

**'THE OUTSTANDING
AMERICAN CRIME WRITER
OF HIS GENERATION'
INDEPENDENT**

JAMES Elroy



BROWN'S REQUIEM

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About the Book

Los Angeles – Fritz Brown, ex-alcoholic private eye with a stained past, makes do with car repossessions and classical music. Then he is offered a case by Freddy ‘Fat Dog’ Baker, an eccentric golf caddy whose sister has made off with a much older man.

This is the beginning of the nightmare: the underworld of golf caddies, arson and incest played against the backdrop of an LA surreal by night and bad by day; of long-hidden secrets that will drive Brown back to the bottle and to the gun: all conspire to make this one of the most hypnotic crime novels ever written.

About the Author

James Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948. He is the author of the acclaimed 'L.A. Quartet': *The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *L.A. Confidential* and *White Jazz*. His most recent novel, *Blood's a Rover*, completes the magisterial 'Underworld USA Trilogy' - the first two volumes of which (*American Tabloid* and *The Cold Six Thousand*) were both *Sunday Times* bestsellers.

ALSO BY JAMES ELLROY

THE UNDERWORLD U.S.A. TRILOGY

American Tabloid
The Cold Six Thousand
Blood's a Rover

THE L.A. QUARTET

The Black Dahlia
The Big Nowhere
L.A. Confidential
White Jazz

MEMOIR

My Dark Places
The Hilliker Curse

SHORT STORIES

Hollywood Nocturnes

JOURNALISM/SHORT FICTION

Crime Wave
Destination: Morgue!

EARLY NOVELS

Clandestine
Blood on the Moon
Because the Night
Suicide Hill

Killer on the Road

Brown's Requiem

James Ellroy

 WINDMILL BOOKS

To Randy Rice

Author Introduction

I WROTE THIS novel sixteen years ago. I was a thirty-one-year-old geek working as a caddy at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles. I had recently quit drinking and using drugs – and I was determined to write an autobiographical epic second to none.

I quickly realized that my life, though more colourful than most, was essentially an inward journey that would not lend itself all that well to fiction. I then ladled a big load of violent intrigue into my already simmering, très personal plot – and the result is the novel you are about to read.

Brown's Requiem is heavily beholden to Raymond Chandler – an icon I've come to dislike quite a bit. Big Ray was a true original who created a truly original style that lazy-assed writers have been imitating with some success for many years. I owe Ray a two-fold debt: he got me going, and he showed me that imitating him was a dead-end street on GenreHack Boulevard.

This is a righteous *private eye* novel: fast, profane, densely plotted for a first work. It's got that discursive philosophical tone that all good, bad and indifferent private eye novels have. I dig this book because it's a summation of my life up to that point when I picked up a pen to write it.

I hope *you* dig *Brown's Requiem*. I hope you read all my books in succession and come to believe that each one is better than the previous.

James Ellroy, Kansas, 7th April 1995

I

I, PRIVATE EYE

1

BUSINESS WAS GOOD. It was the same thing every summer. The smog and heat rolled in, blanketing the basin; people succumbed to torpor and malaise; old resolves died; old commitments went unheeded. And I profited: my desk was covered with repo orders, ranging in make and model from Datsun Sedan to Eldorado Ragtop, and in territory from Watts to Pacoima. Sitting at my desk, listening to the Beethoven Violin Concerto and drinking my third cup of coffee, I calculated my fees, less expenses. I sighed and blessed Cal Myers and his paranoia and greed. Our association dates back to my days with Hollywood Vice, when we were both in trouble and I did him a big favor. Now, years later, his guilty *noblesse oblige* supports me in something like middle-class splendor, tax free.

Our arrangement is simple, and a splendid hedge against inflation: Cal's down payments are the lowest in L.A., and his monthly payments the highest. My fee for a repossession is the sum of the owner's monthly whip-out. For this Cal gets the dubious satisfaction of having a licensed private investigator do his ripoffs, and implicit silence on my part regarding all his past activities. He shouldn't worry. I would never rat on him for anything, under any circumstances. Still, he does. We never talk about these things; our relationship is largely elliptical. When I was on the sauce, he felt he had the upper hand, but now that I'm sober he accords me more intelligence and cunningness than I possess.

