

PARADOX X

“THE FLASHBACKS
OF
BLACKIE’S ILLOGICAL LIFE”

the true narrative of a real gangster

Chapter 1

The ringing phone stirred the afternoon heat as he walked up from the dock. He reached through the kitchen window and answered it.

“Yeah?”

“The deal’s all set.”

He recognized the voice on the other end as a long time political friend, Eddie D’Gerolamo. Eddie D’s stature, of only 5’2” and about 125, did not project the power he really wielded. His olive complexion, dark penetrating eyes, and black curly hair were signatures of his pure Sicilian ancestry. Eddie D’ had been the main liaison for family business to politics for as long as Blackie could remember. First, an elected councilman and then the Mayor of the City of Kenner, Louisiana’s fourth largest city, he was now a state legislator who led the powerful Jefferson delegation, which, with its block vote, could usually control any bill presented. In addition, Blackie shared one of his metro offices with Eddie D’ when he was home from Baton Rouge. His mind wandered as his friend rambled on. How long had he been in this godforsaken place? Ten months? It was only forty miles from metropolitan New Orleans but he felt isolated. The closest town a couple of miles away was a quiet, sleepy place of country folks, and that dullness only increased his isolation.

He looked around his temporary prison through the heat ripples. Acres of beautifully manicured rolling grounds were bordered by the Ponchatoula River on the North. The water he had just left was so clear he could count the tadpoles swimming between the polished rocks. A guesthouse sat empty on the bank beyond the three-car garage. The rustic main house was enormous and held all the amenities an estate could offer—fireplaces, an indoor atrium, sunken tubs, wet bar, and cedar closets. The double front doors opened to a place built of windows and peaceful country views designed to bring the outdoors in, comfortably controlled.

There had been a power struggle back in the city between two families. Even though his side had won, there had been a lot of heat, and he

was out here cooling off. This was his cooler. With only a half a dozen people who knew where he was, communication was at a minimum. This wasn't life as he knew it. This place was dead and he was bored.

At 6'3 and 235, his muscular upper body and wiry legs required that his clothes be custom altered, in addition to the coat adjustment to hide the .44 Magnum that was always on his right hip. His natural dark complexion was copper colored from the southern sun, accenting his high cheek bones and making his distinctive black eyes menacingly that of a predator when angered. His nose had been broken a couple of times but, hell, Sicilian noses were big and crooked anyhow. He had a scar on the edge of his chin where a pistol sight had cut him in a fight. There was an indentation over the right eyebrow where a shotgun pellet had dented the skull permanently. He had a three-and-a-half-inch scar on his throat from surgery. A knife fight had left him with a scar crossing the middle, ring, and little finger on the left hand. The beads of sweat on his forehead, mixed with his natural body oils, made his coal black hair seem even blacker than it was.

Eddie D' said, "you have to call the Commissioner in Baton Rouge today and set up an appointment for Monday. You got the number?"

"Yeah," he said, "whasa dis guy like?"

"You know, he's a virgin," Eddie D' responded. "It's his first time out and he don't know shit."

His mind wandered again. Would this be the one? Would this be the guy who figured him out?

"How are the girls?" Eddie D' asked.

"Okay, getting big."

"Call me Monday and let me know how it went."

"Alright, man, thanks a lot," he said, as he stood there holding the telephone with the dial tone buzzing in his ear.

Looking across the backyard where his three daughters, still at home, played in the water of the small river. His oldest daughter, Teri, was away at college and Bitsie was getting ready to go, honing up her studies at a private girls school. None of them liked it here, either, but they were his girls and they were tough. As he gazed at the girls, he remembered how all those big brown eyes had stared at him and asked, "What do you mean, dad? We're moving and we can't tell any of our friends or our teachers where we're going?" Street life had been tough on them. He was married, but you really couldn't say he had a wife. He married her so that he could get custody from the children's mother

after the divorce. Even when he and the stepmother were together, the relationship was at best strained. He pondered calling the Commissioner from his home phone, but his instincts told him no. He packed the girls up in the pick-up and drove the hour to Baton Rouge to call from a local pay phone. As they drove along Interstate 12, he started missing his black Caddy. His signature, or logo, or trademark, or whatever you wanted to call it, was one of the reasons that got Blackie his nickname. Since 1960 there had been a black Cadillac with the red leather interior, which he acquired new each year. Everyone who was anyone knew that when the black Cadillac pulled up in front of their house or business, it was Blackie, delivering either help or trouble, depending on which side of the fence they were on, and those who didn't know found out fast.

Blackie was a strange dude. Friends described him as a humorous, warm guy, who was, for the most part, kind. Family saw him as a loyal friend with a heart of gold but very private. Others saw him as a tenacious, vindictive egomaniac who had a mean streak a mile wide with all the traits of a sociopath. Occasionally, the press had depicted him as something of an enigma, or a paradox, best left alone. Law enforcement, on the other hand, was always trying to figure out what side of the fence he was really on. Although he had had several criminal arrests and spent some time in front of Grand Juries, he had no convictions.

