





## CHAPTER 13

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### TERMINUS

Ginger said, “Hey, open the door, dumb ass. Let me get up there.” Vitellius leaned over across the passenger seat and opened the passenger door on the Caddy. Ginger folded the seat forward and climbed out to take over the passenger seat. Upon settling in, she leaned over and gave Vitellius a peck on the cheek. Her hands made their way for denim delight. “There now, isn’t that much better?”

Vitellius leaned back to enjoy her handiwork. “Ohhhh yeahhhh! That is much better.” He relaxed a bit and then asked, “Hey, what are you doing here anyway? I thought we were going to pick you up in a little when we got done here?”

Ginger smiled. “Well, that’s what John wanted to do, but I told him I didn’t want to sit around while you guys got drunk before game time.” She looked around at the car. “I can’t believe you don’t have any Stroh’s in here! Anyway, John didn’t tell me you guys had . . . uh . . . other plans this morning.” She looked around more at the car they were in and the house whose driveway the car was in. “Nice ride,” she said. “I love the candy red color. Wheredya get it?”

Vi answered, “Rob lined it up. It’s an El Dorado, you know.” With that, they both looked at each other and said, “Terminus!” The mutual laughter made tears come to their eyes.

Ginger bounced on the seat and sang in a high girlie voice, “Well, maybe he got it for me!”

Vitellius snorted, “Yeah, right. I don’t think so. It’s probably another one of his clients who wants a later model. This one’s got some things wearing out on it.” He put his hand to the driver-side, convertible-top release. “Look, this thing’s broken.”

Ginger looked around at the vehicle. “Yeah, and it’s got an eight-track instead of a cassette player! No wonder they want to get rid of this!” Ginger started the eight-track tape. It was Blondie. She reached over and turned the ignition key forward to power the tape. “Oooohhhh, I like this,” she said and started singing along to “Rip Her to Shreds.”

The car was a bit chilly. Vitally was wearing a blue jean ensemble—a jean coat and jean pants. Ginger joined in the blue jeans, but she was a sweater girl. “Can you turn on some heat?” she said. “It is a little chilly out.” Vitellius obliged by starting the car and blowing the heat on full. Ginger started looking around the vehicle some more. “Damn, it’s chilly in here. I wonder what the temperature is like today. It’s gonna be brisk at the ball park.” She pointed a finger at the dash. “You know what would be cool? A temperature gauge in the dash. Now that would be cool.” She looked around further and pointed at the wheel. “Is that an air crash system? Wow. This car is loaded! No wonder there’s no seat belts.”

Vi perked up a little. His face became covered in curiosity. “Ya know, that’s funny, now that you say that. I thought every Caddy but the El Dorado had an air crash system as an option.” He shrugged and grabbed her hands. “Ooooooooh, you are cold. Here, let me put those hands somewhere warm.” He put Ginger back to work, and he adjusted the vents to blow down on her activities. “How’s that? Much better?”

Ginger smiled at him. She looked out the back at a sign posted on the roadside that read, “Neighborhood Protected by Magnum Security.”

She looked back at Vi. “Aren’t you a little worried about security seeing what’s going on?”

Vitally had his eyes half-closed, thoroughly enjoying her dexterity. His jeans were really cramped, but the heat and pressure felt good. “Hmm? Oh. It’s an inside job. The family here is taking a bus to the game from the yacht club. Grosse Pointe does it right, ya know? C’mon, the whole city is partying downtown for the Tigers home opener. You know how the home opener is always a citywide

holiday for Detroit. It's one of the best days for pulling a caper. The cops and security crews are all busy with the game, and they wanna party too. Rob set this one up. It's an insurance scam. We get the jewels and the homeowners collect on the insurance. Rob also took care of getting this car. He had John steal it from somewhere. My ride's down at the stadium. We'll pick it up when we head down there and ditch this one." He paused for a second. "Hell, we might even make it in time to see Soleman throughout the first pitch!"

Ginger looked at Lake St. Clair showing behind the house. Her attention then came back to closer surroundings. The residence was fronted by a three-foot wall that had some sculptures of lions at the driveway gate. There was another weird sculpture she saw of an eel-like creature with a gargoyle head and fins or gills that looked sail-like as they protruded from the neck.

