

Chapter 1

Daytona Beach

November 17th, 1982

Charles Angelus waited in the white, antiseptic reception area for Doctor Meredith. The room wasn't pure white, more like the color of fluff from a field of dandelions. Charles chuckled to himself, *not a bad image to describe the people waiting for their visit with the shrink. They were like those denuded plants slowly losing their fluff, preparing to bare their souls.* He looked around the waiting room; it was five minutes past his scheduled appointment. Charles didn't like waiting. He felt the pressure rise inside him. To calm himself, he tried to guess what was wrong with the other patients. Sitting across from him was a kid who couldn't be much over twenty. His eyes were like searchlights, constantly darting furtively around the room. Every couple of seconds a phlegm-filled snort broke the silence. *Addiction, cocaine?* Sitting two seats over was another man with lifeless eyes staring at the clock on the wall. He was wearing a dark green leisure suit with white patent leather shoes and belt, perfect for Florida. He looked like he was about to jump out of his skin. Every thirty seconds he would lick his lips. *Compulsive disorder.*

The receptionist was a heavy set woman with "Sandra" emblazoned on her right boob. She had the best plastic smile he had ever seen. Whenever lip-licker or nose-snorter said anything to her, she would give them the smile. *The shut the fuck up and sit down smile.*

He tried to focus on the magazine he'd picked up off the table. It was People. He thought an unusual choice for a psychiatric office. A magazine bought by women who very much wanted to be someone else. Like most of the magazines on the table, it was two years old, dated December 1980. The cover promised to tell the reader about the 25 most intriguing people of

1980. Charles couldn't get intrigued by Brooke Shields, Larry Hagman or Goldie Hawn. None of them were as fascinating as himself.

Charles felt like getting up and leaving, saying something nasty Sandra-the-boob on the way out. He had promised himself he would go through with it this time. Charles reflected on the past. First it was Dad, followed by Mother shortly after. After everything that he'd gone through it would only be normal to be a little fucked up.

The door finally opened, and a distinguished, gray-haired man, wearing a tweed jacket with leather elbow patches, exited the office. Getting a nod in Charles' direction from Sandra, he extended an outstretched hand, "I'm Dr. Meredith." His voice was deep and modulated. Like, someone, you might hear on a late night call-in show on the radio.

Charles stood up and awkwardly shook the man's hand. The guy had fat hands, soft like laundry. He invited Charles into his office and told him to make himself comfortable. Closing the door behind him, Meredith sat down behind a desk made from a sheet of glass. "So now, how are you doing?" Asked Meredith, looking down at his desk and reaching for a legal pad.

"Fine. What happened to your last patient, I didn't see them leave?"

"There's a back staircase, some of my patients prefer to leave that way."

"Are they embarrassed to be seen coming out of a shrink's office?"

"Are you embarrassed to be here?" Meredith asked, looking at Charles with a speculative look on his face.

"No." There was an uncomfortable moment of silence before Charles asked, "Is what I say confidential like you see on TV? Are you like Dr. Bellows on *I Dream of Genie*?"

“Not sure I’ve seen that program, but yes, with only a few exceptions. If you tell me about something during our sessions, then I am bound to protect your confidentiality. Only if you tell me about a crime you plan to commit, do I have an obligation to inform the authorities.”

“What if I tell you about something I did that was really bad?”

“Anything that you say will be held strictly confidential. Your past secrets Mr. Angelus are safe with me. Do you mind if I record our conversation? It saves me trying to write down everything, and lets me concentrate on what you’re telling me.”

“I would prefer that you don’t. At least for now.”

Meredith seemed a little bothered but continued after a moment, “Fine, where would you like to begin?”

“You just want me to talk?”

“Sure, that’s what you came here for, right?”

Charles spoke for the balance of their hour together. Meredith had the good sense to stay quiet and let him tell his story.

“It all started up at Ole Miss in 1973. Maybe it was all set in motion years before. Don’t crazy people get described as a ticking time bomb?”

“Do you think you are crazy Mr. Angelus?”

“That’s up to you to figure out. I was up in Oxford, Mississippi taking a couple of courses. My late Mother had always been ragging me about making something of myself. Well, she would have been proud of me. One of the classes was a survey of the greatest serial killers in history.”

Charles paused to clear his throat before continuing, “I met him at a house party. He had been watching me get rejected by just about every girl in the place. I should tell you that since the house party, I’ve had plastic surgery on my face. You see I had chicken pox as a child. Mother said that if I continued my picking and scratching, I would be marked for life. I had what the kids in school used to call a tomato face.”

Meredith was making notes and nodded for him to continue, “Anyway, he must have been watching me go down in flames. He brought me a drink and told me not to give up. He said he was a Deputy Sheriff from Biloxi taking criminology courses. We hit it off pretty well. We both had a thing for blondes. The guy’s name was Barry Franklin, and he was everything I wasn’t - confident, funny, reasonably good looking if you don’t mind red hair. He had plenty of stories about crimes he had solved. As I listened, he kept the drinks coming.”

