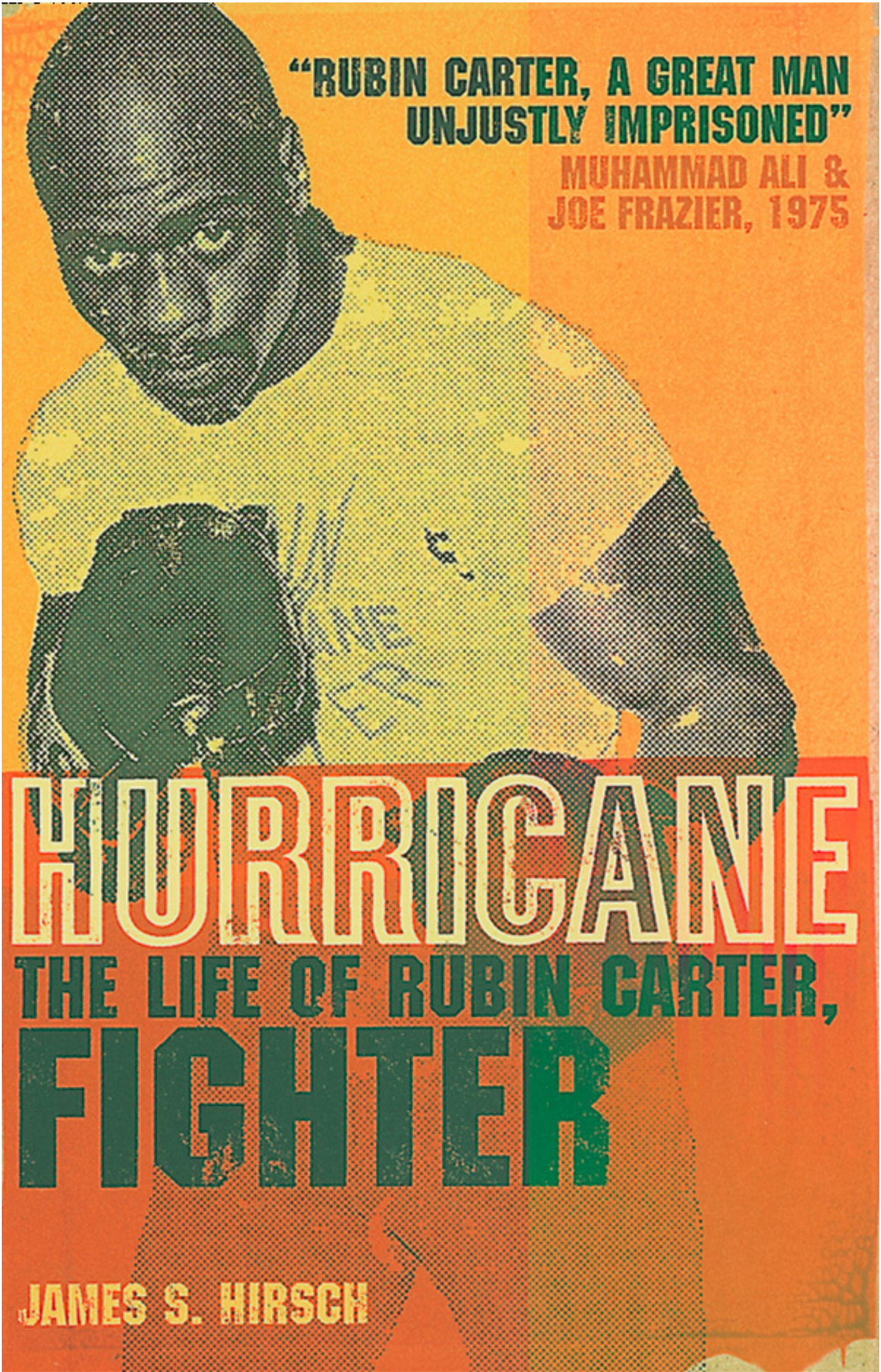
"RUBIN CARTER, A GREAT MAN UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED"
MUHAMMAD ALI &
JOE FRAZIER, 1975
HURRICANE
THE LIFE OF RUBIN CARTER,
FIGHTER
JAMES S. HIRSCH

James Hirsch

Hurricane: The Life of Rubin Carter, Fighter

«HarperCollins»

Hirsch J. S.

Hurricane: The Life of Rubin Carter, Fighter / J. S. Hirsch — «HarperCollins»,

Rubin Carter is the Hurricane. A pistol shot in a bar room ruined his chances of becoming the middleweight champion of the world. But he did not fire the gun. Nineteen long years in prison, a massively high profile campaign to release him that failed, and the persistence of an unlikely supporter finally saw him free.This is the story of a raging bull who learned to accommodate that rage. The Hurricane is an authentic C20th hero, every inch a fighter.Rubin Carter was a boxer on the threshold of the Middleweight Championship, with all the celebrity and wealth that would have conferred, when he was picked off the streets of Paterson, New Jersey by the police and accused of first degree murder in a bar room shooting. It was 1966, when America was gripped by racial rioting and burgeoning Black Power movements. Rubin faced an all-white jury. He was convicted. Liberal America adopted the campaign to release him in the 1970s – Candice Bergen, Mohammad Ali and Bob Dylan all protested for his release – but he remained in jail until 1985. Then, one man doggedly self-educated in the law finally achieved what years of high-profile lobbying had not: he freed Rubin Carter and righted one of the most significant cases of American injustice this century. Hurricane is a biography of modern America's great flaw: race relations. It is the story of a troublesome but gifted man, a paratrooper, a boxer, from the poorer side of the tracks, who was crudely and cruelly convicted of a crime he did not commit. Failed by the justice process, Rubin Carter proved himself a fighter all over again outside of the boxing ring, and a genuine hero in the process.

Содержание

HURRICANE
The Life ofRubin Carter, Fighter
James S. Hirsch

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DEDICATION

To Sheryl,who gave me her loveand never lost the faith

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1
DEATH HOUSE RENDEZVOUS

BY 1980, New Jersey's notorious Death House had been revived as a lovers' alcove, but Rubin "Hurricane" Carter still wanted no part of it.

The Death House was Trenton State Prison's official name for the brick and concrete vault where condemned men lived in tiny cells and an electric chair stood hard against a nearby wall. The first inmate reached the Death House on October 29, 1907. Six weeks later he was dead, his slumped body shaved and sponged down with salt water, the better to conduct the electricity. New Jersey continued to hang capital offenders for two more years. But soon enough the electric chair, with its wooden body, leather straps, and metal-mesh helmet, which discharged three mortal blasts of up to 2,400 volts, was seen as the most felicitous form of execution.

At least one infamous death gave the site a brief aura of celebrity. Richard Bruno Hauptmann, convicted of murdering Charles Lindbergh's baby, was electrocuted in the brightly lit chamber at 8:44 P.M. on April 3, 1936. In later years, sentences were carried out at 10 P.M., after the "general population" prisoners had been placed in total lockup. An outside power line fed the chair to ensure that a deadly jolt did not interfere with the penitentiary's regular lighting. On occasion, "citizen witnesses" crowded into a small green room, with only a rope between them and the chair about ten feet away. The observers watched the executioner turn a large wheel right behind the seated man's ear, thereby activating the lethal current. The body, penitent or obdurate, innocent or guilty, alive or dead, pressed against the restraints until the current was shut off.

The Death House confronted its own demise in 1972, when the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the death penalty as cruel and unusual punishment. The electric chair, having singed the breath from 160 men, was suddenly obsolete. So prison officials found a new mission for the chamber: it became the Visiting Center.

Despite its macabre history, the VC was a huge hit with most of the prisoners. It marked the first time that Trenton State Prison, a maximum-security facility, had allowed contact visits. Inmates could now touch their spouses, children, or friends. The metal bars were removed from more than two dozen Death Row cells near the archaic chair, its seven electric switches still in place. The rooms were not exactly cozy hideaways, but they became the unsanctioned venue for conjugal meetings. Inmates seeking a bit of privacy tried to reserve cells farthest away from the guards, and the arrangement, as described by some old-timers, gave rise to Death House babies.

But Rubin Carter didn't care a bit. He refused to accept virtually anything the prison offered, and that included visits inside the reincarnated Death House.

He was repulsed by the prospect of sharing an intimate moment among the souls of 160 men, some of whom he knew. Transforming this slaughterhouse into a visiting center, Carter believed, was like turning Auschwitz or Buchenwald into a summer camp for children. It was another way for the state to humiliate prisoners, to express its contempt for the new law that pulled the plug on its chair.

Carter knew well that he could have been one of the chair's immolations. In 1967 he had been found guilty of committing a triple murder in Paterson, New Jersey. He adamantly claimed his innocence. The state sought the death penalty, but the jury returned a triple-life sentence instead. That conviction was overturned in 1976, but Carter was convicted of the same crime again later that year and given the same triple-life sentence.

By the end of 1980, Carter had gone for almost four years without a contact visit. Since his second sentencing in February of 1977, he had not seen his son or daughter, his mother, his four sisters, or his two brothers. Most of his friends were also shut out. He and his wife had divorced. He saw his lawyers in another part of the prison.

But now, on the last Sunday of the year, Carter had a visitor as the result of an unusual letter he'd received three months earlier. As a former high-profile boxer who was known around the country and even the world, he received hundreds of letters each year, but he rarely answered them. In fact, he didn't even open them, allowing them to pile up in his cell. Carter wanted nothing to do with the outside world.

Then came a letter in September, his name and prison address printed on the envelope. Carter could never explain why he opened it except to say that the envelope had *vibrations*. The letter, dated September 20, 1980, was written by a black youth from the ghettos of Brooklyn who, oddly enough, was living in Toronto with a group of Canadians. The seventeen-year-old, Lesra Martin, wrote that he had read Carter's autobiography, *The Sixteenth Round*, written from prison in 1974, and it helped him better understand his older brother, who had done time in upstate New York. Lesra concluded the letter:

All through your book I was wondering if it would have been easier to die or take the shit you did. But now, when I think of your book, I say if you were dead then you would not have been able to give what you did through your book. To imagine me not being able to write you this letter or thinking that they could beat you into giving up, man, that would be too much. We need more like you to set examples of what courage is all about!

Hey, Brother, I'm going to let it go. Please write back. It will mean a lot.

Your friend,

Lesra Martin

Lesra's words, his efforts to reach out, touched Carter. He responded on October 7. The one-page typewritten note thanked Lesra for his "outpouring of hope, concern and humanness … The heartfelt messages literally jumped off the pages."

More letters followed between Lesra, his Canadian guardians—who had essentially adopted the youth to educate him—and Carter in which they discussed politics, philosophy, Carter's own case, and his appeal. But when Lesra asked if he could visit the prison at Christmastime—he was going to be in Brooklyn seeing his family—Carter replied noncommittally. That did not deter Lesra. The bond between the two—and, more important, between Carter and this mysterious Canadian commune that typically shunned friendships with the outside world—had been sealed.

Winter's chill could be felt inside the Trenton State Prison on that last Sunday of December. Built in 1836 by the famed British architect John Haviland, the prison is a brooding, monolithic fortress. Haviland used trapezoidal shapes and austere giganticism to evoke a massive Egyptian temple. Scarab beetles, which symbolized the soul in ancient Egypt, were carved into the prison's pink limestone walls. Tributaries from the Delaware River flowed in front of the prison, in faint mimicry of the Nile.

But by 1980 the waterways had long since dried up and the pink limestone had turned brown. Loops of razor-ribbon wire topped twenty-foot-high concrete walls, and stone-faced guards stood in gun towers. The prison yard, with a softball field, weight machines, and handball courts, was said to sit over a cemetery. The yard's red dirt was so dry that it was regularly sprayed with oil, creating a viscous sheen that rubbed off on inmates in crimson splotches.

While the prison sought total control of its inmates, Carter defied the institution at every turn. He did not wear its clothes, eat in its mess hall, work its jobs, or participate in any organized activity. He refused to meet with prison psychiatrists, attend parole hearings, or carry his prison identification card. His rationale was simple: he was an innocent man; therefore, he would not be treated like a criminal. His defiance earned him several trips to a subterranean vault known as "the hole," where inmates were held in solitary confinement. He was also once banished to a state psychiatric hospital, where the criminally insane and other incorrigibles were disciplined.

But Carter had a predatory instinct for survival, and he was eventually allowed to live quietly in his fourth-tier cell. He continued to fight for his freedom in the courts, but by now he had immersed

himself in books on philosophy, history, metaphysics, and religion. Searching for meaning in his own life, he turned his cell into "an unnatural laboratory of the human spirit." He studied, wrote, and tutored other inmates about the need to look within themselves to find answers to the world outside.

Carter had been on this personal journey for more than two years by the time a guard came to his cell and told him he had a contact visitor. Suspecting it was the letter-writing youth, Carter walked down his tier, through the center hub of the prison, and past the infirmary, which was conveniently next to the Death House. (The infirmary used to receive the electrocuted bodies.) Before entering the Death House, he gritted his teeth and disrobed for a strip search—standard procedure for every prisoner before and after a contact visit. Searching for contraband, a guard ran his hand through Carter's hair and looked inside his mouth, under his arms, beneath his feet, and up his rectum. This degrading invasion was another reason Carter avoided contact visits.

Once inside the chamber, Carter reserved a cell on the lower tier, placing his plastic identification tag and a pack of Pall Malls on two chairs. The prison visitors soon filed in and quickly joined their friend or loved one. Finally, only two people were left—Carter and a slip of a youth. The young man was trembling.

Growing up in the slums of Brooklyn, Lesra Martin knew plenty of people who had gone to prison, but this was his first time inside a pen. The high stone walls, metal gates, and claustrophobic corridors were imposing enough, but the brusque security checks were even more unnerving. He emptied his pockets, was frisked, was scanned by a hand-held metal detector, and had his right hand stamped with invisible ink. He had brought a package of Christmas cards, socks, and a hat from his Canadian guardians but was not allowed to deliver it because all packages have to come through the mailroom, where they are opened and inspected. Lesra registered and was given a number, but as he passed through the prison in single file, he was jarred by the guards' shrill orders.

"Get back in line!"

"Don't speak to the person in front of you!"

"Have your ID ready!"

"Put your things in your locker!"

As Lesra stood in the waiting room, he finally heard "four-five-four-seven-two, up!"

That was Carter's prison number. Lesra waited before a dim holding bay. As the steel doors opened and visitors began walking in, several women took deep breaths while others held hands. A guard checked the right hand of each visitor with a blue fluorescent light. After about twenty people filed in, the guard yelled, "Bay secure!" The doors shut, and there was a long moment of helplessness, of captivity. Then doors on the other side opened, and everyone moved out. The experience dazed Lesra, who had arrived wanting to cheer up a prisoner but was made to feel as if he had done something wrong himself.

Rubin Carter understood the feeling.

"You must be Lesra," Carter said. He saw a frightened but good-looking young man about six inches shorter than he. (Carter was only five foot eight.) The prisoner's appearance stunned the teenager. Every picture Lesra had seen of Carter showed him with a clean-shaven head, a thick goatee, and a menacing stare. Now he had a full Afro, a mustache, and a smile. The two embraced, then walked to the cell Carter had reserved. They sat facing each other and leaned forward so passing guards could not hear their conversation.

Lesra recounted his harrowing experience getting to the Visiting Center. "How do you survive in here?" he asked.

"I don't acknowledge the existence of the prison," Carter said. "It doesn't exist for me."

Lesra noticed that the guards patrolling the corridor did not walk as closely to their cell as to other cells, giving them a bit more privacy as a sign of respect. Lesra also heard inmates as well as guards refer to Rubin as "Mr. Carter." When Lesra called him "Mr. Carter," he laughed. "You can call me Rubin, or better yet, Rube." As the inmate explained his refusal to participate in prison

activities, Lesra remembered the words of Bob Dylan's song "Hurricane," which had been released in 1975 amid an outpouring of celebrity support:

But then they took him to a jailhouse

Where they tried to turn a man into a mouse.

The jailhouse, Lesra realized, had failed.

He described how he left his home in Bedford-Stuyvesant and moved to Toronto, where his new Canadian family was educating him. The arrangement puzzled Carter, and he told Lesra he need not worry about being alone. "I know they're treating you well because of your smile, but if you're ever not happy there, you let me know," he said. The young man gave him the phone number to his home in Canada.

About an hour passed. As the visit was about to end, a prisoner who had a Polaroid camera approached them.

"You like me to take a picture of you and your son, Mr. Carter?"

"Absolutely!" he responded.

Lesra turned and began walking toward a wall that he believed would make a fine backdrop. Carter yanked him back.

"We don't go that way," he said. "That's where the chair was."

The electric chair had been removed a year or so earlier and was now in the Corrections Department Museum in Trenton. But the bolts were still in the ground, and the imprint of the chair was visible. The picture was taken against a different wall, with the two standing next to each other, smiles creasing their faces, Carter's arm draped across Lesra's shoulders.

As the two walked toward the holding bay, Lesra said, "I wish I could just walk you right on out."

"Don't worry," Carter said. "I'm with you."

This encounter marked the beginning of Carter's reemergence from his self-imposed shell. He would always have a special bond with Lesra, but he would develop far more important ties with the Canadian commune, and its members would provide vital support on Carter's journey through the federal courts. At the same time, the group's strong-willed leader, Lisa Peters, and Carter would become intense but doomed soulmates in an unlikely prison love affair. But all that was in the future. After his visit to the Death House, Carter returned to his cell, lay down on his cot, and stared at the picture of Lesra and himself.

2
WILD WEST ON THE PASSAIC

AT THE TIME of Rubin Carter's arrest in 1966, his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, was dominated by Mayor Frank X. Graves. A smallish man with heavy jowls and thinning hair, he was one of the last of the old city bosses. He controlled every department in his bureaucracy, personally answered phone calls from irate citizens, and referred to anything in Paterson as "mine," as in "my City Hall" or "my police force." He had no hobbies and read few books. He did have a wife and three daughters, but Paterson was his life, and he took any infraction inside its boundaries as a personal wound. Faced with white flight and fears of rising crime rates, he launched a law-and-order crusade with a hard-edged moralism.

No one doubted his audacity. Graves had won two Purple Hearts in World War II for injuries suffered during the invasion of Italy. As mayor, he usually carried a pistol. Driving around Paterson in his black sedan, he monitored the police and fire radio scanners, his ears perked for any signs of disorder. He personally led several raids on what he called "hotbeds of prostitution," and he denounced white suburbanites who came to Paterson to pursue ladies of the night. He donned a firefighter's suit and busted up a bookmaking operation. He ordered the police to issue a warrant to the poet and Paterson native son Allen Ginsberg for smoking pot. Ginsberg, in town for a poetry reading, escaped to New York.

Nothing flustered Graves more than Paterson's surplus of taverns. There were too damn many of them, about three hundred and fifty, give or take a stray moonshiner with a back porch brew strong enough to rip your gut out. The mayor attacked the jazz bars and gin joints, sometimes twenty on a block, as carriers of moral decay, seedy venues of gambling, brawling, and whoring. The very names of the bars—Cabin of Joy, Blue Danube, Polynesian Club, Bobaloo—evoked exotic, bacchanalian pleasures, which he felt threatened Paterson's social equilibrium.