Vitellius opened his eyes toward the manse. "I wonder what is taking him so long. He shouldn't have to go through every room in the house."

Ginger looked at Vi and asked, "Do you think he knows?"

Vi spread his legs wider and snorted, "After that incident at the golf course last year? Um, yeah! Yeah, I'd say he knows."

She laughed and slapped him across the chest. The knowing smile was large. "No, silly, you know what I mean!" Her eyes widened a little, and she cocked her head a bit to indicate "Get it." Her mouth gave out an "Hmmm?"

Vi rubbed his hand along her thigh. His hand was huge; it covered nearly half of her leg. "Oh. Ya know, I dunno? Damn, I hope not." He paused a minute, looking at the house. "Ya know, it's not like he's a saint anyway." He relaxed a bit more, enjoying the moment.

Ginger reached her second hand over to assist the first. "I swear I don't know how you fit into these jeans!"

Vitellius looked at the house. "Better be careful. John should be done about now. I don't think he'd be too happy about you jacking me off here."

**BANG! BANG!**

Two gunshots were heard from inside the house. Vitellius and Ginger snapped to attention. They looked at each other and then at the house in wide-eyed surprise.

Two men came running out from behind the house. In their hands were sidearms. The men were raising the guns to point them at the car. Vi let out a “Fuck this,” and he started the car. He threw the El Dorado into reverse and peeled back onto Windmill Pointe.

***BANG! BANG!***

Vi heard the reports but didn’t notice any hits anywhere. He sped north on Windmill Pointe. He saw three Magnum Security cars peel around the corner from Berkshire at a high speed. They were hard-charging at the Cadillac. He asked aloud, “Where did these guys come from?” Vi decided south would be better. He drove across the six-foot-wide grassy median separating the lanes of the wealthy neighborhood and headed south on Windmill. Then he turned west onto Middlesex. The other three cars followed. Two of the cars followed behind Vitellius. The third car went past the ten-foot-wide median and drove up Middlesex the wrong way. The vehicles rapidly reached a speed of fifty. Vehicles on both lanes dodged traffic and parked cars, bouncing up curbs to the sidewalks and back down.

***BANG! BANG!***

Vi and Ginger heard the reports but didn’t see any results. Vitally told Ginger, “Keep your eye on those cars back there.”

Ginger turned in her seat and looked. “Where the hell did these guys come from? Why are they shooting at us? I thought you said this was an inside job?”

Vi replied, “It was an inside job! Hell if I know where they came from. They are not supposed to be here!”

The cars were going over sixty when they ran the stop signs at Korte and Avondale. There was a crossover between the lanes, and the wrong-way car pulled across, aiming to cut Vi off. He yelled, “Hang on,” and he bounced his vehicle across the grass and around the oak trees and ended up in the wrong way. Vi bounced the vehicle farther up on the far sidewalk to avoid oncoming traffic. Horns from the nearing traffic were blaring. Vi angled back onto the street and blew through the stop sign at Essex. The pursuit vehicles were not far behind.

Crossing Essex was a zag, and the road name changed to Beaconsfield. The street narrowed. Trombley Elementary was on the right. The school was letting kids out at noon in honor of the Tigers home opener. Ginger screamed. There were a half-dozen kids on bikes in the middle of the road, chatting. Vitellius pulled left as far as he could while braking to avoid plowing into the children. Two Magnum cars went left with him. The El Dorado slid sideways into a parked car on the street. The Magnum vehicles slid into the El Dorado. Vitellius floored it to pull away from the vehicles. The Caddy scraped paint and metal as it took off.

**BANG! BANG!**

More reports were heard. Vi and Ginger didn't notice any hits.

The third Magnum car went right to avoid the crash and children in the road, but this took the vehicle at more schoolkids in front of the school. The kids screamed and started running. The car fishtailed to avoid hitting youngsters and drove straight into the side of the school. Parents in cars in the school parking lot hopped out in horror, screaming their heads off and running to see if their offspring were OK. Ginger had been looking back and saw what happened. "One down," she quipped as the Cadillac sped away.

Vitellius couldn't worry about that. Jefferson was up ahead. He was looking to make it to Jefferson. They approached the stop sign at a speed over fifty.