I surveyed the figures on my scratch pad: 11 cars, a total of \$1,881.00 in monthlies, less 20 percent or \$376.20 for my

driver. \$1,504.80 for me. Things looked good. I took the record off the turntable, dusted it carefully, and replaced it in its sleeve. I looked at the Joseph Karl Stieler print on my living room wall: Beethoven, the greatest musician of all time, scowling, pen in hand, composing the *Missa Solemnis*, his face alight with inward heroism.

I called Irwin, my driver, and told him to meet me at my place in an hour and to bring coffee—there was work on the line. He was grumpy until I mentioned money. I hung up and looked out my window. It was getting light. Hollywood, below me, was filling up with hazy sunshine. I felt a slight tremor: part caffeine, part Beethoven, part a last passage of night air. I felt my life was going to change.

It took Irwin forty minutes to make the run from Koshers Canyon. Irwin is Jewish, I'm a second generation German-American, and we get along splendidly; we agree on all important matters: Christianity is vulgar, capitalism is here to stay, rock and roll is evil, and Germany and Judaica, as antithetical as they may be, have produced history's greatest musicians. He beeped the horn, and I clipped on my holster and went outside.

Irwin handed me a large cup of Winchell's black and a bag of donuts as I got in the car beside him. I thanked him, and dug in. "Business first," I said. "We've got eleven delinquents. Mostly in South Central L.A. and the East Valley. I've got credit reports on all of them and the people all have jobs. I think we can hit one a day, early mornings at the home addresses. That will get you to work on time. What we don't snatch there, I'll work on myself. Your cut comes to three hundred seventy-six dollars and twenty cents, payable next time I see Cal. Today we visit Leotis McCarver at 6318 South Mariposa."

As Irwin swung his old Buick onto the Hollywood Freeway southbound, I caught him looking at me out of the corner of his eye and I knew he was going to say something serious. I

was right. "Have you been all right, Fritz?" he asked. "Can you sleep? Are you eating properly?"

I answered, somewhat curtly, "I feel better in general, the sleep comes and goes, and I eat like a horse or not at all."

"How long's it been, now? Eight, nine months?"

"It's been exactly nine months and six days, and I feel terrific. Now let's change the subject." I hated to cut Irwin off, but I feel more comfortable with people who talk obliquely.

We got off the freeway around Vermont and Manchester and headed west to the Mariposa address. I checked the repo order: a 1978 Chrysler Cordoba, loaded. \$185 a month. License number CTL 412. Irwin turned north on Mariposa, and in a few minutes we were at the 6300 block. I fished out my master keys and detached the '78 Chrysler's. 6318 was a two-story pink stucco multi-unit dump, ultra-modern twenty years ago, with side entrances and an ugly schematic flamingo in black metal on the wall facing the street. The garage was subterranean, running back the whole length of the building.

Irwin parked in front. I handed him the original of the repo order and tucked the carbon into my back pocket. "You know the drill, Irwin. Stand by your car, whistle once if anyone enters the garage, twice if the fuzz show up. Be prepared to explain what I'm doing. Hold on to the repo order." Irwin knows the procedure as well as I do, but even after five years of legalized ripoffs, the whole deal still makes me nervous, and I repeat the instructions for luck. Strange things can happen, have happened, and the L.A.P.D. is notoriously trigger-happy. Having been one of them, I know.

I dropped down into the garage. I expected it to be dark, but the morning sunshine reflecting off the windows of the adjacent apartments provided plenty of light. When I spotted CTL 412, the third car from the end, I started to laugh. Cal Myers was going to shit. Leotis McCarver was

undoubtedly black, but his car was a full dress taco wagon: chopped, channeled, lowered, with a candy apple, lime-green paint job with orange and yellow flames covering the hood and sweeping halfway back over the sides of the vehicle. Black enamel script over the rear wheel wells announced that this was the "Dragon Wagon." I got out my master key and opened it. The interior was just as esoteric: fuzzy black and white zebra-striped upholstery, pink velveteen dice hanging from the rear-view mirror, and a furry orange accelerator pedal in the shape of a naked foot. The customizing must have cost old Leotis a fortune.

I was still laughing when I heard the scrape of a footstep off to my left near the backend of the garage. I turned and saw a black man almost as big as I am striding toward me. There was no time to avoid a confrontation. When he was ten feet away, he screamed "Motherfucker" and charged me. I was in the walkway, now, and just before he made contact I sidestepped and tripped him with a kick at his knee. As he struggled to get to his feet I kicked him once in the face, once in the neck, and once in the groin. He was moaning and spitting out teeth.