Graves was particularly concerned about the so-called ghetto bars and personally led raids on them to break up fights or ferret out other wrongdoing. Indeed, "checking" these bars, which entailed cops pushing, shoving, and threatening patrons, was a favorite method for maintaining the balance of terror between blacks and the authorities, however much observers decried these tactics as Gestapo-like.

Blacks took considerable pride in their rollicking circuit of jazz clubs and playhouses, burlesque shows and barrooms. They clustered at the bottom of Governor Avenue, known as "down the hill," abutting the Passaic River and just outside Paterson's cheerless Central Business District. Frank Sinatra and Nat "King" Cole had played in black Paterson. So had Lou Costello, the fleshy wit who was a native son. But for the black machine operators and silk dye workers, the seamstresses and secretaries, Paterson's nightlife was not about glamour or celebrities. It was about loud music, hard drinking, and dirty dancing. They cashed their checks on Friday and had money to spend on the weekend. Young men on the make, dressed in dark suits and narrow black ties, some with razor blades in their pockets, danced the slop, the boogaloo, or the grind. Well-dressed young women, many of them domestics, flirted with their suitors. The revelers, sometimes en masse, sometimes in a trickle, strolled through the neon-lit, one-way streets long into the night, circulating through the Kit Kat Club, the Do Drop Inn, or the Ali Baba. When these clubs closed at 3 A.M., the party moved to after-hours clubs tucked behind darkened grocery stores or to "basement socials," where entrants paid a quarter to the house, slipped downstairs with their bottle in a brown bag, and swayed with a partner beneath an undulating red light.

The most popular black club, the Nite Spot, stood on the corner of Governor and East Eighteenth Streets. Female impersonators gave it a racy edge, while a black tile floor with drizzles

of gray, a cover charge, and a kitchen grill conferred a veneer of sophistication. The crowd grooved on the wooden dance floor to Alvin Valentine's jazzy, sweet-tempered organ and sipped Dewar's White Label Scotch and Johnnie Walker Red (which was smoother than Black). Managers allowed in "young blood," or bucks under the age of twenty-one, while bartenders sneaked bottles of wine to youngsters at the back door, charging them double. Paterson's most famous resident, the boxer Rubin Carter, gave the Nite Spot added cachet. He had his own table, Hurricane's Corner.

Drinking holes for white Patersonians, if not exactly respectable, were more … decorous. They had less colorful names—Bruno's, Kearney's, Question Mark—and were typically called taverns. They were scattered through the Polish and Lithuanian neighborhoods of the city's Riverside section, through Little Italy in the center of town, and through the Irish enclaves of South Paterson. They served cream ale, a flat brew made locally with a thick foamy top and a potent kick. Many of these taverns had sawdust on the floor, pool tables in the back, and grills in the kitchen. Patrons ate burgers, watched Friday-night boxing matches on black-and-white televisions, and threw darts. They cursed with Old World epithets.

The beery dens were in all neighborhoods and welcomed all comers. Gangsters and millworkers, politicians and merchants, nurses and hookers, blacks and whites, rich and poor—they all had their hangouts, they were out there somewhere, and Frank Graves could not stop them.

It was not as if he had nothing else to worry about. The exodus of industry, commerce, and the middle class had sent his city into a long downward spiral. Paterson, only 8.36 square miles, sits in the lowland loop of the Passaic River, its southern banks lined by abandoned redbrick cotton mills, empty factories, and rusting warehouses. At night, Main Street was deserted as street lamps cast islands of light on discount stores: John's Bargain Store, ANY SHOE for $3.33, the five-and-ten. Displays of plastic shoes and acetate dresses were fragile remnants of a once-pulsating business district. Across Main Street stood Garrett Mountain, a camel's hump of a hill that offered a view of the world beyond Paterson. When the smog cleared and the sun was out, residents could discern Manhattan's metallic skyline, 15 miles southeast.

Graves's campaign against the bars was, in fact, a battle against the city's raucous history. Since its founding, Paterson had been the Wild West on the Passaic, where bare-knuckled industrialists converged with brawny immigrants and infamous scoundrels. Alexander Hamilton, smitten by the Great Falls of the Passaic River, founded Paterson in 1791 with the belief that water-powered mills would turn the city into a laboratory for industrial development. Initially, Paterson was not a city at all but a corporation, called the Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufacturers, or SUM. The Panic of 1792 almost sank SUM, but it survived, and Paterson flourished as a freewheeling outpost of frontier industrialism.

Fueled by iron ore from nearby mines, charcoal from abundant forests, and coal from Pennsylvania, Paterson in the nineteenth century attracted inventors, romantics, and robber barons who made goods used across the country and beyond. In 1836 Sam Colt, unable to raise money for a factory by roaming the East Coast with a portable magic show, found backers in Paterson, where he manufactured his first revolver. John Holland, an Irish nationalist, built the first practical submarine in Paterson in 1878, his goal being "to blow the English Navy to hell." (The Brits turned out to be principal buyers of the new weapon.)

It seemed that Patersonians believed anything was possible, reckless or otherwise. In the 1830s "Leaping" Sam Patch, a cotton mill foreman, became the only man to jump off the Niagara Falls successfully without a protective device. (He was less successful jumping off the Genesee Falls; his body turned up in a block of ice on Lake Ontario.) Wright Aeronautical Corporation undertook a more constructive if no less daring mission in 1927: it built a nine-cylinder, air-cooled radial engine that propelled Charles Lindbergh to Paris on the first solo Atlantic flight. Paterson's most famous product was silk—enough to adorn all the aristocrats in Europe, if not the Victorian homes and furtive mistresses of the silk barons themselves. Silk lured thousands of European immigrants to Paterson.

By 1900 they filled three hundred and fifty hot, clamorous mills, weaving 30 percent of all the silk produced in the United States.

Between 1840 and 1900, Paterson's population increased by 1,348 percent, to 110,000 residents, making it the fastest-growing city on the East Coast. Newly arrived Germans, Irish, Poles, Italians, Russians, and Jews carved out sections of the city, and ethnic taverns followed. By 1900 Paterson had more than four hundred bars, where tipplers bought cheap, locally brewed beer and reminisced about the old country. Even in the 1950s, long after the immigrant waves had been assimilated, the Emil DeMyer Saloon, in the oldest part of the city, north of the river, hung out a sign that read: "French, Dutch, German, and Belgian Spoken Here."

The bars, of course, were also seen as contributing to alcoholism, broken marriages, and lost weekends. Wives complained to the priest of Saint John the Baptist Cathedral, William McNulty, that their husbands were quaffing down their wages. Dean McNulty, who led the church for fifty-nine years until he died in 1922, would patrol the bars on Friday nights and swat the guzzlers home with his wooden walking stick.

Booze was hardly enough to calm the tensions that stirred in the crowded three-family frame tenements. The factory laborers, with their dye-stained fingers and arthritic backs, chafed at the excesses of the rich. In 1894 Paterson's largest silk manufacturer, Catholina Lambert, built a hulking medieval castle near the top of Garrett Mountain, hiring special trains to bring four hundred guests to its opening reception. But in the streets below, vandalism was rampant, strikes common, and political passions high. In 1900, when Angelo Bresci, a Paterson anarchist, returned to his homeland of Italy and murdered King Humbert I, a thousand anarchists in Paterson gathered to celebrate. Between 1850 and 1914, Paterson was the most strike-ridden city in the nation. The strife reached its brutal climax in 1913, when a five-month strike left gangs of workers and police roaming the streets and attacking one another. Paterson's silk industry, and the town itself, never recovered.

While World War II spurred a brief economic revival, mechanization threw weavers out of work, and textile factories needing skilled labor moved to the South. Wright Aeronautical went from a wartime peak of sixty thousand employees to five thousand, then moved to the suburbs. The Society for the Establishment of Useful Manufacturers dissolved in 1946. The Great Falls became a favorite spot for suicides and murder.

Lacking leadership and vision, Paterson continued its long economic slide in the 1960s, and like other cities in New Jersey, it became a wide-open rackets town. Bookies ran the wirerooms in a club on lower Market Street, placing bets on horse races and football games. The most popular form of gambling, the grease that lubricated the Paterson economy, was the "numbers." It cost as little as a quarter or even a dime, and everyone played, including the cops. Bettors dropped off their money at a storefront, typically a bar but perhaps a bakery or grocery. Bets were made on the closing number of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the winning numbers from a horse race, or the *New York Daily News's* circulation number, which was published on the back page in each edition. The following day, the two-bit gamblers either griped about their bad luck or picked up their winnings, typically six hundred times their bet, meaning $60 on a ten-cent wager or $150 on a quarter. Win or lose, they put down another bet. Numbers runners ferried the cash to the mobsters, who controlled the game, and the small business owners who collected the cash got a cut. It was another way for the bustling taverns to stay in business, but it did little to help Paterson regain its glory.

In *On Paterson*, Christopher Norwood wrote this elegy for the city in the middle 1960s: "The mills, the redbrick buildings where people produced commodities and became commodities themselves, still stand in Paterson, but most are abandoned now. The looms are no more, their noisy, awkward machinery long vandalized or sold for scrap. Vines, weeds and sometimes whole trees have grown through their stark walls, the walls unadorned except for small slits, outlined in a contrasting brick pattern, left for windows."

This was the city Frank Graves ran from 1960 to 1966. Despite the deteriorating economy, the mayor wanted the police force to be his legacy. Graves himself was a policeman manqué. He had ridden in police cars as a kid and relished the crisp blue uniforms, the recondite radio codes, and the peremptory wail of a car siren. But his father, Frank X. Graves, Sr., would not allow his son to work on the force. Frank Sr. was a city power broker who owned a lucrative cigarette vending-machine company. He also covered the police for the *Paterson Evening News* for fifty years, and no son of his was going to chase petty thieves on the street. So, as mayor, Frank Jr. gloried in turning the police into his fiefdom. He spent time at the police station and personally answered incoming calls. He approved all hires, assignments, and promotions. He interrogated suspects. He chastised traffic cops who failed to direct cars with sufficient authoritarian snap. He required patrolmen to salute him, and offenders were summoned to the captain's office the next day for a reprimand. Graves decreed that all police calls receive a response within ninety seconds, resulting in siren-blaring patrol cars careening through Paterson's narrow streets. "The police force," Graves said, "is the city." And no task was too trivial. He once sent a phalanx of patrol cars to a nearby suburb to search for Tiger, a dog who'd strayed from Paterson.

But Graves came under fire for turning the city into a police state; there were charges of brutality and even torture. In 1964 the state ordered Passaic County to convene a grand jury to investigate reports that Paterson police had burned a prisoner's body with matches and poured alcohol into his nose. The grand jury made no indictments but recommended that the department photograph prisoners both before and after questioning. The barroom raids were seen as grandstanding ploys, sacrificing basic patrol work. Although drug-related crimes were the city's worst problem, there was only one man in the Narcotics Bureau.

Paterson's swelling black population especially feared the mostly white police force and resented Graves's apparent indifference to their grievances. During the Depression, blacks made up less than 2 percent of the city's population. By the middle 1960s, they were about 20 percent. Between 1950 and 1964, 18,000 blacks and Hispanics moved into Paterson as 13,000 whites moved out. At the same time, good factory jobs were disappearing quickly, creating tensions between whites and blacks for a piece of the shrinking economic pie. Many black immigrants settled in the Fourth Ward and established taverns and nightclubs. Housing there was a shambles. Old wooden structures slouched beneath the weight of their new occupants; many of the units lacked plumbing, central heating, or private baths. A citywide survey showed that when a black family moved into a tenement, the rent was increased. There were long waiting lists for low-income municipal housing, and when blacks tried to move out of the Fourth Ward, they were refused or stalled by white real estate agents. Health conditions were horrid. A protest group offered a bounty of ten cents for each rat found in a home and delivered to City Hall. A court injunction snuffed out the rodent rebellion.

The anger in the black community was finally unleashed in August 1964, when a three-day riot broke out, primarily in the Fourth Ward. No one was killed, but the cataract of violence unnerved white Patersonians, who still made up 75 percent of the city's 140,000 residents. Black youths shattered more than a dozen store windows at the intersection of Godwin and Graham Streets while a black youngster battling sixteen policemen was pushed through a plate glass window. Factory fires, Molotov cocktails, and errant shotgun blasts sent panic through the city. A marked law enforcement car from Maryland appeared with two German shepherd police dogs, although the authorities said they were never loosed on the rioters. Black leaders blamed the uprising on police harassment and overcrowded housing conditions, saying it was simply too hot to stay indoors, and they demanded rent control in blighted areas and a new police review board.

The riot was part of a summer of uprisings that broke out in Harlem, in Jersey City and Elizabeth, New Jersey, in Rochester, New York, and in small black enclaves in Oregon and New Hampshire. In each case, a street arrest triggered escalating hostilities, but only Paterson had Frank Graves.

The mayor tried to keep control. At a luncheon in Paterson on August 12 for Miss New Jersey, he promised, “Paterson will be completely safe for you tonight.” By nightfall, Graves probably hoped, Miss New Jersey was smiling in some other part of the state, because violence erupted once again in Paterson. Graves personally led the police through a ravaged ten-block area and narrowly missed serious injury when a bottle was thrown at him as he stepped from his car. Confronted by the overturned vehicles, shattered storefronts, and broken streetlights, Graves blamed the riot on “the worst hooligans that man has ever conceived.” His rhetoric, combined with his hard-nosed police, left little doubt among blacks that Graves was less interested in civil rights than civil repression.

Thoughts of race and crime were probably not on the mind of seventeen-year-old William Metzler when he arrived at work on Thursday, June 16, 1966. Metzler was an attendant for his father’s ambulance company in Paterson, working a midnight–8 A.M. shift. Employees stayed awake for two-hour stretches, sipping coffee, eating doughnuts, and monitoring the police radio. Some time after 2 A.M. on June 17, Metzler began hearing a series of police calls amid escalating panic. One call said, “Holdup.” Another: “Shooting.” And yet another, “Code one for ambulances,” which meant emergency.

Metzler and his older brother, Walt, raced their ambulance twelve blocks to the scene of the crime: the Lafayette Grill at 128 East Eighteenth Street, a nondescript neighborhood bar on the first floor of a tired three-story apartment building. When the ambulance arrived, a police car and two officers were on the site. William Metzler opened the bar’s side door, on Lafayette Street, walked inside, and literally slid across the bloody tile floor, almost falling into the red stream. Amid the cigarette and nut machines, a pool rack and jukebox and black-and-white television above the L-shaped bar, a scene of mayhem emerged: there were four bullet-ridden bodies—two dead, two alive, all white. It was, Metzler said years later, “a Wild West scene.”

While the shooting itself would be subject to one of the longest, most bitterly contested criminal proceedings in American history, no one would ever dispute the distinctively sadistic nature of the rampage. These basic facts were known within days.

Two black men entered the bar through the side door, one carrying a 12-gauge shotgun, the other a .32-caliber handgun. The bartender, James Oliver, age fifty-one, flung an empty beer bottle at the assailants, then turned to run. As the bottle shattered futilely against the wall, a single shotgun blast from seven feet away ripped through Oliver’s lower back, opening a two-by-one-inch hole. The bullet severed his spinal column, literally breaking the man in half. Oliver fell behind the bar, dead, two bottles of liquor lying near his tangled feet and cash strewn on the floor.

At about the same time the second assailant, holding the handgun, fired a single bullet at Fred Nauyoks, a sixty-year-old regular sitting on a barstool. The bullet ripped past Nauyoks’s right earlobe and struck the base of his brain, killing him instantly. He slumped over as if asleep, his head lying in a pool of blood, a lit cigarette between his fingers, his shot glass full, and cash on the bar ready to pay for the fresh drink. His foot remained on the stool’s footrest.

The pistol-carrying gunman then fired a bullet at William Marins, a forty-three-year-old machinist who had been at the bar for many hours, sitting two stools down from Nauyoks. The bullet entered his head near the left temple, caromed through the skull, and exited from the forehead by the left eye. He survived his wound and was able to describe the assailants to the police.

Seated in a different section of the bar was fifty-one-year-old Hazel Tanis, who had just arrived from her waitressing job at the Westmount Country Club. The assailant with the shotgun fired a single blast into her upper right arm. Then the second shooter turned and emptied his remaining five bullets, the muzzle of the gun as close as ten inches from the victim. Four bullets struck their mark: the right breast, the lower abdomen, the vagina, and the genital area. Tanis survived and was able to describe the gunmen to the police, but she developed an embolism four weeks later and died.

From the outset, the Lafayette bar murders became intertwined with another brutal homicide in Paterson. About six and a half hours earlier, a white man named Frank Conforti walked into the

Waltz Inn, about four blocks from the Lafayette. Conforti had sold the bar to a black man, Roy Holloway, who was paying him in weekly installments. On this night, Conforti came to collect his last payment, but a heated argument broke out over the amount owed. Conforti stormed out of the tavern and returned moments later with a double-barreled shotgun. He blasted Holloway in the upper right arm; when Holloway tried to flee, he fired again, this time striking him in the head. Conforti was arrested for murder.

The police immediately suspected that the Lafayette bar shooting was in retaliation for the Waltz Inn murder. At the Waltz Inn, a white man with a shotgun killed a black bartender. At the Lafayette bar, a black man with a shotgun killed a white bartender. An eye for an eye. The Lafayette bar slaying chilled the white establishment. Black vigilantism, of course, was unacceptable. What's more, the bar itself had long been a tiny neighborhood hangout for the Italians, Lithuanians, Poles, and other Eastern European immigrants who lived on the southern boundary of the working-class Riverside section.

But by the summer of 1966, the neighborhood was changing quickly. Blacks, moving north along Carroll and Graham Streets, were now living near and around the Lafayette bar. But the bar was still a watering hole for its traditional base of white workers, not blacks. Indeed, rumors circulated that the bartender refused to serve blacks. In time the bar, under different owners and different names, would be a black gathering spot for a black neighborhood. But on June 17, 1966, it was seen as a white redoubt against a coming black wave.

For a city the size of Paterson, the Lafayette bar shootings—four innocent victims, including one woman, three ultimately dead—would have been jarring under any circumstance. There had been only six murders in Paterson since the beginning of the year. But the overlay of race, of black invaders and white flight and a hapless neighborhood bar with a neon Schlitz sign and threadbare pool table, elevated the tragedy further.

Frank Graves assigned 130 police officers (out of a force of 341) to the investigation, promising promotions and three-month vacations to the arresting officers. He initially offered a $1,000 reward for information that led to an arrest, then raised it to $10,000. The Paterson Tavern Owners Association chipped in another $500. That the crime occurred in a bar confirmed the mayor's conviction that taprooms were whirlpools of disorder. "We have three hundred and fifty" taverns, Graves thundered. "We should only have a hundred."

He repeatedly referred to the Lafayette bar murders as "the most heinous crimes" and "the most dastardly crimes in the city's history." Two days after the shooting, Graves told the *Paterson Evening News*, "We will stay on this investigation until it is solved. There will be no such thing as a dead end in this case. If we hit a roadblock, we'll back up and get on the main road until it is solved. These are by far the most brutal slayings in the city's history."

The pressure to solve the worst crime in Paterson's long history would soon lead to the most feared man in the town.