He blew through the stop sign at Beaconsfield and Jefferson. There was another median to cross to go left. Vi headed along Jefferson toward downtown. The first Magnum car blew the stop sign and followed. The second Magnum vehicle went left to avoid a Gremlin that was coming across Jefferson. The Magnum car hit the cement curbing for the median square, and the car steering broke. The driver lost control and went straight over the median, clipping a tree before clipping the rear end of the first Magnum car that had turned up Jefferson. Car number 1 kept control and continued the chase while car number 2 crashed into a red brick wall gating an apartment complex.

Ginger quipped to Vi, "Two down."

The chase down Jefferson went on for miles at speeds reaching ninety miles per hour. Traffic was fortunately light as they used all six lanes, crossing back and

forth around traffic in both directions. Traffic heading toward Detroit could see the commotion coming and was pulling over out of the way. Traffic lights were irrelevant to them. They flew by the pawnshops dotting the way that bought and sold cheap remnants of lives. Decrepit liquor stores catering to lowest common denominators were passed. The chase had gone from wealth to poverty as they passed the Jefferson Chrysler plant and the road turned to being lined by bombed and burned-out buildings.

Waterworks Park was passed. Henderson Park was passed. Owen Park was passed. The Detroit River appeared on the left. The city sewage plant was passed. The silver circular towers of the Renaissance Center came into view in the far distance as well as the Stroh's Brewery sign. Gabriel Richard Park came up on the right. Belle Isle was approaching.

Vitellius told Ginger, "Hold on!" He sped up even more toward the light at E Grand Boulevard. A bus of revelers from the Lake St. Clair Yacht Club on their way to Tiger Stadium tried to get out the way by moving right, but the bus accidentally cut Vitellius off. He had to slow down, but the pursuit car sped up and got on his rear bumper.

Another center median approached. Vitellius went the wrong direction. The pursuit car followed behind. Traffic would be coming at them in each lane. The light at Grand turned red. A gravel truck started through the intersection. Vitellius hit the gas and pulled right as hard as he could. He bounced over the median and cut in front of the bus and headed up Grand. He never knew how the Magnum vehicle lost control, but it turned sideways as it tried to brake.

***CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!***

The Magnum vehicle fishtailed back and hit the gravel truck head-on. Other vehicles lost control and struck the truck as it tried to veer away. Ginger saw vehicles piled up in a spectacular four-car crash. Shattered glass spread everywhere. The Belle Isle Grand Prix met Terminus El Dorado. Vitellius kept going to the right up Grand.

Ginger screamed in exhilaration at seeing the spectacular car crash. She grabbed and kissed Vitellius on his cheek. He turned left at Lafayette and drove down past Martin Luther King High School. Elmwood Cemetery was on the



right. He maneuvered the El Dorado past the Calvary Baptist Church and into the graveyard.

Vitellius drove slowly around the winding paths through the tombstones. There were graves hundreds of years old. Statues of humans and saints dotted landscape as well as massive spires of death. In ten years of crime with his buddies, nothing had ever gone wrong. They had never had a bad setup before. What had happened? What was he to do now? He found a lower tier and parked by the T. B. Rayl underground crypt across from the cemetery's pond. He needed to think.

Reality hit Ginger. She started to cry and go into shock. "John's dead! He's dead. He's . . . he's dead. He's dead." She crumpled into Vitellius. He hugged her tightly, comforting her as best as he could.

"Shhhh, shhhh, calm down, everything'll be OK. Hey, we don't know what happened to John. Maybe he's OK." He pulled her face back to make her look at him. "I'm sure he's OK. John wouldn't get hurt in some fool robbery like this. They probably shot at him, and he ran out another exit. We'll probably see him at the ball game later." He pulled her close, hugging her again.

Vitally thought about the situation they were in. They needed to get rid of the car now. It was now marked by dents. Vi noticed that his door was loose. The crash must have broken the locking mechanism. His Camaro was at a parking lot near Tiger Stadium. They could ditch the Caddy in the parking lot down there and pick his car up. The cops would be busy with crowd control. It was the Tiger's home opener. The streets would be packed with people. Even with a 1-7 record to start the season, the home opener was always a citywide holiday. They could blend in and disappear. There's no way the cops would be looking for them down at the game. The police would be too busy with crowd control.