Reproduction of criminal rap sheet:

Bureau of Identification, SHERIFF OFFICE,
Jefferson Parish, Louisiana

| NAME: David Warren Steece | | NO. 40282 SID #471 666 | | |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| ALIAS | | | | |
| Contributor of Fingerprints | Name & Number | Arrested or Received | Charge | Disposition |
| P D Atchison Kansas | David Warren Steece #2968 | 11/10/55 | Fraud Solicitation | Printed for Atchison, Co. Charge Reduced Cost Pd & REL. |
| P D Baton Rouge, La | David Warren Steece #105 | 5/24/57 | Appl. FP. | PRT. RET |
| P D Baton Rouge, La. | David Warren Steece #18653 | 3/26/58 | BURG & THEF | REL NO CHARGE |
| P D Baton Rouge, La | David Warren Steece #18653 | 5/8/58 | Disorderly Conduct 13:300 | 5/12/58/case Cont. With Out Date |
| P D Shreveport, La. | David Warren Steece# 68386 | 11/2/59 | Suspect | REL. 11/3/59 |
| P D New Orleans, La. | David Warren Steece #SO7435 | 7/20/67 | APPL. F.P. | F. P. RET. |
| S O Gretna La. | David Warren Steece #SPD-421 Residence: 5024 Haring Court, Metairie, La. | 10/22/69 | APPL. F.P. | PRT. RET. |
| S O Gretna La. | David Warren Steece #40282 | 7/9/70 | Public Bribery | AFF#70-1101 Case was Nolle Prossed 9/14/71 |
| S O Gretna La. | David Warren Steece #40282 | 8/25/73 | Att. Murder | No Record in Clerk Office As of 8/7/77 |

Jefferson Parish, La. Sheriff's Office 3/9/78 Updated by Sgt. Reggio

No one knew just where he came from. He just kind of fell out of the sky in the fall of 1955, living and going to school from Nofia Pecora's home, an alleged high-ranking Mafia member and seen much of the time associating with the family and playing with Nofia, Jr. It was obvious he was connected, but you never heard him drop any names. The next traceable thing about him was that, when he was in his early twenties, he either owned, or appeared to own, two nightclubs, allegedly mob controlled.

THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE PUBLICLY DISPLAYED AS PROVIDED BY LAW

**BUREAU OF REVENUE
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
SALES TAX**

Nº 73168

Registration Certificate

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|---------------|
| NAME OF BUSINESS | Top Hat Lounge, <small>David Warren Street,</small> | Taxpayer's Number | 11-0108-73168 |
| ADDRESS | 301 Harrison Ave., New Orleans 24, La. | 11 - 26 | A. |

Effective Date July 1, 1963

Countersigned
Walter J. Kahn
Assistant

Lee G. Lowe
COLLECTOR OF REVENUE

THIS CERTIFICATE IS
NONTRANSFERABLE,
and should be surren-
dered for cancellation
when you sell, close, or
move your business.
**YOU MUST REGISTER
EACH STORE
OPERATED**

NEW REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE ISSUED ONLY ON CHANGE OF STATUS

The Top Hat Lounge, New Orleans, LA

One of the clubs, The Top Hat, was in New Orleans, and the other, the Joy, a reputed gambling casino, was in Gretna, just across the Mississippi River and long known for its fast and loose lifestyle.

THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE PUBLICLY DISPLAYED AS PROVIDED BY LAW

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Account Number GRETN 2-05-1031 | SALES TAX <h2 style="margin: 0;">Registration Certificate</h2> Issued by REVENUE DEPARTMENT PARISH OF JEFFERSON STATE OF LOUISIANA |  |
| BUSINESS <u>JOY LOUNGE</u> <u>DAVID W. Steece</u> ADDRESS <u>319 Huey P. Long Ave.</u> <u>Gretna, La.</u> | Effective Date <u>8-20-63</u> | THIS CERTIFICATE IS NON-TRANSFERABLE If business is closed, moved or sold, taxpayer will complete the form on reverse side of this Certificate and forward to Revenue Dept., P.O. Box 9227, Metairie, La. |
|  <small>DIRECTOR, REVENUE DEPARTMENT</small> |  JOHN G. FITZGERALD <small>SHERIFF AND TAX COLLECTOR</small> | |

EACH PLACE OF BUSINESS MUST BE REGISTERED SEPARATELY

The Joy Lounge Casino, Gretna, LA

That came to light in a 1963 story in *The Saturday Evening Post* with a picture of Blackie and his daughter, Teri (then six years old) walking out of the club in Gretna on a Saturday morning. The story claimed that drugs, vice, and gambling were wide open in this club and that only a direct descendant of a high-ranking Mafia figure could ever hold that position with that club in Gretna. That publicity put him out of the nightclub business, but he was seen regularly driving alleged Mafia figures, usually Peter Marcello. Many times they were accompanied by Peter's younger brother Pascal. This added to the enigma of Blackie, because two of Marcello's younger brothers, Vincent and Anthony, owned and operated Jefferson Business Machines, which handled pin-ball machines, juke boxes, etc., throughout Jefferson Parish, and both of Blackie's clubs sported "TACS," John "Tac" Elm's machines and Anthony Tucia's New Orleans cigarette machines. Undercover detectives had photographed his connections when Blackie had been to their homes and businesses. In the mid 1960s, he surfaced again with a private detective agency and, for many years, purported to be just that. But anytime you looked at his investigators, it was obvious that they could go bear hunting with a stick.

Blackie pulled into a self-service gas station in Baton Rouge and dropped a dime into the pay phone. He dialed the number and counted

On six, a child answered. Blackie said, “May I please speak to the Commissioner?”

“Who’s calling please?”

“He’s expecting my call.”

A few moments passed and a booming voice said, “This is the Commissioner speaking.”

“David Steece here. Someone told me to call you for an appointment tomorrow.”

The Commissioner said, “Who?”

Blackie repeated, “David Steece.”

“Oh, yeah, I’ll be in the city tomorrow. Meet me at the Roosevelt Hotel, Suite 910 at 7:00 a.m. sharp.”

“Okay,” Blackie said and hung up the phone. He got back in the pick-up and drove across the street to Dairy Queen and got his girls some ice cream. When they started back east on Interstate 12, he wondered if the Commissioner was as arrogant as he sounded. What the hell, most elected officials were arrogant assholes. In his many years, he had dealt with about a thousand, and he could only think of a few that he could depend on for anything.