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Sanctioned Murder: The Term Limits Conspiracy (The Hunters)

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Chapter 1

Day One

Munny - "It's a hell of a thing, killing a man. Take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have."

Kid - "Yeah, well, I guess they had it coming."

Munny - "We all got it coming, kid."

Dialogue between

Will Munny and the Schofield Kid

The Motion Picture - "Unforgiven"

1. The Speed of Light

The pump whirred to a stop, the digital LED display showing \$53.79. The slightly balding, older man gave a "humph" in disgust and replaced the gasoline nozzle. He stood patiently while the little printer clicked and spit out the receipt, and then squinted at the printed amount and gallons indicated, comparing them to the numbers displayed on the pump. With another disgusted shake of his head, he moved to the door of the black BMW.

It was not a common car, but in this affluent Atlanta neighborhood near the Buckhead district, uncommon cars and homes and jewelry and the other trappings of the upwardly mobile and successful were more common than usual. Those who could, mostly white at first and then the black, had escaped to the surrounding towns and cities that made up the large metropolitan Atlanta region. They had been doing so for forty years. But neighborhoods still existed in the city. They were enclaves really; islands of prosperity floating in the midst of tawdry businesses, downtown high-rise offices, and the desperate poverty of those forced to remain behind in the housing projects and low-rent districts.

The two Atlantas could not have been more disparate. Old money and the nouveau riche lived lives of elegance and extravagance mere blocks, sometimes feet, from enslaving poverty and ignorance. A dark shadow of underworld crime and gang violence hung heavily over the poorer sections of the city and crowded the edges of the upscale neighborhoods. The gas station was at the line of demarcation between the city and one of the neighborhoods.

“Don’t make a sound motherfucker.” The voice was thick and deep, coming from behind. The words were emphasized by a sharp forearm to the back of the older man’s head causing his chin to impact painfully on the car’s door.

“What do you want?” the man said, wiping gingerly at the trickle of blood that had started down his chin.

“Keys, motherfucker, and I said don’t make a sound.” The man behind leaned hard against him, pinning the older man to the side of the car. The hard object pressed into his back reinforced the demand for the keys. He had no trouble recognizing it for what it was, the barrel of a handgun.

“Here,” he extended his arm backward for the man to take the keys from his hand. “Take the keys, and go.”

The gunman jerked the keys from the outstretched hand, pressing the button and unlocking all of the doors. Yanking the driver’s door open, the he pushed hard, forcing the older man into the car.

“Just take the car. Go. You don’t need me.”

“Get in.” With those words, he gave a shove hard enough to push the old man across the driver’s seat to the passenger side, his legs still dangling out the driver’s door.

“Pull your legs in or I’ll shoot your stupid ass now.”

The older man awkwardly complied. Sitting up straight in the passenger seat, he became aware of a second male sitting in the rear seat directly behind him. He also was armed with a handgun. For the first time, the old man could see his assailants. They wore ski masks so that their faces were not visible to him or the video cameras that the gas station almost certainly had recording activity in the lot. That would have been standard practice in this part of town.

The man in front pulled the car from the pumps and out onto the street slowly, sliding the ski mask up so that it sat high on the top of his head in a style familiar to the area. Sounds from the back let the old man know that the man in the rear had done likewise. They appeared calm and cool. Without the ski masks, they could have been taken for two young men taking their uncle for a Sunday afternoon drive.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge, Clayton Marswell, filled the tank of his black BMW every Sunday afternoon at the same gas station. The station was at the edge of the upscale neighborhood

where Clayton had resided with his wife, May, for nearly thirty years. They had chosen their residence deliberately. The area offered the more refined lifestyle and ambiance that they desired, but was very near the hard streets of their roots.

Others had urged them to move “further out”, the term for escaping the desperate conditions of the poorer sections of the city. For a time they had considered such a temptation. Having reached a level of prosperity uncommon for the area, the Marswells could have relocated to any district or city they chose. Deep ties to the area, and the civil rights movement that had been largely driven by a pastor at a church not far from their childhood home, kept them close. It was a matter of principle to them. They would not allow education and success to separate them from their past and the struggles they and others had endured.

