

Chapter Eight

*The day Dr. King was murdered
April,4, 1968*

Butch and I awoke around 10 that morning, april,4, 1968. We looked across the room at each other, and you could sense we were both uneasy. Both of us half smiled at each other and reached for the smokes. We weren't saying anything, just staring at the walls. After about 15 minutes Butch spoke first, he ask how did I feel and I told him tired. Butch said to wake up because this was our big day. I said yea, a good day for a killing and a bad day for the weather. It was cool that morning and some clouds but outside that it was a normal spring day.

We both moved slow that day, like there was no hurry to get where we were going and no rushing into what we had to do. We took showers and dressed,then we started talking a little. Butch was calm and didn't act concerned about what was going to take place today. Butch ask me what I thought about Caruthersville being intergrated,and I told him I didn't like it because they had there own school and it was brand new, and the next thing we would know would be they would start dating the white girls. You have to stop and remember this was a time of unrest and major hate time. There was riots, the war and nobody trusted the next man. You had to be careful what you said and who you said it to. At the time the question was a normal one that meant nothing, later it would come to mean alot.

We sat and went over the street maps and pictures of Ray that Paul had given us. Butch said there could be no mistakes. He told me to remember what happened to the wolf boy that holcomb had killed at jaybirds and the other people that had crossed Jaybird. And I told Butch not to worry that I knew my job. Then Butch said, this is my ass too, so don't forget.

We left the motel about 12 noon and stopped on Lamar and got us a burger and fries. Then we went on to downtown and went in a bar down by the old King Cotton hotel. While we sat there ,Butch punched me and said "look at this". When I looked up there was James Ray coming in the door. I ask Butch if he wanted to do him now and he said no, we were told he couldn't die until after 5 PM. Ray kept looking toward us like he was nervous,and after a few minutes left. Butch and I talk awhile longer and left about 2:30.

We drove main and the other streets looking at escape routes and going over the plans. I kept asking Butch where he would be and he told me I would be able to see him from where I would be. Then he said ,if something goes wrong and I can't pick you up, take the car at the corner by the arcade and leave and don't look back, we'll get out the best way we can. "Just make for sure that you get Ray".

At about 3:05 PM Butch dropped me off and I went across the lot and railroad tracks, climbed the ladder to the roof and posted myself with clear view of 422 main. Ray had already got there, in 10 or 15 minutes Butch and Paul pulled up and parked about two car lengths from Ray's mustang. I looked toward the arcade and the other mustang was just parking next to main. The man got out and got in a car that pulled up along side of him. This car was a dark chevy and both men had suits on. Butch went in one doorway and Paul went in another. In ten minutes ray came out and went into the

bar, then Paul came out and went into the bar. At about 3:30 Ray came out and walked up main going north. In half a block I lost sight of Ray.

Then about 3:40 Paul came out, looked my way and went back into the rooming house. During my time up on the roof I had time to ask myself many questions like, what was I doing here, what if something did go wrong, what if I missed Ray when I fired, what if I couldn't pull the trigger, and many more ideas came in my head. When you're sitting alone like I was your mind runs wild. I saw Ray come and go several times, but I didn't see Butch again until after I heard the shot. About four people began to get off work. This time of year there was not many people because it was the off season for cotton except for the loaders and trucks. I had been told to climb the Loomis building but at the last minute I changed that to a building about four doors down. The Loomis was right in front of the fire station and I thought it was too wide open.

I'll never forget the sounds that day, the robins were running around and the pigeons were on the top of every building. The street sounds and the sounds of the river boats behind me as they blew their horns. The car horns the sounds of people as they walked and talked on the street below me. But every time Ray or somebody would come out on the street, I wouldn't hear anything my eyes being focused on nothing but that rooming house.

It was getting later and the air was getting cooler. The light was fading slowly and I was getting more nervous by the minute. Then, at 5:55 I saw Ray emerge from the rooming house and get into the Mustang. I knew this was it, the time was right and I would have a good shot. Ray started his car and pulled away from the curve and I waited for him to turn his car south, but he didn't, then I thought he would circle the block and park and walk. This is what I had been told, so I waited.

I waited and waited, then about five minutes after Ray had left I heard what I thought was a loud backfire, then I heard people hollering, then sirens started going off and several people were running toward the fire station. As this was going on I saw Butch come from the side of the building in the bushes and then Paul emerged from the rooming house and I saw Paul lay a box and what looked like a coat down on the sidewalk, then they got in the Mustang, made a U-turn and came south toward me. I sat there a minute watching the police cars, I figured since Ray went the other way the Memphis police had got him. Then I got up and moved toward the ladder and Butch hollered "come on lets go". I had seen Butch drop Paul off at the arcade at the other Mustang. As I got down Butch asked if I got Ray, I looked at him in surprise and said no. His eyes lit up and he said damn, we're in trouble, lets go.

