

Prologue

*I*ke and Rusty were excited. School was out for the summer, and they were in a hurry to try out their favorite fishing spot.

Fishing poles in hand, they raced their bicycles down the one lane paved road to the pasture lane that led to an old secluded pond located next to the Forked Deer River. The shallow water would be churning with bass and bream trapped there when the river receded back into its banks this spring.

The birds were the first thing they spotted – hundreds of them circling around hurriedly, then diving to the ground and disappearing into the tall grass. Sitting atop the numerous cypress trees lining the riverbank were the buzzards – dozens of them watching the activity below.

Both boys sat quietly on their bikes, wondering what all the commotion was about. Possibly a dead cow or horse, but livestock was not usually kept in this area.

Perhaps it was some dead wildlife – a deer or wild hog responsible for all the activity.

Whatever it was Ike and Rusty were curious, and had to go find out. That's what boys do...13 year old boys headed on their first fishing trip of the summer.

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*T*he grass was high, almost up to their waist and clinging to their jeans as they waded through it and towards the birds. A few stones thrown in the direction of the birds sent the small ones in the air and to branches of surrounding trees. However, the buzzards weren't so easily spooked – and remained high on their perch, overseeing everything below.

Inching closer, they spotted the reason for all the commotion. Lying in the tall grass and partially covered with leaves was something large...large enough to be a full grown cow. But, the color was wrong – it wasn't a cow or any other type of animal they had ever seen. It was white; a milky white with red blisters from the sun or perhaps from all the bird activity.

Walking to the left side of the object they saw what they didn't want to see – a head. The head of a man with long dark hair covering what remained of a face – the face of a dead man!

Racing their bicycles back home, they were almost out of breath while trying to explain to Ike's father what they had found.

A phone call to the local sheriff started another kind of activity in this little field next to the pond and the river.

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Ike and Rusty had discovered the body of a 50 to 55 year old white male. He was naked and had been dead for no more than 24 hours. It was believed he died somewhere else and the body dumped at this site. Cause of death was determined to be a small caliber bullet to the head – just behind the left ear. Death would most certainly have been instant and the wound would have caused a great deal of bleeding – although very little blood was found at the scene.

A thorough search of the field and surrounding area turned up nothing – no clues regarding the crime and no clues regarding identification of the dead man.

At the autopsy fingerprints were taken and another kind of search began – the search to find his identity, the search for why he was in the field and the search for who put him there.

Maurice Fisher was an educated man. A Bachelor's Degree in Finance Management from Memphis State University had landed him a good job...a damn good job with *Liberty Trust*. Daily Maurice handled hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars that belonged to investors trying to turn their little nest eggs into a fortune. That rarely happened, but Maurice was more than eager to take their money and search for investment opportunities.

He was good at his job, or at least he thought he was, and *Liberty Trust* was certainly happy with their piece of the action that Maurice brought to the business.

The happiness for Maurice Fisher ended there.

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First it was his name – Maurice. Why would his mother have saddled him with that silly handle for the rest of his life? But he couldn't change it – it was too late. His education degrees, his job at *Liberty Trust*, his presidency of the Rotary Club, his Country Club membership, his wife of eight years (his third) and a grown child from a first marriage made sure that he would always be Maurice Fisher – nobody else.

Four years ago, at the age of 50, Maurice saw his life passing him by. Passing too quickly – things needed to change. He needed more – more than what Maurice Fisher, Senior Account Executive for *Liberty Trust* had to offer.

So, when away from *Liberty Trust*, away from the Rotary Club, away from the Country Club and away from his wife – he introduced himself to everyone as Larry...Larry Fisher.

He liked the sound of that name – it was manly, more like somebody in charge, more like somebody who could handle things for himself and not just things that belonged to someone else.

That's when all the trouble started.

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*I*t all began innocently enough, a few of his client's dollars had been transferred to a private personal account, and then written off as simply a bad investment. But it wouldn't end there, not with just a few dollars – these things never do.

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*L*arry Fisher spent most afternoons and evenings at the West Memphis Dog Track, and many late nights playing high stakes poker in a game that traveled around Memphis. Using the excuse of working late or traveling for business, he convinced his wife of his loyalty to work and to her. She believed him. Ain't love grand?

But, instead of finding happiness with his new life, he was losing thousands at the track and even more at the poker games.

And there was also that other thing...the drugs. A get rich scheme to turn twenty thousand dollars of heroin into a hundred thousand was a disaster from the beginning. Maurice (Larry) Fisher learned quickly that he was no drug dealer – he had no idea.

