



TROUBLE



Gerald W. Darnell

a short story by
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The characters and events in this short story are fictitious. Any similarity to a real person, living or dead is coincidental and not intended by the author.



“Live is cheap – make sure you buy enough”

®

Trouble



This muggy and warm day in Miami sent most people searching for ocean breezes, sandy beaches and cool drinks with little umbrellas in them. My search was for a man named Iaam Trouble. Not sure where he got his first name, or his last name, but I did know the name fit. This guy was bad news.

My associate Joe Richardson was working in Mississippi on a case for *Black Diamond Insurance*. My other associate, Lydia Longstreet was...well...I'm sure Lydia was doing something, I just didn't know what that something was.

Using airplanes and rental cars I had traveled through the Southeastern United States – finally ending up in Miami. I was searching for a person suspected to be heavily involved in a case being handled by Jack Logan. Jack's client was accused of murdering his business partner, but my investigations had uncovered a blackmail plot by the murdered business partner. He was blackmailing a fellow named Iaam Trouble. The reasons for the blackmail were a little sketchy, so I needed to find Mr. Trouble and get his side of the story. Also maybe find a murder weapon, and perhaps recover some money and documents missing from the murder scene. Documents that I believed were relevant to the blackmail, and money I suspect had been paid to Mr. Iaam Trouble.

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Jack Logan is my lawyer and partner; he's also a good friend. He's not 'officially' my partner; however, we do work together on a number of cases, and the business he brings the *Drake Detective Agency* is always welcomed.

Jack's law practice is small when compared to most of the firms in Memphis, but he's always busy. Because it's small, Jack is able to

provide the kind of personal service that the larger firms can't, and that was important. Besides, he's also a damn good lawyer.

*I*d chased Iam Trouble from Memphis to Mobile to Pensacola to Jacksonville to Orlando to Miami and finally to South Beach. He'd left a lot of clues with his travels, so I was pretty sure that he wasn't aware he was being followed. He was also dropping a lot of cash as he traveled – mostly on women and booze.



This guy was definitely not hard to trail, but it seemed every time I got close, he pulled up stakes and was on the move again. I was pretty sure he was the killer and had information that would clear Jack's client - I just needed to pin him down and somehow get that information. So far I had not been successful in doing that.

When he finally landed in South Beach and checked into a sleazy hotel on Collins Avenue, I knew it was time to make things happen. Jack's client was running out of time and I was running out of patience.

After getting myself a room at the *Beacon Hotel* on Ocean Boulevard, I took a cab over to Collins Avenue and made camp in his hotel's downstairs bar. Trying to pace my drinking, I was struggling to remain anonymous and not bring any attention to myself. Considering all the distractions found in South Beach, that wasn't an easy task.

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I needed Iaam Trouble occupied for fifteen or twenty minutes, giving me an opportunity to get into his room and search for missing documents and perhaps a murder weapon. However, he wasn't cooperating. For some reason he had remained in his room since checking in. I suspected maybe a prostitute or someone else had joined him and my idea of camping out in this bar wasn't going to work.

I was contemplating my Plan B when things changed. I watched as Iaam casually waltzed into the bar, sat down at a table and ordered a drink – this was my chance. I'd gotten lucky and needed to move fast.

Walking back out onto Collins Avenue, I stopped the first hooker I saw – a tall black woman wearing a leather bra outside a tight sweater, a short red skirt and white boots with high heels. Before I could speak she grabbed my arm, gave me a big beautiful smile and introduced herself as Honey Bunn, before suggesting I call her 'Tickles' – her nickname. Without pausing, she squeezed my arm and began describing activities that included sliced bread, cucumbers, warm butter, olive oil and whipped cream – finally adding that if I had some other ideas for the evening she was willing to listen and learn.

