

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Because the Night

James Ellroy

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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
Suicide Hill
Killer on the Road

Because the Night

James Ellroy

 WINDMILL BOOKS

To Edith Eisler

I must take charge of the liquid fire, and storm the cities of human desire
—W. H. Auden

ONE

THE LIQUOR STORE stood at the tail end of a long stretch of neon, where the Hollywood Freeway cut across Sunset, the dividing line between bright lights and residential darkness.

The man in the yellow Toyota pulled into the bushes beside the on-ramp, twisting the wheel outward and snapping on the emergency brake in a single deft motion. He took a big-bore revolver from the glove compartment and stuck it inside a folded-up newspaper with the grip and trigger guard extended, then turned the ignition key to *accessory* and opened the car door. Breathing shallowly, he whispered, "Beyond the beyond," and walked up to the blinking fluorescent sign that spelled L-I-Q-U-O-R, the dividing line between his old life of fear and his new life of power.

When he walked through the open door, the man behind the counter noticed his expensive sports clothes and folded *Wall Street Journal* and decided he was a class Scotch buyer—Chivas or Walker Black at the least. He was about to offer assistance when the customer leaned over the counter, jabbed the newspaper at his chest and said, "Forty-one-caliber special load. Don't make me prove it. Give me the money."

The proprietor complied, keeping his eyes on the cash register to avoid memorizing the robber's features and giving him a reason to kill. He felt the man's finger on the trigger and caught the shadow of his head circling the store as he fumbled the cash into a paper bag. He was about to look up when he heard a sob behind him near the refrigerator case, followed by the sound of the robber

cocking his gun. When he did look up, the *Wall Street Journal* was gone and a huge black barrel was descending, and then there was a cracking behind his ear and blood in his eyes.

The gunman leaped behind the counter and dragged the man, kicking and flailing, to the rear of the store, then crept to the cardboard beer display that stood next to the refrigerator case. He kicked the display over and saw a young woman in a navy pea coat huddled behind an old man in coveralls.

The robber weaved on his feet; nothing he had been taught had prepared him for three. His eyes shifted back and forth between the two whimpering in front of him and the counterman off to his left, searching for a neutral ground to tell him what to do. His vision crisscrossed the store, picking up geometric stacks of bottles, shelves piled with junk food, cutouts of girls in bikinis drinking Rum Punch and Spañada. Nothing.

A scream was building in his throat when he saw the beige curtain that separated the store from the living quarters behind it. When a gust of wind ruffled the curtain he *did* scream—watching as the cotton folds assumed the shape of bars and hangman's nooses.

Now he knew.

He jerked the girl and the old man to their feet and shoved them to the curtain. When they were trembling in front of it, he dragged the counterman over and stationed him beside them. Muttering, "Green door, green door," he paced out five yards, wheeled and squeezed off three perfect head shots. The horrible beige curtain exploded into crimson.

TWO

DETECTIVE SERGEANT LLOYD HOPKINS stared across the desk at his best friend and mentor Captain Arthur Peltz, wondering when the Dutchman would end his preliminaries and get down to the reason why he had called him here. Everything from the L.A.P.D.'s touch football league to recent robbery bulletins had been discussed. Lloyd knew that since Janice and the girls had left him Dutch had to fish for conversational openers—he could never be direct when he wanted something. The rearing of families had always been their ice-breaker, but now that Lloyd was familyless, Dutch had to establish parities by roundabout means. Growing impatient and feeling ashamed of it, Lloyd looked out the window at the nightwatch revving up their black-and-whites and said, “You’re troubled, Dutch. Tell me what it is and I’ll help.”

Dutch put down the quartz bookend he was fingering. “Jungle Jack Herzog. Ring a bell?”

Lloyd shook his head. “No.”

