

**'ELLROY IS A  
UNIQUE VOICE IN  
AMERICAN FICTION'**  
JONATHAN KELLERMAN

# **JAMES ELLROY**

A black silhouette of a detective wearing a fedora and holding a magnifying glass in his right hand and a vintage camera in his left hand. The magnifying glass is positioned over the word 'THE' in the title below.

**THE BIG  
NOWHERE**

# Contents

About the Book

Also by James Ellroy

Title Page

Dedication

## 1. Red Crosscurrents

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Sixteen

## 2. Upshaw, Considine, Meeks

Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty-one

Chapter Twenty-two

Chapter Twenty-three

Chapter Twenty-four

Chapter Twenty-five

Chapter Twenty-six  
Chapter Twenty-seven  
Chapter Twenty-eight  
Chapter Twenty-nine  
Chapter Thirty  
Chapter Thirty-one

3. Wolverine

Chapter Thirty-two  
Chapter Thirty-three  
Chapter Thirty-four  
Chapter Thirty-five  
Chapter Thirty-six  
Chapter Thirty-seven  
Chapter Thirty-eight  
Chapter Thirty-nine  
Chapter Forty

4. The Red Chaser Blues

Chapter Forty-one  
Chapter Forty-two

Copyright

## **About the Book**

1950s Los Angeles: The City of Angels has become the city of the Angel of Death.

Communist witch-hunts and insanely violent killings are terrorising the community. Three men are plunged into a maelstrom of violence and deceit when their lives become inextricably linked as each one confronts his own personal darkness...



## About the Author

James Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948. He is the author of the acclaimed 'LA Quartet': *The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *LA 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

Brown's Requiem

Clandestine

Blood on the Moon

Because the Night

Suicide Hill

Killer on the Road

# **THE BIG NOWHERE**

James Ellroy

 WINDMILL BOOKS



To  
Glenda Revelle

It was written that I should  
be loyal to the nightmare of my choice -

Joseph Conrad  
Heart of Darkness

1

# Red Crosscurrents

# ONE

THUNDERSHOWERS HIT JUST before midnight, drowning out the horn honks and noisemaker blare that usually signaled New Year's on the Strip, bringing 1950 to the West Hollywood Substation in a wave of hot squeals with meat wagon backup.

At 12:03, a four-vehicle fender bender at Sunset and La Cienega resulted in a half dozen injuries; the deputies who responded got eyewitness testimony: the crash was caused by the clown in the brown DeSoto and the army major in the Camp Cooke staff car racing no-hands with dogs wearing paper party hats on their laps. Two arrests; one call to the Verdugo Street Animal Shelter. At 12:14, an uninhabited vet's shack on Sweetzer collapsed in a heap of drenched prefab, killing a teenaged boy and girl necking under the foundation; two County Morgue DOA's. At 12:29, a neon lawn display featuring Santa Claus and his helpers short-circuited, shooting flames along the electrical cord to its inside terminus - a plug attached to a maze of adapters fueling a large, brightly lit Christmas tree and nativity scene - severely burning three children heaping tissue-wrapped presents on a glow-in-the-dark baby Jesus. One fire truck, one ambulance and three Sheriff's prowl cars to the scene, a minor jurisdictional foul-up when the LAPD appeared in force, a rookie dispatcher mistaking the Sierra Bonita Drive address as City - not County - territory. Then five drunk drivings; then a slew of drunk and disorderlies as the clubs on the Strip let out; then a strongarm heist in front of Dave's Blue Room, the victims two Iowa yokels in town for the Rose Bowl, the muscle two niggers who escaped in a '47 Merc with purple fender skirts. When the rain petered out shortly after 3:00, Detective Deputy Danny Upshaw, the station's

acting watch commander, predicted that the 1950's were going to be a shit decade.

Except for the drunks and nonbooze misdemeanants in the holding tank, he was alone. Every black-and-white and unmarked was out working graveyard; there was no chain of command, no switchboard/clerical girl, no plainclothes deputies in the squadroom. No khaki and olive drab patrolmen strutting around, smirking over their plum duty - the Strip, glossy women, Christmas baskets from Mickey Cohen, the real grief over the city line with the LAPD. No one to give him the fisheye when he picked up his criminology textbooks: Vollmer, Thorwald, Maslick - grid-searching crime scenes, blood spatter marks explained, how to toss an 18-foot-by-24-foot room for hard evidence in an hour flat.