I dragged him over between two cars near the back of the garage and patted him down for weapons. Nothing. I left him there, got into his chariot, and pulled out onto Mariposa. Irwin was still standing there by his car, as if nothing had happened. "He tried to jump me, and I waxed him. Get out of here. Tomorrow, same time, my place." Irwin turned pale. This was the first time anything like this had happened. "Didn't you hear anything?" I yelled. I jammed on the gas, peeling rubber.

I looked in the fur-bordered, rear-view mirror. Irwin was just starting to get into his car. He looked like he was trembling. I hoped he wouldn't quit me.

I turned left on Slauson and right on Western, half a mile later. I had been driving for five minutes or so when I discovered that I was trembling. It got worse, so bad that I

could hardly hold the wheel steady. Then I felt my stomach start to churn and turn over. I pulled into the parking lot of a liquor store, got out, and vomited on the pavement until my stomach and lungs ached. My vomit tasted like coffee and sugar and fear. After a few minutes I started to calm down. A group of gangly black youths lounging against the liquor store wall and passing around a bottle of cheap wine had watched the whole scene, laughing at me like I was some rare breed of alien from outer space. I took several deep breaths, got back into the car and headed out to the Valley to see Cal Myers.

By the time I hit the freeway, my adrenalin rush had subsided. In five years as a repo-man I had had a dozen or so such encounters, been shot at twice, and beat up badly once. But this was my first confrontation since getting sober, and I was pleased that the old instincts and tricks were still there. I don't like hurting people, no sane man does, but there had been no alternative this time. My six years with the fuzz had taught me to read people for signs of violence, and that man had meant to fuck me up.

I recalled another repo from about three years back: a memo had come in from the bank stating that a woman had stiffed Cal with a rubber check for two months' delinquent payments and three months in advance. I checked out her home address and learned from her neighbors that she was a honcho at the local Scientology Center, a lesbian, and a Welfare recipient. No one at the Scientology joint or her apartment building had seen her for several days, so I broke in late that night and discovered she had moved out completely. When I told Cal what had happened and described the woman's lifestyle, he went nuts. Cal is a big right-winger and took the ditch-out as a personal affront. He told me to find the woman and repo the VW bus regardless of the time and expense involved, promising me a fat bonus if I succeeded.

Through coercion and bribery I got the Scientologists to relinquish the woman's new address in Berkeley. I flew up there, getting drunk on the plane. After sleeping off the booze in a rented room, I took a cab to the address I had been given. No VW bus, no one at home. I had the cabbie run me by the Scientology Celebrity Center. XLB841 was not in the lot, or on any of the surrounding blocks. I told him that we had some waiting to do, promising him fifty dollars plus the meter if he kept me company. He agreed.

Berkeley gave me the creeps: the people passing by looked aesthetic and angry, driven inward by forces they couldn't comprehend and rendered sickly by their refusal to eat meat. A lot of people passed through the center, but I didn't notice any celebrities.

Finally the VW bus pulled in. Suddenly I was pissed. I had tickets for the L.A. Philharmonic that night, and here I was, four hundred miles away, putting the arm on some counter-culture bimbo for her sleazy bus. Rather than waiting until she entered the building and pulling a simple ripoff, I ran across the street and intercepted her. Flashing my repo order in her face, I yelled, "I'm a private investigator and I have a repossession order for this vehicle. You have five minutes to remove your things, then she goes."

The pretty young woman nodded along with me, but when I went for the driver's side, she attacked. I had the key in the door when I felt a sharp kick in my leg. I turned around, the door half open, and caught her purse full in the face. I had never hit a woman, but I swung around and cocked my right arm. Then I hesitated. The heavy leather purse was arcing toward me again, and I grabbed it with both hands, wrenched it free, and hurled it across the parking lot. She was at me now, shrieking and clawing at my face. Her shrieks alerted the Scientologists within the building and I could see them goggling through the plate glass window. I grabbed the woman and flung her to the ground.

Luckily, the bus started easily. People were pouring into the parking lot. I swung out into the alley behind the lot. The woman was on her knees hurling invectives. Her best shot was “urban barracuda.” The cabbie was nowhere to be seen. I found the address of the cab company in the phone book, drove over, and left the dispatcher with an envelope containing fifty scoots. He told me Manny, the hackie, would get it when he clocked out.