Clayton Marswell had grown up poor in a shabby house on Atlanta’s south side. May had lived on the corner of the same street in a slightly larger house befitting a deacon in the Allatoona Park Baptist Church, a position her father held for nearly twenty years.

They had become sweethearts at an early age. When Clayton went off to Morehouse College, May followed a year later. When he graduated and worked his way through law school, she taught school and waited for him.

On his graduation from law school, they married. Their first home was within a block of the street where they had lived as children. Clayton worked long hours, taking every case that came his way, mostly young black men in trouble with the law.

A natural leader, Clayton was a fearless spokesman for the people. Professionally, he soon gained a reputation among the white courts and white lawyers as that upstart ‘niggra’ lawyer. He did not win every case, but his elegant and eloquent arguments caused the white judges, prosecutors, and juries of the day to go through a good deal of mental and legal gymnastics to justify their verdicts. His voice was one that had pricked consciences and kept the movement alive. Twenty years later, he had been elected to the bench, where his service took a different, but not less important, turn.

“You the judge, right?”

Marswell looked at the young black man driving the car. The handgun lay between his legs on the seat. Clayton would have no chance in trying to reach for it.

“You the judge?” the driver repeated.

“Answer the man!” A hard thump from the barrel of the gun accompanied the barked order of the man in the back seat.

“Yes, I’m Judge Marswell,” he said rubbing the swelling that began to rise on the back of his head. “You know me? Have I ever heard one of your cases in court?”

Grinning briefly, the driver looked at him and replied, “Naw, man. You ain’t never heard none of our cases.”

The man in back gave a short laugh. “Nope. You sure haven’t heard our case in court.”

Marswell sat quietly after this exchange, pondering his situation. They hadn’t killed him, yet. They seemed to have a purpose beyond just jacking his car. They were calm, professional, and not to be trifled with. Their air of criminal professionalism was somewhat reassuring. They were not about random murders and robbery. He went back to the thought that they seemed to have a purpose, and

that gave the Judge some slight comfort.

Clayton Marswell was unaware of the white, nondescript delivery truck that had pulled from a parking lot and started following them a block from the gas station. It was a truck like a thousand others roaming the streets of the city, making deliveries and picking up shipments. The fact that a white man was driving was not remarkable. Whites drove many of the trucks, but they went somewhere else to sleep at night. This was not their territory. The truck kept pace a few car lengths behind the BMW as it wound its way through dingy streets into an industrial area full of empty warehouses with weeds springing up wherever the asphalt was cracked.

The young man driving made a sudden right turn pulling to the rear of a large concrete block building. Loading docks that appeared to have been deserted for years lined the back of the building. A chain link fence surrounded the lot, separating it from an identical warehouse building on the other side. A scrawny, hide-worn yellow and white tabby ran from the building and scurried under the fence as the car rocked to a sudden stop.

The driver immediately exited the car and moved to the rear. The muzzle of the handgun thumped Marswell in the back of the head as the man in the back seat said, "Stay put."

Clayton Marswell heard the rear door slam shut and sat motionless for a minute. Then noises from the back caused him to turn his head.

The white truck parked directly behind the car surprised Marswell. A large white man sat behind the wheel. The clanking of steel on concrete caught his attention. The two young men rolled a hydraulic jack from the rear of the truck to the car. It took only a few seconds for the jack to raise the rear of the car and within a few minutes, the rear tires and wheels were gone, rolled to the rear of the truck. The front tires were removed by one of the carjackers while the other searched under the hood apparently looking for parts that would be of value.

Unconsciously, Marswell relaxed a bit. This was a carjacking, a professional one for sure, but still, a basic carjacking. Feeling that his chances for survival had improved somewhat, he allowed himself to think about May. She would have the Sunday ham about ready, waiting for his return. The two girls, their husbands, and the grandchildren would be over for Sunday supper soon. A slight smile crossed his face as he thought of the story he would have to tell them this evening. Supper would be undoubtedly delayed as the police report and interview with the detectives would take a bit of time, especially in light of his prominence as a Superior Court judge and well-known public figure. But this would be a story worth telling tonight and at innumerable official dinners and gatherings in the future. The smile on his face broadened.