We got in the car, cut over to third street, then Lamar, and headed toward West Memphis across the Arkansas bridge. As we got across the bridge we pulled off and went under the bridge to the bank of the river and got out. Butch opened the trunk of the car, took the one 30-06 and 357 rifles out and we threw them in the river. They were thrown about forty to fifty yards out into the water. Then we headed back to Caruthersville, Missouri. What we hadn't noticed was a 30-06 was still in the car. We didn't see it until we were at Osceola, Arkansas. We knew we couldn't just dump it on the side of the road.

We headed north on highway 61 instead of 55, this was our planned route because 61 wasn't traveled since 55 had been built. It took us two hours to get back to Missouri. We arrived around 10 PM, and Butch let me off at dad's house. At the house I wasn't

nervous anymore because nothing had happened and I was home, but this wouldn't last but a matter of minutes.

My father always watched the 10 o'clock news before going to bed. As I walked in the den they had a picture on the TV of Dr. King saying he had been killed at 6:00 that night at the Loraine motel. I sat down still not realizing yet what had really happened. Then they announced the shot was fired from the rooming house and my heart went to my throat. I knew then what we had done, but I didn't put everything together till later. I got up and told dad I had to run uptown. I went straight to Jaybirds and he grabbed me as soon as I walked through the door and ushered me to the back room. I started to ask a question and he said shutup and listen. He said we had fucked up by not killing ray and everybody was covering their tracks. He told me to go home and stay out of sight till him or Butch called, not to talk to no one and say I was at his bar all day gambling and who was there. He said he had me and Butch covered.

The next morning I took the 30-06 me and Butch had forgotten about to a friends house, and it stayed there for 29 years until I got it in march of 1998 and turned it over to some people for safe keeping and testing. This 30-06 is army issue from the Springfield armory, its a bolt action balanced for a sniper weapon. My diary was also turned over because today they can test it and tell you within a few years when it was written. If the government try's to make my word unbelievable then I want the evidence to speak for its self.

In two days Jaybird called and I went to the climax bar to meet him. When I arrived Butch, Paul, Jaybird, Bo, and Clyde were there. I was told we had some serious problems to deal with, first we had to try and find Ray and kill him. If not, nothing could lead back to us or the government. Paul said we are all in this together and if one goes down we all go down. Paul said his orders had come from the top and that roachie would kill us before he or his boss would be involved. I later figured out who roachie was. He was directly under Hoover. In the government we had nicknames for everybody, the FBI was called the Feebees, ATF. was called revenuer's, so the nickname fits the person or group. We told them what we did with the weapons, but we didn't tell them about the 30-06 we forgot to throw away. We sat our alibis up and who would back us up that we were there. We went over who we trusted and didn't trust. Everybody that was in that room that day along with the names we talked about died violent deaths except me and Paul which are still alive, and Butch supposedly died of cancer. Everybody in that room that day was scared to death except Paul and Butch. You could hear it in their voices and see it in their faces. If I could see the fear, I know Paul could too.

For the next couple of weeks Butch and I went several places that Paul and Jaybird sent us looking for Ray. We had been Given 38's made in Brazil, named rossi pistols. At one time we were only a few hours behind Ray in Canada. We had been sent to Toronto where he was in a motel, but we were late by about two hours. When we got back to Caruthersville the FBI picked me up at town and country supply where I worked and ask me had Ray been in touch with me. They said they were questioning me because I had been in Jail with Ray. The two agents were out of Cape Missouri. When I told Jaybird about the two agents he told me to lay low for a while. I had a lot of sleepless nights during all this time. I would dream and over and over, I would go over what happened April fourth. I would see Paul come out of the building and lay

the box and jacket down, then get in the car and get out at the arcade on main. I could hear Butch's voice and see his face when I told him I didn't kill Ray. I remember the ride back to Caruthersville, and how quite it was except for Butch repeating himself over and over "I did it, I did it, I killed that Nigger". That nightmare has been with me for 30 years. I did get some relief after I had my meeting with Dr. Kings son, Dexter. And the way I felt when sitting in dad's den and hearing that King had been shot from the rooming house. I'll never forget the feeling in my gut or my chest. But as time goes on its like losing a loved one, you gradually let it fade to the back of your mind, not to forget but to block the scene out.