I went back to Berkeley to move out my things. I sorted out my observations of the woman, her lifestyle, and her reaction when I presented her with the price of her culpability. I came to one conclusion: if life was to be a game of give and take, with a rational morality deciding who gives and who takes, I would have to watch my personal morality, but stay on the side of the takers. I drove over the Bay Bridge and got a room at the Fairmont, a magnum of Mumms and a call girl. L.A. looked good the next afternoon.

I left the freeway and turned onto Ventura Boulevard, where you can buy anything you want, and anything you don't want. The storefronts on this smoggy expressway feature manifestations of every scheme, dream, and hustle the jaded American mind can conceive. It is beyond tragedy, beyond vulgarity, beyond satire. It is supreme guilelessness. There are approximately eight billion of these storefronts—and three billion new and used car lots. Cal Myers has three: Cal's Casa de Carro, Myers' Ford, and Cal's Imports. He makes big bucks. He could sign a contract with a credit agency for his repossessions and save money, but we go back a long time, and he likes as well as fears me.

I ditched the bean-mobile at the Ford lot and dropped the keys and repo order with the sales manager. He told me Cal was across the street at Casa de Carro filming a commercial.

Cal comes from the same ethnic background I do and we both have blunt, ruddy faces, dark hair, and brown eyes. Black German. There the resemblance ends: he's much

smaller and far more dynamic-looking. The TV cameras were panning as Cal walked down a line of parked cars, stopping in front of each one and extolling its merits. When he got to the last one, he introduced his dog Barko, a senile German Shepherd, to the TV audience. Barko is a nice enough dog, although he smells. He's been with Cal since before he hit it big. When he was younger, Barko would make on-camera running leaps onto the hoods of cars, turn around, and bark repeatedly at the camera while subtitles were run across the bottom of the TV screen detailing all the wonderful facts about the car he was sitting on. Ingenious. Now that he's decrepit, Barko has been kicked upstairs to a supporting role: a three-second introduction and a pat on the head from Cal.

Rather than stand around watching dreary retakes of Cal's spiel, I walked over to his office and let myself in. The large room was out of another era, and I liked it: knotty pine walls with lush, dark-green Persian carpets over an oak floor, bookshelves crammed with texts and picture books on World War II, knotty pine beams studded with ornamental horseshoes. The largest beam, directly over Cal's giant oak desk, held the Myers Coat of Arms; a vulgar configuration of crosses, flowers, and trumpets around a wounded boar's head. The walls were festooned with framed photographs of Cal in the embrace of various politicians who had welcomed his campaign contributions. There was Cal with Ronnie Reagan, Cal with Sam Yorty, Cal solemnly shaking hands with Tricky Dick Nixon before his fall.

Cal came in, grinning. "Jesus, Fritz," he said, "what a work of fucking art! That guy, what's-his-name? McCoover? We should hire that fucker to redo all our waiting rooms, sales managers' offices, even redesign our magazine ads. Dragon Wagon! Ha! Ha! Ha! You know what it is, don't you, Fritz? It's those goddamned Ricardo Montalban Cordoba ads, 'I am a man, and I know what I want. I want Cordoba!' Old Ricardo is a Mexican, this guy McCoover has gotta be a nigger, he

sees the ad on TV, decides he wants to be a Mexican, and fucks up a beautiful car designed for white people! Jesus! Fucking Madison Avenue will fuck you every time.” Cal shook his head. “Two good things came out of the deal, though. One, we got old Dragon Baby back, and two, Larry found a bag of weed in the glove compartment. I told him to take it to Reuben and the guys at the car wash. Sparkle up their day.”

I forgot to mention that Cal is also the owner of Cal’s Car Wash, a tax dodge that he operates at a loss to “give my customers the best of . . . *total* service for their cars.” He hires nothing but wetbacks, and pays them the minimum wage, naturally. Little goodies, such as the weed and the occasional cases of beer he sends over, keep them from seeking more profitable work, like dishwashing. I decided not to tell him about my fight with McCarver. It would only prompt another racist tirade, undoubtedly not as amusing.

“We’ve got one down, ten to go. I’ll get them all provided they haven’t skipped town with no leads,” I said. “One a day, something like that. All the people are working.”

“Good, good. I have faith in you. You’ll do your usual superb job.” Cal looked at me seriously. “Any plans for your future? It’s been a while now; I think you’ll make it.”

“No real plans, as yet. Europe this fall, though. Work will slack off here, and I can catch the great orchestras of Germany and Austria at the beginning of their concert seasons.”