When I finally got the opportunity to speak, I waved a \$50 dollar bill under her beautiful nose and explained that what I really needed was for her to entertain a friend, Mr. Trouble, for thirty minutes – keeping him occupied and away from his room. After that, if he was interested in her other entertainment specialties then they could work something out. But my \$50 dollars was for thirty minutes, and she was to keep him in the bar during that time. 'Tickles' put her fingers on the fifty, but I held it while I gave her a brief description of Mr. Iaam Trouble. When she finally nodded her understanding, I slowly released the bill. She gave me another smile, pushed the money into her leather bra and headed toward the hotel bar.

Thirty minutes would give me enough time to search his room and collect any evidence. After that I didn't care what happened between Mr. Iaam Trouble, Ms. Honey Bunn and the numerous food items she used for entertainment. Eating and sex were always a part of the fun of being in South Beach – just usually not at the same time.

*F*rom the street outside the bar I watched through the window. ‘Tickles’ was smooth, and within a few minutes they were engaged in a conversation that I was glad I couldn’t hear.

He’d fell for it and was enjoying her company when I discretely made it across the lobby, then up to his room where I began my search. What I found was more than enough, and more than I expected.

A .38 revolver with one round fired was in his luggage along with enough damning information to put him and several others in jail for a long time. It appeared that his scam of false business loans had been discovered by Jack Logan’s client’s business partner, and that expended bullet in the .38 had been used to shut him up and stop the blackmail.

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I was wrapping up my examination when the hotel room door suddenly swung open and slammed against the inside wall. I stopped my search and looked toward the noise. What I saw wasn’t pretty.



Mr. Iaam Trouble was standing in the open doorway and staring at me. Iaam was a big black man, 3 inches taller than me, 50 pounds heavier and giving me a glare that could have caused an infection. He was also holding a .45 revolver in his left hand.

“Who are you?” he shouted, and then took a couple of steps in my direction. “What are you doing in my room?”

“Exterminator...sent by the hotel,” I said, while slowly turning around to face him.

“I’m in here looking for rats. I see now that one has shown up. Guess I do good work.”

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“What are you doing in my room?” He repeated. Iaam seemed to be a little confused, and still surprised by my presence.

I ignored his question and pointed at the .45 he was holding. “I see you have another gun – one other than the .38 you carry in your luggage. Are there other weapons I need to check?”

He looked down at his weapon and then back at me. “Just this one,” he said slowly before pointing it at my head. “It should work just fine.”

“Hey mister,” I heard from somewhere outside the room and just before the partially open door swung into Iaam Trouble’s back. It was Honey Bunn and she’d come to join the party.

Startled, he turned to the interruption - that was all I needed. Closing the few feet between us, I used my weight, movement and right fist to hit him on the jaw with all the power I could muster. He reeled backward, dropped the .45 and fell to his knees before curling up in the doorway. He was mumbling something I didn’t understand when I pulled his big arms behind his back and slapped on my cuffs.

“Hey mister,” I heard again – this time from the open doorway. “That fellow owes me \$50 and I intend to be paid.” She looked down at Iaam lying on the floor, “whether he’s conscience or not. It ain’t my fault that you done knocked him out. We had an arrangement.”

“An arrangement,” I muttered.

“Yes...an arrangement,” Honey Bunn had her hands resting on her hips and swinging them side to side as she spoke. “He owes me \$50 dollars.”

Searching his pockets, I found two twenty dollar bills and tossed them toward the door. “Look sister, you just made ninety bucks this afternoon - fifty from me and forty from this guy...and all without taking your clothes off! Now, you need to get outta’ here before the cops show up – because it won’t be long.”

She gave me an odd look, scooped up the two twenties, stuffed them into her bra and quickly disappeared down the hallway.

I turned the big fellow over to the Miami police along with everything I'd found in his room, then left a message with Jack Logan's secretary telling her what happened. My work was done here. Jack would contact the Miami police and arrange to get Iam Trouble transferred back to Memphis along with all the evidence and suspected murder weapon.

I, on the other hand, had plans to spend a relaxing and stimulating night in South Beach. The women were hot; the drinks were cold and the ocean breeze refreshing. What else could a young man ask for?