3
DANGER ON THE STREETS

AT THE TIME of the Lafayette bar murders, Rubin Carter was a twenty-nine-year-old prizefighter and one of the great character actors of boxing's golden era. The middleweight stalked opponents across the ring with a menacing left hook, a glowering stare, and a black bullet of a head —clean-shaven, with a sinister-looking mustache and goatee. Outside the ring, Carter cultivated a parallel reputation of a dashing but defiant night crawler. He settled grudges with his fists and was not cowed by the police. His intimidating style sent chills through boxing foes and cops alike, making him a target for both.

Regardless of where he walked, Carter always turned heads. At five feet eight inches and 160 pounds, he had an oversize neck, broad shoulders, and trapezoidal chest, with contoured biceps, thick hands, a tapering waist, and sinuous legs. A broadcaster once said of Carter, "He has muscles that he hasn't even rippled yet."

He was obsessed with fine clothing and personal hygiene, passions he inherited from his father. Lloyd Carter, Sr., believed that immaculate apparel showed a black man's success in a white man's world. A Georgia sharecropper's son with a seventh-grade education, Lloyd earned a good living as a resourceful and indefatigable entrepreneur. He owned an icehouse, a window-washing concern, and a bike rental shop, and he wore his success proudly. He had his double-breasted suits custom-made in Philadelphia, favored French cuffs, and wore Stacy Adams two-tone alligator shoes. He bought his children shoes for school and for church; but if the school shoes had a hole, church shoes could not be worn to classes. No child of his would enter a house of worship with scuffed footwear.

Rubin Carter was just as meticulous as his father, if somewhat flashier. He instructed a Jersey City tailor to design his clothes to fit his top-heavy body. He placed $400 suit orders on the phone —"Do you have any new fabrics? … Good. Put it together and I'll pick it up"—and he favored sharkskin suits, or cotton, silk, all pure fabrics, an occasional vest, and iridescent colors. His pants were pressed like a razor blade. He wore violet and blue berets pulled rakishly over his right ear, polished Italian shoes, and loud ties.

Carter trimmed his goatee with precision and clipped his fingernails to the cuticle. He collected fruit-scented colognes while traveling around the United States, Europe, and South Africa, then poured entire bottles into his bath water, soaked in the redolent tub, and emerged with a pleasing hint of nectar. Every three days Carter mixed Magic Shave powder with cold water and slathered it on his crown and face. He scraped it off with a butter knife, then rubbed a little Vaseline on top for a shine. His wife, Tee, complained that the pasty concoction smelled like rotten eggs, so she made him shave on their porch, but the result was Carter's riveting signature: a smooth, shiny dome.

Nighttime was always Carter's temptress, a lure of sybaritic pleasures and occasional danger. On his nights out, he left his wife at home and cruised through the streets of Paterson in a black Eldorado convertible with "Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter" emblazoned in silver letters on each of the headlights. He strolled into nightclubs with a wad of cash in his pocket and a neon chip on his shoulder. He bought everyone a round or two of drinks and mixed easily with women, both white and black. An incorrigible flirt, he danced, drank, and cruised with different women most every night.

But club confrontations often got Carter in trouble. He faced assault charges at least twice for barroom clashes, including once from the owner of the Kit Kat Club. Carter, contending he was unfairly singled out because of his swaggering profile, was cleared. But stories swirled about his hair-trigger temper. In an oft-repeated tale, Carter once found a man sitting at his table at the Nite Spot. When the man was slow to leave Hurricane's Corner, Carter knocked him out with a punch, then took his girl.

Carter pooh-poohs such tales, although he says he would have told the man to sit elsewhere if other tables had been available. His dictum was that he never punched anyone unless first provoked, but he acknowledges that he was easily antagonized and, once aroused, showed little mercy on his tormentor. Adversaries came in all stripes. He once knocked a horse over with a right cross. The horse had had it coming: it tried to take a bite out of Carter's side. The knockdown, publicized in local and national publications, added to Carter's street-fighter reputation and legendary punching prowess.

Hedonistic excess was hardly uncommon in the boxing world; nonetheless, it was not widely known that Carter was an alcoholic during his career. Some thought Carter drank to make up for his dry years in prison: between 1957 and 1961, Carter had been sentenced to Trenton State Prison for assault and robbery. The inmates surreptitiously made a sugary wine concoction, "hooch," but good liquor was hard to come by.

Outside prison, vodka was Carter's drink of choice. Straight up, on the rocks, in a plastic cup, in a glass, from a bottle, it didn't matter; it just had to be vodka. He was not a binge drinker but a slow, relentless sipper, and he could drink a fifth of vodka in a single night. Carter stayed clear of the bottle, mostly, when in training, but when he was out of camp, he kept at least one bottle of 100-proof Smirnoff's in his car; friends hitching a ride got free drinks.

Carter concealed his drinking as much as possible. It was a sign of weakness and undermined his image as an athletic demigod. To avoid drinking in clubs, he picked up liquor in stores and drank in his car, sometimes with drinking buddies, sometimes alone. He tried not to order more than one drink at any one club on a given night. His wife rarely saw him imbibe and had no idea of the scope of his addiction. He carried Certs and peppermint candies to mask the alcohol on his breath, and he never got staggering drunk.

While Carter was a dedicated night owl, he was also a celebrity loner whose ready scowl stirred fear in bystanders, and he shunned close personal ties. He was often silent and moody, and many blacks in Paterson viewed him with a mixture of respect, envy, and fear. "Everybody loved Rubin, but no one was his friend," said Tariq Darby, a heavyweight boxer from New Jersey in the 1960s. "I remember seeing him once in that black and silver Cadillac. He just turned and gave me that nasty look."

Tensions were more overt between Carter and Paterson's white majority as he flaunted his success in ways that he knew would tweak the establishment. He owned a twenty-six-foot fishing boat with a double Chrysler engine, which was docked at a marina in central New Jersey. He owned a horse, a once-wild mare he named Bitch, and rode in flamboyant style on Garrett Mountain. Dressed in a fringed jean jacket, a ten-gallon hat, and spur-tipped boots, Carter was hard to miss passing the white families picnicking on the hillside, and he didn't mind when his riding partner was a white woman.

Carter's shaved head, at least twenty-five years before bald pates became a common fashion statement among African Americans, had its own political edge. In the early 1960s, many blacks used lye-based chemical processors to straighten their curls and make their hair look "white." White was cool. But Carter's coal-black cupola sent a message: he had no interest in emulating white people. In fact, he shaved his head in part to mimic another glabrous black boxer, Jack Johnson, who won the heavyweight title in 1908 but was reviled as an insolent parvenu who drove fancy cars, drank expensive wines through straws, consorted with white women, and defied the establishment.

Carter's showy displays jarred white Patersonians, who had a very different model for how a black professional athlete should act. They cherished Larry Doby, a hometown hero and baseball pioneer. On July 5, 1947, Doby joined the Cleveland Indians, breaking the color barrier in the American League. He was the second black major league player, following Jackie Robinson by eleven weeks. This feat spoke well of Doby's hometown, Paterson, and Doby seemed to always speak well of the city. Never mind that Doby, who grew up literally on the wrong side of the Susquehanna Railroad tracks, knew well the racism of Paterson. As a kid going to a movie or vaudeville show at the Majestic

Theater, he had to sit in the third balcony, known as "nigger heaven," and he could not walk through white sections of Paterson at night without being stopped by police. Even after he became a baseball star, Doby was thwarted by real estate brokers from buying a home in the fashionable East Side of Paterson. He eventually moved his family to an integrated neighborhood in the more enlightened New Jersey city of Montclair.

But in public Doby was always a paragon of humility and deference. After he helped the Indians win the World Series in 1948, he was feted in Paterson with a motorcade. A crowd of three thousand gathered at Bauerle Field in front of Eastside High School, his alma mater, and city dignitaries gave effusive speeches about a black man whose deeds brought glory to their town. Then Doby took the microphone: he thanked the mayor and his teachers and coaches, concluding with these words: "I know I'm not a perfect gentleman, but I always try to be one."

No white authority figure in Paterson ever called Rubin Carter a gentleman, perfect or otherwise. He was viewed not simply as brash and disrespectful but as a threat. Bad enough that he could knock down a horse with a single punch. Carter also owned guns, lots of them—shotguns, rifles, and pistols. He learned to shoot as a boy, practicing on a south New Jersey farm owned by his grandfather, and he honed his skills as a paratrooper for the 11th Airborne in the U.S. Army. He used his guns mostly for target practice but also for hunting, roaming the New Jersey woodlands with his father's coon dogs. Carter could nail a treebound raccoon right between the eyes. He also owned guns for protection, and he had some of his suits tailored wide around the breast to accommodate a holster and pistol, which he would wear when he feared for his safety.

Like Malcolm X, Carter advocated that blacks use whatever means necessary, including violence, to protect themselves. He participated in the March on Washington in 1963, but two years later he rebuffed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s request to join a demonstration in Selma, Alabama. Carter knew he would not, could not, sit idly in the face of brutal attacks from law enforcement officials, white supremacists, or snarling dogs. "No, I can't go down there," he told King. "That would be foolishness at the risk of suicide. Those people would kill me dead."

Carter did not accept the mainstream civil rights approach of passive resistance. He believed the sacrifices that blacks were making, whether on the riot-torn streets of Harlem or in the bombed-out churches of Birmingham, were unacceptable. Malcolm X had been killed. So too had James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, three young civil rights workers, Medgar Evers, a black civil rights leader, and others unknown. *Nonviolence is Gandhi's principle, but Gandhi does not know the enemy*, Carter thought.

When under attack, Rubin Carter believed in fighting back; in his view it was the police who were usually doing the attacking. But his many scrapes with the cops, plus some intemperate comments to a reporter, gave the authorities reason to believe that he was able, even likely, to commit a heinous crime.

In addition to the assault and robbery conviction in 1957, Carter, at fourteen, and three other boys attacked a Paterson man at a swimming hole called Tubbs near Passaic Falls. The man was cut with a soda water bottle and his $55 watch was stolen. Carter was sentenced to the Jamesburg State Home for Boys, but he escaped two years later. In the 1960s, his fracases with the police were common. In one incident, on January 16, 1964, a white officer picked him up after his Eldorado had broken down on a highway next to a meatpacking factory near Hackensack, New Jersey. He was driven to the town's police headquarters, then accused of burglarizing the factory during the night. He had been locked in a holding cell for four hours when a black officer arrived and recognized him. "Is that you in there, Carter? What the hell did you get busted for, man?" Carter let out a stream of invective about the cops' oppressive behavior. He was finally released after the black officer demanded to know the grounds on which he was being held. According to the official record, Carter had been arrested as a "disorderly person" for his "failure to give good account," and the charge against him was dismissed.

Hostilities between Carter and the police, in New Jersey and elsewhere, escalated to a whole other level after a *Saturday Evening Post* article was published in October 1964. The story was a curtain raiser for the upcoming middleweight championship fight between the challenger, Carter, and Joey Giardello, the champ. The article, which introduced Carter to many nonboxing fans, was headlined "A Match Made in the Jungle." Actually, the bout was to take place in Las Vegas, but "Jungle" referred to Carter's feral nature. He was described as sporting a "Mongol-style mustache" and appearing like a "combination of bop musician and Genghis Khan." With Carter fighting for the crown, "once again the sick sport of boxing seems to have taken a turn for the worse," the article intoned. Giardello, photographed playfully holding his two young children, was the consummate family man. Carter sat alone, staring pitilessly into the camera.

In his interview with the sportswriter Milton Gross, Carter raged against white cops' occupying black neighborhoods in a summer of unrest, and he exhorted blacks to defend themselves, even if it meant fighting to their death. He told the reporter that blacks were living in a dream world if they thought equality was around the corner, that reality was trigger-happy cops and redneck judges.

That part of the interview, however, was left out of the article. Instead, Gross printed his reckless tirade so that it was Carter, not the police, who looked liked the terrorist. Describing his life before he became a prizefighter, Carter told the writer: "We used to get up and put our guns in our pockets like you put your wallet in your pocket. Then we go out in the streets and start shooting—anybody, everybody. We used to shoot folks."

"Shoot at folks?" Carter was asked, because this seemed too much to believe and too much for Carter to confess even years later.

"Just what I said," he repeated. "Shoot at people. Sometimes just to shoot at 'em, sometimes to hit 'em, sometimes to kill 'em. My family was saying I'm still a bum. If I got the name, I play the game."

This was sheer bluster on Carter's part—no one had ever accused him of shooting anyone—but it was how he tried to rattle his boxing opponents and shake up white journalists. He invented a childhood knifing attack "I stabbed him everywhere but the bottom of his feet"—and the story quoted a friend of Carter's who recounted a conversation with the boxer following a riot in Harlem that summer. The uprising occurred after an off-duty police lieutenant, responding to a confrontation between a sharp-tongued building superintendent and black youths carrying a bottle, shot to death a fifteen-year-old boy. Carter, according to his friend, said: "Let's get guns and go up there and get us some of those police. I know I can get four or five before they get me. How many can you get?"

This fulsome remark sealed his image for the police and now for a much larger public. On the Friday-night fights, the showcase for boxing in America, Carter stalked across television screens throughout the country as the ruthless face of black militancy. He was seen as an ignoble savage, a stylized brute, an "uppity nigger." He was out of control and, more than ever, he was a targeted man. (He was also not to be the champion. The Giardello fight, rescheduled for December in Philadelphia, went fifteen rounds; Carter lost a controversial split decision.)

After the *Saturday Evening Post* article appeared, authorities in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Akron, and elsewhere approached Carter when he was in town for a fight. On the grounds that he was a former convict, they demanded that he be fingerprinted and photographed for their files. At the time, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's clandestine political arm, COINTELPRO (for "counter intelligence program"), was spying on Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and other civil rights leaders. Carter believed that by 1965, the FBI had begun tracking him, which simply made him more defiant.[*] In the summer of 1965, for example, Carter arrived in Los Angeles several weeks early for a fight against Luis Rodriguez. The city's police chief, William Parker, soon called Carter in his motel on Olympia Boulevard and told him to get down to headquarters.

"So, you thought you were sneaking into town on me, huh?" Parker said. "But we knew you were coming, boy. The FBI had you pegged every step of the way."

"No, I wasn't trying to sneak into your town. I just got here a little bit early," Carter said. A woman whom Carter had seen tailing him at the airport and his motel was standing in the office. He motioned her way, then looked back at the police chief. "My God," he said. "She's got a beautiful ass on her, ain't she?"

By June 1966, Carter's last prizefight had been more than three months earlier in Toledo, against the Olympic gold medalist Wilbert "Skeeter" McClure. The match ended in a draw. He feared he faced increased police surveillance and harassment as black militancy became a greater force across America. Instead of young people marching together arm-in-arm and singing "We Shall Overcome," new images emerged of combative black men and women wearing black berets and carrying guns, their fists raised in defiance. Social justice was not enough. Black separatism and empowerment were part of the new agenda. Malcolm X's legacy was being carried on by charismatic leaders like Stokely Carmichael and Bobby Seale, whose cries for "black power" galvanized growing numbers of disaffected black youths while igniting a backlash from frightened whites. Paterson swirled with rumors that black organizers had come from Chicago to reignite the protests that had ripped the city apart two summers earlier.

Rubin Carter knew he needed to get off the streets.

Carter had a match coming up in Argentina in August, and he was moving to his training camp on Monday, June 20. Camp itself was a small sheep farm in Chatham, New Jersey, run by a man from India named Eshan. On Thursday the sixteenth, beneath a warm afternoon sun, Carter filled the trunk of his white 1966 Dodge Polara with boxing equipment. He could almost feel the canvas under his feet, and he was grateful.

In the evening his wife made dinner for her husband and their two-year-old daughter, Theodora. Mae Thelma, known as Tee, looked like a starlet, with dark chocolate skin, a radiant smile, and arched eyebrows. She sometimes tinted her hair with a bewitching silver streak. She was also quiet and self-conscious. As a young girl in Saluda, South Carolina, Tee had crawled into an open fireplace, disfiguring several fingers on her left hand. Thereafter she often wore long white gloves to conceal her scars, or she kept her hand in her coat pocket and slipped it under tables, sometimes awkwardly, at clubs or restaurants. Rubin had dated her for months before he finally caught a glimpse of the injury. On their next date, he pulled off to the side of the road, took her left hand, and pulled off her glove. "Is this what you've been hiding from me all this time?" he asked. "Do you think I would love you any less?"

When Tee told him she was pregnant, she feared he would abandon her; she herself had grown up in a fatherless home. Instead, Rubin promptly proposed, and they were wed on June 15, 1963. Carter families, Rubin knew, did not go without fathers, and their children did not go on welfare. Theodora was born seven months later. Rubin and Tee had an unspoken agreement: Rubin took care of his business, and Tee took care of Rubin. They each had their own friends and socialized separately. Tee never watched any of Rubin's fights. Some nights, when they ended up at the same club, the people around them often didn't know they were married.

This deception gave rise to some pranks. One night, sitting at the opposite end of the bar from his wife, Carter asked a bartender, "Would you please send down a drink to that young lady and tell her I said she sure looks pretty."

The unsuspecting bartender walked down to Tee. "This drink comes from that gentleman up there, and he says you sure look pretty."

She wrinkled her nose at Rubin. "Tell him I think he looks good too."

The flirtation ended with Tee's accepting Rubin's offer to go home with him, leaving the bartender in awe of this Lothario's good luck.

The couple's three-story home, in a racially mixed neighborhood in Paterson, was comfortably decorated with a blondish wood dining room table, blue sofas with gold trim, African artifacts hanging on the walls, and an oil painting of the family. On the night of June 16, Carter watched a James Brown

concert on television, doing a few jigs in the living room with Theodora. During the commercials, he repaired to the bedroom to dress for the night and returned to the living room with a new ensemble in place. Black slacks. White dress shirt. Black tie. Black vest. A cream sport jacket with thin green and brown stripes. Black socks. Black shoes. A splash of cologne, and a dab of Vaseline on his cleanly shaven head.

That night Carter decided to drive the white Polara, which was blocking the Eldorado in the garage. (He leased the Polara as a business car for the tax writeoff.) It was a warm evening, and Carter, at the outset, had business on his mind. He had a midnight meeting with his personal adviser, Nathan Sermond, at Club LaPetite to discuss the Argentina fight; the promoters were balking at giving Carter a sparring partner in Buenos Aires. Carter was also to meet, at the Nite Spot, one of his sparring partners, "Wild Bill" Hardney, who would be joining him in camp the following week. But by 11 P.M., the night was taking some unusual twists.

Sipping vodka outside the Nite Spot with a group of people, Carter bumped into a former sparring partner, Neil Morrison, known as Mobile for his Alabama roots. Carter had been looking for him for months because he suspected him of stealing three of his guns from his Chatham training camp. The theft—of a .22 Winchester, a bolt-action .22 rifle, and a 12-gauge pump shotgun—had occurred the previous fall when Morrison was staying in the camp. Morrison, dressed in dungarees and a white T-shirt, had just been released from prison, and Carter confronted him, accusing him of stealing the guns.

"Man, you know I would never do that," Morrison said.

"I know a person who's seen you with my guns," Carter said. A childhood friend, Annabelle Chandler, had told Carter she saw Morrison with the weapons.

"The hell you do!" Morrison said.