“You speak the language, too.”

“Enough to get by. I want to hear great music in its birthplace. That’s the main thing. Check out Beethoven House in Bonn, the Vienna Opera, Salzburg. Take a boat ride up the Rhine. I have a feeling that there are all kinds of hot chamber ensembles, unsung, playing in little country inns all over Germany. I’ve got the money, the weather is good in the fall, and I’m going.”

“Before you leave, we’ll talk. I’ll give you a list of good hotels and restaurants. The food can be great over there—or lousy. Right now, though, I have to split. I’m due on the tee in half an hour. Do you need any money?”

“Not for myself, but I need three hundred seventy-six dollars and twenty cents for my driver.” Cal went to the wall safe, extracted the amount, and handed it to me.

“You take care, Fritz,” he said, leading me outside, grabbing a twenty-pound bag of dried dog food as he locked the door behind him. He called to his secretary, “Feed Barko, will you, honey? I think he’s hungry.” The attractive, bespectacled blonde smiled and went for Barko’s dish.

I looked at Cal and shook my head. “All the money that dog has made for you, you cheap fuck, and you still feed him that dried shit?”

“He likes it. It’s good for his teeth.”

“He doesn’t have any teeth.”

“Then I must be a cheap fuck. I’ll see you, Fritz.”

“Take care, Cal.”

Larry, the sales manager at Casa, fixed me up with an old Cutlass demo, loaded. I told him I’d hang onto it for a week or so and return it gassed up. Rather than check out the places where my repo’ee’s worked, I decided to take the day off, maybe see my friend Walter. I headed down Ventura toward Coldwater. It was ten-thirty, and hot and smoggy already. Driving over the hill I felt good; relaxed and even a little hungry. Coming down into Beverly Hills, I felt again that my life was going to change.

I'VE GOT MY own tax shelter, the Brown Detective Agency. It's a detective agency in name only. As far as the IRS knows, I'm a starving gumshoe, declaring nine grand in total income and paying \$275 in income tax. I save about eighty bucks a year by claiming myself as a deduction. I used to advertise in the Yellow Pages, before the repo racket got lucrative, and actually handled a few cases, mostly runaway kids who had dropped into the drug culture; but that was years ago, when I had more illusions about myself as an urban manipulator. I still retain my office, an \$85 write-off, in a crummy office building on Pico in Rancho Park. I keep my library there and go there when I want to read. It's a dump, but it's air-conditioned.

I decided to head for the office now, since Walter was probably still passed out from last night's bout with T-Bird and TV. I parked in the lot, crossed the alley to the Apple Pan, and returned with three cheeseburgers and two coffees to go. I had wolfed down two of the burgers by the time I opened my office door. It was musty inside. I hit the air-conditioning immediately and settled into my chair.

It's not much of an office; just a small, square room with venetian blinds over a rear window facing an alley, a big, imitation-walnut desk with a naugahyde swivel recliner behind it for myself, a cheesy Bentwood rattan chair for clients, and an official-looking file cabinet that contains no files. There are two photographs of me on the wall, both designed to inspire confidence: Fritz Brown, circa 1968, my Police Academy graduation picture; and one of me in

uniform taken three years later. I was drunk when that one was taken and, if you look closely, you can tell.

I scarfed my last burger, flipped on KUSC and sat back. The music was early baroque, a harpsichord trio; nice, but without passion. I listened anyway. Baroque can send you off on a nice little cloud, conducive to quiet thoughts, and I was off on one of them when the doorbell rang. It couldn't be the landlord, since I paid by the year. Probably a salesman. I got up and opened the door. The man standing there didn't look like a salesman, he looked like a refugee from the Lincoln Heights drunk tank. "May I help you?" I said.

"Probably," the man replied, "if you're a private detective and this is your office."

"I am, and it is." I pointed to the visitor's chair. "Why don't you have a seat and tell me how I can help you."

He sat, grudgingly, after checking out the furnishings. He was close to forty, and fat, maybe 5'6" or 7" and about 220. He was wearing ridiculous soiled madras slacks three inches too short in the leg, a tight alligator golf shirt that encased his blubbery torso like a sausage skin, and black and white saddle golfshoes with the cleats removed. He looked like a wino golfer out of hell.

"I thought private eyes was older guys, retired from the police force," he said.