Handing him a manila folder, Dutch said, “Officer Jacob Herzog, age thirty-four. Thirteen years on the job. An exemplary cop, balls like you wouldn’t believe. Looked like a wimp, bench pressed two-fifty. Worked Metro, worked Intelligence Division plants, worked solo on Vice loan-outs to every squadroom in the city. Three citations for bravery. Known as the ‘Alchemist,’ because he could fake *anything*. He could be an old crippled man, a drunk marine, a fag, a low rider. You name it.”

Lloyd’s eyes bored in. “And?”

"And he's been missing for three weeks. You remember Marty Bergen? 'Old Yellowstreak'?"

"I know two jigs blew his partner in half with a ten-gauge and Bergen dropped his gun and ran like hell. I know he faced a trial board for cowardice under fire and got shitcanned from the Department. I know he published some short stories when he was working Hollenbeck Patrol and that he's been churning out anticop bullshit for the *Big Orange Insider* since he was fired. How does he figure in this?"

Dutch pointed to the folder. "Bergen was Herzog's best friend. Herzog spoke up for him at the trial board, made a big stink, dared the Department to fire him. The Chief himself had him yanked off the streets, assigned to a desk job downtown—clerking at Personnel Records. But Jungle Jack was too good to be put to pasture. He's been working undercover, on requests from half the vice commanders on this side of the hill. He'd been here at Hollywood for the past couple of months. Walt Perkins requested him, paid him cash out of the snitch fund to glom liquor violators. Jack was knocking them dead where Walt's guys couldn't get in the door without being recognized."

Lloyd picked up the folder and put it in his jacket pocket. "Missing Person's Report? Family? Friends?"

"All negative, Lloyd. Herzog was a stone loner. No family except an elderly father. His landlord hasn't seen him in over a month, he hasn't shown up here *or* at his personnel job downtown."

"Booze? Dope? A pussy hound?"

Dutch sighed. "I would say that he was what you'd call an ascetic intellectual. And the Department doesn't seem to care—Walt and I are the first ones to even note his absence. He's been a sullen hardass since Bergen was canned."

Lloyd sighed back. "You've been using the past tense to describe Herzog, Dutchman. You think he's dead?"

"Yeah. Don't you?"

Lloyd's answer was interrupted by shouting from the downstairs muster room. There was the sound of footsteps in the hall, and seconds later a uniformed cop stuck his head in the doorway. "Liquor store on Sunset and Wilton, Skipper. Three people shot to death."

Lloyd began to tingle, his body going alternately hot and cold. "I'm going," he said.

THREE

THE MAN IN the yellow Toyota turned off Topanga Canyon Road and drove north on the Pacific Coast Highway, dawdling at stoplights so that his arrival at the Doctor's beach house would coincide exactly with dusk. As always, the dimming of daylight brought relief, brought the feeling of another gauntlet run and conquered. With darkness came his reward for being the Doctor's unexpendable right arm, the one person aside from the Night Tripper who knew just how far his "lonelies" could be tapped, dredged, milked, and exploited.

Spring was a sweet enemy, he thought. There were tortuously long bouts of sunshine to contend with, transits that made nightfall that much more satisfying. This morning he had been up at dawn, running an eight-hour string of telephone credit checks on the names gleaned from the John books of the Doctor's hooker patients. A full day, with, hopefully, a fuller evening in store: his first grouping since taking three people for the mortal coil shuffle and maybe later a run to the South Bay singles bars to trawl for more rich lonelies.

The man's timing was perfect; he pulled off P.C.H. and down the access road just as the Doctor's introductory music wafted across the parking area. Six cars—six lonelies; a full house. He would have to run for the speaker room before the Night Tripper got impatient.

Inside the house, the man ignored the baroque quartet issuing over the central speakers and made for a small rectangular room lined with acoustical padding. The walls held a master recording console with six speakers—one for

each upstairs bedroom, with microphone jacks for each outlet and six pairs of headphones and an enormous twelve-spooled tape deck capable of recording the activity in *all* the bedrooms with the flick of a single switch.

