

CHAPTER ONE

How My Journey In The Feds Began

August 3rd, 1998—Summer, about 5:30 PM
El Torito Restaurant, Northridge, California

The air inside El Torito was a twisted cocktail of spilled tequila, stale lime wedges, and the unmistakable scent of desperation marinated in cheap cologne. This wasn't just a bar; it was the graveyard where dreams and dignity came to die—a place where you could almost convince yourself that the bottom of a bottle of Jack held the answers to life's problems. Between the off-key mariachi music blaring from the speakers and the sea of lost souls laughing just a bit too loud, it was clear: this was the last stop before hell. And me? I was right in the thick of it, half-assing my way through a flirtation with some bleached-blond insurance adjuster who looked like she'd spent way too many years chained to a desk. She was guzzling booze on my dime, hoping to drown out the cubicle nightmare she couldn't shake, and I wasn't exactly in a rush to stop her.

I took another drag from my Jack and Coke, the burn sliding down my throat like an old, familiar enemy. The ice clinked in the glass, the sound almost lost under the dull roar of bar chatter that hummed in the background. Sweat clung to my skin—not from the heat, but from the chaos bouncing around in my head like a pinball. I was drifting between two worlds—one filled with cheap sex and fleeting satisfaction, the other chained to the obligations of fatherhood.

My mind was running at a hundred miles an hour, flipping between the need to pick up my kid Jacqueline from her friend's place and the not-so-subtle desire to seduce the blonde before the night unraveled. It was a reckless balancing act, thinking I could juggle both without the whole thing blowing up in my face. But hell, maybe if I played my cards right, I could squeeze in a little detour for some action and still make it back in time without screwing everything up. Life's just one big hustle, after all—a tightrope walk between lust and responsibility, and I was dead center, trying to keep from crashing.

She laughed, her hand lingering on my arm a little too long, and I flashed her a smile, but my mind was already miles away. Out there in the hazy twilight of the San Fernando Valley, I was trying to figure out what the hell I was even doing. I was caught between some half-baked fantasy and the cold reality waiting on the other side of that bar door. The drink was dulling the edges, just enough to keep me from making any firm decisions.

And then, of course, my flip phone rang. The buzz in my pocket snapped me back to reality. Gary P.—because who the hell else would it be? That relentless halfwit had been hounding me for days, chasing after five kilos of product like a junkie chasing down his next fucking fix. I should've known better than to pick up, but, like an idiot, I did. Gary's voice was frantic, as always, telling me to get outside like his life depended on it.

I glanced back at the blonde—there was something about her that still had a pull on me, but the chaos outside was dragging me away. I should've stayed on that stool, ordered another drink, and tried to salvage the night. But no—against every ounce of logic, I slid off the barstool and gave her a smile that said I'd be right back. We both knew that was a load of crap, but it felt good to pretend for a second.

I pushed through the crowd, the noise fading as I stepped out into the evening air, my mind already unraveling the disaster waiting for me outside.

The Takedown

The second I stepped outside, it hit me like a sledgehammer—**bam**—a 105 degree wall of heat straight from the depths of hell slammed into my face. The kind of heat that makes you question every bad decision that led you there. The air was thick, choking, like the universe was playing some sick joke on me. I squinted against the sun, feeling sweat pooling on the back of my neck, and then I saw him.

Gary P., waving like a damn idiot from across the blacktop parking lot, grinning like he'd just hit the jackpot. Or maybe he just got lucky with some poor soul in the bathroom. Whatever it was, the idiot looked way too pleased with himself, which should've been my first red flag. But no, I was too focused on getting this over with, too distracted by the sweat dripping down my back and the nagging voice telling me I should've stayed inside with the insurance chick.

I took one step toward him, and that's when it all went to hell—**boom**. Like a goddamn hurricane, the entire federal government crashed the party. DEA, FBI, ATF—the whole alphabet soup of federal agents stormed from out behind cars like they were trying to set a new record for overkill. Guns drawn, and a chorus of voices yelling, “Put your hands in the air, put your hands in the air!”

For a moment, I just stood there, staring around like a deer caught in headlights, thinking, *Wow, something big's going down here*. Half expecting they were after some other poor bastard. It was surreal, like a fever dream where nothing made sense.

And then it hit me—the heat, the shouting, the chaos—*it was all real*. I don't even know why, but I managed to say, calm as anything, “Hey, are you guys talking to me?”

A chorus of voices answered back, “Yes! Put your fucking hands in the air!” But there was a problem? Not a single one of these assholes had even bothered to ID themselves. For all I knew, they were just some cowboy mercenaries playing make believe. I knew if they were gonna whack me I’d already be dead. So, I stood there, hands out to the side, calm as Moses parting the goddamn Red Sea, and ordered, “Hey, lower your weapons. I’m not gonna hurt you.”

Now we had a real Mexican standoff. I wasn’t budging, and they were doing that federal shuffle—two steps forward, one step back—like they’d studied the choreography from some shitty B-movie. I shook my head, watching them close in, thinking, *Really, guys?*

There they came, pistols and shotguns pointed straight at my head, ready to turn my brains into a fine red mist in the hot summer air.