Carter, Morrison, and two other Nite Spot regulars agreed to drive over to Chandler's apartment, in the nearby Christopher Columbus Projects. There they found Chandler in the bathroom, sick. She had recently returned from the hospital and was suffering from cancer. Carter entered the bathroom and told her he had brought Morrison with him so she could repeat how she saw him with Carter's guns.

"If I had known you were going to tell him, I wouldn't have told you," she told Carter.

"Well, forget about it," he said in deference to her illness. Carter dropped the matter; his guns had been stolen and sold and lost forever. The group returned to the Nite Spot. Little did Carter know that in years to come, this chance encounter with Neil Morrison and quick jaunt to a run-down housing project to visit a dying woman would be used against him in a devastating way.

The night was unusual for another reason. Word had spread that Roy Holloway, the black owner of the Waltz Inn, had been slain by a white man, Frank Conforti. When the police arrested Conforti, a crowd of people, mostly blacks but not including Carter, angrily yelled at the white assailant. Holloway's stepson, Eddie Rawls, was the bartender at the Nite Spot, and he pulled up to the club when Carter was in the midst of his dispute with Morrison. Carter expressed his condolences to Rawls, who was coming from the hospital. The group chatted for several minutes before Rawls went inside the club.

There was a buzz at the Nite Spot and other black clubs about a "shaking," or retaliation of some sort, for the Holloway murder. Carter, however, had never met Holloway and was never heard to express any anger over the murder. He had other things on his mind. Thursdays were known as "potwashers night." Domestics were given the night off, and the women got into the Nite Spot for free through the back door. By 2 A.M., as the crowd began to thin out at the Nite Spot, Carter was still looking for a date. When last call was announced, he approached the bar and asked for the usual, a vodka. He took out his wallet, but when he discovered it was empty, he told the bartender he'd have to pay up later.

Carter had planned to go to an after-hours social club, so he had to head home to get some money. He spotted his sparring partner, "Wild Bill" Hardney, and asked if he would go with him so Tee would not complain about his going out again. But Hardney, preoccupied with his girlfriend, begged off.

Then Carter noticed John Artis on the dance floor. The former high school football and track star was a sleek, high-spirited dancer who practiced his steps at home, following the advice of one of his uncles: "When you dance, be original and be different from the others. Take a step and change it, and always be smooth."

Nineteen-year-old Artis loved fast cars and pretty girls, and that night, dressed in a sky-blue mohair sweater with a JAA monogram, matching light blue sharkskin pants, and gold loafers, he was certainly on the prowl. But it had been a long boozy evening—he had been sick earlier—and he was winding down. He had just performed a dazzling boogaloo when Carter called out to him. "Nice moves, buddy," he said. "Wanna take a ride?" Overhearing the conversation was John "Bucks" Royster, a balding alcoholic drifter who was friendly with Carter. Royster, figuring drinks would be available in the car, asked if he could join them. Outside, Carter flipped Artis the keys and asked him to drive. Then Carter climbed in the back seat, slumped down, and called out directions to his house, about three miles southeast of the Nite Spot.

Artis had only met Carter a couple of times. He rambled on about how boxing was not his favorite sport, but his friends would be impressed when they heard he'd been driving Hurricane's car, even if it wasn't the Eldorado. There was talk about women they knew, who was looking fine and who wasn't, and other idle conversation. Their chatter came to a quick end at 2:40 A.M. when the Polara crossed Broadway and a police car, lights flashing, pulled up next to it. A policeman motioned Artis to stop about six blocks north of Carter's house.

Artis pulled out his license as Sergeant Theodore Capter, flashlight in hand, approached the car. A second officer, Angelo DeChellis, walked behind the car and wrote down the license number, New York 5Z4 741. Artis handed over his driver's license but couldn't find the registration. "It's on the steering post, John," Carter said as he sat up in the back. Carter was relieved when he saw Capter, a short, graying officer who had been on the force for eighteen years and had always gotten along with him. "Hey, how you doing, Hurricane?" Capter asked, flashing his light in the back. "When's your next fight?"

"Soon," Carter said. "But what's wrong? Why did you stop us?"

"Oh, nothing, really. We're just looking for a white car with two Negroes in it. But you're okay. Take care of yourself."

Carter shrugged off the incident. Unknown to him, a police radio call had gone out a short while earlier indicating that a white car with "two colored males" had left a shooting scene at the Lafayette Grill. Capter and DeChellis had spotted a white car followed by a black car speeding out of Paterson. The officers gave chase, jumping on Route 4 heading toward New York, but they never saw the cars again. So they had returned to Paterson when they saw and stopped Carter's car.

Artis drove on to Carter's house, where Carter went inside, collected about $100, and told Tee he was going back out. The trio returned to the Nite Spot, which was closing down, so Carter instructed Artis to drive to Club LaPetite, on Bridge Street, to look for Hardney. But they discovered that that club too had closed; after sitting in the car for a few minutes, Artis and Royster decided to call it a night.

Artis, who was still driving, dropped off Royster on Hamilton Street sometime after 3 A.M. With Carter now in the front seat, he continued down Hamilton, then turned right at East Eighteenth Street. At the intersection of East Eighteenth and Broadway, Artis put on his right blinker and waited for the signal to change. Suddenly, a patrol car came screeching behind them. The cop hurriedly said something into his car radio, opened his car door, and hustled over to the bewildered Artis and Carter. Then they recognized Sergeant Capter again.

"Awww, shit, Hurricane, I didn't realize it was—" But before he could finish, four other squealing police cars arrived at the intersection. Someone else took charge and as Capter stepped away, Carter made eye contact with him and said, "Aw, fuck!" Other officers, their guns pulled, circled the Dodge. "Get out of that car," barked one cop. "No, stay in the car," another yelled. After a few more moments of confusion, an officer looked at Artis and pointed in the opposite direction on East Eighteenth Street. "Follow that car," he yelled.

"What car?" Artis asked. But there was no time to talk. The sirens went off and the police cars began to peel away. Artis turned the car around and the cavalcade began racing up East Eighteenth. Artis had never been arrested and had never had any trouble with the police. Now he looked into his rearview mirror and saw a cop leaning out the window of the car behind them, pointing a shotgun at him. Artis felt his testicles tighten. "Damn, Rubin, damn! What's going on?" he yelled.

Carter was also petrified. He had no idea where they were heading, only that they had turned East Eighteenth Street into the crazy backstretch of a stock car race. He saw landmarks fly by. There was a cousin's home on the corner of East Eighteenth and Twelfth Avenue. There was the Nite Spot on the corner of East Eighteenth and Governor. But then the juggernaut sped beyond the black neighborhoods into unknown territory. Finally, the lead police car slowed down and made a sharp left turn at Lafayette Street, five blocks north of the Nite Spot. A crowd of people in the brightly lit intersection scattered as the pacer car screeched to a halt. The other vehicles followed suit.

Everything seemed to be in miniature. The streets were so narrow, the intersection so compressed, that any car whipping around a corner could easily crash into an apartment building or a warehouse. "What the fuck are we doing here?" Carter blurted. Neither he nor Artis had ever been inside the Lafayette bar; Carter had never even heard of the place. *These are not my digs, but whatever went down, it had to be bad*.

A scene of chaos lay before them. An ambulance had pulled up next to the bar, where a bloodstained body was being hauled out on a stretcher beneath the neon tavern sign. The throng of mostly white bystanders, many in pajamas, robes, or housecoats, milled about the Dodge, parked on Lafayette Street and hemmed in by police cars. There was panicked crying and breathless cursing, the slap of slamming car doors, and the errant static of police radios. Whirling police lights gave the neighborhood's old brick buildings a garish red light as about twenty white cops, wearing stiff-brimmed caps, shields on their left breast, and bullet-lined belts, whispered urgently among one another.

The neighbors, some weeping, began to converge on the Dodge. Peering into the open windows, they looked at the two black men with anger and suspicion. Carter and Artis both sat frozen, unclear why they had been brought there but fearing for their lives. *This is how a black man in the South must feel when a white mob is about to lynch him*, Carter thought, *and the law is going to turn its head*. Finally, a grim police officer approached Artis.

"Get out of the car."

"Do you want me to take the keys out?"

"Leave the keys."

Then another officer intervened. "Bring the keys and open the trunk!"

"No problem," Artis said.

As Artis headed to the rear of the car, Carter hesitated. *If I get out of this car, it could be the worst mistake I've ever made*. Artis opened the trunk, and a cop rummaged through Carter's boxing gloves, shoes, headgear, and gym bag.

Another officer motioned to Carter to step out. Carter opened the door, but he had held his tongue long enough. "What the hell did you bring us here for, man?"

"Shut up," the officer shouted as he cocked the pistol. "Just get up against the wall and shut up, and don't move until I tell you to."

As Carter and Artis walked toward the bar at the corner of Lafayette and East Eighteenth, a hush settled over the crowd. With bystanders forming a semicircle around the two men, Carter and Artis stood facing a yellow wall bathed in the glare from headlights. Artis turned his right shoulder and searched for a familiar face, maybe someone from racially mixed Central High School, his alma mater, but he saw only white strangers. The police frisked them brusquely but found nothing on them or in Carter's car or trunk. Another ambulance arrived, and Artis felt the hair on his neck rise when he saw another body, draped in a white sheet, roll past him on a stretcher.

Finally, a paddy wagon pulled up and someone shouted, "Get in!" Carter and Artis stepped inside and were whisked away. Sitting by themselves, the two men were once again speeding through Paterson, heading to the police headquarters downtown. No one had asked them any questions or accused them of anything. They could see the driver through a screen divider but were otherwise isolated. "Something terrible is going on, but what's it got to do with us?" Artis asked.

Carter, disgusted, told him to stay calm. "Don't volunteer anything, but if someone asks you any questions, tell them the truth. The cops are just playing with me, as usual. It'll all be cleared up soon."

The paddy wagon stopped downtown, and the doors swung open at police headquarters. Built in 1902 after a devastating fire wiped out much of Paterson, the building is a hulking Victorian structure with dark oak desks and wide stairways. But Carter and Artis had barely gotten inside when there was another commotion. "Get back in!" someone shouted, and the two men returned to the wagon, which peeled off again. Now they headed on a beeline south on Main Street, eventually stopping at St. Joseph's Hospital, Paterson's oldest, where plainclothes detectives were waiting. Carter and Artis were hustled out of the truck and into the emergency room. Everything seemed white, the walls and curtains, the patients' gowns and nurses' uniforms, the floor tile and bedsheets. The room had that doomy hospital smell of ether and bedpans and disinfectant. The only patient was a balding white man lying on a gurney, a bloody bandage around his head, an intravenous tube rising from his arm, and a doctor working at his side.

"Can he talk?" asked one of the detectives, Sergeant Robert Callahan.

The doctor, annoyed at the intrusion, shot a disapproving glance at the detective, then at Carter and Artis. "He can talk, but only for a moment." The doctor lifted the lacerated head of William Marins, shot in the Lafayette bar. The bullet had exited near his left eye, which was now an open, serrated cut. He was pallid and weak.

"Can you see clearly?" Callahan asked the one-eyed man. "Can you make out these two men's faces?"

Marins nodded his head feebly. Callahan pointed to Artis. "Go over and stand next to the bed." Artis walked over.

"Is this the man who shot you?" Callahan asked.

Marins paused, then slowly shook his head from side to side. Callahan then motioned for Carter to step forward. "What about him?"

Again, Marins shook his head.

"But, sir, are you *sure* these are not the men?" Callahan asked in a harder voice. "Look carefully now."

Carter had been relieved when the injured man seemed to clear him and Artis. But now he concluded the police were going to do whatever they could to pin this shooting on them. Previous assault charges against Carter had been dismissed. Police surveillance had yielded little. Now, this: pell-mell excursions through the night, an angry mob outside a strange bar, a one-eyed man lying in agony, and Carter an inexplicable suspect. He had had enough. As Marins continued to shake his head, Carter closed his eyes, clenched his fists, and spilled his boiling rage. "Dirty sonofabitch!" he yelled. "Dirty motherfucker!"

Back at police headquarters, in the detective bureau, Carter found himself in a windowless interrogation room. It was familiar ground. He had been questioned in the same room twenty years

earlier for stealing clothing at an outdoor market. (His father had turned him in.) Two battered metal chairs and a table sat beneath a cracked, dirty ceiling. Artis was left to stew in a separate room, which had green walls, a naked light bulb, and a one-way mirror in the door. Artis could see, between the door and the floor, the black rubber soles of the officers outside his door. He knew they were watching him.

Both men lingered in their separate rooms for several hours, their alcoholic buzz long worn off. They simply felt exhaustion. At around 11 A.M., the door to Carter's room opened and Lieutenant Vincent DeSimone, Jr., walked in. The two men had a history. DeSimone joined the Paterson Police Department in 1947 and had been one of the officers who questioned the teenage Carter after he assaulted the man at the swimming hole. DeSimone was a coarse and intimidating old-school cop, who would quip about suspects, "He's so crooked, they'll have to bury him standing up." A relentless interrogator, he was known for his ability to elicit confessions through threats and promises. He would do anything for a confession, including pulling out a string of rosary beads to bestir a guilty conscience. He hated the 1966 *Miranda* decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no confession can be used against a criminal defendant who was not advised of his rights. The ruling, DeSimone feared, gave confessed criminals a loophole.[*]

In the 1950s he joined the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office as a detective specializing in homicides, and he was known for keeping index cards in his pocket so he wouldn't have to carry a notebook. His bosses viewed him as the finest law enforcement official in the state, their own Javert, and his power and reputation were unquestioned.

But on the streets of Paterson's black community, DeSimone had a different reputation entirely, for he embodied the racist, bullying tactics of an overbearing police force. His confessions had less to do with gumshoe police work than with intimidation, and he was feared. Frankly, he looked scary. In World War II he had taken a grenade blast in the face, and despite several surgeries, his jowly visage was disfigured. A scar inched across his upper lip, which was pulled tightly back, and drool sometimes gathered at the side of his mouth. He had thick eyeglasses, spoke in a gravelly voice, and wore an open sport jacket across his thick, hard gut, revealing his low-slung holster.

DeSimone was tense when he entered Carter's holding room. He had been awakened at 6 A.M. with news of the shooting, and he stopped off at the crime scene before going to the police station. Despite his many years in police work, this was his first interrogation for a multiple homicide.

"I'm Lieutenant DeSimone, Rubin. You know me." He sat down heavily and pulled out his pen and paper.

"You can answer these questions or not," he continued. "That's strictly up to you. But I'm going to record whatever you say. Just remember this. There's a dark cloud hanging over your head, and I think it would be wise for you to clear it up."

"You're the only dark cloud hanging over my head," Carter said.

DeSimone was joined by two or three other officers. Over the next couple of hours, Carter recounted his whereabouts on the previous night, from the time he left his home after watching the James Brown special to his two encounters with Sergeant Capter. He mentioned his trip to Annabelle Chandler's and various club stops. When DeSimone finally told Carter that four people had been shot, Carter waved off the suspicion: "I don't use guns, I use my fists. How many times have you arrested me around here for using my fists? I don't use guns."

Carter was certain the interrogation was just another example of police harassment for his bellicose reputation. He felt his position on fighting was well known to DeSimone and the other officers: he would fight only if provoked. He did not imagine that even an old antagonist like DeSimone would consider him a suspect for killing people inside a bar he had never entered.

During the questioning, DeSimone shuttled back and forth between Carter and Artis in parallel interrogations. It was more difficult to write down the answers from Artis, who spoke faster. DeSimone also told Artis that "there was a dark cloud hanging over you," but he said the young man

had a way out. “When two people commit a murder, you know who gets the short end of the stick? The guy who doesn’t have a record, and you don’t have a record. That’s the guy they really stick it to. Tell us what you know.”

“I don’t know anything,” Artis said.

By midday Carter’s wife heard he had been picked up, and she came to the station.

“Do you want me to call a lawyer?” Tee asked.

“What do I need a lawyer for?” Carter responded. “I didn’t do anything, so I’ll be out of here shortly.”

Later, while Carter was heading to the bathroom, he was taken past several witnesses who supposedly saw the assailants fleeing the crime scene. One was Alfred Bello, a squat, chunky former convict who was outside the bar when the police arrived. He told police at the crime scene that he had seen two gunmen, “one colored male … thin build, five foot eleven inches. Second colored male, thin build, five foot eleven inches.” Another was Patricia Graham, a thin, angular brunette who lived on the second floor above the bar and said she saw two black men in sport coats run from the bar after the shooting and drive off in a white car. Both Bello and Graham would later provide critical testimony in the state’s case against Carter, giving different accounts from those in their initial statements.

A police officer asked the group of witnesses if they recognized Carter. “Yeah, he’s the prizefighter,” someone said. Asked if he had been spotted fleeing the crime scene, the witness shook his head.

After DeSimone completed his questioning of Carter, he gathered up his papers. “That’s good enough for the time being, but there’s one thing more that I’d like to ask. Would you be willing to submit to a lie detector test?”

“And a paraffin test, too,” Carter said without hesitation. “But not if any of these cops down here are going to give it to me. You get somebody else who knows what he’s doing.”

At 2:30 P.M., Sergeant John J. McGuire, a polygraph examiner from the Elizabeth Police Department, met Carter in a separate room. A barrel-chested man with short hair, McGuire had just been told about the shootings, and he was in no mood for small talk. “Carter, let me tell you something before you sit down and take this test,” he said in a tight voice. “If you have anything to hide that you don’t want me to know, then don’t take it, because this machine is going to tell me about it. And if I find anything indicating that you had *anything* to do with the killing of those people, I’m going to make sure your ass burns to a bacon rind.”

“Fuck you, man, and give me the goddamn thing.”

McGuire wrapped a wired strap around Carter’s chest, and Carter put his fingers in tiny suction cups. He answered a series of yes-or-no questions and returned to his holding room. After another delay, McGuire showed up and laid out a series of charts tracking his responses. DeSimone and several other officers were there as well. Pointing to the lines on the chart, McGuire declared, “He didn’t participate in these crimes, but he may know who was involved.”

“Is that so?” DeSimone asked.

“No, but I can find out for you,” Carter said.

Sixteen hours after they had been stopped by the police, Carter and Artis were released from the police station. Carter was given his car keys and went to the police garage, only to find that the car’s paneling, dashboard, and seats had been ripped out. The following day, June 18, Assistant County Prosecutor Vincent E. Hull told the *Paterson Morning Call* that Carter had never been a suspect. Eleven days later Carter, as well as Artis, testified before a Passaic County grand jury about the Lafayette bar murders. DeSimone testified that both men passed their lie detector tests and that neither man fit the description of the gunmen. Notwithstanding the adage that a prosecutor can indict a ham sandwich—prosecutors are given a wide berth to introduce evidence to show probable cause—the prosecutor in the Lafayette bar murders failed to indict anyone. Carter traveled to Argentina and lost his fight against Rocky Rivero. The promoter never did give him a sparring partner. The

thought flashed through Carter's head that he should just stay in Argentina, which had no extradition treaty with the United States. That way, the Paterson police would no longer be able to hassle him. Instead he returned home.

On October 14, 1966, Carter was picked up by the police and charged with the Lafayette bar murders.

[*] FBI files released through the Freedom of Information Act indicate that Carter was under investigation at least by 1967. The report could not be read in full because the FBI had blacked out many sections, evidently to protect its informants.