He went to work, first turning on the power amp, then hitting the volume on all six speakers at once. A cacophony of chanting struck his ears and he turned the sound down. The lonelies were still shouting their mantras, working themselves into the trancelike state that was a necessary precondition to the Doctor's counseling. Getting out his notebook and pen, the man settled into a leather chair facing the console, waiting for the red lights on the amplifier to flash—his signal to listen in, record, and assess from his standpoint as Dr. John Havilland's executive officer.

He had held that position for two years; two years spent prowling Los Angeles for human prey. The Doctor had taught him to control his compulsions, and in payment for that service he had become the instrument that brought about realization of Havilland's own obsession.

As the Doctor explained it, a "consciousness implosion" had replaced the "consciousness explosion" of the 1960s, resulting in large numbers of people abandoning the old American gospels of home, hearth, and country, *and* the counterculture revelations of the sixties. Three exploitable facts remained, one indigenous to the naive pre-sixties psyche, two to the jaded post: God, sex, and drugs. Given the right people, the variations on those three themes would be infinite.

His assignment was to find the right people. Havilland described his prototypical chess piece as: "White, of either gender, the offspring of big money who never fit in and never grew up; weak, scared, bored to death and without purpose, but given to a mystical bent. They should be orphaned and living on trust funds or investment capital or severely estranged from their families and living on remittances. They should accede to the concept of the

‘spiritual master’ without the slightest awareness that what they really want is someone to tell them what to do. They should love drugs and possess marked sexuality. They should consider themselves rebels, but their rebelliousness should always have been actualized as timid participation in mass movements. Find these people for me. It will be easier than you might think; because as you search for them, they will be searching for me.”

The search took him to singles bars, consciousness workshops, the ashrams of a half dozen gurus, and lectures on everything from New Left social mobilization to macrobiotic midwifery, and resulted in six people who met Havilland’s criteria straight down the line and who fell for his charisma hook, line, and sinker. Along the way he served the Doctor in other capacities, burglarizing the homes of his legitimate patients; reconnoitering for information that would lead to the recruitment of more lonelies; screening sex ads in the underground tabloids for rich older people to pimp the lonelies to; planning his training sessions and keeping his elaborately crossreferenced files.

He had moved forward with the Doctor, indispensable as his procuror of human clay. Soon Havilland would embark on his most ambitious project, with him at his side. Last night he had proved his mettle superbly.

But the headaches . . .

The light above speaker number one flashed on, causing the man to drop his pen and reach for the headphones. He had managed to adjust them and plug in the jack when he heard the Doctor cough—his signal that it was time to pay careful attention and make notes about anything that seemed special or particularly useful.

First came a profusion of amenities, followed by the two lonelies praising the bedroom’s decor. The man could hear the Doctor pooh-poohing the rococo tapestries, assuring his charges that such surroundings were their birthright.

“Get to it, Doc,” the man muttered.

As if in answer, the Doctor said, "So much for light conversation. We're here to break through the prosaic, not dawdle in it. How did your ménage in Santa Barbara work out? Did you learn anything about yourselves? Exorcise any demons?"

A soft male voice answered. The man recognized the voice immediately and recalled his recruitment: the gay bar in West Hollywood; the plump executive type whose wary mien was a virtual neon sign announcing "frightened first-timer seeking sexual identity." The seduction had been easy and the seducee had met all the Doctor's criteria.

"We used the coke to get things started," the soft voice said. "Our client was old and afraid of displaying his body, but the coke got his juices running. I—"

A woman's voice interrupted: "I got the old geezer's juices going. He wasn't even down to his skivvies when I grabbed his crotch. He wanted the *woman* to take the lead; I sensed that as soon as we walked in the door and I saw all that science fiction art on the walls—amazons with chains and whips, all that shit. He—"

The soft male voice rose to a wail. "I was savoring the lead-in! Doctor said to take it slow, the guy wasn't pre-screened. We got him from the sex ads, and Doctor said that —"

"Bullshit!" the woman barked. "You wanted to get coked yourself, and you wanted the old guy to like you because you were the one with the dope, and if we played it your way the whole assignment would have been a cocaine tea party."

