# Prologue

September 17th, 1982

The house was just like all the other ghetto houses in Greenville, Mississippi. The bungalow was set back from the road in front of a patchy grass yard that had been overtaken by dandelions. A rusted-out Ford F150 was parked at an angle in the dirt lane. The house was made of dirty cream-colored clapboard with a roof that sagged in the middle like a well-worn saddle.

The full moon looked pale and wan, as if it shouldn't be up on a night like this. A solitary light bulb with a cluster of buzzing flies stood guard on the wooden porch. *This is where they ran to*, thought Kory, chewing on a toothpick. *I hate fuckin’ runners.*

Kory Nantois, whose name, because he was from New Orleans, was pronounced NAN-TOY-ZZ, was sitting in his prized 1972 powder blue Plymouth Barracuda. Sitting in the passenger seat was his stupider-than-shit half-brother Kane. *The boy didn’t have the brains God gave a pissant,* thought Kory, although he wasn’t quite sure what a pissant was. *The guy’s a psycho. A ticking, fucking time bomb. Just look at the guy – those ridiculous lamb chop sideburns, greasy black hair, and a three-day beard.*

While the brothers shared the same mother, they had different fathers. Their mother had remarried a half-dozen times, each time popping out another kid. She named all her boys with names starting with a K. In addition to Kory and Kane, there was Kiefer, Kerry, and two Kevins. The latter was because she couldn’t think of anymore K names. She’d seen on the tube one night that George Foreman had named all his sons George. From that point on, she decided that all her future sons would be named Kevin.

Kane started playing the bongos on the dash to the Scorpions hit, *Rock You Like a Hurricane*. Kory just shook his head. *They wouldn’t be in this mess if it weren't for the idiot sitting beside me. Now the mess needs to be cleaned up.* Frankie Fingers, their boss in New Orleans, didn’t like people asking questions about his business. The word was that Frank got his nickname because one of his employees let him down, and as punishment, he had used tin snips to remove a couple of their fingers. Frankie was part of Bratva or the Russian Mafia. In the last ten years, they’d developed a reputation for brutality, and were involved in a huge web of criminal enterprises.

Kory looked up at the house, lighting up a Marlborough with his Zippo. He’d recently seen an ad in *Penthouse* featuring the *Marlborough Man*. Ever since then, he’d started wearing a black Stetson, a black fringe jacket, and kick-ass cowboy boots.

“Can I bum a smoke?” asked Kane.

“No. Sit still and fuck off the bongos. Make yourself useful and watch the street. We don’t want any fucking witnesses.” Kory pulled out his Smith and Wesson Enforcer from his shoulder holster and checked the ammo.

 “Aren’t we wasting time? Giving people more of a chance to notice us?” asked Kane.

“We’re waiting until the street is clear,” the *Marlborough Man* said, his tone reflecting his growing impatience. “You see that teenage girl walking towards us on the sidewalk?” She was leading a black miniature dachshund on a leash.

 “Yeah, I’d like to show her my big black wiener! Ha-ha,” sneered Kane.

“Your wiener's not black, numbnuts,” Kory blew smoke out the side of his mouth.

“How do you know, you been peeking at my junk?”

“Shut the fuck up.” *It’s been five years since the killing in the woods. I thought we were in the clear until I got the call that there might have been a witness. That’s why we’re sitting here in Wankertown waiting for all these fucks to get off the street.*

Kane looked at his watch, “It’s almost 9 PM, time for everyone to go inside and watch The *Cosby Show*.”

“Let’s wait until she leaves. Do you remember what you’re supposed to do?”

“Yeah.”

“Tell me again what you’re supposed to do.”

“I’m going to go to the door and ask for Tommy Huffman.”

Kory extended his index and pinkie of his right hand, turning to Kane, “You know what this is?”

“Yeah, that’s like, *Rock on Man*,” answered Kane, sticking out his tongue like the devil and copying the sign with both hands.

“No, that’s what your hand is going look like if you fuck up again.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Once the girl left, the street was deserted. Taking the safety off the Enforcer, Kory opened the car door, “Let’s saddle up.”

Kane led the way up the cement path to the porch. He slipped on brass knuckles from his pocket. Kory followed, walking like John Wayne because the new boots were pinching his toes. When they got to the door, Kory took his post, out of sight to the left of the door. Kane, hand combing his greasy black hair off his face, rang the doorbell. They waited a few moments before Kane whispered, “I hear something.” Putting his ear to the door, “Yeah, someone’s coming.” The adrenaline was kicking in. Kane’s eyes were as big as saucers under the porch light.

The front door opened and Kory heard a woman’s voice, “Can I help you?”

There was a pause as Kane just stared at the woman.

*He forgot what he was supposed to say*, thought Kory.

 A moment later Kane said, “Tommy Huffman.”

“What about Tommy? Who are you?”

Kane must have realized that he had fucked it up. He suddenly leaped forward and punched the old woman in the forehead. The force of the blow knocked the African American lady backward through the doorway.

Kory peeked around the corner. The woman was lying on the floor with Kane straddling her and banging her head against the linoleum tile. Kory, Enforcer in hand, rushed the door and surveyed the area. *Living room on the left, dining room and kitchen to the right. Bedrooms must be in the back.* He put his hand on Kane’s shoulder. When his brother looked up, Kory shook his head. There was blood on the floor, and the woman was now unconscious. “Shut the door,” Kory whispered in a stern voice.