Danny settled in to read, his feet up on the front desk, the station-to-prowler two-way turned down low. Hans Maslick was digressing on how to roll fingerprints off severely burned flesh, the best chemical compounds to remove scabbed tissue without singeing the skin below the surface of the print pattern. Maslick had perfected his technique during the aftermath of a prison fire in Düsseldorf in 1931. He had plenty of stiffs and fingerprint abstracts to work from; there was a chemical plant nearby, with an ambitious young lab assistant eager to help him. Together, they worked rapid fire: caustic solutions burning too deep, milder compounds not penetrating scarred flesh. Danny jotted chemical symbols on a notepad as he read; he pictured himself as Maslick's assistant, working side by side with the great criminologist, who would give him a fatherly embrace every time he made a brilliant logical jump. Soon he was transposing the scorched nativity scene kids against his reading, going solo, lifting prints off tiny fingers, double-checking them against birth records, the hospital precaution they took in case newborns got switched around -

'Boss, we got a hot one.'

Danny glanced up. Hosford, a uniformed deputy working the northeast border of the division, was in the doorway. 'What? Why didn't you call it in?'

'I did. You mustn't of -'

Danny pushed his text and notepad out of sight. 'What is it?'

'Man down. I found him - Allegro, a half mile up from the Strip. Jesus dog, you ain't ever seen noth -'

'You stay here, I'm going.'

Allegro Street was a narrow residential road, half Spanish bungalow courts, half building sites fronted by signs promising DELUXE LIVING in the Tudor, French Provincial and Streamline Moderne styles. Danny drove up it in his civilian car, slowing when he saw a barrier of sawhorses with red blinkers, three black-and-whites parked behind it, their headlights beaming out into a weed-strewn vacant lot.

He left his Chevy at the curb and walked over. A knot of deputies in rain slickers were pointing flashlights at the ground; cherry lamp glow fluttered over a sign for the ALLEGRO PLANTATION ARMS - FULL TENANCY BY SPRING 1951. The prowlers' low beams crisscrossed the lot, picking out booze empties, sodden lumber and paper debris. Danny cleared his throat; one of the men wheeled and pulled his gun, spastic twitchy. Danny said, 'Easy, Gibbs. It's me, Upshaw.'

Gibbs reholstered his piece; the other cops separated. Danny looked down at the corpse, felt his knees buckle and made like a criminologist so he wouldn't pass out or vomit:

'Deffry, Henderson, keep your lights on the decedent. Gibbs, write down what I say verbatim.'

'Dead male Caucasian, nude. Approximate age thirty to thirty-five. The cadaver is lying supine, the arms and legs spread. There are ligature marks on the neck, the eyes have been removed and the empty sockets are extruding a gelatinous substance.'

Danny squatted by the corpse; Deffry and Henderson moved their flashlights in to give him some close-ups. 'The genitals are bruised and swollen, there are bite marks on the glans of the penis.' He reached under the dead man's back and felt wet dirt; he touched the chest near the heart, got dry skin and a residue of body heat. 'There is no precipitation on the cadaver, and since it rained heavily between midnight and three A.M., we can assume the victim was placed here within the past hour.'

A siren wailed toward the scene. Danny grabbed Deffry's flashlight and went in extra close, examining the worst of it. 'There is a total of six oval, irregular, circumscribed wounds on the torso between the navel and rib cage. Shredded flesh outlines the perimeters, entrails coated with congealed blood extruding from them. The skin around each wound is inflamed, directly outlining the shred marks, and -'

Henderson said, 'Hickeys sure as shit.'

Danny felt his textbook spiel snap. 'What are you talking about?'

Henderson sighed. 'You know, love bites. Like when a dame starts sucking on your neck. Gibbsey, show plainclothes here what that hat check girl at the Blue Room did to you Christmas.'

Gibbs chuckled and kept writing; Danny stood up, pissed at being patronized by a flunky harness bull. Not talking made the stiff sucker-punch him; his legs were rubber and his stomach was flip-flops. He flashed the five-cell at the ground surrounding the dead man, saw that it had been thoroughly trampled by LASD-issue brogans and that the prowl cars had obliterated any possible tire tracks. Gibbs said, 'I ain't sure I got all them words spelled right.'