The man put down his pen as the executive type started to blubber. After a short interval of silence, the Doctor whispered, "Hush, Billy. Hush. Go out and sit in the hallway. I want to talk to Jane alone."

There were the sounds of footsteps over a hardwood floor and of a door slammed in rage. The man smiled in anticipation of some vintage Havilland. When the Doctor's

voice came over the speaker, he took up his pen with a glee akin to love.

"You're letting your anger run you, Jane."

"I know, Doctor," the woman said.

"Your power lies in exercising it judiciously."

"I know."

"Was the assignment fulfilling?"

"Yes. I chose the sex and made them like it."

"But it felt hollow afterwards?"

"Yes and no. It was satisfying, but Billy and the old man were so *weak*!"

"Hush, Janey. You deserve to traffic with stronger egos. I'll keep my eye on the high-line personals. We'll find you some feisty intellectuals to butt heads with."

"And a partner with balls?"

"Nooo, you'll go solo next time."

The man heard Jane weep in gratitude. Shaking his head in loathing, he listened to the Doctor deliver his coup de grâce: "He paid you the full five thousand?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Did you do something nice for yourself with your gratuity?"

"I bought myself a sweater."

"You could have done better than that."

"I—I wanted you to have the money, Doctor. I took the sweater just as a symbol of the assignment."

"Thank you, Jane. Everything else all right? Reciting your fear mantras? Following the program?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Good. Then leave the money with me. I'll call you at the pay phone later this week."

"Yes, Doctor."

The sounds of departure forced the man to catch up with his note-taking. As if on cue, the Doctor clapped his hands and said, "Jesus, what an ugly creature. Speaker three, Goff. Efficacy training."

Goff plugged a jack into speaker number three and hit the *record* switch. When the tape spool began to spin, he tiptoed upstairs to watch. This would be his first visual auditing since blasting his “beyond” to hell, and he had to see how far the Night Tripper was taking his recruits. Only one of them was capable of approaching his own degree of extremity, and all his instincts told him that Havilland was just about to push him to it.

Goff was wrong. Peering through a crack in the door, he saw the Professor and the Bookworm kneeling on gym mats facing the mirror that covered the entire west wall. Their hands were clasped as if in prayer and Havilland was standing over them, murmuring words of encouragement. With Billy Boy and the Bull Dagger already counseled, it meant that the Doctor was saving the foxy redhead and the real psycho for last.

Goff pressed himself into the wall and stared into the bedroom just as the two men on the mats pulled off their undershirts and began shouting their fear mantras. “*Patria infinitum patria infinitum patria infinitum patria infinitum patria infinitum.*” With each repetition of the phrase they smashed their hands into their chests, each time harder, shouting louder and louder as the blows hit home. Throughout, they retained eye to eye contact with their own mirror images, never flinching, even as blood-dotted welts rose on their torsos.

Goff checked the second hand of his watch. One minute. Two. Three. Just when he thought the chanters would have to collapse, he heard the word “*Stop!*”

Havilland knelt on the mat, facing the men. Goff watched them move their eyes from the mirror to the eyes of the Doctor, then extend their right arms and squeeze their hands into fists. Havilland reached into the pocket of his lab coat and withdrew a disposable syringe and a handful of cotton balls. First he injected the Bookworm; then he wiped

the needle and injected the Professor. Both lonelies swayed on their knees but remained upright.

The Doctor got to his feet, smiled, and said, "Think pure efficacy. Robert, you have been placed in a very wealthy home on assignment. A couple, an older man and woman, are drooling for your favors. The phone rings. They both go to answer it. Where do *you* go?"

Robert stammered, "T-to the b-bathroom? To check for drugs?"