[*] The *Miranda* decision had been issued only days before the Lafayette bar murders. DeSimone testified that he gave Carter his *Miranda* warning, which Carter denies.

4
MYSTERY WITNESS

IT WAS THE BREAK everyone had been waiting for. On October 14, 1966, the front page of the *Paterson Evening News* screamed the headline: "Mystery Witness in Triple Slaying Under Heavy Guard." A three-column photograph, titled "Early Morning Sentinels," showed tense police officers in front of the Alexander Hamilton Hotel on Church Street guarding the "mystery witness." An unnamed hotel employee said he saw the police hustle a "short man" into an elevator the day before at 6 P.M. The elevator stopped on the fifth floor, where a red-haired woman was seen peering out from behind a raised shade.

The newspaper story raised as many questions as it answered, but the high drama indicated that a breakthrough had occurred in the notorious Lafayette bar murders, now four months old. Excitement swirled around the Hamilton, where a patrol car was parked in front with two officers inside, shotguns at the ready. Roaming behind the hotel were seven more officers, guarding the rear entrance. A police spotlight held a bright beam on an adjoining building's fire escape, lest an intruder use it to gain access to the Hamilton. Two more shotguntoting cops stood inside the rear entrance, and detectives roamed the lobby. Overseeing the security measures, according to the newspaper, was Mayor Frank Graves.

John Artis saw the headline and thought nothing of it. He assumed he had been cleared of any suspicion of the Lafayette bar shooting after he testified before the grand jury in June and no indictments had been issued. At the time, Artis was at a crossroads in his own life. His mother had died from a kidney ailment a month after he graduated from Central High School in 1964. Mary Eleanor Artis was only forty-four years old, and her death had devastated John, an only child. He knocked around Paterson for several years, working as a truck driver and living with his father on Tyler Street. In high school, he had been a solid student and a star in two sports, track and football, and he sang in the choir at the New Christian Missionary Baptist Church. He had giddy dreams of playing wide receiver for the New York Titans (later known as the New York Jets). He also had a bad habit of driving fast and reckless—he banged up no fewer than eight cars—but he had no criminal record and never had any problems with the police. Neither of his parents had gone to college, and they desperately wanted their only child to go. By the fall of 1966, Artis had been notified by the Army that he had been drafted to serve in Vietnam, but he was trying to avoid service by winning a track scholarship to Adams State College in Alamosa, Colorado, where his high school track coach had connections.

On October 14, dusk had settled by the time Artis finished work. It was Friday, the night before his twentieth birthday, and an evening of dancing and partying lay ahead. He stopped at a dry cleaner's to pick up some shirts, then went into Laramie's liquor store on Tyler Street to buy an orange soda and a bag of chips. He and his father lived above the store. As he was paying for the soda, the door of the liquor store swung open. "Freeze, Artis!" a cop yelled. "You're under arrest!"

Artis saw two shotguns and a handgun pointed at him. "For what?" he demanded.

"For the Lafayette bar murders!"

"Get outta here!"

Police bullying of blacks in Paterson was so common that Artis thought this was more of the same, an ugly prank. But then two officers began patting him down around his stomach and back pockets. Artis handed his clean shirts to the liquor store clerk and told him to take them to his father. His wrists were then cuffed behind his back. *Damn*, Artis thought, *these guys are serious!* On his way out of Laramie's, Artis yelled his father's name: "JOHHHHN ARTIS!" As he was shoved into a police car, Artis saw his father's stricken face appear in the second-story window.

Rubin Carter was at Club LaPetite when one of Artis's girlfriends approached him with the news: John had been arrested.

"For what?" Carter asked.

"I don't know, they just arrested him."

Like Artis, Carter had seen the "Mystery Witness" headline in the newspaper but hadn't given it a second thought, and he didn't connect the headline to Artis's arrest. Carter, distrustful of the police, feared for Artis's safety, so he got into his Eldorado and drove to police headquarters to check up on the young man. As he neared the station, he put his foot on the brake; then, out of nowhere, detectives on foot and in unmarked cars swarmed around his car.

"Don't move! Put your hands on the wheel! Don't move!"

Here we go again, was all Carter could think. But this police encounter proved to be much more harrowing than his June confrontation. His hands were quickly cuffed behind his back, and he was shoved into the back seat of an unmarked detective's car. According to Carter, the officers did not tell him why they had stopped him or what he was being charged with. Instead, with detectives on either side of him, the car doors slammed shut and the vehicle sped away, followed by several other unmarked cars. Carter had no idea where they were going, or why. Soon the caravan headed up Garrett Mountain, cruising past the evergreens and maple trees. Even at night Carter knew the winding roads because he often rode his horse on the mountain. The motorcade finally came to a stop along a dark road, and there they sat. Detectives holding their shotguns milled around, and Carter heard the crackling of the car radios and officers speaking in code. They did not ask him any questions. *Damn! They're going to kill me*. They sat for at least an hour, then Carter heard on the car radio: "Okay, bring him in." He always assumed that someone had talked the detectives out of shooting him.

At headquarters, Carter was met by Lieutenant DeSimone and by Assistant County Prosecutor Vincent E. Hull. It was Hull who spoke: "We are arresting you for the murders of the Lafayette bar shooting. You have the right to remain silent …" The time was 2:45 A.M. Unknown to Carter, Artis had also been taken to Garrett Mountain, held for more than an hour, then returned to headquarters and arrested for the murders. The *Evening News* said the arrests "capped a cloak-and-dagger maneuver masterminded by Mayor Graves," who grandly praised his police department: "Our young, aggressive, hard-working department brought [the case] to its present conclusion."

Some nettlesome questions remained. Though the police searched the city's gutters and fields and dragged the Passaic River, they never found the murder weapons. The authorities were also not divulging *why* Carter and Artis killed three people. Robbery had already been ruled out, and the *Evening News* reported on October 16 that the police had determined there was no connection between the Roy Holloway murder and the Lafayette bar shooting. Such details were unimportant. The *Morning News* rejoiced at the arrest, trumpeting on the same day that the newspaper "exclusively broke the news that the four-month-old tavern murders were solved."

Carter figured his arrest was tied to the November elections. Mayor Graves, prohibited by law from running for a fourth consecutive term, was hoping to hand the job over to his chosen successor, John Wegner. What better way to show that the city was under control than by solving the most heinous crime in its history? After the election, Carter reckoned he'd be set free.[*]

But sitting in the Passaic County Jail, where each day he was served jelly sandwiches, Carter learned through the jailhouse grapevine that two hostile witnesses had emerged. Alfred Bello, the former con who had been at headquarters following the crime, and Arthur Dexter Bradley, another career criminal, were near the Lafayette bar trying to rob a warehouse on the night of the murders. Questioned by the police that night, Bello said he could not identify the assailants. But suddenly his memory had improved. Both Bello and Bradley now told police that they had witnessed Carter and Artis fleeing the crime scene.

The Passaic County Prosecutor's Office took the case to a special grand jury empaneled in the basement of the YMCA, convened to investigate the sensational killing of a young housewife

named Judy Kavanaugh. On November 30, Carter heard a radio report on the loudspeakers in jail that the grand jury had indicted Kavanaugh's husband for the murder. Paul Kavanaugh was in a cell near Carter's. Then, almost as an afterthought, the announcer said: "Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter and John Artis were also indicted for the Lafayette bar slayings."

The twining of the Kavanaugh and the Lafayette bar murders fueled rumors for many years to come. Speculation centered on the role that the mob may have played in persuading the prosecutor's office to pursue enemies of the underworld. The Mafia connection was more direct in the Kavanaugh case. Eight months after the killing, a small-time hood named Johnny "the Walk" DeFranco died from a slit throat, the victim of a gangland-style murder. Prosecutors put forth a theory that Judy Kavanaugh had been involved in a counterfeiting and pornography ring and was silenced when she panicked, while DeFranco was later killed to keep him silent about her death. Five people were ultimately indicted for one or both crimes, including Harold Matzner, the young publisher of a suburban newspaper company in New Jersey. He had backed a series of articles that tried to link the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office to the underworld. All the defendants in both crimes, including Matzner, were ultimately acquitted amid allegations of witness tampering and gross misconduct inside the prosecutor's office.[*]

Carter's indictment also generated discussion about the underworld in Paterson. Mobsters had approached Carter about throwing fights, but he had always refused. In theory, this would give the mob an incentive to turn against him—just as the mob had an incentive to turn against Harold Matzner. Rumors circulated that mobsters, seeking vengeance against Carter, gave the prosecutor's office conclusive evidence of his guilt, but the evidence could never be introduced because of its origins. The rumor is fantastic, but it gained some currency over the years as prosecutors, seemingly armed with little direct proof of guilt against Carter or Matzner, pursed each man with zeal. Other unsettling parallels between the Kavanaugh and Lafayette bar murders would surface in time.

When Carter heard about his indictment on the radio, he was shocked. Even though he had hired a lawyer, he still believed that the authorities planned to release him. But after being jailed for about six weeks, he guessed that prosecutors sought the indictment against him because they feared a possible lawsuit against Passaic County for false arrest. (Carter had no such intention.) If a jury returned a verdict of not guilty, prosecutors could say they had done their best with the evidence they had. Carter's shock soon gave way to fury and fear. He was now trapped in jail until his trial. With little to do, he began writing letters to people who had seen him on the night of June 16 and who could serve as his alibi witnesses.

To those who knew Carter, the accusation didn't make sense. His friends and family believed he *was* capable of killing three people, but not in the fashion of the Lafayette bar murders. Despite his inflammatory comments in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Carter was known for advocating self-defense, specifically against police harassment. Violence was justified, indeed necessary, against aggressors, he argued, but not against innocent bystanders. Why would he walk into an inoffensive bar and shoot a room full of strangers? It never made sense, and the authorities offered no explanation.

Moreover, when Carter did exact revenge and lash out, he used only his fists. The rules of the streets were clear. Punks and sissies used guns or knives; warriors used their fists. If Carter wanted to punish or even kill someone, he would consider it an insult to his manhood if he did not use his bare hands. He would want the victim to *know* that it was "Hurricane" Carter meting out his punishment. Carter owned and occasionally carried guns, but that was because of his own fears—perhaps exaggerated, perhaps not—that he would be shot at. What is clear is that until the Lafayette bar murders, no one had ever accused Carter of pointing a gun at another person.

The Lafayette bar shooting "wasn't Rubin's style," said Martin Barnes, an acquaintance of Carter's who was elected mayor of Paterson in the 1990s. "If you were bad, you did it with your hands, and Rubin did it strictly with his hands."

Carter initially wanted F. Lee Bailey to represent him, but the famed defense lawyer was already embroiled in the Kavanaugh case, so instead he hired Raymond Brown from Newark. Brown was

known for being the only black lawyer in the state to take on whites. He did not, at first glance, look like a dragon slayer in his rumpled brown and gray suits, Ben Franklin-type bifocals, and a plaid hat. He smoked a pipe and ambled around in a kind of slouch, as if he were getting ready to sit down after every step. But he was an expansive orator whose voice filled a courtroom, a firebrand with a rapier wit. In his fifties, he had short, dust-colored hair and a high yellow complexion; in fact, he was light enough to pass for white. When he was in the Army, an officer candidate once told him, "Be careful, some people will think you're a nigger." "I am!" Brown shot back.

The trial against Carter and Artis took place at the Passaic County Court on Hamilton Street, where grandeur and tradition welcomed every visitor. Completed just after the turn of the century, the building featured large white Corinthian columns and a ribbed dome with a columned cupola; on it stood a blindfolded woman holding the scales of justice. In the courtroom where Carter was tried, the judge's large dark wood desk stood on a platform in dignified splendor. On the desk lay a black Bible with its red-edged pages facing the gallery. An American flag stood to the side.

Paterson was a tinderbox as jury selection began on April 7, 1967. The establishment was terrified that blacks would riot if the defendants were found guilty. Black youths had rioted three summers before, and a conviction of Paterson's most celebrated, most feared, most hated black man could trigger another firestorm. To quell any possible disturbance, the courthouse was transformed into a fortress, with extra uniformed and plainclothes police perched in the building's halls and stairwells, on the streets outside, and on neighborhood rooftops. The roads around the building were blocked off. The authorities questioned known troublemakers and even rummaged through garbage cans in search of contraband. According to an internal FBI report dated May 27, 1967, an informant told the agency that in the "Negro district, five large garbage cans were filled with empty wine and beer bottles and some beer cans … and these might be a source of Molotov cocktails … and this condition could be caused by the feeling of people regarding the Carter-Artis trial."

Presiding was Samuel Larner, an experienced New Jersey lawyer who had recently been appointed to the Superior Court in Essex County and had already developed a reputation as a no-nonsense judge. Larner gained widespread acclaim in the 1950s when he spearheaded an investigation of government corruption in Jersey City. The inquest triggered more than fifty indictments, culminating in the suicide of one employee and the resignation of several others. Sam Larner knew Ray Brown well. The two men were co-counsel for John William Butenko, an American engineer, and Igor Ivanov, a Soviet national, who just a few years earlier had been convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage.

Judge Larner had been reassigned from Essex to Passaic County, evidently because Passaic was either experiencing a shortage of judges or a backlog of cases. Carter always suspected he had been reassigned to keep Ray Brown under control. Larner intervened often when Brown was pressing witnesses, and their jousting was a running sideshow during the trial.

Each day during the voir dire, for example, the proceedings lasted into the early evening. Then one afternoon Judge Larner abruptly rose at 4 P.M. and declared, "The court is adjourned." The stunned courtroom silently watched the judge walk toward his chamber. Suddenly, Ray Brown stood up.

"Judge Larner!"

"What is it now, Mr. Brown?"

"Tell me, Judge Larner, why is this night different from all other nights?"

It was the first night of the Jewish holiday of Passover, and the judge needed to get home. He first glared at Brown for his effrontery in questioning a judge's decision to end the day prematurely. Then he realized Brown's clever invocation of a line from the Passover Seder. Larner smiled at his former colleague and continued out the door.

Carter, however, found little to smile about. He had never been on trial before. When he did something wrong, he owned up to it, as he had ten years earlier when he pled guilty to robbery and

assault. Carter figured he was in trouble during jury selection, a three-week ordeal that saw one potential juror dismissed for being a member of Hitler's youth movement in Germany and another for believing that blacks who grew up in ghettos were more prone to violence. Despite such efforts, the jury that was selected comprised four white women, nine white men, and one black man—a West Indian. Fourteen jurors in all, two of whom would be selected as alternates at the end of the trial. *This was a jury of my peers?* Carter thought. *Aside from being a different color than all but one of them, I probably had more education than any person sitting on the jury, and even I didn't understand a damn thing that was going on*.

The prosecuting attorney was Vincent Hull, the son of a state legislator, whose precise, low-key manner contrasted sharply with Brown's showmanship. Hull was young, slim, and conservatively dressed with prematurely gray hair. In his opening statement, he described how the two defendants, after circling the bar in Carter's 1966 Dodge, parked the car, walked into the Lafayette bar, and without uttering a word "premeditatedly, deliberately, and willfully" shot four people, killing three of them. Hull meticulously described the victims and their wounds and asserted that Detective Emil DeRobbio found an unspent 12-gauge shotgun shell and an unspent .32 S&W long bullet in Carter's car. Those were the same kinds of bullets, Hull said, used in the bar shooting. When Hull completed his opening, he thanked the jury and sat down.

Judge Larner turned to the defense table. "Mr. Brown," he said.

Ray Brown rose from the table, his glasses perched on his nose and a legal document in his hand. While the prosecutor had not mentioned race except as it related to the identification of the suspects, Brown argued that Carter stood accused because the police were looking for a Negro on the night in question, and therefore every Negro was suspect. Brown told the jury that Carter didn't know what happened in the bar and refuted Hull's assertions point by point, including the alleged discovery of bullets in the Dodge. If the police actually found the bullets on the night of the crime, Brown asked, why wasn't Carter arrested then instead of four months later?

To convict, the state needed a unanimous vote of guilt from the jurors, so Brown's strategy was to direct his entire defense to the West Indian juror, hoping to persuade him that the state was victimizing his client. "Any man can be accused," Brown thundered, "but no man should have his nerves shredded and his guts torn out without a direct charge."

"Mr. Brown!" Judge Larner exploded. "I don't want to interrupt you, but I think it is time you limited yourself to the facts to be shown, and let's get beyond the speeches on philosophy."

"This is not philosophy, Your Honor. This is a fact."

The state's first witness, William Marins, who lost his left eye in the shooting, set the tone for the trial. Carter had hoped that Marins, a balding, stocky man in his forties who was the lone survivor of the tragedy, would convince the jurors that he and Artis were not the gunmen in the same way he had convinced the police at St. Joseph's Hospital after the shooting. Marins was now an unemployed machinist—and an unsympathetic witness. He told the court that on the night of the crime, he had been shooting pool and drinking beer with another patron, Fred Nauyoks. Also in the bar were Jim Oliver, the bartender, and Hazel Tanis. Suddenly, two colored men entered the place between two-thirty and three o'clock in the morning, shooting everyone inside. One gunman, with a mustache, swung a shotgun. The other, standing directly behind him, had a pistol. Marins said he felt a sharp pain in the left side of his head, noticed smoke curling out of the shotgun barrel, and passed out. When he awoke, "I was bleeding and bleeding and bleeding. I waited for the police to come."

Throughout the questioning, Marins emphasized that he was in a state of shock after the shooting and was in no condition to identify the gunmen. By the time Brown began his cross-examination, it was clear Marins was not about to exonerate Rubin Carter and John Artis.

"Do you feel like testifying some more, Mr. Marins," Brown asked, "or would you like a glass of water?"

"No," Marins snapped.

"You gave a statement to the police about what happened in this place, did you not?"

"Yes, but I was in a state of—"

"I didn't ask you, sir—" Brown said.

Judge Larner interrupted. "Just answer the particular question, Mr. Marins."

Brown produced numerous official statements that Marins had given about the shooting, one as late as October 20, 1966. "Now, you repeatedly told these officers, did you not, that [the gunmen] were thin, tall, light-skinned Negroes, didn't you?"

"I said they were colored," Marins protested.

Carter, of course, was short, thickly built and black as soot, so Brown homed in on Marins's previous descriptions, which seemed to have ruled Carter out as a suspect. Shuffling between the witness stand and the defense table, Brown noted that his description matched that of Hazel Tanis, who told police before she died that the gunmen were about six feet tall, slimly built, light-complexioned and had pencil-thin mustaches. Isn't that the same description you gave? Brown asked Marins.

"No!" Marins insisted. "I told [the police] the man had a dark mustache, or well, it was a mustache. I didn't look at him that long … I was in a state of shock."

Brown had one more card to play. "Your Honor, please. At this time I would like to ask that Your Honor unseal depositions given by this man in a civil suit brought by him in January of 1967."

Carter had no idea what was going on.

"Mr. Marins," Brown said, "do you know that you are the plaintiff in an action against Elizabeth Paraglia owner of the Lafayette Grill?"

"True."

"Do you recall having testified in depositions taken before a notary public … on December 16, 1966?"

"True."

"Do you recall signing these depositions and stating under oath they were true?"

"True."

"You were out of the hospital?"

"True."