Danny found his textbook voice. 'It doesn't matter. Just hold on to it and give it to Captain Dietrich in the morning.'

'But I'm off at eight. The skipper don't come in till ten, and I got Bowl tickets.'



‘Sorry, but you’re staying here until daywatch relieves you or the lab techs show up.’

‘The County lab’s closed New Year’s, and I’ve had them tickets –’

A Coroner’s wagon pulled to a stop by the sawhorses, killing its siren; Danny turned to Henderson. ‘Crime scene ropes, no reporters or rubberneckers. Gibbs stays posted here, you and Deffry start shaking down the locals. You know the drill: witnesses to the dumping, suspicious loiterers, vehicles.’

‘Upshaw, it is four-twenty fucking A.M.’

‘Good. Start now, and you may be finished by noon. Leave a report in duplicate with Dietrich, and write down all the addresses where no one was home, so they can be checked later.’

Henderson stormed over to his cruiser; Danny watched the Coroner’s men place the body on a stretcher and drape it with a blanket, Gibbs talking a blue streak to them, Rose Bowl odds and a number on the Black Dahlia case, still unsolved, still a hot topic. The profusion of cherry lights, flashlights and headbeams darted over the lot, picking out details: mud puddles reflecting moonlight and shadows, the neon haze of Hollywood in the distance. Danny thought of his six months as a detective, his own two homicides open-and-shut family jobs. The morgue men loaded the body, hung a U-turn and took off sans siren. A Vollmer maxim hit home: ‘In murders of extreme passion, the killer will always betray his pathology. If the detective is willing to sort physical evidence objectively and then *think* subjectively from the killer’s viewpoint, he will often solve crimes that are baffling in their randomness.’

Eyes poked out. Sex organs mauled. Bare flesh gored down to the quick. Danny followed the morgue wagon downtown, wishing his car had a siren to get him there faster.

The LA City and County morgues occupied the bottom floor of a warehouse on Alameda just south of Chinatown. A wooden partition separated the two operations: examination slabs, refrigerators and dissecting tables for bodies found within City confines, a different set of facilities for stiffes from the unincorporated area patrolled by the Sheriff's Department. Before Mickey Cohen sent the LAPD and Mayor's Office topsy-turvy with his Brenda Allen revelations - the high brass taking kickbacks from LA's most famous whores - there had been solid City/County cooperation, pathologists and cadaver caddies sharing plastic sheets, bone saws and pickling fluid. Now, with the County cops giving Cohen shelter on the Strip, there was nothing but interagency grief.

Edicts had come down from City Personnel: *no* loan-outs of City medical tools; *no* fraternizing with the County crew while on duty; *no* Bunsen burner moonshine parties, for fear of mistagged DOA's and body parts snatched as souvenirs resulting in scandals to back up the Brenda Allen job. Danny Upshaw followed the stretcher bearing John Doe # 1-1/1/50 up the County loading dock, knowing his chance of getting his favorite City pathologist to do the autopsy was close to nil.

The County side was bustling: traffic fatalities lined up on gurneys, morgue jockeys tagging big toes, uniformed deputies writing dead body reports and Coroner's men chaining cigarettes to kill the stench of blood, formaldehyde and stale chink takeout. Danny sidestepped his way over to a fire exit, then hooked around to the City loading dock, interrupting a trio of LAPD patrolmen singing 'Auld Lang Syne.' Inside, the scene was identical to the one on the County turf, except that the uniforms were navy blue - not olive drab and khaki.

Danny headed straight for the office of Dr. Norton Layman, Assistant Chief Medical Examiner for the City of Los Angeles, author of *Science Against Crime* and his instructor

for the USC night school course 'Forensic Pathology for Beginners.' A note was tacked to the door: 'I'm on days starting 1/1. May God bless our new epoch with less business than the first half of this rather bloody century - N. L.'

Cursing to himself, Danny got out his pen and notepad and wrote:

'Doc - I should have known you'd take the busiest night of the year off. There's an interesting 187 on the County side - male, sexually mutilated. Grist for your new book, and since I caught the squeal I'm sure I'll get the case. Will you try to get the autopsy? Capt. Dietrich says the ME on the County day shift gambles and is susceptible to bribes. Enough said - D. Upshaw.' He placed the sheet of paper on Layman's desk blotter, anchored it with an ornamental human skull and walked back to County territory.