Havilland shook his head. "No. You have drugs on the brain; it's a weak point of yours. Monte, what would *you* do?"

Monte wiped sweat from his chest and twisted to stare at himself in the mirror. "*I* would wonder why the call was so important that they both had to run for the phone, especially when I was there looking so groovy. So what I would do would be to run for an extension and pick it up the very second that the old fucker did, then listen in and see if there was any salient info I could get from the call."

Havilland smiled and said, "Bravo," then slapped Monte across the face and whispered, "Bravo, but always look at *me* when you answer. If you look at yourself you get the notion that you thought independently. Do you see the fallacy in that kind of thinking?"

Monte lowered his eyes, then brought them up to meet Havilland's. "Yes, Doctor."

"Good. Robert, a hypothetical question for you. Think pure efficacy and answer candidly. My supply of legally obtained pharmaceutical drugs runs out, because of new laws passed limiting hypnotics and the like to physicians with hospital affiliations. You crave them and come to realize that they are what you like most about being in my tutelage. What do you do?"

The Bookworm pondered the question, shifting his gaze back and forth from the mirror to the Doctor. Goff grinned

when he realized that Havilland had given the lonelies a Pentothal jolt.

Finally, Robert whispered, "It would never happen to you. It just couldn't."

Havilland put his hands on Robert's shoulders and gave them a gentle squeeze. "The perfect answer. Monte would have intellectualized it, but your response was pure candor and pure heart. And of course you were right. I want you to both chant your mantras now. Hold eye contact with yourself, but think of *me*."

When Havilland started for the door, Goff padded downstairs and back to the speaker room. He rewound the efficacy training tape and placed the spool in a large manila envelope, then plugged his headphones into the middle speaker just in time to hear male/female sexual grunting move into strangled sighs and girlish giggles. The giggle became a high-pitched smoker's cough, and Goff himself laughed. It *was* the tight little redhead he had picked up at the Lingerie Club, the one who had devastated him with her Kundalini yoga positions. He had been lucky to get out of her Bunker Hill Towers condo alive.

The Doctor was the first to speak. "Bravo. Bravo." His monotone sent the woman into new gales of laughter. The man she had coupled with was still trying to catch his breath. Goff imagined him lying on the bed on the verge of a coronary.

The Doctor spoke again. "Later, Helen. I want to check the victim's pulse. You may have gone too far this time."

"Beyond the beyond," Helen said. "Isn't that our motto, Doctor?"

"Touché," the Doctor said. "I'll call you Thursday."

When a full five minutes of silence followed the sound of little Helen skipping gaily out the bedroom door, Goff's gut clenched. He knew that the male lover was the real psycho and that the Night Tripper was taking him a major step closer to his brink. Thus the shattering of glass and the

obscenities that came in the wake of the stillness were expected, as were the expressions of concern from the Doctor. "It's all right, Richard, it really is. Sometimes 'beyond the beyond' means hating. First you have to accept that reality, then you have to work through it. You can't hate yourself for being what you are. You are basically *good* and *powerful*, or you wouldn't be with me now. You just happen to have an exceptionally high violence threshold to overcome in order to achieve your selfhood."

Thomas Goff shifted into memories of Richard Oldfield's recruitment, beginning with the crippled whore with the three-hundred-dollar-a-day smack habit he had met at Plato's Retreat West. She had told him of the stockbroker/bodybuilder/remittance man who paid five C-notes a pop to work her over because of her resemblance to the governess who had tortured him as a child. The approach at the health club had had the thrust of a nightmare; Oldfield looked enough like Goff to be taken for his fraternal twin, and he was dead-lifting four hundred pounds. But the bodybuilder had capitulated to the Doctor's machinations like a baby going for its mother's tit.

More breaking glass. Oldfield weeping. Havilland alternately whistling a tune and murmuring, "There, there." Goff knew that the reversal was coming.