"I retired early," I said. "They wouldn't make me chief of police at twenty-five, so I told them to kiss my ass." He got a bang out of that and started to laugh, kind of hysterically. "My name is Fritz Brown, by the way. What's yours?"

"I'm Freddy Baker. You got the same initials as me. You can call me Fat Dog. It ain't no insult, everybody calls me that. I like it."

Fat Dog. Jesus. "Okay, Fat Dog. You can call me Fritz, or Mr. Brown, or Daddy-O. Now, why do you need a private investigator? Incidentally, the fee for my services is one

hundred twenty-five dollars a day, plus expenses. Can you afford that?"

"I can afford that, and more. I may not look like no millionaire, but I'm holding heavy. I'll whip some bread on you today, after I tell you what I want." Fat Dog Baker bored into me with wild blue eyes, and said "It's like this. I got this sister, my kid sister, Jane. She's the only family I got. Our folks is dead. For a long time now she's been staying with this rich guy. A Jewish guy. He's old; he don't try no sex stuff with her—it ain't like that—he just supports her and I never see her no more. This guy, he don't want her to have nothing to do with me. He pays for her music lessons, and Janey, my own sister, shines me on like I'm a piece of shit!" His voice had risen to a shout. He was sweating in the air-conditioned room and had clamped his hands around his thighs until his knuckles were white.

"What do you want me to do? Is your sister over eighteen?"

"Yeah, she's twenty-eight. I wasn't thinking about hanging no morals rap on him, I just know he's not right somehow! Somewhere, somehow, he's using my sister for something. She won't believe me, she won't even talk to me! You could follow her, couldn't you? Follow him, tail him around town, check out what he's into? He's fucking her around somehow, and I want to know what's happening."

I decided not to pass it up. I could work it in on my off time from the repo's. I liked the idea of a surveillance job. It sounded like an interesting change of pace.

"Okay, Fat Dog, I'll do it. I'll tail your sister and this nameless bad guy. We'll give it a week. I'll dig up all I can. But first, I need some more information." I got out a pen and a notebook. "Your sister's name is Jane Baker and she's twenty-eight years old, right?"

"Right."

"Have you got a photograph of her?" Fat Dog got out an old hand-tooled wallet and handed me a snapshot. Jane

Baker was a good-looking woman. There was humor in her mouth and intelligence in her eyes. She looked like the antithesis of her fat brother. When I put the photo in my desk drawer, Fat Dog looked at me suspiciously, like he had just handed me an ikon and was afraid I would break it. "Don't worry," I said, "I'll take good care of the picture and get it back to you."

"You do that. It's the only one I got."

"Now tell me about this guy. Anything and everything you know."

"His name's Sol Kupferman. He owns Solly K's Furriers. His address is 8914 Elevado. That's in Beverly Hills up north of Sunset, near the Beverly Hills Hotel."

"Describe him."

"He's about sixty-five, skinny, curly gray hair. Big nose. A typical Hebe."

I wrote down the information, such as it was. "What can you tell me about Kupferman? I take it your plan is to confront your sister with whatever dirt I can dig up on him."

"You got the picture. That's my plan. I heard lots of things about Solly K. All bad, but all rumors. Caddy yard stuff, you got to consider the source. It's *feelings* I got about him. Like *intuition*, you know what I mean?"

"Yeah. How did your sister meet Kupferman?"

"I was loopin' Hillcrest, maybe ten, twelve years ago. That's right down the street where all the Hebes play golf. She used to visit me in the caddy shack; sometimes she worked the lunchcounter there. But I didn't like her to. Loopers got dirty mouths. Anyway, that's where she met Solly K. He's a member there. He met her out on the golf course. She used to take walks out there. He got her interested in music, got her to start taking music lessons. She's been living with him ever since. She says he's her best friend and her benefactor. She hates me now. That Jew bastard made her hate me!"

Fat Dog was close to losing control, close to tears or some sort of outburst. His anti-Semitism was repulsive, but I wanted to know more about him. Somehow his insane rage grabbed and held me.

I tried to calm him down. "I'll give this my best shot, Fat Dog. I'm going to stick close to both of them and find out everything I can on Kupferman. You hang loose and don't worry."

"Okay. You want some bread now?"

The iconoclast in me trusted there was some kind of logic in his lunacy. "No, if you're holding as heavy as you say you are, I've got nothing to worry about. I'm going to give this thing a week or so. You can pay me then."