Business had slacked off. Daylight was starting to creep across the loading dock; the night's catch was lined up on steel examination slabs. Danny looked around and saw that the only live one in the place was an ME's assistant propped up in a chair by the dispatch room, alternately picking his teeth and his nose.

He walked over. The old man, breathing raisinjack, said, 'Who are you?'

'Deputy Upshaw, West Hollywood Squad. Who's catching?'

'Nice duty. Ain't you a little young for a gravy job like that?'

'I'm a hard worker. Who's catching?'

The old man wiped his nose-picking finger on the wall. 'I can tell conversation ain't your strong suit. Doc Katz was catching, only a snootful of juice caught him. Now he's catching a few winks in that kike kayak of his. How come the hebes all drive Cadillacs? You're a detective, you got an answer for that?'

Danny felt his fists jam into his pockets and clench, his warning to ease down. 'It beats me. What's your name?'

‘Ralph Carty, that’s –’

‘Ralph, have you ever done a preautopsy prep?’

Carty laughed. ‘Sonny, I done them all. I did Rudy Valentino, who was hung like a cricket. I did Lupe Velez and Carole Landis, and I got pictures of both of them. Lupe shaved her snatch. You pretend they ain’t dead, you can have fun. What do you say? Lupe and Carole, five-spot a throw?’

Danny got out his billfold and peeled off two tens; Carty went for his inside jacket pocket, whipping out a deck of glossies. Danny said, ‘Nix. The guy I want is on a tray over there.’

‘What?’

‘I’m doing the prep. *Now.*’

‘Sonny, you ain’t a certified County morgue attendant.’

Danny added a five-spot to his bribe and handed it to Carty; the old man kissed a faded snapshot of a dead movie star. ‘I guess you are now.’

Danny got his evidence kit from the car and went to work, Carty standing sentry in case the duty ME showed up pissed.

He stripped the sheet off the corpse and felt the limbs for postmortem lividity; he held the arms and legs aloft, dropped them and got the buckle that indicated rigor mortis coming on. He wrote, ‘Death around 1:00 A.M. likely,’ on his notepad, then smeared the dead man’s fingertips with ink and rolled his prints onto a piece of stiff cardboard, pleased that he got a perfect spread the first time around.

Next he examined the neck and head, measuring the purpled ligature marks with a caliper, writing the specs down. The marks encompassed the entire neck; much too long and broad to be a single- or double-hand span. Squinting, he saw a fiber under the chin; he picked it off with a tweezer, nailed it as white terrycloth, placed it in a test tube and on impulse forced the half-locked jaws open,

holding them wide with a tongue depressor. Shining his penlight into the mouth, he saw identical fibers on the roof, tongue and gums; he wrote, 'Strangled and suffocated with white terrycloth towel,' took a deep breath and checked out the eye sockets.

The penlight beam picked out bruised membranes streaked with the gelatinous substance he'd noticed at the building site; Danny took a Q-tip and swabbed three slide samples from each cavity. The goo had a minty medicinal odor.

Working down the cadaver, Danny spot-checked every inch; scrutinizing the inside crook of the elbows, he tingled: old needle scars - faded, but there in force on both the right and left arms. The victim was a drug addict - maybe reformed - none of the tracks were fresh. He wrote the information down, grabbed his caliper and braced himself for the torso wounds.

The six ovals measured to within three centimeters of each other. They all bore teethmark outlines too shredded to cut casts from - and all were too large to have been made by a human mouth biting straight down. Danny scraped congealed blood off the intestinal tubes that extended from the wounds; he smeared the samples on slides and made a speculative jump that Doc Layman would have crucified him for:

The killer used an animal or animals in the postmortem abuse of his victim.

Danny looked at the dead man's penis; saw unmistakable human teeth marks on the glans, what Layman called 'homicidal affection,' working for laughs in a classroom packed with ambitious off-duty cops. He knew he should check the underside and scrotum, saw Ralph Carty watching him and did it, getting no additional mutilations. Carty cackled, 'Hung like a cashew'; Danny said, 'Shut the fuck up.'

Carty shrugged and went back to his *Screenworld*. Danny turned the corpse onto its back and gasped.