“It must have been nearing midnight, I was starting to slur my words and bump into things, so I told him I had better call it a night. He was concerned about letting me drive, so he offered to give me a lift back to my apartment. I figured a Deputy Sheriff getting pulled over would be more likely to talk himself out of the ticket. When we got outside, I was even more grateful for the lift. The weather had turned ugly. A north wind was howling making it a cold night even for February. Blinding rain made it difficult to find his van in the parking lot.”

Charles paused for a moment and asked Meredith for a glass of water. The doctor poured a glass from the pitcher and brought it to him. After a long swallow, Charles continued the story, “When we finally located the van, Franklin started down this country road. We hadn’t gone far when we noticed a girl walking along the side of the road. Franklin pulled up to the curb and rolled down his window. ‘Not a very pleasant night to be out,’ he yelled. He was speaking slowly and trying not to slur his words. When she continued walking, he moved the van alongside her.

‘It’s really coming down.’ She continued to ignore him and kept walking. Finally, he said, ‘Listen I’m a Deputy Sheriff, I would be happy to drive you home Miss.’ Franklin had his badge out and displayed it. She finally stopped, I leaned forward and gave her a reassuring smile. She reluctantly agreed, and Franklin told her to crawl into the back. It was one of those panel vans, the kind with a sliding door on the side and two doors in the back. Once she was out of the rain, the three of us made idle conversation. Franklin continued driving down the road following the girl’s instructions on how to get to her house. She told us she had just gotten off work and that her parents weren’t home to give her a lift. When Franklin turned left onto a dirt road leading to a clump of trees, the girl asked where we were going. Franklin didn’t say anything and continued to follow the narrow road.”

“I remember she leaned forward and said, ‘Please, can you just take me home?’ That’s when Franklin elbowed her viciously in the face. The girl fell backward in the van, holding her nose. It was gushing blood like an oil well. Things from that point started happening very quickly. In my drunken state, I felt like I was watching a really bad movie. Franklin parked behind a bunch of trees and crawled in the back. I asked him what he was doing. He started slapping the girl over and over again.”

“You should leave her alone,” I said, trying to sober up.

“He started to laugh, ‘Wait for your turn.’ The girl continued to scream, and he straddled her. When she resisted, he started banging her head on the floor of the van. ‘Please leave her alone.’ I cried. I remember the girl all of sudden quit screaming and just laid there either unconscious or maybe waiting for him to finish. ‘Please, Franklin leave her alone.’ Using his name somehow got his attention.”

“Just shut the fuck up!” He screamed at me. The girl meanwhile started to cry, and he slapped her again and then ripped her panties.”

“Listen I have money; how much do you want to leave her alone?”

“Seriously?’ He started to laugh as he unbuckled his pants.”

“YES, I’LL PAY YOU JUST LEAVE HER ALONE,’ I was screaming now, trying to get him to stop. He looked at me, weighing his options. ‘A girl like this must be worth a couple of grand. What are YOU going to do with her?’”

“Leave that to me. Just drive me to my boat and I’ll take care of her.”

“Okay, but I’m not leaving her until I get the cash.” After I nodded he said, ‘if you want her, we had better tie her up. Otherwise, she’s going to run.’ He told me there was rope in the glove compartment. I remember thinking, who carries rope around with them?”

“It was a long drive; we finally made it to the marina where I kept my boat. I went on board and got him his money. Franklin carried the girl and put her on one of the bunks in the cabin. ‘Where did you get all this money?’ He asked, looking around the cabin. I remember being worried he was going to try to rob me.”

“That’s my business; you’ve been paid. I need you to leave now.’ He finally left and warned me that she had seen both of our faces and that I had better take care of things.”

“After he left, I steered the boat into the harbor. I got a few miles into the Gulf before I went below and untied her. I got the first aid kit out and started taking care of her. She had numerous bruises and cuts. While I was swabbing her face with antiseptic, her eyes flew open with fright. At first, she was confused and started to scream. I let her get it out, and when she

finally took a break, I told her we were miles from shore, and there was no one to hear her. That just brought on more screams and she tried to hit me. I slapped her like you would slap a hysterical person. Not to hurt, but to snap her out of it. Her screams stopped abruptly, replaced by tears. 'I'll fix you some tea, and then we can discuss what we need to do. I hope you understand that I had to get you away from that other man.' She seemed to remember something and stopped crying. While I made her tea, my mind was whirling about what to do. A doctor had prescribed something to help me sleep. At the last minute, I slipped some into her cup. She sipped the tea eagerly and seemed to perk up a little.

'Where am I?' she asked between sniffles.