"You had been discharged?"

"True."

"Your health then permitted you to go to a lawyer's office and give depositions, is that correct?"

"True."

"Your lawyer was present?"

"True."

Brown bored in. "You were asked, 'Did you recognize the men who shot you?' Your answer: 'I know they were colored, light-colored, and one in particular, the first one with a shotgun, had a mustache that I just happened to see, and the man in back of him was about the same height.' Did you give him that answer?"

"True," Marins replied meekly.

"You were asked, 'How tall are they?' You said, 'Six feet, maybe five eleven, six feet.' Is that correct?"

"Well, I said six feet. Maybe."

"Isn't it a fact that you told Detective Callahan six feet, slim build, sir?"

"When was this?"

"June 17, 1966, in the emergency room."

"I don't remember because I was in a state of shock."

"Were you in a state of shock in December 1966?"

The judge had seen enough. “He said no, and he doesn’t remember what he told Detective Callahan, whether it is the same or not.”

Brown had cut Marins to shreds, but there was no joy at the defense table. The lone survivor had inexplicably changed the very statements that had once helped clear Carter and Artis of suspicion, and Carter quietly seethed.

Despite his renowned temper, Carter remained calm during the proceedings. Hundreds of times he had to stand up before prospective jurors to be identified, but he never balked or showed any annoyance. The *Evening News* said he acquired the stance of a “mild-mannered student.” His wife brought him a clean suit and dress shirt every night at the jail, and throughout the trial he took copious notes on a yellow legal pad. Only once did Carter vent his rage in the courtroom. His nemesis, Vincent DeSimone, sat next to Hull at the prosecutor’s table. During one recess, Carter’s daughter wandered over to the table and began playing and laughing with the lieutenant. Carter bolted out of his seat and grabbed the three-year-old.

“Come here,” he said. “You don’t talk to this punk. He’s trying to put your father in jail.”

DeSimone leaned back and smiled.

“Fuck you, you fat pig,” Carter said. “You leave my daughter alone.”

The state had little evidence linking Carter and Artis to the shooting. The police had neglected to brush the Lafayette bar for fingerprints or conduct paraffin tests on the defendants’ hands after they were picked up. There were no footprints, no bloodstains, no murder weapons, no motive. There was conflicting testimony about Carter’s car. One witness, Patricia Graham Valentine (Patricia Graham at the time of the shooting), lived in an apartment above the bar. She said Carter’s white Dodge “looked like” the getaway car; both cars had triangular, butter-fly-type taillights. But another witness, Ronnie Ruggiero, also saw the getaway car and testified that he thought it was a white Chevy, not a white Dodge. Ruggiero, a white boxer, had driven in Carter’s Dodge Polara before. Then there were the bullets. Detective DeRobbio testified that he found a .32-caliber S&W lead bullet and a Super X Wesson 12-gauge shotgun shell in Carter’s car. But ballistics experts testified that the bullets found at the crime scene were .32 S&W long *copper-coated* bullets and Remington Express *plastic* shells. The bullets in Carter’s car were indisputably different from those used in the crime, but Judge Larner allowed the lead bullet into evidence because it *could* have been fired from a .32-caliber pistol. The same could have been said for the 12-gauge shell, but Larner still excluded that as evidence. His logic confounded the defense team.

The state’s case rested on the shoulders of its two eyewitnesses, Alfred Bello and Arthur Dexter Bradley. As a thief, Bello was more pathetic than petty. By the age of twenty-three, he had already been convicted five times on various charges of burglary and robbery. In one instance, he robbed a woman of a makeup case valued at one dollar, a cigarette case valued at two dollars, and a pocketbook valued at twenty dollars. Carter assumed that the reward for his conviction, now up to $12,500, looked mighty tempting compared to such nickel-and-dime thieving. A heavy drinker who had threatened his classmates with a penknife in grade school, Bello had spent so much time in Paterson’s police headquarters that DeSimone’s secretary referred to him as the lieutenant’s adopted son. Bello was short and fat with greased-back hair. He talked too loud and he wore high-heeled shoes. He had a tattoo on his right arm that read: “Born to Raise Hell.” He had been discharged from the Army for fraudulent enlistment. He had also been in state reformatories off and on for several years, and he was out on parole when the Lafayette bar shooting occurred. At the time of the murders, he was serving as “chickie,” or lookout, for Bradley’s break-in at the Ace Sheet Metal Company.

He was the state’s “mystery witness.”

Bello took the stand with an air of insouciant invincibility, basking in the spotlight of his sudden fame. In his answers to Hull’s questions, he gave his account of the night in question. While waiting for Bradley to break into the warehouse with a tire iron, Bello said he saw a white Dodge driving around the block with three colored men inside. He thought he saw something sticking up between

one of their legs that looked like a rifle barrel. Then he decided he wanted a cigarette, so he walked to the Lafayette bar to buy a pack. As he walked toward the tavern, he heard two shots, then two shots more, then he saw two colored fellows walking around the corner, talking loud and laughing. One had a shotgun, the other a pistol. They were fourteen feet away and saw Bello, but Bello ran to safety. So the gunmen drove away in their white car. The two men, Bello said, were Rubin Carter and John Artis.

Bello then walked to the bar and saw the bodies on the floor. He went to the cash register to get a dime to call the police; instead, he stole money from the register. He left the bar, gave the pilfered cash to Bradley, and then returned to the tavern because he feared a witness had seen him leaving the crime scene. He saw Carter and Artis when the police brought them to the bar and later at the police station, but under questioning by police, he did not identify them. Then in October, Bello gave another statement to police, claiming he saw the two defendants fleeing the crime scene. He said he did not identify them on the night of the murders because he feared that doing so would endanger him.

The lies, at least to Carter, were transparent. Why would a man engaged in a surreptitious criminal activity decide to walk to a bar and buy a pack of cigarettes? How could an overweight, high-heeled Bello elude a world-class professional athlete and a former high school track star? Why would testifying now put him in less danger than on the night of the murders? Why would Carter have let the police take him to the bar if he knew somebody had seen him? *Shit!* Carter thought. *I wouldn't have lost anything by killing the police too—if I had been the killer!*

Ray Brown's cross-examination entangled Bello in a thicket of half-truths and inconsistencies. Even the most innocuous inquiries caught Bello in lies.

"Where were you living in June of 1966?" Brown asked.

"One-thirty-eight Redwood Avenue," Bello answered.

"Did you tell the police on June 17, 1966, where you lived?" Brown asked.

"Yes."

"Where did you tell them you lived?"

"It had to be Redwood Avenue," he said.

"Would you look at this please." Brown showed him a written statement. "I show you S-40 for identification. Is there a date in the upper left-hand corner?" he asked.

"June 17, 1966," Bello said.

"Is that your signature?"

"Yes."

"What does it say with respect to your full name, age, and address?"

"Maple Avenue," Bello conceded.

"Where did you live in June of 1966?" Brown asked again.

"On Maple Avenue."

"You lived in Clifton?" Brown asked.

"Yes."

"You have difficulty recalling where you lived less than a year ago?"

"I'm not very good on dates," Bello said.

"You're not very good on memory either, are you," Brown snapped.

Bello conceded that he had lied to the police on the night of the murders when he said the assailants had chased him up the street; now he claimed the gunmen did not chase him at all—and he also tried to backpedal from his initial description of the men.

"You told, at the very scene, other police officers … that these men were of slim build, five eleven or so, is that correct?" Brown asked.

"I meant to say one was a little taller than the other," Bello said.

The witness said he could not recall exactly what he had told the police. Brown pulled out Bello's original police statement on the description of the two gunmen.

"Do you deny telling Officer Unger and Officer Greenough on the morning of the seventeenth of June, 1966, that one man was five eleven and the other was five eleven and that both were slim built? You deny that?"

"I don't deny anything. If it is there, it must be true."

Bello then tried to explain more fully what he did after he entered the bar. He did not have a dime to make a telephone call, he said, so he stepped over the bleeding dead body of Jim Oliver to reach the cash register. "I went in there to try to help, and when I went to the cash register to get that dime, basically I am a thief. I will admit that." With the courtroom in titters, he continued. "I did go to the cash register to get a dime, but when I seen this money, knowing myself, knowing that I am a thief, I did take some money. But I am not an assassin. Remember that."

With $62 of stolen cash in hand, Bello stepped back over Oliver's corpse and left the bar.

Bello was grilled on the witness stand for two days, and Ray Brown ended his interrogation with a flourish of indignation.

"When you stole that money from the cash register sitting behind the bar, did you have to pass by Hazel Tanis lying there on the floor begging for help?"

"Yes," Bello answered.

"And Mr. William Marins slumped on the barstool shot in the head?"

"Yes."

"And Fred Nauyoks lying dead at the bar?"

"Yes, Mr. Brown."

"Then you stepped over Jim Oliver lying dead behind the bar to get to the cash register. When did you do all of this, mister?"

"Do what?" Judge Larner intervened.

Brown whipped around and looked at the judge. "Slay the bartender," he said.

"What!" Judge Larner screamed.

"When did he slay the bartender?" Brown repeated. "That is addressed to him," pointing to Bello.

"Objection!" shouted the prosecutor.

"Answer that," the judge told Bello.

"It is not to my knowledge," the witness said defiantly.

"No further questions, *Your Honor,"* Brown snarled, stalking away. "Not to his knowledge," he said derisively as he passed the jury.

Arthur Dexter Bradley, a lanky, red-haired twenty-three-year-old, already had six convictions under his belt by the time of the trial. But unlike Bello, he was locked away in the Morris County Jail, and he had additional charges pending on four armed robberies. He was a poor thief and a worse prisoner: he had tried to escape from jail and failed. He testified that he recognized Carter running down Lafayette Street after the shooting, even though he had only seen Carter once before, two years earlier. Asked by Hull to point out the man he saw running down the street, Bradley pointed to Carter.

"Pointing where," Judge Larner asked. "Tell us again."

This time Bradley spoke. "That Negro right there."

That Negro, indeed. The dividing line of this trial had been clearly drawn, and it cut along race. The prosecutor and his staff were white. The investigators and police officers were white. The judge was white. The victims were white. Their family and friends in the courtroom were white. The state's witnesses were white. The jury, save one man, was white. The courtroom clerk was white. The courthouse guards were white, and the courthouse attendees were white. Rubin Carter was black, bald, and bearded. His co-defendant was black. His lawyer was black. His alibi witnesses were black. His family and friends who crowded the courtroom were black. Could a white juror look at that contrasting tableau and not be affected? Carter feared not. He believed that once a juror is called to serve the government, he takes on the mantle of the government. The juror is now part of a famous

case. He is now part of the system, and he is going to do what the system wants. In Carter's mind, the juror thinks: Maybe the government didn't prove it, but they must know something. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here.

Carter kept his feelings about race to himself. In fact, he surprised both Brown and John Artis's lawyer, Arnold Stein, by not complaining of racial prejudice. "With Bello and Bradley, I'd say, 'Fuck these white sons-of-bitches,'" Brown recalled many years later. "Carter would say, 'They're sons of bitches,' but he wouldn't say they were white. To this day, I've never heard him say a racial epithet."

Carter and Artis both testified. Carter gave the same account of his whereabouts on the night of the murder that he had already given the police and grand jury. He took the stand wearing the same clothing he had worn that night, including his cream sport coat. Patricia Graham Valentine had testified that she saw two well-dressed Negroes in dark clothes fleeing the bar.

After two and a half weeks of testimony, Ray Brown, in his closing argument, shambled over to the jury box and made clear what he thought this trial was all about: race. He started slowly, noting that the jurors needed to be guided by reason, "not passion, not prejudice, not bias. Reason. Reason. Reason." He ticked off Carter's alibi witnesses, who said they were around him between two and two-thirty on the night of the crime, then he reared back and lit into Bello and Bradley. He reminded the jury of the witnesses' criminal records and that Bello in particular offered testimony that contradicted his previous statements. Is it not reasonable, Brown said, to assume that Bello "is testifying for hope, for favor?" He called Bello and Bradley "jackals" and "ghouls," said the judge had prevented him from implying that they were responsible for the murders, but "I will imply with all my might" that they were somehow involved.

"Remember what [Bradley] said. It will remain with me forever for a special reason. I remember … he said, 'That Negro over there.' What is that, an animal? Well, I will tell you, in his voice it was there, and everything around this case revolves around that simple fact. They were Negro …"

Brown told the jury that his client had lived since 1957 "without a blemish" and that he "is now a human being standing in fear of his life … Can you believe that this man who did not run, who did not hide, did this, did these things? How can you believe this …?" Almost three hours into his summation, Brown reiterated that Carter did not fit the description of the killers; then, exhausted and with tears in his eyes, he closed by denouncing the courtroom proceeding and the city of Paterson.

"This is probably the last place in the entire world where a trial like this could go on," he said. "Where else would they tolerate three weeks of picking a jury? Where else would they tolerate lawyers sometimes bumbling, sometimes stumbling? … Where else would they tolerate this in the world, where else but here? Why then must this man suffer because he rode the streets of Paterson, minding his own business, a black man driving a white car? I know you won't stand for it. Thank you."

The courtroom was stirred by Brown's stem-winding broadside—muffled sniffles, angry voices—although the jurors sat with stone faces. After the lunch recess, Vince Hull made his methodical summation in a monotone, shoring up maligned witnesses and reconciling contradictions in testimony. Marins could not be held accountable for failing to identify the defendants at the hospital, Hull said, because he was under sedation. The prosecutor acknowledged that financial rewards were offered in June of 1966 to anyone who helped the police solve the crime, but if Bello and Bradley were testifying for money, why did they wait until October? While Hull lacked the drama of Ray Brown, he was able to turn the weaknesses of his case into apparent strengths. For example, the testimony of Bello and Bradley revealed numerous contradictions in their accounts of what happened that night. Bello said he saw three people driving by in a white car. Bradley said he saw four people. Bradley said he saw the car going west on Lafayette Street. Bello saw the car on Sixteenth Street. These and other inconsistencies only proved one thing, Hull said, that these witnesses had to be telling the truth! Lying witnesses would have been more coordinated. "If they were so interested in the reward," Hull asked, "why didn't they get their stories straight?"

Hull proved himself a master rhetorician. For example, several character witnesses for John Artis, including Robert Douglas, his pastor, testified that the defendant was a nonviolent, honest young man. Given that no motive was adduced, the jurors might very well doubt that a peaceful, law-abiding kid would brutally kill three people without any provocation. Hull's response: The character witnesses did not know their man. "What weight can their testimony have as to [Artis] being law-abiding and nonviolent after hearing all of the testimony as to what transpired in and around the Lafayette Grill on the morning of June 17, 1966." This sophistry bewildered Artis. Hull discredited his character witnesses by citing the very crime that his character witnesses said he was incapable of committing.

Hull finished his summation with a bit of high theater.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, when you retire to the jury room, all of the exhibits in this case that have been admitted in evidence will be in there with you, including this bullet, this .32 S&W long Remington Peters. That will be one of the items that goes into the jury room with you, and after you deliberate upon the facts in this case, and weigh all of them carefully, that bullet, small in size, will get larger and larger and larger, and that bullet will call out to you and say to you, Bello and Bradley told the truth. That bullet will call out to you and say to you that Carter and Artis lied, and that bullet will get louder and larger and it will cry out to you like three voices from the dead, and it will say to you Rubin Carter and John Artis are guilty of murder in the first degree …"

Hull then emptied out three bags of bloody clothes on a table in front of the jury, each bag's contents in a separate pile. Beside each heap he placed a picture of the decedent whose clothes they were, the photos showing each person laid out on slabs in the morgue.

"There once was a man," the prosecutor continued, "a human being by the name of James Oliver, a bartender at the Lafayette Grill, and he wore this shirt, and he looked like this when he was placed into eternity by a 12-gauge shotgun shell. There once was a man, a fellow human being by the name of Fred Nauyoks who lived in Cedar Grove, and he had the misfortune of going to the Lafayette Grill on June 16–17, 1966, and this is how his life ended when he was murdered in cold blood with a .32-caliber bullet through his brain. And there once was a human being, a woman by the name of Hazel Tanis, and she wore these clothes, these bullet-riddled clothes, when she was shot, not once, not twice, not three times—four times; two of the bullets passed through her and two remained in her body, and she clung on to life for nearly a month, and on July 14 of 1966 she passed away, and this is what became of this fellow human being.

"Ladies and gentlemen, on the question of punishment, the facts of this case clearly indicate that on the morning of June the seventeenth of 1966, the defendants, Rubin Carter and John Artis, forfeited their rights to live, and the State asks that you extend to them the same measure of mercy that they extended to James Oliver, Fred Nauyoks, and Hazel Tanis, and that you return verdicts of murder in the first degree on all the charges without a recommendation. Thank you."

The following day, May 26, 1967, Judge Larner gave the jurors lengthy instructions, advising them that they had to return with a unanimous verdict. He also pointed out that "the race of the defendants is of no significance in this case except as it may be pertinent to the problem of identification." Finally, he turned to a woman who had been seated at a desk beside him throughout the trial. "All right. You may proceed, Miss Clerk." The woman got up and started to spin the wooden lottery box that held the names of the fourteen jurors. Carter frantically tugged Ray Brown's coat sleeve.

"What the hell is she doing?" Carter hissed into his ear. "Get her away from that damn box."

"Shh, Rubin," Brown whispered back. "She's only picking the twelve jurors who will decide the verdict. Two of the fourteen will have to go."

With a sweep of her hand, the clerk pulled the West Indian's name out of the box, leaving an all-white jury to decide the defendants' fate. It did not take long. The jurors deliberated for less than two hours, then returned to the courtroom, which quickly filled with spectators and reporters. Court

officers searched the purses of entering women to guard against smuggled weapons. There were wild rumors that Carter's allies, in the event of a guilty verdict, would try to break him out. City detectives, plainclothes policemen, and uniformed officers from the county Sheriff's Department circled the room and lined the building's corridors. Outside, patrolmen were on alert that a guilty verdict could trigger riots in the street.

In the courtroom, the four women jurors had tears in their eyes. The others took their seats with bowed heads. Rubin Carter, John Artis, and their lawyers rose from their seats. A hush fell over the room as the jury foreman, Cornelius Sullivan, announced the verdict: "Guilty on all three counts." After a long pause he continued: "And recommend life imprisonment."

Carter's head dropped, but he showed no emotion. Artis's legs buckled, and he clenched a fist. The stunned silence of the courtroom was suddenly pierced by a scream from Carter's wife, her prolonged wails sending a dagger into Rubin's heart and alarming seasoned court observers. "She let out a scream the likes of which I've never heard before or since," said Paul Alberta, a local reporter, many years later. "It was the kind of scream of someone being physically tortured."

Tee thought the trial would have a Perry Mason ending: a defense attorney would spin around, point to a member of the gallery, and identify the true killer. Now she collapsed to the floor, unconscious; a friend and three attendees carried her limp body out of the room. Judge Larner asked that the jurors be polled to be sure that they agreed with the verdict. Each one announced: "I agree." One juror, a short, elderly woman with gray hair and glasses, looked at Carter on her way out. "I feel nothing for him," she said, then pointed to Artis, "but I feel so sorry for him."