Deep, razor-sharp cuts, dozens of them crisscrossing the back and shoulders from every angle, wood splinters matted into the narrow strips of caked blood.

Danny stared, juxtaposing the front and backside mutilations, trying to put them together. Cold sweat was soaking his shirt cuffs, making his hands twitch. Then a gruff voice. 'Carty, who is this guy? What's he doing here?'

Danny turned around, putting a pacify-the-locals grin on; he saw a fat man in a soiled white smock and party hat with '1950' in green spangles. 'Deputy Upshaw. You're Dr. Katz?'

The fat man started to stick out his hand, then let it drop. 'What are you doing with that cadaver? And by what authority do you come in here and disrupt my workload?'

Carty was shrinking into the background, making with supplicating eyes. Danny said, 'I caught the squeal and wanted to prep the body myself. I'm qualified, and I lied and told Ralph you said it was kosher.'

Dr. Katz said, 'Get out of here, Deputy Upshaw.'

Danny said, 'Happy New Year.'

Ralph Carty said, 'It's the truth, Doc - if I'm lyin', I'm flyin'.'

Danny packed up his evidence kit, wavering on a destination: canvassing Allegro Street or home, sleep and dreams: Kathy Hudgens, Buddy Jastrow, the blood house on a Kern County back road. Walking out to the loading dock, he looked back. Ralph Carty was splitting his bribe money with the doctor in the rhinestone party hat.

## Two

LIEUTENANT MAL CONSIDINE was looking at a photograph of his wife and son, trying not to think of Buchenwald.

It was just after 8:00 A.M.; Mal was in his cubicle at the DA's Criminal Investigation Bureau, coming off a fitful sleep fueled by too much Scotch. His trouser legs were covered with confetti; the roundheeled squadroom steno had smeared kisses on his door, bracketing EXECUTIVE OFFICER in Max Factor's Crimson Decadence. The City Hall sixth floor looked like a trampled parade ground; Ellis Loew had just awakened him with a phone call: meet him and 'someone else' at the Pacific Dining Car in half an hour. And he'd left Celeste and Stefan at home alone to ring in 1950 – because he knew his wife would turn the occasion into a war.

Mal picked up the phone and dialed the house. Celeste answered on the third ring – 'Yes? Who is this that is calling?' – her bum phrasing a giveaway that she'd been speaking Czech to Stefan.

'It's me. I just wanted to let you know that I'll be a few more hours.'

'The blonde is making demands, Herr Lieutenant?'

'There's no blonde, Celeste. You know there's no blonde, and you know I always sleep at the Hall after the New Year's –'

'How do you say in English – rotkopf? Redhead? Kleine rotkopf scheisser schtupper –'

'Speak English, goddamn it! Don't pull this with me!'

Celeste laughed: the stage chortles that cut through her foreign-language routine and always made him crazy. 'Put my son on, goddamn it!'

Silence, then Celeste Heisteke Considine's standard punch line: 'He's not your son, Malcolm. His father was Jan



Heisteke, and Stefan knows it. You are my benefactor and my husband, and the boy is eleven and must know that his heritage is not amerikanisch police talk and baseball and –

*‘Put my son on, goddamn you.’*

Celeste laughed softly. Mal knew she was acknowledging match point – him using his cop voice. The line went silent; in the background he could hear Celeste cooing Stefan out of sleep, singsong words in Czech. Then the boy was there – smack in the middle of them. ‘Dad – Malcolm?’

‘Yeah. Happy New Year.’

‘We saw the fireworks. We went on the roof and held umb-umb –’

‘You held umbrellas?’

‘Yes. We saw the City Hall light up, then the fireworks went, then they . . . fissured?’

Mal said, ‘They fizzled, Stefan. F-i-z-z-l-e-d. A fissure is a kind of a hole in the ground.’

Stefan tried the new word. ‘F-i-s-u-r-e?’

‘Two s’s. We’ll have a lesson when I get home, maybe take a drive by Westlake Park and feed the ducks.’

‘Did you see the fireworks? Did you look out the window to see?’

He had been parrying Penny Diskant’s offer of a cloakroom quickie then, breasts and legs grinding him, wishing he could do it. ‘Yeah, it was pretty. Son, I have to go now. Work. You go back to sleep so you’ll be sharp for our lesson.’