The scheme was cooked up at one of those late night poker games. Mal Reese offered to front the heroin, Larry was to set up a distribution network and they would split the hundred thousand...after Larry took back his original twenty thousand investment.

Larry's partners in this arrangement were a couple of cheap crooks named Louis Fairfax and Sammy Brewster. What they did was steal the heroin, sell it themselves and leave poor Larry Fisher holding the bag...the empty bag.

He was on the hook to Mal Reese for the heroin and the forty grand with no idea of how to pay it back.

His disguised losses to his *Liberty Trust* clients continued to grow, and those losses didn't go unnoticed by his employer.

Suddenly Maurice Fisher was no longer a shining star at *Liberty Trust*, and it would only be a matter of time until his little charade was discovered. He had to do something.

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And Larry had another problem. The ‘Boys on Beale Street’ (aka the Memphis Mafia) had been watching Larry’s activities...watching them closely and waiting for the chance to turn his misfortunes into an opportunity.

Getting a hook into Maurice (Larry) Fisher meant a hook into *Liberty Trust* and the thousands of dollars they handled on a daily basis. It was a goldmine if they could find a way to tap into it, and Maurice (Larry) Fisher was just the key they needed.

He was first approached by James Henry King and then later by Johnie Gibson – both high-end operators for the ‘Boys on Beale Street’ and both regular players in the traveling poker game Larry frequented. They watched him drop a lot of cash at the games and knew that he had to be pulling money from *Liberty Trust* to keep things afloat. That was all they needed.

Their offer was a simple one – a one hundred thousand dollar loan, a cash loan repayable over time. Enough cash to give him some breathing room while he got his affairs in order. In reality, it was a loan that could never be repaid – a hook deep into Maurice (Larry) Fisher and *Liberty Trust*.

At first Larry said no, but eventually the thoughts of that much cash was just too much to turn down.



But, Larry had a plan - a big plan but a complicated one. A plan where he could walk away with that hundred grand and a whole lot more if things worked out. Larry was smart, he wasn’t going to let things go wrong as they had before.

He took the money, which was delivered to his midtown office by James Henry King. No words were exchanged as James Henry dropped a leather briefcase containing mostly \$100 dollar bills on his desk – smiled and walked away.

Things were finally looking up for Maurice (Larry) Fisher and it was time to put the second part of his plan into action.

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*T*his part was the poker game - and key in Larry's complicated plan to assemble suitcases full of cash before disappearing.

The high stakes poker game that had consumed most of his losses was a traveling game – moving from hotel to hotel on game nights. Larry, as a regular, always knew where and when the next game would be. And he also knew that the pot from the players could be over a hundred thousand dollars on game nights – maybe more.

The second part of his plan was to rob the poker game and take all the money, and that needed to happen quickly. The walls were closing in and closing in a hurry. *Liberty Trust* had already called for an audit of his accounts, and that would bring his little fraud program to a crashing halt.

He'd managed to make one last transfer of funds into his personal accounts before closing them and turning everything into cash. It had been a large transfer, and he was sure that Leonard Mann was aware of his tricks. Time was running out.

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Knocking over the poker game would be easy. Rooker Pickle ran the games, issued chips and collected money from the players. No money was ever visible or on the game tables in case the police showed up.

During play Rooker placed himself in an adjoining hotel room, issued new chips and cashed out players – always away from the game. Sure he took his cut, 10%, but nobody ever complained. They were happy to have a game and a safe place to play.

Most nights there were at least two tables and as many as twenty people playing – some coming, some going as the night went on. All guns were checked with Rooker and kept away from the playing tables – along with the cash.

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Rooker planted himself in that adjoining room with a couple of bottles of whiskey - drinking constantly and watching television. He issued chips to new players and provided cash to those fortunate enough to walk away with some winnings. However, by late most evenings he was so drunk he couldn't walk, and often players had to cash themselves out.

The plan was safe and simple. Rooker couldn't report the robbery, and most of the players didn't want anything to do with the police. They would all eat their losses, say nothing and the game would resume at another time and another place.

It would be easy - so easy Maurice couldn't figure out why somebody hadn't already done it before!

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But, he couldn't do it alone. No – he needed an accomplice...or maybe two to pull off the robbery. Louis Fairfax and Sammy Brewster owed him...owed him for the drugs they had

stolen. He would make them help with the robbery and then keep all the money for himself.

However, that part of his plan (keeping all the money) would not be so easy.

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*O*ur story begins two weeks after a naked murdered man was found in a grassy field just off Sanders Bluff road – a small rural area near Humboldt, Tennessee.