Marswell jerked in his seat as the jack released and the car slammed to the pavement minus its tires. One of the men, the one from the back seat, leaned through the driver's window and spoke.

"Your wallet. Gimme your wallet, man."

Marswell reached into his back pocket and handed over the leather wallet. It took only seconds for the young man to remove all of the cash, two hundred and thirty dollars, and the credit cards, two MasterCards, two Visas, an American Express, and an old Sears card that had not been used for years. He then threw the empty wallet into the floor of the car.

"What else you got?" The man scanned Marswell quickly then said, "Your watch. Gimme your watch."

Marswell began to remove the watch.

“And the ring, man. Hand over the ring.”

“You mean my wedding band?” Marswell asked, trying to think of a way to delay or prevent the inevitable theft of something so precious to him and his wife.

“Yeah. The ring. Gimme the ring.”

The loss of the gold and diamond studded wedding band that May had given him on the renewal of their vows on their fortieth anniversary would dampen the humor and effect of the story he would have to tell. Still, there was nothing to be done but to comply with the demand. Marswell took comfort in the fact that throughout the thefts of his wallet, watch, and ring, there had been no weapon present. The young man had leaned through the window and made his demands. Marswell had complied. No weapon was necessary.

Sensing that the ordeal was drawing to a close, Judge Marswell began to relax slightly. The men would leave soon in the truck that had followed them and that now held the tires and other vehicle components removed from the BMW. He would find a way to call the police. The report would be made, the investigation begun, and he would be given a ride home.

The carjacker turned with both hands full of the items he had taken from Marswell and handed them to the man who had been the driver and initial carjacker. Turning, he leaned back through the window to address Marswell.

“The console. What you got in the console?”

“You mean the glove box?” Marswell asked. “Nothing there.”

“Yeah. What you got? Open it up.”

The Judge complied and after a brief examination, the carjacker grunted his agreement that there was nothing of value in the glove box.

He turned and spoke to the other carjacker who had remained standing behind. Hands full of Marswell’s cash and possessions, he walked to the passenger side of the truck.

It was almost over. A few more minutes and they would be gone. Marswell’s level of anxiety eased a bit more.

“That’s it? You ain’t got nothing else?” The man leaned through the window again apparently eyeing Marswell closely for any sign that he was concealing some valuable item.

“Nothing. There is nothing else that is worth anything at all.”

“Alright then.” The young man turned to move away and towards the truck. The judge began to let out a long, low sigh of relief. Almost as an afterthought, the man turned and leaned back through the driver’s window again. A large handgun filled his hand, pointing directly at Marswell’s face.

Marswell was no expert in firearms and did not recognize the gun as a .357 magnum stainless steel Smith and Wesson revolver. To him, it was just the biggest gun barrel he had ever seen.

Electric impulses between the neurons and synapses in the Judge’s brain began to fire, sending the realization into his consciousness that Clayton Marswell, devoted husband and father, hero of the civil rights movement and ‘uppity niggra’ who had fought tirelessly for the rights of the

disadvantaged, would not see his grandchildren that evening at Sunday supper. Moving at the speed of light, the electric impulses delivered their message to his conscious brain as the hammer fell on the revolver. The blinding white light that followed extinguished all that was Clayton Marswell.

The smoke from the fired round filled the car with its pungent odor as the carjacker brought the weapon down after its recoil and back to bear on Marswell's lifeless body. Roaring echoes of the magnum's discharge reverberated loudly between the concrete block buildings. The young man regarded Marswell's mutilated head with interest. The impact had caused him to slump against the passenger door and then forward so that his head leaned against the door handle. A hole in the blood spattered passenger window indicated that the powerful magnum round had penetrated the Judge's head and exited the car through the window, ricocheting off the block walls of the building.

Assured that Marswell had not survived, the young man walked to the truck and climbed in beside his companion and the truck driver. Quiet returned to the deserted warehouse district as the gun's echoes died. It would be hours before the Judge's body was discovered. There was no hurry. The truck pulled slowly and deliberately from behind the building onto the empty street. A few turns and several minutes later, it merged into traffic on I-75 and headed north out of Atlanta.

...excerpt...

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