Thirty minutes after leaving the police station I was sitting on a stool at the *Beacon Hotel* lobby bar having a Jack Daniel's and Coke while staring at the breasts of the prettiest bartender I'd seen in years – or at least since my last



trip to New Orleans. She couldn't make a drink like Andy and her conversation was somewhat limited, but everything else had 'exciting evening' written all over it.

We were just starting to get acquainted when a smartly dressed bellboy walked through the bar looking left, then right and yelling my name.

"Carson Reno....Mr. Carson Reno...I have a message for Mr. Carson Reno."

"Here boy," I shouted. "I'm Carson Reno."

He walked quickly to my barstool and handed me a folded piece of paper. I placed a dollar bill in his outstretched hand, and he nodded his head before saying "Thank You."

Written on the paper was a simple note: *Carson Reno – Room 237. Call Jack Logan in Memphis – Urgent.*

I stared at the note for a moment and mumbled to myself, "Urgent...what could be urgent?" I had just solved his problems,

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arrested a killer and provided evidence to clear his client. What could be urgent enough to interrupt my evening in South Beach?

I leaned across the bar and spoke to my new bartender friend. “Miss...Miss...”

She turned in my direction and answered while showing me a big smile and waving her cleavage under my nose. “Cricket...my first name is Donna, but all my friends call me Jimmie.”

“Jimmie Cricket,” I nodded while returning her smile. “Well Jimmie...please consider me a friend. But, right now I need to make a phone call. Is there a payphone around?”

“Yep...there’s one in the lobby just outside,” she was pointing at the door. “I’ll keep your drink fresh while you’re away.”

“You do that,” I was speaking to her but staring at her cleavage. “I’ll try to keep it short – I’m looking forward to getting to know Jimmie Cricket much better.”

Her smile and wink at me spoke volumes. It was shaping up to be a beautiful evening.

I hurried out of the bar and easily found a group of payphones located in the corner of the hotel lobby.

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I wasn’t about to fool with change, so my call to Jack’s office was collect. His secretary answered quickly, accepted the charges and within a minute Jack was on the line. I spoke first.



“Before you say anything I want to know why you would interrupt me with an urgent message. Was something wrong with the information I gave your secretary? I caught the bad guy and have evidence to prove your client innocent. What could possibly be urgent?”

“Have you read the newspaper?” he asked, without answering any of my questions.

"No I haven't read the newspaper, and you know that I DON'T read newspapers. Besides, what kind of news could you have in Memphis that would be important enough to make the Miami press?"

"Sergeant Martin Greene was found dead last evening. Apparently he committed suicide, shot himself with a personal weapon while at home and sitting at his desk. But, the police haven't made any formal announcement regarding cause of death."

"My deepest sympathy and condolences to the family...but who the hell is Sergeant Martin Greene and why should I care?"

"Martin Greene was a Sergeant with the Memphis Police Department – he worked out of the Fourth Precinct."

"Okay...as I said I am sorry for the family. But allow me to repeat myself...who the hell is Martin Greene and why should I care? And why does a cop committing suicide qualify as 'urgent'?"

"That precinct has been under investigation by the District Attorney's office for the past few months. They have been looking into corruption, bribes by city officials and links to the mob...maybe even the Memphis Mafia."

"Alright, another bad cop who couldn't face the music or the significance of his activities and committed suicide - just another bad guy out of the picture as far as I'm concerned. As I said, my sympathy for the family, but you didn't answer my question. In fact, you haven't answered ANY of my questions! Why should I care that Sergeant Martin Greene took the easy way out of his life of crime? Good riddance and let's move on."

"It had been rumored that Sergeant Martin Greene was going to roll over to the District Attorney...roll over on all his police and Mafia friends with lots of names, dates and places. A Grand Jury is scheduled to convene tomorrow, and I suspect he was going to testify."

"Do you know he was going to testify?"