It arrived in the form of a slap in the face that filled the speaker with static. "You weakling," Dr. John Havilland hissed. "You picayune poseur. You sycophantic whoremonger. I give you the best fuck in our program, promise to take you where your chickenshit conscience would never permit you to stray, and you respond by smashing windows and bawling."

"Doctor, please," Richard Oldfield whimpered.

"Please *what*, Richard?"

"Pie—you know . . ."

"You have to say it."

"Ple-please take me as far as I can go."

The Doctor sighed. "Soon, Richard. I'm going to be collecting a great deal of information, and it should yield the name of a woman suitable for you. Think of that when you go through your fear mantras."

"Thank you, Doctor John."

"Don't thank me, Richard. Your green doors are my green doors. Go home now. I'm tired, and I'm going to dismiss the grouping early."

Goff heard the Doctor escort Oldfield to the door. The tape machine recorded a hissing silence. The Night Tripper's executive officer imagined it as being inhabited by nightmares in repose, manifested in cold manila folders spilling out data that would transform human beings into chess pieces. The Alchemist and his six offerings were just the beginning. A series of Havilland's slogans caused Goff to shudder back the headache that was burning behind a beige curtain in his mind. Last night. Three. What if the data keepers couldn't be bought? The headache throbbed through the curtain, like a hungry worm eating at his brain.

Doors slamming above him; periods of stillness, followed by the staggered departures of the lonelies. Mercedes and Audis pulling out onto P.C.H. and more silence. Suddenly Goff was terrified.

"Bad thoughts, Thomas?"

Goff swung around in his chair, knocking his shorthand pad to the floor. He looked up into the light brown eyes of Dr. John Havilland, locking his own eyes into them exactly as the Doctor had taught him. "Just thoughts, Doctor."

"Good. The papers are full of you. How does it feel?"

"It feels dark and quiet."

"Good. Does the 'psycho killer' speculation disturb you?"

"No, it amuses me because it's so far from the truth."

"You had to take out three?"

"Yes. I—I remembered your efficacy training. Sometime I might have to do it again."

"A cold gun? Untraceable?"

"Cold city. I stole it."

"Good. How are the headaches?"

"Not too bad. I chant if they really start to hurt."

"Good. If your vision starts to blur again, see me immediately, I'll give you an injection. Dreams?"

"Sometimes I dream about the Alchemist. He was good, wasn't he?"

"He was superb, Thomas. But he's gone. I scared him off the face of the earth."

Havilland handed Goff a slip of paper. "She's a legitimate patient—she phoned the office for an appointment. I checked her out with some girls in the life. She's a thousand dollars a night. Check out her john book—anyone who can afford her can afford us."

Goff looked at the slip: Linda Wilhite, 9819 Wilshire Blvd, 91W. He smiled. "It's an easy building. I've hit it before."

Havilland smiled back. "Good, Thomas. Go home now and enjoy your dreams."

"How do you know I'll enjoy them?"

"I *know* your dreams. I made them."

Goff watched the Doctor about-face and walk to the latticework patio that overlooked the beach. He let the Doctor's exit line linger in his mind, then turned off the tape console and walked outside to his car. He was about to hit the ignition when he noticed a mound of wadded up plastic on top of the dashboard. He grabbed at it and screamed, because he knew that it was *beige* plastic, and that meant that *he* knew.

Goff ripped the plastic trashbag to shreds, then slammed his fists into the dashboard until the pain numbed the screaming in his mind. Turning on the headlights, he saw something white under his windshield wiper. He got out of the car and examined it. The embossed business card of John R. Havilland, M.D., Practice in Psychiatry, stared at him. He turned the card over. Neatly printed on the back were the words *I know your nightmares*.