Fat Dog whipped out the fat old Mexican wallet again, and this time pulled out his roll. He fanned it in front of me. There must have been sixty or seventy C-notes. I wasn't surprised. A lifetime in Los Angeles had taught me never to take anything at face value, except money. Fat Dog wanted me to be impressed. I hated to disappoint him, so I tossed him a bone. After all, he was tossing me a big one. "Woo! Wpo!" I said. "I'm ditching this racket and becoming a caddy! Get me a hot-looking mama with a nice swing who likes to fuck. I'll give her the old nine-iron on the course and off. Woo! Woo!" Fat Dog was laughing like a hyena, threatening to fall off his chair. I had delivered. I hoped he didn't want more. Acting like a buffoon tires me quickly.

After a minute or so, he regained his composure and got serious again. "I know you'll do me good, man. The Fat Dog can judge people, and you're okay."

"Thanks. What's your phone number and address? I'll be needing to get in touch with you."

"I move around a lot, and in the summertime I sleep outside. I'm hard to find. L.A.'s full of fucking psychos, and you never know if one of 'em has your number. You can leave messages for me at the Tap and Cap—that's a beer bar at Santa Monica and Sawtelle. I'll get them."

“Okay, one last thing. You said your sister is a musician. What instrument does she play?”

“One of those big wooden things that stand up on a pole.”

The cello. That was interesting. As Fat Dog waved and walked out my office door, I found myself wondering if she could be any good.

I called an old friend who worked L.A.P.D. Records and Information and gave him three names, descriptions, and approximate years of birth: Solomon “Solly K” Kupferman, Frederick “Fat Dog” Baker, and Jane Baker. I told him I would call later for whatever info he had dredged up.

I got my Cutlass demo out of the lot. It looked prosperous enough for surveillance in Beverly Hills. I drove east on Pico and turned left on Beverly Drive, traveling up through the heart of the Beverly Hills business district, passing by shops catering to every taste in fashion, trinketry, and affluent boredom. North of Santa Monica the ritzy business facades gave way to ritzy personal ones: large, beautifully-tended lawns fronting Tudor mansions, Spanish villas, and pseudo-modern chateaus. When I crossed Sunset, the homes became larger still. This was the “pheasant under glass” district.

Sol Kupferman’s house was two blocks north of Sunset, off of Coldwater. It was some pad: a Moorish estate, immaculate white with twin turrets flying the California Bear flag. The house was set back at least forty yards from the street. A family of stone bears foraged on the broad front lawn, and there were two Cadillacs parked in the circular driveway: a one-year-old Eldorado convertible and a four- or five-year-old Coupe de Ville.

I parked directly across the street and decided to wait only one hour, not wanting to risk a confrontation with the ubiquitous Beverly Hills fuzz. I got out my binoculars and checked the license numbers on the two Cadillacs. The Eldorado bore a personalized plate: SOL K. The Coupe de Ville had one, too: CELLO-1. So far, my case was working

out. I switched on the radio just in time to catch *Luncheon At The Music Center* on KFAC. Thomas Cassidy was interviewing some French bimbo on the state of current French opera. The guy had lousy manners. You could hear him dropping his fork.

I turned off the radio and reached again for my binoculars. I was training them on Kupferman's front door when it opened and a man in a business suit came down the steps carrying a briefcase. I had seen him before, I knew that immediately, but it took a few seconds for my formidable memory to supply the time and place: the Club Utopia, late 1968, just before the place burned itself into immortality. The man—who fit Fat Dog's description of Kupferman perfectly—got into the Eldorado and backed out of the driveway and onto the street, passing me in the opposite direction.

I pulled into his driveway, and backed out to follow him. I caught him at the corner just before he turned right on Coldwater. I let a car get between us as Coldwater turned into Beverly Drive, and we headed south into Beverly Hills. It was a short trip. He turned right on Little Santa Monica and parked on the street half-a-block down. I drove on. He had parked in front of Solly K's Furriers. From my rear-view mirror I could see him enter the building. He had to be Kupferman.

In December of 1968, the Club Utopia, a sleazy neighborhood cocktail lounge located on Normandie near Slauson, was fire-bombed. Six patrons of the bar died. Surviving eyewitnesses described how three men who had been ejected from the bar earlier that evening had returned just before closing and tossed a Molotov cocktail into the crowded one-room lounge, turning it into an inferno. The three men were apprehended by L.A.P.D. detectives a few hours later. They admitted their culpability, but denied it was "their idea." They claimed the existence of a "fourth