The summer of 1967 was the worst of the decade's "red hot summers." From April through August, violence raged in 128 cities from Jersey City to Omaha, from Nashville to Phoenix. The most destructive conflagrations erupted in Newark, where 26 people were killed, and Detroit, where 43 perished. In all, 164 disorders resulted in 83 deaths, 1,900 injuries, and property damage totaling hundreds of millions of dollars.

But Paterson remained calm. The convictions of Rubin Carter and John Artis brought to a close the worst crime in the city's history. Judge Larner, noting Carter's "antisocial behavior in past years," sentenced him to three life sentences, two consecutive and one concurrent. Artis, as a first-time offender, received three concurrent life sentences. The only thing that surprised Carter was that the jury did not recommend the electric chair. Why would a white jury spare the life of two black men found guilty of such a barbaric act? *Mercy? Shit! They've fried niggers for less*. Maybe the jury felt pity for Artis and thus spared them both from the chair. Maybe the jury had doubts about their guilt. It didn't matter—not now, not ever. *One lie covers the world*, Carter thought, *before truth can get its boots on*.

[*] Even with Carter in jail, Wegner lost to the reform candidate, Lawrence Kramer.

[*] In a letter to Governor Richard Hughes in 1968, F. Lee Bailey, who represented Matzner, wrote: "I have never, in any state or federal court, seen abuses of justice, legal ethics, and constitutional rights such as this case has involved."

5
FORCE OF NATURE

TRENTON STATE PRISON did not tolerate dissidents. The gray maximum-security monolith ran according to an intractable set of rules that completely controlled its captives' lives. Prison guards often said: "The state always wins," meaning, rebellious prisoners ultimately comply. Rubin Carter would test that motto unlike any other inmate in New Jersey's history. But opposition to authority was nothing new for him. It was, in fact, his nature.

Born on May 6, 1937, in the Passaic County town of Delawanna, Carter learned early on that the men in his family are not intimidated by threats. His father was one of thirteen brothers who all grew up on a cotton farm in Georgia. According to family lore, one brother, Marshall, was once seen fraternizing with a white woman. Panic surged through the house as word arrived that the Ku Klux Klan planned to crash the Carter home. The boys' father, Thomas Carter, sent several of his sons to Philadelphia, instructing them to return with fifteen guns—one for each member of the family. The Klan arrived, but the Carters, fortified with weapons, stood their ground, and the hooded riders retreated. Shortly thereafter, the family packed up and moved to New Jersey—although each brother would return to Georgia to select a bride.

The Klan story, no doubt embellished over the years, impressed on Rubin the importance of family pride and unity. His father, Lloyd, also regaled his seven children with stories of tobacco-chewing crackers in the South hunting down black men, then tarring or hanging them. On cold nights at home, Lloyd Carter told these stories around a coal-stoked burner as his children ate roasted peanuts sent by relatives in the South. Rubin, in stocking feet, would stretch his legs toward the crackling stove and let his mind race through the Georgia swamps, chased by whooping rednecks and howling dogs. The specter scared him, but he felt protected by the closeness of his family.

When Rubin was six, the Carters moved to Paterson, to a stable, racially mixed neighborhood known as "up the hill"—a few blocks away from poorer residents, who were literally "down the hill." Lloyd Carter made good money with his various business enterprises. He traded in for a new car every two or three years, and the Carters were the first black family in the neighborhood to own a television. But working two jobs six days a week—Sundays were for praying—wore him down, and his wife, Bertha, worried about his health. A lean, strong, bespectacled man just under six feet tall, Lloyd defended himself by quoting the Holy Scriptures. "Bert," he said, "'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'"

Lloyd Carter also disciplined his children with a religious zeal. A deacon in his Baptist church, he forbade the children from playing records or cards at home. Listening to the radio or dancing in the house was also prohibited. While he spoke softly, he carried a hard switch, and Rubin gave his father ample reason to use it.

The boy's penchant for fighting often earned him swift punishment, but Rubin felt he had good reason to fight. He stuttered severely, stomping his foot on the ground to push the words out, and bitterly fought any kid who teased him for this impediment. His father had stammered as a youth, and *his* father had struck him with a calf's kidney to try to cure him. Somehow Lloyd did overcome his speech problem, but he didn't give his son much help. On the contrary, Rubin's parents believed an old wives' tale that severe stuttering indicated that the speaker was lying, which meant Rubin seemed unable to tell the truth. His response was to avoid talking, but that fueled the perception that he was stupid. To compensate for his stumbling tongue, the boy excelled in physical activities. He was muscular, fast, and fearless, and he saw himself as a protector of other people, particularly his siblings.

His brother Jimmy, for example, was two years older than Rubin, but he was studious, quiet, and prone to illness. When the Carters lived in Delawanna, Jimmy was sent to the basement to fetch coal from the family bin, but a neighborhood bully who was stealing the coal beat him up in the process. With his parents off at work, Rubin went to the basement himself to avenge the Carter name. It was his first fight. As he later wrote:

A shiver of fierce pleasure ran through me. It was not spiritual, this thing that I felt, but a physical sensation in the pit of my stomach that kept shooting upward through every nerve until I could clamp my teeth on it. Every time Bully made a wrong turn, I was right there to plant my fist in his mouth. After a few minutes of this treatment, the cellar became too hot for Bully to handle, and he made it out the door, smoking.

Bullies were not the only victims of Rubin's wrath. In a Paterson grammar school, he once looked out his classroom door and saw a male teacher chasing his younger sister Rosalie down the hall. He raced out the door, tackled the teacher, and began swinging. The school expelled Rubin, prompting his father to beat him with a belt. But the beatings at home did not deter the boy, who continued to lash out at most anyone, even a black preacher who lived in the neighborhood. He owned a two-family home, and when he saw Rubin, at the age of ten, flirting with a girl who also lived in the house, he shooed him off the porch. But Rubin punched back with all his strength. The dazed preacher reported the incident to Rubin's father, who stripped his son, tied him up, and whipped him.

Lloyd Carter feared that his son's pugnacity would cost him his life one day, specifically at the hands of whites, and that fear led to a searing childhood incident. Each summer, Lloyd and his brothers drove their families in a caravan from New Jersey to Georgia, where they stayed with relatives, worked on farms, told stories, and sang and prayed together. On one occasion after church, some cotton farmers gathered in a grove to sing and picnic. A white man selling ice cream bars stopped nearby, and children carrying dimes raced to get a treat. Rubin had barely torn his wrapper when his father landed a heavy blow on his face, sending Rubin and the ice cream in opposite directions. Lloyd Carter never said why he struck his son; years later Rubin realized that his father feared white men, and he wanted his son to feel that same fright as well. Instead, the nine-year-old, his face puffed and bruised, came away with a very different lesson. He had taken his father's best shot, and now he no longer feared the man. Moreover, Rubin determined that he was never going to let another person hurt him again. Not his father, not a police officer, not a prison guard, not a mayor, not a bum. Nobody.

Young Rubin welcomed any physical challenge—the more dangerous, the better. He swam in the swift waters of the Passaic River, jumped off half-built structures at construction sites, ran down mountains, and rode surly mules on his grandfather's farm. On a swing set in the Newman playground, he swung so high that he flipped completely around in full circles. On one occasion, he and a friend, Ernest Hutchinson, were cutting through a backyard when a big bulldog ran at them. "I was going nuts, but Rubin told me to stand behind him," Hutchinson recalled. "All of the sudden, the dog leaps and—*bam!*—Rubin hits him right in the chest. The dog rolled over and couldn't catch his breath. I'll never forget that. We were ten years old."

Rubin continued to rebel against his father's rules. Even on a simple walk to P.S. 6 on Carroll and Hamilton Streets in Paterson, he had to make his own way. Lloyd Carter stood on the porch of their Twelfth Avenue home and made sure all his children took the safest, most direct route. When the brood was out of his sight, Rubin ducked into an alley, hopped a fence, and took a different, longer way. He was literally incapable of following the crowd.

But misdeeds landed him in more serious trouble—with both his father and ultimately the police. Rubin stole vegetables from a garden owned by one of his father's co-workers, ransacked parking meters, and led a neighborhood gang called the Apaches. When he was nine, the Apaches crashed a downtown marketplace, stealing shirts and sweaters from open racks, then fleeing to the hills. Rubin gave his stolen goods to his siblings. When his father saw the new clothes, price tags still attached, and was told that Rubin was responsible, he beat his son with a leather strap, then called

the police. The boy was taken to headquarters—his first encounter with the police. He would always resent that his father had initiated what would become a lifelong battle with law enforcement officials. The following day, the Child Guidance Bureau placed him on two years' probation for petty larceny.

For all the confrontations between father and son, Rubin noticed that he liked to do many of the same things as his father. While his two brothers and four sisters often begged off, Rubin hunted with his father and accompanied him on trips to the family farm in Monroeville, New Jersey. His mother told him that his father was hard on him because Lloyd himself had also been a rebel in his younger days. Now, the father saw himself in his youngest son.

That did not become clear to Rubin until he was in his twenties, when he and his father went to a bar in Paterson where the city's best pool shooters played. As they walked in, the elder Carter quipped, "You can't shoot pool."

A challenge had been issued. Rubin considered himself an expert player, and he had never seen his father with a cue stick. Indeed, Lloyd hadn't been on a table in twenty years. They played, betting a dollar a game, and Lloyd cleaned out his son's wallet.

Rubin, shocked, simply watched. "Where did you learn to play?" he asked.

"How do you think I supported our family during the Depression?" his father replied. "I had to hustle."

Unknown to his children, Lloyd Carter had been a pool shark, and his disclosure seemed to clear the air between him and Rubin. "Why do you think I always beat on you?" Lloyd said later that night. "You wouldn't believe how many times your mother said, 'Stop beating that boy, stop beating that boy.' But I saw me in you." Lloyd Carter had also rebelled against authority, and he knew that was a dangerous trait for a black man in America. "I was trying to get that out of you," he told his son, "before it got hardened inside."

It was too late, however. Rubin's defiant core had already stiffened and solidified.

For all the turmoil in his youth, Carter actually fulfilled one of his boyhood dreams: he wanted to join the Army and become a paratrooper. In World War II the Airborne had pioneered the use of paratroopers in battle. It was not, however, the division's legendary assaults behind enemy lines that captivated Carter. Nor was it the Airborne's famed esprit de corps or its reputation for having the most daring men in the armed forces. Carter liked the uniforms. Even as a boy he had a keen eye for sharp clothing, and he admired the young men from Paterson who returned home wearing their snappy Airborne outfits: the regimental ropes, the jauntily creased cap, the sterling silver parachutist wings on the chest, the pant legs buoyantly fluffed out over spit-shined boots.

By the time Carter enlisted, however, the uniform was not his incentive. At seventeen, Carter escaped from Jamesburg State Home for Boys, where he had been serving a sentence for cutting a man with a bottle and stealing his watch. On the night of July 1, 1954, Carter and two confederates fled by breaking a window. They ran through dense woods, along dusty roads, and on hard pavement, evading farm dogs, briar patches, and highway patrol cars. Carter's destination was Paterson, more than forty miles away. When he reached home, the soles on his shoes had worn off. His father retrofitted a fruit truck he owned with blankets, and Rubin hunkered down in the pulpy hideaway while detectives vainly searched the house for him. Soon Carter was shipped off to relatives in Philadelphia. He decided, ironically, that the best way for him to hide from the New Jersey law enforcement authorities was by joining the federal government—the armed forces. With his birth certificate in hand, he told a recruiting officer that he was born in New Jersey but had lived his whole life in Philly. No one ever checked, and Rubin Carter, teenage fugitive, was sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to learn to fight for his country.

Carter was no patriot, but soldiering allowed him to do what he did best: wield raw physical power. The Army, in some ways, was similar to Jamesburg, the youth reformatory. Carter lived in close quarters with a group of young men, and he was told what to do and when to do it. Individual opinions were forbidden; and just as a reformatory was supposed to correct a wayward youth, the

Army was supposed to turn a civilian into a soldier. Carter spent eight grinding weeks in basic training, followed by eight more weeks to join the Airborne. He was then sent to Jump School in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Recruits were known as "legs," because graduates received their paratrooper boots. Each class began with about 500 would-be troopers; as few as 150 would graduate. The school's relentless physical demands thinned the ranks, as recruits were eliminated by the early morning five-mile runs, the pushups on demand, the pullups, the situps, the expectation to run everywhere while on the base, even to the latrine.

Most difficult of all, however, trainees had to learn to leap twelve hundred feet from a C-119 Flying Boxcar. To prepare, they hung from the "nutcracker," a leather harness suspended ten or fifteen feet aboveground. They lay on their backs strapped to an open parachute while huge fans blew them through piles of sharp gravel until they were able to deflate the chute and gain their footing. There was also the "rock pit." Soldiers stood on an eight-foot platform, jumped into the air, and did a parachute-landing fall onto the jagged bed of rocks. They then got up and did it over and over again until ordered to stop. To quit was tempting, but the Army sergeants and corporals who ran the Jump School gave those who faltered a final dose of humiliation. They were forced to walk around the base with a sign on their shirt that read: "I am a quitter."

To Carter, Jump School was "three torturous weeks of twenty-four-hour days of corrosive annoyance." But when he executed his first jump, he excitedly wrote home about it, flush with pride, and later described the sensation.

There was no time for thought or hesitation. I could only hear the dragging gait of many feet as man after man shuffled up to the door and jumped, was pushed, or just plain fell out of the airplane. The icy winds ripped at my clothing, spinning me as I hit the cold back-blast from the engines, and then I was falling through a soft silky void of emptiness, counting as I fell: "Hup thousand—two thousand—three thousand—four thousand!" A sharp tug between my legs jerked me to a halt, stopping the count, and I found myself soaring upwards—caught in an air pocket, instead of falling. I looked up above me and saw that big, beautiful silk canopy in full blossom and I knew that everything was all right. The sensation that flooded my body was out of sight! I didn't feel like I was falling at all; rather, the ground seemed to be rushing up to meet me.

The ground, however, gave Carter a jolt of reality. Even though the armed forces had officially been desegregated under President Truman, racial segregation and inequality still prevailed. Riding a train from Philadelphia to Columbia, South Carolina, black soldiers were shoehorned into the last two cars while whites rode in relative comfort in the first twenty-odd vehicles. When paratrooper trainees were bused from South Carolina to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, passing through Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee, blacks sat in the back of the bus. At dinnertime, whites ate at steakhouses while blacks had to stay outside and eat cold baloney sandwiches and lukewarm coffee.

This experience pricked Carter's racial consciousness for the first time. Whites and blacks had mixed easily in his old neighborhood in Paterson, and while Jamesburg State Home segregated the inmates, Carter assumed that whites slept in their own quarters because they were weaker than blacks and therefore vulnerable in fights. But as his bus rolled through mountainsides of quaking aspens, he saw white farmers guzzling beer at resting stops, their drunken rebel shrieks grating his nerves. Their pickup trucks carried mounted gun racks, and they eyed the black soldiers suspiciously. Carter suddenly realized why his father and uncles drove their families through the Deep South in caravan style. He had thought it reflected the family's solidarity, but he now understood that it was to provide safety in numbers. He felt angry that his parents had not told him about the true dangers that lay across the land—in the South and throughout the country. This discovery came at the very moment Carter was training to fight for America. He decided from here on he would defend himself in the same fashion that he was defending his country—with guns. If his adversaries, be they communists or crackers, had weapons, so too would he. Carter kept these thoughts to himself, however. Speaking out was not his style. But his silence, about race and all other matters, would soon end.

By the time the winter winds blew through Fort Campbell in 1954, the 11th Airborne was preparing to transfer to Europe. Carter was one of three hundred paratroopers recruited from the States to be part of the advance party. Their destination: Augsburg, Germany. Founded almost two thousand years ago, Augsburg is one of those languorous Bavarian towns that lolls in the shadows of its history. Grand fountains and tree-shaded mansions with mosaic floors evoke a golden age of Renaissance splendor. In the Lower Town, among a network of canals and dim courtyards, small medieval buildings once housed weavers, gold-smiths, and other artisans. Nearby is Augsburg's picturesque Fuggerei, the world's oldest social housing project that still serves the needy. Built in 1519, it consists of gabled cottages along straight roads and preaches the maxim of self-help, human dignity, and thrift.

But Augsburg's patrician munificence and cobblestone alleys were far removed from the fervid world of Private Rubin Carter. He spent most of his time on the Army base, a member of Dog Company in the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. Each day began at 6 A.M. with an hour's run on the cement roads surrounding the compound. Even on the coldest winter mornings, Dog Company ran in short-sleeve shirts, their frozen breath from shouted cadences hanging in the Augsburg air.

"Hup-Ho-o-Ladeeoooo!" the sergeant yelled.

"Hup-Ho-o-Ladeeoooo!" the Dog Company echoed.

"Some people say that a preacher don't steal!"

"Hon-eee! Hon-eee!"

"Some people say that a preacher don't steal—but I caught three in my cornfield!"

"Hon-eee-o Ba-aa-by Mine!"

Military maneuvers on the steep hills around Augsburg were a weekly exercise. The soldiers clambered up and down the slopes in leg-burning labors, firing blank bullets to secure a hill or to push back an imaginary enemy. But Carter learned what the real nemesis was on his first maneuver.

"Oh shit!" someone yelled. "It's comrades' 'honey wagons.'"

A fetid smell swept across the hills. On nearby cropland, farmers took human excrement from outhouses, slopped it in honey wagons, and spread it across their potato and cabbage fields. There was no defense against this invasion, but Carter never complained. *Shit, the stench inside prison is worse.*

Carter attended daily military classes in the "war room," where maps of the European terrain hung on the wall and the platoon's weapons were stored. He studied heavy weapons, rifles, and mortars, memorizing their firepower. Carter trained as a machine gunner; his job would be to back up the front line.

He liked the rigors and responsibilities of Army life, but his early days in Augsburg were marked by isolation and loneliness. His stutter, as always, deterred him from reaching out to others. He was also afraid that the Army would discover the deceptive circumstances of his enlistment and that he was a wanted man in New Jersey. Best to keep a low profile, he figured. So he never spoke up in class, he ate alone in the mess hall, and he rarely socialized at the service club, where friendships were forged over watered-down beer and folds of cigarette smoke. On weekends, he took the military bus to Augsburg. The town had an aromatic blend of fresh bread, spicy bratwurst, and heavy beer, a piquant scent that would hang on the soldiers' leather jackets long after they returned to the States. Augsburg's horse-drawn wagons and pockmarked buildings from a 1944 air raid added to the town's quaint and battered charm; but for most soldiers, its attractions were the liquor and the women. At one restaurant, each table was equipped with a telephone so that male patrons could ring nearby ladies of the evening and request a date.

Carter, however, rarely socialized and did not stray far from Augsburg's Rathausplatz, the town square. He had no special interest in its statue of Caesar on an elaborate sixteenth-century fountain. He simply was afraid he would be stranded if he missed the bus home.

The Airborne troops conducted weekly practice jumps in a nearby drop zone. One morning, after falling from the sky, Carter was folding his parachute when he heard a strange voice from over his shoulder.

"How you doin', little brother?"

Carter looked up but said nothing. A man he had never seen before had landed within twenty yards of him, but the close touchdown did not appear to be accidental.

"I've been watching you," the strange man said, "and I think you've got a problem."