He pushed Ginger back again. "Hey, hey, look at me." She looked up at him. She didn't look good. Her eyeliner and mascara were all over her face. A vacancy sign had been hung at the door of her eyes. He needed to extract her mind back to reality. "Ginger, Ginger, listen to me. I know this looks bad, but things are not always what they seem. Now, we can't stay here. We need to get rid of this car. Here's what we're going to do. We're gonna go down to where I have my car parked at the ball park and switch cars. OK? Are you with me? We need to do this now, and then we'll figure out what we will do after that. OK?" Ginger

nodded an assent. "Now remember. We haven't done anything wrong. I picked you up at your house, and we were out driving, and these cars started chasing us and shooting at us. Don't worry about this car. I stole it, and you didn't know that. OK? If we find out later on that they have John, then we'll change our story. OK? Remember, if something happens and the cops take us, don't say anything without a lawyer. OK? ANYTHING!" Ginger nodded again.

Vitellius drove the car out of the cemetery. Concern over being on a main thoroughfare sent him from Elwood to Chene to Antietam. He was working his way through neighborhoods. The slow drive helped calm him down. Some of the adrenaline jag wore off. He came down Gratiot to Monroe to Michigan, heading to Trumbull.

They passed the statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Vi idly wondered who he was. To him, he was just another John Doe in the world who had been lucky enough to have a statue made of him. It made him think of Augustus. Augustus, named for a Roman Emperor. Maybe Auggie would have a statue made of him someday and be famous like a Roman emperor or Mr. Polack here. But probably not. He would probably be another person who lived and died and left nothing but a headstone behind.

The car crossed the lodge, and the road turned to red brick. It certainly wasn't yellow brick. Nemo's was on the right, and it was teeming with people. They were in Corktown, Detroit's oldest neighborhood. It wasn't even the oldest neighborhood. It was just the neighborhood that had survived the longest to be known as a specific area.

The road was wall-to-wall with vehicles. Horns were honking, and people with drinks were walking all around. The bars and beer tents and street vendors were hopping. It was a brisk fifty outside, and there was a slight breeze, but the sun was peeking through clouds, and the home opener is a day that marks the upcoming spring. After months of colder weather, fifty degrees and sunshine makes people cut loose. Vi sunk down a bit in his seat. He pulled Ginger down with his hand. The last thing he wanted was for the two of them to be seen together in this car right now.

Cops were everywhere directing traffic. It was a nerve-racking fifteen minutes, inching past police and people. Traffic cops directed all traffic flow. They passed by Tiger Stadium. The marquee at Michigan and Trumbull stated.



He wanted to get by to Harrison just a couple blocks ahead. His Camaro was in a lot up there. He turned onto Harrison and proceeded to shit bricks. Squad cars were in the parking lot. Cops were looking at his car. He kept going down the road, but as he reached Cherry, he was spotted. Flashers were hit, and vehicles started. It was time to go. The chase was on.

He peeled around Cherry. He wanted to head north on Rosa Parks to get to 75, but there were policemen in the road. He turned south on Rosa Parks. He clipped a Charger, making the turn onto Rosa, denting both vehicles significantly in the rear quarter panels. It was back to weaving around vehicles. Cops were in pursuit.

Ginger started wailing. He looked over at her, and his eye was drawn to the seat floor. The crash appeared to have dislodged a White Owl box. It was partially exposed from under the seat. He yelled at Ginger, "GRAB THAT." She dully looked at him. "THE BOX, GRAB THAT!" he yelled, pointing a finger at the box.

She jostled around in the vehicle as the car lurched from side to side. Slowly she pulled the box up. She opened the box and didn't understand what she was looking at. She opened the box to where she could show Vitellius. He saw what looked like fifty small bags containing a light brownish powder. His eyes bugged as he ran the light at Fort where Rosa turned into Jefferson. Vitellius knew now why things had gone wrong. It was all a setup. One of his partners had sold him out. His guess was that he was looking at heroin. He shut the box. He didn't want to look at it. That bastard Rob had set the whole thing up. John got nailed in the house stealing ice, and he was to be nailed with skag. Well, fuck him. He'd get away and then show him who would fuck who.