, and these guys looked like they were in their thirties, "Come on," whispered Paul. "We can't be here." But I refused to leave. I wanted to help. Paul was scared, and so was I. But we couldn't move. Then I heard, "Next time we come, you better have something for us. Understand? No more excuses." "I understand," said Mr. Chin. "That's good. We understand each other, Lei. That's very good. Now we can move on. Let's go up front." As they turned from the cooler, the three of them saw us. Mr. Chin turned white. One of the two guys with him said something in his ear, and Mr. Chin smiled at us as they came to the front. "You boys should not be here. Please go home to your family" The guy next to him said, "Yeah, kid. You both go home

before your parents start to worry." He smiled at me and Paul. Paul was speechless and scared. I looked up at the guy and said, "Why were you hitting Mr. Chin? What did he do to you?" Mr. Chin's eyes just looked at me, and his expression said, Shut up! The second guy said, "Beat it, kids, and now." The other guy responded, "Easy, Vince. Is that the way you talk to your kids? I'll handle this." Addressing us, he continued, "Don't worry about him. He's not such a pleasant guy." This giant of a man walked closer to me, knelt, and looked at us. "So, what're your names?" Paul quickly spoke. "Don't tell him, Danny." Paul was so nervous that he just told them my name. The guys started laughing. The man looked at me and said, "That is friendship." Then he said, "Listen, Danny, what you saw was not what you think. I will just be straight with you. You and your buddy didn't see a thing. Forget what you saw and forget us. Move on, and everyone is happy. Okay?" "Okay," said Paul. He laughed again, and so did his buddy. Then he looked at me with a serious look and said, "Do you understand, Danny?"

I looked at him, then at Mr. Chin and the other guy. I looked at Paul and then back at the guy and said, "Yeah, I understand. I didn't see a thing." The guy smiled. "Good. I like it when people understand." He stood up, reached into his pocket, took out two twenty-dollar bills, and gave them to us. "Put it in your piggy bank," said the tall man. "Now, boys, please go home and remember what I said." Paul grabbed me by the arm and said, "Let's go, Danny." He pulled me back. "Let's go!" I never took my eyes off the tall man as I walked backward. When we were outside, walking past the store window, I kept my eyes on the tall guy until he was gone. As we walked closer to my house, I looked at Paul and said, "Can you believe this? He gave us twenty dollars to be quiet and not say anything. Paul looked at me and said, "I think we should listen and move on." I looked at Paul. "This is our neighborhood. We can't live like this. What if they hit my grandfather's pizzeria? Then what? Maybe we can't do anything now, but we can when we grow up." "What did you have in mind?" asked Paul. "Beat them up when they're old?" "Paul, when we grow up, we will be cops. And we will protect our neighborhood from guys like them. Let's make a pact, Paul." I extended my hand to see if Paul would agree. He smiled and said, "Well, the chicks do love guys in a uniform." We both giggled. "I'm with you." We made a pact and shook hands. As the years passed, Paul and I graduated from the police academy. As a police officer, I've seen so much garbage and the worst lowlifes during my days on patrol. I've made arrests, raided drug havens, and cleared traffic accidents. I tried to settle disputes and sometimes over parking. On the job, I gave it 100 percent. I didn't back away from anyone, no matter the situation. I did my job. All the hard work promoted me to detective along with my childhood friend, Detective Paul Corillo. We were like brothers, and we were always there for each other. I lived in a good neighborhood, on Thirteenth Avenue and Bay Ridge, with good

people who looked out for one another. And they loved the fact that a cop lived in the same neighborhood. The stores were nearby, and there were trains and buses for easy transportation. The locals were good, hardworking people supporting their families. Then you had the nonlocals who preyed on these people and the store owners, making collections, the same type of guys Paul and I saw when we were kids. If you didn't make a payment, they hurt you, and if you still didn't make a payment, they hurt a family member. You know who these guys are. They never worked a day in their life, and they think they own you by fear. They were the wise guys, mob men with no care for human life. I've crossed paths with them on the job, but nothing serious until now. They all worked for Don Ginetti. The guy was a ruthless animal with so many people in his pockets. No one spoke against him. If you did, no one would ever see you again. He had beaten every charge against him and walked away with a sick smile. He was always two steps ahead of us, and we couldn't figure out why. Maybe he had a source in the NYPD who was feeding him information, but the only problem was we never found out who it was or if we were wrong. His nickname was "the Untouchable Don." But soon everything changed the day these bags of garbage walked into my dad's pizzeria. What happened to me in Pennsylvania would change my life forever, and nothing would ever be the same again.