Kane tried to close the front door, but the woman’s legs were blocking the way. He then took hold of her legs and with some difficulty dragged her to the living room, leaving a river of blood on the floor.

They heard a man’s voice from the back of the house, “What’s going on Mary? Was that the paperboy? I hope you talked to him about not leaving the paper in the lane...”

A middle-aged black man abruptly stopped speaking as he took in the scene in the living room. There were two men, one with a wild-eyed look holding his wife’s legs up in the air, and another dressed as a cowboy, pointing a huge gun at him.

“What’s going on here? What are you doing to my wife?” The man’s tone suggested to Kory that he was used to giving orders.

Kory walked right up to him and hit him savagely on the side of the head with the butt of the gun. The man fell to one knee, and Kory hit him a second time.

“He-he, fuck that’s cool,” said Kane.

“You need to take charge, show him right away who the alpha dog is.” Kory boasted. He looked over at his brother, still holding up the women’s legs and peering up her dress. Kory was sure that Kane was batshit crazy. “You can put the lady’s legs down. I’m going to look for the kid. Keep your eye on them.”

Both Huffmans were out cold. Kane looked at the woman. She was wearing a simple flower skirt and a pink cashmere sweater that accentuated her ample breasts. “*Mary the Milf*,”Kane said to himself.

Kory came back after a few minutes and said, “Fuck! The kid ain’t here.” A *National Geographic* sat beside an easy chair. Kory picked it up and read the address label. “Ralph Huffman, 1933 Lebanon Lane, Wankertown, Mississippi.”

“I thought this place was called Greenville?” asked Kane, sitting in a chair and pushing back, causing the footrest to rise.

“It is, fucktard. Go into the kitchen and find something we can use to tie them up.” Kory lit a Marlborough and went to the front window to draw the drapes closed.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Aw fuck, what do we do now?” Kane whined. They had just finished using phone cords to tie the Huffmans to kitchen chairs. They used a pair of black socks and some black electrical tape to gag them. In a moment of exuberance, Kane encircled Mrs. Huffman’s head with the tape at least a dozen times. “She looks like a mummy...a nigger mummy.” He laughed, stepping back and proudly admiring his work.

“Get some water from the kitchen,” commanded Kory.

Kane came back a few minutes later drinking a glass of water.

“Not for you, fucktard,” Kory took the water glass and dumped its contents over Mr. Huffman. “Ralphie, wake up.”

“Wakie, wakie, eggs and bakie,” added Kane.

When the man didn’t wake up, Kory told his partner to give him the brass knuckles. Kory put the knuckles on his right hand and went to punch the bound man in the head. At the last minute, as the man winced, he pulled back. Kory then walked over to the wife and hit her hard in the face. The blow was strong, causing her chair to fall backward. She lay on the floor making a strange gurgling noise.

“Whee, hee!” said Kane.

Mr. Huffman suddenly opened his eyes and struggled to untie himself.

“Oh, great...thanks for joining us old Ralphie, my boy,” Kory said, using the Art Carney voice he’d heard on television. Kory gestured for his partner to lift the wife’s chair back up. “Put it right here so Ralphie can see what I’m going to do to her.”

Ralph’s eyes went wide with fear for his wife. She was slumped in her chair, blood seeping through the electrical tape. “Take the tape off his mouth,” Kory directed his brother. “Sounds like he has something he wants to say.” Kane removed the electrical tape and pulled out the sock.

 “Please leave my wife alone. She has a bad heart. Whatever you want, you can have. I have cash in my wallet, take the television, it’s a Zenith.”

“A Zenith?” repeated Kory, his tone showing he was impressed.

Kory went over to Mrs. Huffman and lifted her skirt revealing her white panties. He used his knees to spread her legs and then started to make a humping motion.

The husband renewed his struggle against his binds, “Please, please what do you want?”

“You know, I think she’s wearing Fruit of the Loom,” Kory said. “The man wants to know what we want,” Kory said to his partner.

“Easy Peasy, Lemon Squeezy.”

“Where’s the kid? You know, Tommy. Where’s he at?” Kory leaned into Huffman’s face.

The man suddenly had a flash of realization. “Tommy...er doesn’t live here anymore. He ran away from home. He didn’t like the schools here.”

“Not convincing,” Kory shook his head. He nodded to his brother, “Get me a sharp knife from the kitchen.”

A few minutes later Kane returned with a Ginsu knife.

“Oh Ginsu! You guys have some cool stuff, a Zenith TV, Fruit of the Loom panties, Ginsu knives...I heard on late night TV that these babies are as sharp as Samurai swords. We're going to have to test that,” said Kory.

“Ahs-hole,” said Kane, bowing and then slashing the air as if he was wielding a sword.

“Get some more water and dump it on her, she needs to be awake for this,” said Kory.

Kane came back from the kitchen and dumped half a glass of water on the woman, who immediately gave a start. Kory pulled some of the tape off so she could watch through the one eye that wasn’t swollen shut. Taking the knife, he held it up, pointing it at Mrs. Huffman, “Last chance Ralphie boy...where’s Tommy at?”

“Please leave her alone. Kill me if you want but leave her.”

“Wrong answer.” Kory pulled the bottom of her cashmere sweater and started to cut the fabric. Her mouth covered in duct tape, Kory had to be satisfied with the look of absolute terror in her one eye.

Ralph Huffman closed his eyes, no longer able to watch.