

Prologue

*T*he voices coming from the upstairs room were loud and angry.

Luckily they had been shouting at each other while running up the stairs, giving me an opportunity to slip through a side door and seek cover in an adjacent downstairs office.

I had left my friend and a stranger on the floor, lying in a massive pool of blood - most of their faces removed by a bullet that had entered the back of their heads and exited just below the eyes.

I'd just knelt down to examine their wounds when I heard those angry voices. The voices of the two men who were now standing on an upstairs landing, yelling at each other and staring down at my dead friend and someone I barely knew.

They didn't seem surprised or alarmed at finding the bodies, but were evidently surprised and alarmed at finding only two bodies, both with blood oozing out onto the dirty floor. There were supposed to be three dead people in that warehouse, and I was meant to be the other one. I was sure their surprise wouldn't last for long. They had seen me enter the building; they knew I was in here - somewhere.

I was trapped – trapped in a room with just a single door, which connected the office with the warehouse. There was only a lone window that opened over a cluttered alley located twenty feet below. Running wasn't an option, and within moments they would be crashing through that door looking for me and the duffel bag which lay next to my feet.

Surrender or fight would be my only way out of this situation, and I knew that surrender would only delay the inevitable – a bullet in the brain like my friends.

The killer had fled after the ambush – and was supposed to kill everyone. But, either I was a few minutes late, or the dead men were early – I didn't know which. It really didn't matter.

I assume the killer heard me approach and ran down the back stairs. And I also assumed it would only take them a few minutes to join up with their friends, the two men arguing on the upstairs landing. Three against one – those were not good odds.

*T*he circumstances that brought me, my friend, the stranger and the killers to this dirty warehouse were long and complicated. But this arranged meeting was designed to bring closure and wrap up one of the most bizarre and confusing cases of my career. Now it seemed this might be the last case of my career.



*O*ur story begins many days before, although it seems like it was just yesterday.