‘Yes. Do you want to speak to Mutti?’

‘No. Goodbye, Stefan.’

‘Goodbye, D-D-Dad.’

Mal put down the phone. His hands were shaking and his eyes held a film of tears.

Downtown LA was shut down tight, like it was sleeping off a drunk. The only citizens in view were winos lining up for doughnuts and coffee outside the Union Rescue Mission;

cars were erratically parked – snouts to smashed fenders – in front of the hot-sheet hotels on South Main. Sodden confetti hung out of windows and littered the sidewalk, and the sun that was looming above the eastern basin had the feel of heat, steam and bad hangovers. Mal drove to the Pacific Dining Car wishing the first day of the new decade an early death.

The restaurant was packed with camera-toting tourists wolfing the ‘Rose Bowl Special’ – hangtown fry, flapjacks, Bloody Marys and coffee. The headwaiter told Mal that Mr. Loew and another gentleman were waiting for him in the Gold Rush Room – a private nook favored by the downtown legal crowd. Mal walked back and rapped on the door; it was opened a split second later, and the ‘other gentleman’ stood there beaming. ‘Knock, knock, who’s there? Dudley Smith, so Reds beware. Please come in, Lieutenant. This is an auspicious assemblage of police brain power, and we should mark the occasion with proper amenities.’

Mal shook the man’s hand, recognizing his name, his style, his often imitated tenor brogue. Lieutenant Dudley Smith, LAPD Homicide. Tall, beefside broad and red-faced; Dublin born, LA raised, Jesuit college trained. Priority case hatchet man for every LA chief of police dating back to Strongarm Dick Steckel. Killed seven men in the line of duty, wore custom-made club-figured ties: 7’s, handcuff ratchets and LAPD shields stitched in concentric circles. Rumored to carry an Army .45 loaded with garlic-coated dumdums and a spring-loaded toad stabber.

‘Lieutenant, a pleasure.’

‘Call me Dudley. We’re of equal rank. I’m older, but you’re far better looking. I can tell we’re going to be grand partners. Wouldn’t you say so, Ellis?’

Mal looked past Dudley Smith to Ellis Loew. The head of the DA’s Criminal Division was seated in a thronelike leather chair, picking the oysters and bacon out of his hangtown fry.

'I would indeed. Sit down, Mal. Are you interested in breakfast?'

Mal took a seat across from Loew; Dudley Smith sat down between them. The two were dressed in vested tweed suits – Loew's gray, Smith's brown. Both men sported regalia: Phi Beta Kappa key for the lawyer, lodge pins dotting the cop's lapels. Mal adjusted the crease in his rumpled flannels and thought that Smith and Loew looked like two mean pups out of the same litter. 'No thanks, counselor.'

Loew pointed to a silver coffeepot. 'Java?'

'No thanks.'

Smith laughed and slapped his knees. 'How about an explanation for this early morning intrusion on your peaceful family life?'

Mal said, 'I'll guess. Ellis wants to be DA, I want to be Chief DA's Investigator and you want to take over the Homicide Bureau when Jack Tierney retires next month. We've got venue on some hot little snuff that I haven't heard about, the two of us as investigators, Ellis as prosecuting attorney. It's a career maker. Good guess?'

Dudley let out a whooping laugh; Loew said, 'I'm glad you didn't finish law school, Malcolm. I wouldn't have relished facing you in court.'

'I hit it, then?'

Loew forked an oyster and dipped it in egg juice. 'No. We've got our tickets to those positions you mentioned, though. Pure and simple. Dudley volunteered for his own –'

Smith interrupted: 'I volunteered out of a sense of patriotism. I hate the Red filth worse than Satan.'

Mal watched Ellis take one bit of bacon, one of oyster, one of egg. Dudley lit a cigarette and watched him; Mal could see brass knuckles sticking out of his waistband. 'Why am I thinking grand jury job?'

Loew leaned back and stretched; Mal knew he was reaching for his courtroom persona. 'Because you're smart. Have you been keeping abreast of the local news?'

‘Not really.’

‘Well, there’s a great deal of labor trouble going on, with the Hollywood movie studios in particular. The Teamsters have been picketing against the UAES – the United Alliance of Extras and Stagehands. They’ve got a long-term contract with RKO and the cheapie studios on Gower. They’re picketing for more money and profit points, but they’re not striking, and –’

Dudley Smith slammed the tabletop with two flattened palms. ‘Subversive, mother-hating Pinks, every one of them.’