FOUR

AFTER THIRTY-SIX NONSTOP hours on the liquor store case, Lloyd Hopkins fell asleep in his cubicle at Parker Center and dreamed of annihilation. Sound waves bombarded him, predator birds attacked the willfully shut-off part of his brain where the man he had killed in the Watts riot and the man he had tried to kill last year resided. The birds tore open jagged sections of sky, letting in crystals the color of blood. When he awakened he bludgeoned the images with quiet still-lives of Janice and the girls in San Francisco, waiting for time to heal the wounds or reinforce the division. The liquor store/charnel house memory took over from there, pushing family love back into the safety compartment with his nightmares. Lloyd was relieved.

The death scene expanded in his mind, chalked like a forensic technician's marking grid. Off to his left were an open cash register, a counter scattered with tens and twenties, broken liquor bottles all along the lower shelves. Heel marks where the proprietor had been dragged to his execution. The right hand grid revealed an overturned cardboard beer display and heel marks where the two other victims had probably crouched to hide from the killer. Bisecting the grids was the crimson wind tunnel into the store's rear room, three bodies crumpled across a once beige curtain that was torn free from the doorway by the muzzle velocity of three hollow point .41 slugs smashing through three cranial vaults. There were no discernible trajectory or spatter marks; exploded brain and bone debris had rendered the tiny stockroom a slaughterhouse.

Lloyd shook himself further awake, thinking: *Psychopath*. He walks into the store, pulls out a monster hand-cannon and demands the money, then sees or hears something that flips his switch. Enraged, he hops over the counter and drags the proprietor by the hair over to the doorway. The girl and the old man betray their presence. He knocks over the display cutout and makes them walk to the curtain. Then he takes them out with three bull's-eyes from a top-heavy, unvented revolver with monster recoil, leaving the money on the counter. A volcano with ice-water fuel injection.

Lloyd stood up and stretched. Feeling the last residue of sleep dissipate, he walked down the hall to the mens room and stood before the sink, alternately staring at himself in the mirror and running cold water over his face. He ignored the sound of early arriving officers laughing and primping quietly around him, aware for a split second that they were keeping their voices at a low register out of deference to his reputation and well-known hatred of loud noise. Feeling his rage start to peak, he defined his killer with self-righteous cop invective: *psychopathic scumbag. Take him out before his switch flips again.*

The first thirty-six hours of his investigation had been spent thinking and chasing computer type. After noticing a "No Parking" zone outside the liquor store and extending all the way down the block, Lloyd theorized that the killer had either walked to the location or had parked in the bushes beside the freeway on-ramp. His latter thesis had been rewarded—under fluorescent arc lights the forensic technicians had found fresh tire tracks in the soft dirt and minute yellow paint scrapings stuck to the tips of sharp branches. Four hours later the L.A.P.D.'s Scientific Investigation Division completed its tests on the paint and announced the results of the technician's plaster of paris moldings of the tire tracks: The car was a Japanese import, late model; the paint the standard brand in every Japanese

automotive plant; the tires standard equipment radials—used solely by Japanese manufacturers. R & I and a computer cross-check of recent armed robbery and homicide bulletins revealed that there were no yellow Japanese imports registered to convicted and paroled armed robbers or murderers and that none had been mentioned as figuring in any robberies or homicides dating back over a year. The California Department of Motor Vehicles supplied the most frustrating information: There were 311,819 yellow Japanese automobiles, 1977 to 1984 models, registered in Los Angeles County, making a concerted check for criminal records a clerical impossibility. Even the L.A. County “Hot Sheet” yielded zilch—a total of eight yellow Toyotas, Subarus, and Hondas had been reported stolen over the past six weeks, and all eight had been recovered. The car was a dead end.

Which left the gun.

Lloyd considered the still awaited latent print workup a foregone conclusion: smudges, streaks, partials, and at best a few completes belonging to local juiceheads who patronized the store. Let the three officers he had assigned to run background checks on the victims have carte blanche there—fingerprint mania or the “kill three to get one” angle his superiors at Robbery/Homicide had told him to stress were as dead as the car. Every ounce of Lloyd’s instinct told him that, just as every ounce had told him that the trinity of this case was the killer’s psychosis, his cool, his *gun*.