"No...no of course not - their witness list is confidential. But it just seems to be too much of a coincidence...with the rumors and all."

"Okay, if your suspicions are correct, that means that perhaps our friends on Beale Street rubbed him out to shut him up – or it could have been some of his crooked police friends. Maybe

somebody put a gun in his hand and helped him pull the trigger...who knows."

"Perhaps, but what if that's not the whole story. What if what he was trying to expose didn't end there – end with Martin Greene's death?"

"I don't get it." This was interesting information for some people, but not interesting to me. "He's dead, what are you trying to say?"

"Look, now that he's dead whatever he was prepared to talk about won't be coming to the District Attorney – at least not from the mouth of Martin Greene. But that doesn't mean his information isn't still out there somewhere, and out there where it can be used."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"A woman showed up at my office this morning and identified herself as Martin Greene's girlfriend...lover. She says they've been seeing each other for over a year AND has the information that he was going to provide to the DA, or at least has access to it. She also insists that he would not have committed suicide."

"Now that IS interesting. But does...did this guy, Martin Greene have a wife? If so, what's her story? Was she in the house when he killed himself? Did he leave a suicide note?"

"No suicide note was found. However, the wife claims that her husband had been in poor health and that might have been the reason for him taking his life."

"Why did this girlfriend come to you and not to the police...or better yet...why not straight to the District Attorney?"

"Because she claims some of what Martin Greene was going to tell involves several members of the police department, members of the DA's office and maybe even the District Attorney himself."

"Really...what's this woman's name?"

"Adele Adora, and she's scared. I need you to get back here as quick as you can. If my hunch is correct, they'll come after her and come after her hard. They'll want to make sure she never gets to talk to the right people."

"By 'they' I assume you mean the Memphis Mafia, the mob and/or those cops who might be implicated by her information."

"Correct."

"Have you checked her out...I mean, is this Adele Adora who she says she is?"

"Carson, you're the detective – I'm just a lawyer. Get back here and talk to her yourself. If she's for real, then we need to make sure she's protected and that her information gets to the right people."

"Where is she now?"

"Safe for the time being...I hope. I located Joe Richardson today and told him what I'm telling you. He's looking after her until you get back to town. I have no idea where, and I didn't ask."

"Good plan," I said hurriedly. "Joe can handle that."

"Now, stop asking questions and get yourself back to Memphis – I need your help."

"Jack...I was really hoping to share the rest of my evening with my new friend, Jimmie Cricket – not spend it sitting on an airplane."

There was silence for a moment before he spoke. *"I wasn't aware that Walt Disney was offering tours on South Beach – maybe that's something I missed. But this woman, Adele Adora is now my client and she's in trouble. I need your help. I need you here to protect her and find out if what she's telling me is true. Call me when you get back to town."* Jack hung up.

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I returned to my barstool, finished my drink and said a sad good-by to Jimmie Cricket and her cleavage. At least it gave me something to think about during the three hour flight back to Memphis.



About the Author



A Florida native, Gerald grew up in the small town of Humboldt, TN., where he attended high school. Following graduation from the Univ. of Tennessee, he spent time in Hopkinsville, KY, Memphis, TN and Newport, AR before moving back to Florida – where he now lives.

While living and working in Memphis, the author worked out of an office located just off the lobby of The Peabody Hotel. Many of the descriptions, events and stories about the hotel are from personal experiences.

This short story fiction work, **“Trouble”** is what the author calls ‘Fiction for Fun’. It uses real places and real geography to spin a story that didn’t happen, but should be fun for the mystery reader. As a quick read, those familiar with the early 1960’s geography in the novel, will travel back in time to places that will always be remembered.

My Carson Reno Mystery Series is available in paperback, hardback and e-book formats. Some are also offered as an audio book. His book, *‘Don’t Wake Me Until It’s Time to Go,’* is a non-fiction collection of stories, events and humorous observations from his life. Many friends and readers will find themselves in one of his adventures or stories.