Loew did a slow burn; Mal sized up the Irishman’s huge hands as neck snappers, ear gougers, confession makers. He made a quick jump, pegged Ellis as being afraid of Smith, Smith hating Loew on general principles: as a sharpster Jew lawyer son of a bitch. ‘Ellis, are we talking about a *political* job?’

Loew fondled his Phi Beta Kappa key and smiled. ‘We are talking about an extensive grand jury investigation into Communist influence in Hollywood, you and Dudley as my chief investigators. The investigation will center around the UAES. The union is rife with subversives, and they have a so-called braintrust that runs things: one woman and a half dozen men – all heavily connected to fellow travelers who went to jail for pleading the Fifth before HUAC in ‘47. Collectively, UAES members have worked on a number of movies that espouse the Commie line, *and* they’re connected to a veritable Dun and Bradstreet of other subversives. Communism is like a spider’s web. One thread leads to a nest, another thread leads to a whole colony. The threads are names, and the names become witnesses and name more names. And you and Dudley are going to get me all those names.’

Silver captain’s bars danced in Mal’s head; he stared at Loew and ticked off objections, devils advocate against his own cause. ‘Why me instead of Captain Bledsoe? He’s Chief

DA's Investigator, he's Mr. Toastmaster for the whole goddamn city and he's everybody's favorite uncle - which is important, since you come across like a shark. I'm a detective specializing in collecting homicide evidence. Dudley is Homicide brass flat out. Why *us*? And why now - at nine A.M. New Year's morning?'

Loew counted rebuttal points on his fingers, the nails coated with clear polish and buffed to a gloss. 'One, I was up late last night with the District Attorney. The Bureau's final fiscal 1950 budget has to be submitted to the City Council tomorrow, and I convinced him that the odd forty-two thousand dollars we had left over should be used to fight the Red Menace. Two, Deputy DA Gifford of the Grand Jury Division and I have agreed to switch jobs. He wants criminal prosecution experience, and you know what I want. Three, Captain Bledsoe is going senile. Two nights ago he gave a speech to the Greater Los Angeles Kiwanis Club and lapsed into a string of obscenities. He created quite a stir when he announced his intention to "pour the pork" to Rita Hayworth, to "hose her till she bleeds." The DA checked with Bledsoe's doctor, and learned that our dear Captain has had a series of small strokes that he's kept under wraps. He will be retiring on April fifth - his twentieth anniversary with the Bureau - and he is strictly a figurehead until then. Fourth, you and Dudley are damn good, damn smart detectives, and an intriguing contrast in styles. Fifth -'

Mal hit the tabletop a la Dudley Smith. 'Fifth, we both know the DA wants an outside man for Chief Investigator. He'll go to the Feds or fish around the LAPD before he takes me.'

Ellis Loew leaned forward. 'Mal, he's agreed to give it to you. Chief Investigator and a captaincy. You're thirty-eight?'

'Thirty-nine.'

'A mere infant. Do well at the job and within five years you'll be fending off police chief offers with a stick. And I'll

be District Attorney and McPherson will be Lieutenant Governor. Are you in?’

Ellis Loew’s right hand was resting flat on the table; Dudley Smith covered it with his and smiled, all blarney. Mal reviewed his caseload: a hooker snuff in Chinatown, two unsolved shine killings in Watts, a stickup and ADW at a coon whorehouse frequented by LAPD brass. Low priority, no priority. He put his hand on the pile and said, ‘I’m in.’

The pile dispersed; Dudley Smith winked at Mal. ‘Grand partners in a grand crusade.’ Ellis Loew stood up beside his chair. ‘First, I’ll tell you what we have, then I’ll tell you what we need.

‘We have sworn depositions from Teamster members, stating Red encroachment within the UAES. We’ve got Commie front membership lists cross-filed with a UAES membership list – with a lot of matching names. We’ve got prints of pro-Soviet films made during the war – pure Red propaganda – that UAES members worked on. We’ve got the heavy artillery that I’ll mention in a minute and I’m working on getting a batch of Fed surveillance photos: UAES brain trusters hobnobbing with known Communist Party members and HUAC indictees at Sleepy Lagoon protest activities back in ’43 and ’44. Good ammo, right from the gate.’