The Ballistics Report and the Autopsy Protocol were rife with flat-out wonderment. Henry McGuire, Wallace Chamales, and Susan Wischer were killed by a .41 revolver fired from a distance of twelve to fifteen feet, all three slugs hitting them square between the eyes. The killer was a marksman, the gun an anomaly. Forty-one revolvers predated the Wild West days, going out of manufacture before the Civil War. They were too unwieldy, too heavy, and had a marked tendency toward misfiring. Forty-one

ammunition was even worse: hardball or hollow point, its unpredictable reports were capable of jerking the shooter's arm seemingly out of its socket or of going off like a soggy popcorn kernel. Whoever had shot the three people at Freeway Liquor had mastered a difficult antique handgun with antique ammo and had exercised his mastery under a state of extreme duress.

Lloyd stared deeper at his own mirror image, wondering what to do now that he had already sent stolen gun queries to every police agency in California and had personally questioned every antique gun dealer in the Central Yellow Pages. Negative answers all the way down the line—no .41s in stock, let alone purchased, and it would probably be another twenty-four hours before the responses to his queries began trickling in. All the paperwork was digested; all the facts were lodged. There was nothing he could do but wait.

And waiting was antithetical to his nature. Lloyd walked back to his cubicle and stared at the walls. Snapshots of his daughters formed a spray around the fed's ten most wanted; a pincushion map of L.A. County showed that homicides were up in Hollywood, South Central, and the East Valley. On the Freeway Liquor case the obvious next step was a call to Hollywood dicks to see what their snitches had come up with. Looking for something to perk his mental juices, he picked up the file that Dutch Peltz had given him just before the start of the frantic thirty-six hours. *Herzog, Jacob Michael, 5/3/49*, was typed on the front of the manila folder and inside were Xerox copies of statistical records forms, fitness reports, commendation certificates and odd memoranda from superior officers. Thinking of Herzog as a dead man and of the folder as his epitaph, Lloyd pulled up a chair and read every word in it five times.

A singular man emerged. Jungle Jack Herzog had a 137 I.Q., barely met the L.A.P.D.'s height and weight requirements and was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He was

fluent in three Middle Eastern languages and had protested the Vietnam war in college, before joining the Air National Guard. He had graduated twelfth in his academy class and received scrolls in scholarship, marksmanship, and physical training. His first four years on the job had been spent working Wilshire Patrol and Wilshire Vice, receiving Class A fitness reports, earning praise from all superior officers save one vice squad lieutenant, who shunted him back into uniform for refusing to serve in a public restroom deployment to catch persons engaged in homosexual acts. That same lieutenant had then recanted his criticism—later requesting that Herzog train his men in operating bookmaking and prostitution surveillances, heavily emphasizing the use of disguise. Herzog's "seminars" had been so successful that he gained consultant status, training plainclothes officers citywide, staying in demand while doing four and three year tours of duty at West L.A. and Venice Divisions.

Jungle Jack became known as the "Alchemist," a reference to his ability to transform himself and render himself virtually invisible on the street. He was also spectacularly brave—twice resolving hostage situations, the first time by offering himself to the gunman who had taken over a bar he was staking out for liquor violations.

The gunman had grabbed a young prostitute and was holding a knife to her throat while his accomplice tapped the cash register and grabbed the purses and billfolds of the bar's patrons. Herzog, in the guise of a crippled drunk, taunted the knife wielder to release the girl and take him in her stead, screaming obscenities at him, inching closer as the blade drew a trickle of blood at the girl's throat. When he was two feet away, the gunman shoved the prostitute aside and grabbed Herzog, screaming when Jungle Jack's elbow crashed into his windpipe. Herzog disabled the man with a flat-handed karate chop and took off after his accomplice, catching him after a five-block foot pursuit.