"I got her a tissue, 'we're out in the Gulf, but don't worry we're far away from that man.' I brushed her blonde hair away from her face. The portion of her face that wasn't bruised and swollen tried to smile. 'What's your name?' I asked."

"Shannon O'Shays. Can you take me home to my Mom and Dad?"

"Not yet. You've been through a lot, and I don't want to take a chance of running into that man again. Rest for now.' As I said this, she lay back down on the bunk and looked at me. In a couple of minutes her eyes closed and she fell into a deep sleep. In the days that followed, I continued to dope Shannon's food. I didn't know what else to do. I was making this up as I went along. By now the papers would have reported the disappearance. The police would be involved. I wondered how Deputy Franklin was handling the investigation. I don't know why, but I got the impression that Franklin had done this before. At one point, Shannon asked me what day it was, and I lied, telling her that only a short time had passed.

"Why do I feel so tired all of the time?" She asked in a bewildered tone.

“I’m not a medical doctor, but I suspect you suffered a concussion.’ I made that up, but it might have been partly right.”

“I never asked you your name, and if you’re not a doctor, then what are you?”

“You can call me Skipper, just like on Gilligan’s Island,” I said smiling. She seemed naturally interested in me, making it the first time any girl had ever shown the faintest interest. ‘As for what I do, the short answer is nothing. My daddy used to own a marina before he died. I used to work there, but now all I do is sail the seas rescuing beautiful young girls.’”

“I’m sorry about your father, how did he die?”

“It’s funny, he died at a party.” She gave me a confused look, “Yeah, it’s weird. Back on August 17th. 1969, my daddy went to a party in an apartment in a town called Pass Christian. That was the day Hurricane Camille hit the coast and destroyed almost everything in her path, including the apartment building. There was only one person who survived to tell the tale.”

“Why would he be at a party in the midst of a hurricane?”

I pointed a finger at her and said, “Bingo, most likely to get away from my mother.”

“Oh, I’m sure that can’t be true. Is your mom still alive?”

“No. She died in a house fire.”

“That’s terrible, how horrible for you.’ She touched my shoulder to comfort me.”

“Thanks, Shannon. Why don’t we go up top? The fresh air will do you good.”

“When we got up top, the evening air was cool. We sat at the back of the boat under a blanket letting the autopilot steer us further out to sea. The moon was like a spotlight in the sky

illuminating the gentle waters of the Gulf. I had an eight track on board and put on Barry White. ‘You know Shannon, sitting here with you makes me feel like everything bad that’s happened was just a bad dream. Sitting here with you makes me feel alive. I’m very happy.’

“She gave me a funny look. ‘Will you take me home tomorrow?’”

“It’s still too soon. You’re too weak, and I’m worried about that deputy.”

“My parents must be frantic.”

“Oh not to worry, I radioed the coastguard while you were sleeping. They were going to get a message to your folks.”

“You did?’ Her face lit up.”

“‘Yes, don’t worry about anything, just concentrate on getting better.’ After a few minutes, she fell asleep in my arms.”

“We lay there together, and I realized that I had a problem. I would need to head to the marina for supplies and couldn’t very well run the risk of her running away. If I tied her up again, she would realize that I wasn’t the Good Samaritan I was making myself out to be. Besides, there are all kinds of nosy people at the marina. I contemplated putting her ashore further down the coast. That would give me time to get away.”

Dr. Meredith pulled out a pack of Benson and Hedges and offered the pack to Charles, who declined. Charles paused the story, growing upset at the interruption. He watched as Meredith lit up, taking a long drag before continuing, “As it turned out, the situation resolved itself the next day. I went down to check on her and found her looking at the pills I had been slipping into her food. When she heard my footsteps, she turned towards me. Her face was a

flamed with anger. She had hatred written across her face. She startled me by charging, hitting me with her fists. ‘Wait, Shannon!’ I screamed. We struggled, her anger making her stronger. I didn’t want to, but I struck her. Her legs buckled, and she fell, striking her head against the side of the bunk.”

Charles took another swallow before resuming, “I was breathing heavily. The blood was pooling onto the floor from where her head had struck. I dropped to my knees and cradled her head in my arms. You see, she had left me no choice. I did what I had to do. What a good boy always does. I cleaned up my mess. I carried her up on deck and tied my spare anchor to her leg. Then I rolled her into the Gulf. We weren’t in the deepest part of the Gulf, but I remember my Dad telling me that this area of the Gulf was over two thousand feet deep.”

Charles stopped at this point and looked down at his feet a move one might interpret as regret and embarrassment. He admitted that he enjoyed reliving the story. Now that it was over he wondered whether he should just get up and walk out.

“So you murdered the girl?” asked the Doctor wanting to confirm. “Is this an actual story?”

“Yeah, I didn’t mean to. It was an accident.”