Mal said, ‘The Sleepy Lagoon stuff might backfire. The kids that were convicted were innocent, they never got the real killer and the cause was too popular. Republicans signed the protest petition. You might want to rethink that approach.’

Dudley Smith doused his cigarette in the remains of his coffee. ‘They were guilty, lad. All seventeen. I know that case. They beat José Diaz half to death, dragged him out to the Lagoon and ran him down with an old jalopy. A pachuco passion job, pure and simple. Diaz was sticking it to somebody’s cousin’s brother’s sister. You know how those taco benders intermarry and breed. Mongoloid idiots, all of them.’

Mal sighed. 'It was a railroad, Lieutenant. It was right before the zoot suit riots, and everyone was cuckoo about the mexes. And a Republican governor pardoned those kids, not the Commies.'

Smith looked at Loew. 'Our friend here takes the word of the fourth estate over the word of a brother officer. Next he'll be telling us the Department was responsible for all our pooooor Latin brethren hurt during the riot. A popular Pinko interpretation, I might add.'

Mal reached for a plate of rolls – keeping his voice steady to show the big Irishman he wasn't afraid of him. 'No, a popular LAPD one. I was on the Department then, and the men I worked with tagged the job as horseshit, *pure and simple*. Besides –'

Loew raised his voice – just as Mal heard his own voice start to quiver. '*Gentlemen, please.*'

The interruption allowed Mal to swallow, dredge up a cold look and shoot it at Dudley Smith. The big man shot back a bland smile, said, 'Enough contentiousness over a worthless dead spic,' and extended his hand. Mal shook it; Smith winked.

Ellis Loew said, 'That's better, because guilty or not guilty isn't germane to the issue here. The fact is that the Sleepy Lagoon case attracted a lot of subversives and *they* exploited it to their ends. That's *our* focus. Now I know you both want to go home to your families, so I'll wind this up for today.

'Essentially, you two will be bringing in what the Feds call "friendly witnesses" – UAESers and other lefties willing to come clean on their Commie associations and name names. You've got to get admissions that the pro-Red movies UAES worked on were part of a conscious plot – propaganda to advance the Communist cause. You've got to get proof of venue – subversive activities within LA City proper. It also wouldn't hurt to get some big names. It's common



knowledge that a lot of big Hollywood stars are fellow travelers. That would give us some . . .'

Loew paused. Mal said, 'Marquee value?'

'Yes. Well put, if a bit cynical. I can tell that patriotic sentiment doesn't come easy to you, Malcolm. You might try to dredge up some fervor for this assignment, though.'

Mal thought of a rumor he'd heard: that Mickey Cohen bought a piece of the LA Teamsters off of their East Coast front man - an ex-syndicate trigger looking for money to invest in Havana casinos. 'Mickey C. might be a good one to tap for a few bucks if the City funding runs low. I'll bet he wouldn't mind seeing the UAES out and his boys in. Lots of money to be made in Hollywood, you know.'

Loew flushed. Dudley Smith tapped the table with a huge knuckle. 'No dummy, our friend Malcolm. Yes, lad. Mickey would like the Teamsters in and the studios would like the UAES out. Which doesn't negate the fact that the UAES is crawling with Pinks. Did you know, lad, that we were almost colleagues once before?'

Mal knew: Thad Green offering him a transfer to the Hat Squad when his sergeantcy came through back in '41. He turned it down, having no balls for armed robbery stakeouts, going in doors gun first, gunboat diplomacy police work: meeting the Quentin bus at the depot, pistol-whipping hard boys into a docile parole. Dudley Smith had killed four men working the job. 'I wanted to work Ad Vice.'

'I dont' blame you, lad. Less risk, more chance for advancement.'

The old rumors: Patrolman/Sergeant/Lieutenant Mal Considine, LAPD/DA's Bureau comer, didn't like to get his hands dirty. Ran scared as a rookie working 77th Street Division - the heart of the Congo. Mal wondered if Dudley Smith knew about the gas man at Buchenwald. 'That's right. I never saw any percentage there.'

'The squad was wicked fun, lad. You'd have fit right in. The others didn't think so, but you'd have convinced them.'