But of course, they didn’t pull the trigger. Why would they? That would’ve required balls. But these guys were so hopped up on adrenaline they were practically foaming at the mouth, eyes wild and twitchy like rabid dogs just waiting for a reason to unload. And there I was, right in their crosshairs, the unlucky bastard in the middle of their fed-fueled frenzy.

They were barking orders now reminiscent of an angry weightlifter with roid rage, screaming over each other like taking me down was the crowning achievement of their careers. And still, not a single one of them flashed a badge. No IDs, no credentials—just guns and bravado. It felt like I’d walked into a circus where the clowns were armed to the teeth, and nobody knew what the punchline was supposed to be.

The Beginning of a Federal Nightmare

Finally, I made the call. I drop down to the ground, knees slamming into the sizzling asphalt, and just lay there like a lamb awaiting slaughter. The sun beats down, and the pavement’s burning through my clothes, but that’s the least of my problems now. Next thing I know, they’re on me—rushing in like a pack of schoolyard bullies who finally found the poor kid with lunch money. The cuffs are slapped on so tight it feels like they’re trying to snap my wrists in two, and then they haul me up like I’m Public Enemy No. 1.

In Federal Custody

They throw me into the back of this beat-up, windowless white van like some cheap mob kidnapping out of a bad '90s flick. One of the cowboys looks over at me and asks, “you know we are?” I’m half-expecting Joe Pesci to show up at any minute. “Of course I do!” I lied, even though I had no fucking clue who they were. It’s chaos, a complete shitshow, and yet somehow it had the air of *official business*. But instead of heading to some sinister black site to put a bullet in my head or a deep underground bunker, these brainiacs drive me straight to the rooftop of the

Northridge Mall. Yeah, you heard that right—a goddamn shopping mall parking garage. Their top-secret rendezvous point. I half expect a director to pop out with a boom mic yelling “Cut!” because this whole operation is running like the lowest-budget production in Hollywood.

The garage is mayhem. Feds in blue windbreakers with agency initials on them are running around like extras in a cop show, guns out, radios buzzing, playing at being real law enforcement while looking like a bunch of clowns. These aren’t the hard-eyed, professional G-Men from the movies. No, these are your run-of-the-mill Keystone Cops, all calling each other by their first names like they’re at a goddamn BBQ. “Hey Steve, toss me those zip ties!” “Sure thing, John!” Meanwhile, I’m sitting cuffed in the back of this tin can on wheels, watching this circus unfold around me. I couldn’t make this shit up if I tried. Mentally I filed everything that was happening starting with faces, first names and agencies. Although I wasn’t sure why I was doing it, it came in handy later when I threw the feds for a loop as you’ll see if you dive deeper into my book.

My book...why did I even write this I’ve asked myself several times. I started penning this rag during Covid in 2021 when me like the rest of the world had some extra time on my hands, and before you knew it I was several chapters deep. So now, let's get back to the nitty gritty.

The Lincoln Conundrum

And just when I thought it couldn’t get any more ridiculous, one of these cocky feds decides to jack my ride. A silver ’90 Town Car. Sure, she wasn’t the prettiest girl on the block, but she was mine. So, this genius hops in the driver’s seat like he’s about to ride off into the sunset, thinking he’s pulled the heist of the century. But here’s the kicker: the tank’s running on fumes. I was going to hit the gas station after I picked up my kid, and later found out that when these idiots were speeding down the 101 at rush hour, my poor Lincoln sputtered out and died right in the middle of the road. When I read about it in discovery I laughed my ass off, because I found it highly amusing that a bunch of feds were stranded on the highway, radioing for backup because they didn’t bother to check the gas gauge.

When My Federal Journey Began

And sitting in the van cuffed up that day is when I realized—I was on my way down the federal rabbit hole. This wasn’t just some unlucky day at the bar; this was the start of my real education in the system’s ways.

This book? It’s the aftermath of that education. Lessons I had to learn the hard way, every goddamn lie I was fed, every trick the system played to keep me locked away. I’m not here to sugarcoat it or sell you some bullshit redemption arc. No, this is the raw, ugly truth of what happens when the feds get their hooks in you. And if you’re facing federal charges, buddy, you’re already knee-deep in the muck. But this book? This might be your lifeline.

I'll take you through it all—through the arrests, the courtroom farces, the plea deals designed to bury you alive, the sentencing that hits like a hammer. I'll show you where they hide the skeletons, who's pulling the strings behind the scenes, and why your lawyer could be the most dangerous person in the room. Because let me tell you, in the federal game, nobody's looking out for you but you. And if you're holding this book, you're smart enough to know that already.

A Rigged System

The system's rigged to break you—to wear you down until you've got nothing left to fight with. But if you know what's coming, if you've got the playbook, you can survive it. And that's what this book is about—survival. I'll give you the real story, the stuff your lawyer won't tell you and the judge sure as hell doesn't care about. It's not going to be pretty, but it'll keep you a step ahead of the madness. I've been through it and clawed my way out the other side. Now, it's your turn.

But this isn't about my story. Sure, I'll drop in some personal war stories when it's relevant. But the real meat of this is about people like Chuck and Megan—two people who have no idea they're already drowning in deep shit. And I'm here to walk you through their journey, so you know exactly what to expect when the feds come knocking on *your* door.

Now since this book is about lawyers, whaddaya say we jump into the action and talk about 'em!

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