"W-w-what's that?" Carter demanded, stunned by the stranger's effrontery.

"We'll talk about that later," the stranger said. "Let's go back to the base."

Ali Hasson Muhammad was unlike anyone Carter had ever met. A Sudanese Muslim, Hasson had immigrated to America and was now trying to earn early citizenship by serving in the Army. He wanted to give Carter guidance as much as friendship. With braided hair that wrapped around his head and a shaggy beard, he was like a sepia oracle. While other authority figures in Carter's life—his father, reformatory wardens, Army sergeants—had lectured him, Hasson spoke in parables designed to redefine Carter as a black man.

Walking back to their barracks one night, Hasson told Carter how a fat countryman from Sudan fell asleep while shelling peas in the attic of his cramped hovel. "The hut mysteriously caught on fire, and the village people rushed in to save the farmer," he said. "But they couldn't do it, because the man was too fat and the attic too small to maneuver him over to the stairs. The townsmen worked desperately, but without success, to save the man before it was too late. Then the village wise man came upon the scene and said, 'Wake him up! Wake him up and he'll save himself!' "

Black Americans were also asleep, Hasson told Carter, and they would have to wake up to save themselves. Hasson was a slender man who spoke softly and worked as a clerk because he refused to carry a weapon. But his dark, glaring eyes conveyed the passion of his beliefs. "Nobody can beat the black man in fighting, or dancing, or singing," he told Carter. "Nobody can outrun him or outwork him—as long as the black man puts his mind and soul to it." Tears of frustration welled in Hasson's eyes. "What on God's earth ever gave the black man in America the stupid, insidious idea that white men could out-think him?"

Carter heard Hasson's ardent pleas but never really absorbed them. *What does this have to do with me?* He didn't understand some of Hasson's more opaque sermons and euphemisms, and he had trouble believing Hasson's thesis of black superiority. What evidence was there in his own life to prove such a claim?

The evidence soon surfaced a half mile from Carter's barracks. The Army's Augsburg fieldhouse, with a sloped quarter-mile track, a basketball court, and weight machines, was the social and athletic epicenter of the base. Even on nights when frost covered the ground, the creaking gym retained a muggy, pungent atmosphere from the men's concentrated exertions.

Carter rarely entered the fieldhouse. But after pouring down a few too many beers at the service club one night, he and Hasson took a shortcut through the gym. There, they were stopped cold by what they saw—prizefighting. The 502nd regimental boxing team was in training, and the drills seemed to produce their own wonderful soundtrack: the staccato beat of speed bags, the plangent thuds of fists against heavy bags, the testosterone snorts of determined fighters. Carter and Hasson watched for a good while.

"Shit!" Carter said suddenly. "I-I-I can beat all these niggers." Hasson looked at him in disdain. "I can see why you don't open your mouth too much," he said. "Every time you open it, you stick your foot right in it. So why don't you just finish the job and tell that gentleman over there what you've just told me. Maybe he can straighten you out."

Hasson motioned to a young, ruddy-faced coach named Robert Mullick, whose blond hair was sheared so short you could see the pink of his skull. His blue eyes sparkled as he reviewed the boxers working out. The boxing ring was the Army's surrogate battlefield, where champions were wreathed

in glory, and the boxing coach trained his men to show no mercy. “Lieutenant?” Hasson said, grinning. “My little buddy thinks he can fight. In fact, he honestly feels that he can take most of your boys right now. So he’s asked me to ask you if you could somehow give him a chance to try out for the team.”

Mullick looked over Hasson’s shoulder at Carter, who suddenly felt his silver parachutist wings hanging heavily on his shirt. Paratroopers were known as a cocky crew, often boasting that one of them could do the work of ten regular soldiers. They were also disliked for another reason: they received higher pay than the GIs, driving up the price of prostitutes.

Now Carter thought his parachutist wings were like a bull’s-eye, signaling to the grim lieutenant that this was his chance to teach at least one saucy trooper a lesson. “So, you really think you can fight, huh?” Mullick asked. “Or are you just drunk and you want to get your stupid brains knocked out? Is that what you want to have happen, soldier?”

Carter’s first reaction was to do what he always did when someone challenged him: knock him down, teach him some respect, show him he wasn’t to be meddled with. But he held back his fists if not his lip.

“I-I-I can fight—I can fight,” Carter stammered. “I’ll betcha on that.”

“You will?” Mullick said, a grin creasing his face. “Well, I’m going to give you a chance to do just that, but not tonight. You’ve been drinking, and I don’t want any of my boys to hurt you unnecessarily. Just leave your name and I’ll call you down tomorrow. Maybe by then you won’t think you’re so goddamn tough.” He turned his back to Carter; the conversation was over.

The next day Carter lay in bed, petrified. He had always been a streetfighter, and a good one at that. His gladiator skills had earned him the position of “war counselor,” or chief, of his childhood gang. War counselors negotiated the time and place of rumbles between gangs, but sometimes they agreed to fight it out between themselves. Carter always relied on “cocking a Sunday,” or slipping in a wrecking ball of a punch when his opponent wasn’t expecting it. He didn’t know how to move around a boxing ring, to counterpunch or to tie up, and his chances of cocking a Sunday on a skilled fighter seemed impossible.

But Mullick was not about to let Carter off the hook. His drunken challenge was a slur against Army boxers, and now he would pay for it. Through a company clerk, Mullick ordered Carter to report to the fieldhouse. When he arrived, the arena was abuzz. Prizefighting was a big sport in Germany, and the impending fight had attracted droves of Army personnel, including sportswriters from *Stars and Stripes*, the Army newspaper. It seemed that the dismantling of a brassy parachute jumper would liven up an otherwise slow day in the Cold War.

Carter stood unnoticed in the doorway, watching two fighters in the ring hammer each other. The short dark fighter was bleeding from a gash over his eye. The other fighter seemed to be suffocating from his smashed nose, spitting out gobs of blood from his mutilated mouth. The crowd stood, cheered, roared for more mayhem, indifferent to who was winning or losing as long as someone toppled over. Carter knew he was out of his class.

When the bout was over, Mullick jumped down from the apron—he had officiated the fight—pushed through the crowd, and found Carter. “Are you ready for that workout now, mister?” Mullick asked. “Or do you have a hangover from boozing it up too much last night and want to call it off?” Carter shook his head.

The lieutenant nodded, wheeled around, and strode back toward the ring, where his fighters were clustered. Carter admired the sweaty black faces. They were scarred and ring battered, but they seemed to have a closeness about them that transcended their ebony surface. *They were men of great courage*, Carter thought. *You’d have to shoot them to stop them, for their pride and integrity couldn’t be broken*.

Finally, breaking away from the squad and climbing into the ring was a large boxer with a sculpted chest and stanchions for legs. He shook out his arms, flexed his ropy muscles, and shadowboxed in a glistening ritual. *I have to admit, the nigger looks good*, Carter thought.

The mob of spectators jumped to their feet and shouted their conqueror's name. He was Nelson Glenn, six feet one inch of animal power, the All-Army heavyweight champ for the previous two years. Mullick climbed through the ropes and began lacing on his fighter's gloves. At the same time, he motioned Carter to enter the ring. It was too late to back out, so he climbed in, Hasson on his heels.

Carter felt the adrenaline pump through his stout body and he showed no fear. He felt light on his feet but also strong, resolute. He was not going to flinch, to back down, to quit. He felt a sharp, electrifying twinge of self-respect. *Nelson Glenn will have to bring ass to get ass*. But he also felt the loneliness, the vulnerability, of the boxing ring. There was no escape.

Hasson tied on Carter's liver-colored gloves and offered some counsel. "Stay down low, and watch out for his right hand," he whispered softly. "And try to protect yourself at all times." Carter nodded.

Mullick called both fighters to the center of the ring to explain the ground rules, but he spotted a problem with Carter. Like Glenn, Carter wore his standard green Army fatigues (long pants, shortsleeve shirt) and tight Army cap, but Mullick pointed to Carter's shoes. "What are those?" he asked.

"My boots," Carter said.

Mullick rolled his eyes. "What size shoe do you wear?" he asked.

"Eight and a half," Carter responded.

"You need boxing shoes," Mullick said, more in pity than disgust. He fetched a pair from one of his own boxers and Carter sheepishly made the switch. Now he was ready.

The bell rang.

Glenn came out dancing, jabbing, grunting, contemptuous of this no-brain, no-brand opponent who presumed to step into the ring with the champion. Carter tried to stay beneath his crisp left hand, pursuing his adversary like a cat in an alley fight. Carter bobbed, feinted, ducked, then lashed out with his first punch of the fight—a whizzing left hook that caught Glenn flush on his chin, spilling him to the canvas. The blow may have startled Carter as much as Glenn.

Glenn bounced up quickly but was now groggy. He was surprised by the power of a mere welterweight. Carter returned to the attack and bored in with a quick, crunching left hook, then another, then a third, the last shot sending Glenn's mouthpiece flying out of the ring. Nelson's eyes turned glassy, his arms fell limp, and he started sinking softly to the canvas. Carter realized he could hear himself panting; the crowd was stunned into silence. Then pandemonium erupted. Spectators stood on their seats, whooping, gaping in disbelief at the knocked-out champion, cheering long and hard for Carter. The former hoodlum was now a hero. He had cocked a Sunday.

The triumph did more for Carter than prove he could slay a Goliath. It gave his life purpose and legitimacy. The boxing ring became his new universe, a place where his splenetic spirit and brawling soul were not only accepted but celebrated. His enemy couldn't hide behind a warden's desk or a police badge. He now stood face-to-face with his rival, and each bout had a moral clarity: the best man won, and if you fight Rubin Carter, *you better bring ass to get ass*.

After the Nelson Glenn fight, Carter never held an Army weapon again. Mullick cut through the Army's red tape and transferred Carter to a Special Service detachment for boxers for the 502nd. They lived in their own building, three glorious floors for twenty-five men. The first floor held a vast recreational area, with ping-pong tables and pool tables, as well as a kitchen. The second floor was sectioned off with bathtubs and shower stalls, whirlpools and rubbing tables, while the top floor had secluded sleeping quarters. This was nirvana in the Army.

Carter was accepted immediately by the other boxers, including Glenn. For one who always preferred isolation, he felt strangely comfortable with these men. Some were black, some were Hispanic, some were white, but they were all fellow warriors. They felt no need to engage in the braggadocio common among the other soldiers. The only vocabulary that mattered was boxing. Past

fights, future fights, championship fights. Carter spoke the same language as everyone else, and winners had the final say.

Soldiers who saw Carter's matches have vivid memories of them more than forty years later. William Mielko, an Army sergeant, remembered Carter's entering the ring in Munich to fight a member of the 503rd regiment. When the announcer declared the names of the boxers, two bugles blared, and a six-foot six-inch, 250-pound heavyweight entered the ring wearing a black hood over his head with two slits for his eyes. His body was wrapped in shackles. It was a frightening spectacle, but when the heavyweight rid himself of the hood and chains, he faced Carter. "Carter looked over at his trainer," Mielko recalled, "and the trainer said, 'First round.' " And that was the round in which Carter knocked him out with a furious combination of punches.

In one year Carter won fifty-one bouts—thirty-five by knockouts—and lost only five, and he won the European Light Welterweight Championship. But he was even more proud of a very different accomplishment.

Again, it was Hasson who tackled the matter of Carter's speech impediment. No one had ever spoken to Carter about his stuttering except his parents, who said that the problem would disappear if he stopped lying. Rubin was at a loss. All he knew was that if anyone laughed at his clumsy tongue, he would flatten him. Hasson, however, saw Carter's speech problem as a barrier not only to communication but to knowledge. Wrapped in a coat of silence, Carter came to believe what others said about him: he didn't talk because he was dumb, and education was useless for someone with such low intelligence.

When they first met in the drop zone, Hasson's comment—"I think you've got a problem"—was an oblique reference to Carter's stammer. Later, on one of their walks across the base, Hasson spoke bluntly: "Your stuttering is a permanent troublemaker, and if you're too embarrassed to go back to school, then I'll go with you."

The two men enrolled in a Dale Carnegie speech course at the Institute of Mannheim, where they were briefly stationed. The institute breathed prestige, with tall white marble columns and long, winding staircases. Carter thought it looked like something the Third Reich would have built. Many of the German students spoke more English than Carter did. The classes themselves were taught by kind, middle-age German men who imparted sage advice.

"Just think about what you're going to say first, then say it," one teacher said. Carter learned that he could sing songs without stammering, and he was able to replicate the relaxed fluidity of music in his own speech. He practiced by chanting Army cadences *("Hup-Ho-o-Ladeeoooo!")* as well as gospels from his church in Paterson. Words soon flew out of his mouth like doves released from a cage. *Freedom!* Powerful oratory was no stranger to Carter. He had five uncles and a grandfather who were all Baptist preachers, and his father's voice was so resonant that churchgoers sat near him just to hear him pray. Rubin too proved to be a persuasive, even gifted, speaker who used ministerial cadences in stem-winding speeches. He also felt free to expand his own mind. His formal education had ended in eighth grade, and the only books he ever read were cowboy novels. Now he attended classes on Islam four nights a week and embraced Allah, renaming himself Saladin Abdullah Muhammad. "Allah is in us all, and man himself is God," Hasson told Carter.

While Carter's new religious faith would wane over the years, his discovery of books and passion for knowledge sustained him through his darkest hours. He never forgot what Hasson once told him: "Knowledge, especially knowledge of oneself, has in it the potential power to overcome all barriers. Wisdom is the godfather of it all."

Discharged from the Army on May 29, 1956, Carter returned to Paterson with the intention of becoming a professional prizefighter. But he quickly discovered that he could not elude his past. He was arrested on July 23 for escaping from Jamesburg and sent to Annandale Reformatory, where inmates' short-short pants evoked the image of incarcerated Little Bo Peeps. Carter was released from Annandale on May 29, 1957, but embittered about his reincarceration, he shelved his boxing

ambitions, got a job at a plastics factory, and began drinking heavily. He liked to spend time at Hogan's, a club that attracted pimps and hustlers, pool sharks, and virtually every would-be gangster in the black community. Carter was enthralled by the diamonds they wore, the bills they flashed, and the luster of their shoes.

Less than five weeks after he was released from Annandale, Carter left Hogan's one day after a good deal of drinking. Walking through Paterson, he went on a brief, reckless crime spree. He ripped a purse from a woman, a block later struck a man with his fist, then robbed another man of his wallet. All the victims were black. When Carter reported to work the next day, the police arrested him. He pled guilty to the charges of robbery and assault but could never explain or excuse why he committed the crimes. He served time in both Rahway and Trenton state prisons, where he received various disciplinary citations for refusing to obey orders and fighting with other inmates. He did not make a particularly good impression on prison psychologists. In a report dated August 30, 1960, one psychologist, Henri Yaker, commented on Carter:

He continues to be an assaultive, aggressive, hostile, negativistic, hedonistic, sadistic, unproductive and useless member of society who will live from society by mugging and who thinks he is superior. He has grandiose paranoid delusions about himself. This individual is as dangerous to society now as the day he was incarcerated and he will not be in the streets long before he will be back in this or some other institution.

Carter was released from prison in September 1961, but that description—assaultive, sadistic, useless—would be used against him long into the future.

In the sixties, the center of the boxing universe was the old Madison Square Garden, with dingy, gray locker rooms and a balcony where rowdy fans threw whiskey bottles at the well – dressed patrons below. During bouts, a haze of smoke from unfiltered cigarettes hovered in the air. Men in sport shirts sipped from tin flasks in between rounds, while other fans sat with cigars, lit or unlit, that never left their lips. The Friday-night fights, televised across the country and sponsored by the Gillette Company, were an institution, and a marquee boxer could earn tens of thousands of dollars. But before reaching the big time, the pugs had to fight in satellite arenas in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Akron, and elsewhere. In later years, cable television would put any hot boxing prospect on the air after only a few fights. But at this time fighters typically had to learn their craft and pay their dues over several years before receiving that sort of publicity.

Rubin Carter felt he had paid his dues—in prison. While incarcerated, he concluded that prizefighting was his best hope of making a living and avoiding trouble. He trained in prison yards for four years, lifting weights, pounding the heavy bag, and accepting bouts with all comers. Once he left prison and entered the ring as a professional, it was soon evident that few could match his blend of intimidation, theatrics, and might. This crowd-pleasing style resulted in his first televised fight only thirteen months after he turned pro, when he knocked out Florentino Fernandez in the first round with a right cross to the chin. A black-and-white photograph of Fernandez falling out of the ring, his body bending like a willow over the middle rope as Carter glared down at him, sent an unmistakable message: the "Hurricane" had arrived.

Carter never really liked his boxing nickname. It was given to him by a New Jersey fight promoter, Jimmy Colotto, who saw the marketing potential of depicting a former con as an unbridled force of nature. Carter's preferred symbol was a panther. In the ring, Carter's trainers wore the image of a panther's black head, its mouth open wide, on the back of their white cotton jackets. The image had nothing to do with race or politics (the Black Panther organization was not formed until 1966). Carter simply admired the panther's speed and stealth, its predatory logic.

But Hurricane stuck, and for good reason. When Carter entered the ring, he *was* a force of nature. His head and face were already glistening from a layer of Vaseline. He wore a long black velvet robe and a black hood knotted with a belt of gold braid. There was something ominous, even alien, about him. When the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission ordered Carter to shave his goatee for

a fight in Philadelphia, some sportswriters opined that the goatee was the seat of Carter's power. The boxer looked foreshortened and brutally compact. The lustrous pate, the piercing eyes, the bristling beard, the sneering lips—and the violent criminal record—sent frissons of fear and delight through the crowd. Before a match, the announcer would introduce other boxing champions, past and present, in the crowd, and the conquerors would hop up in the ring, wave to the fans, and shake hands with the opposing fighters. Carter, however, refused to shake hands or even acknowledge their presence. Prowling around the canvas, he kept his eyes down and, in the words of one opponent, looked like "death walking." When the battle began, he attacked straight on, punches whistling. No dancing, no weaving, no finesse. He rarely jabbed. Just heavy leather. Carter liked the violence.

While Carter often found trouble on the streets, his training camp in Chatham provided sanctuary. He and several sparring partners escaped to camp six weeks before a bout. They awoke at 5 A.M. and ran up to twenty miles through steep, wooded hills. Carter liked the dark frigid mornings best, when icicles formed in his goatee and the only sounds were the pounding of shoes on pavement and the stirrings of a sleepy cow.

After an eggs and bacon breakfast and rest time, Carter resumed his training in the small gym. He jumped rope for forty minutes, pumped out five hundred pushups, lifted neck weights, pounded the heavy bag and speed bag, pushed against a concrete wall to build muscle mass, and did chinups until he dropped.

A sparring session was no different from a televised fight: in each, Carter locked out the rest of the world and tried to destroy his opponent. At the beginning of his career, he lived in Trenton and trained in the same Philadelphia gym as Sonny Liston, the feared heavyweight who reigned as champion from 1962 to 1964. Liston's heavy blows made it difficult for him to find sparring partners. One day Carter volunteered to go a few rounds, despite giving up five inches and fifty pounds. While most boxers spar to improve their footwork, punching combinations, or defensive maneuvers, neither Liston nor Carter had the patience for such artistic subtleties. Both were former convicts—Liston for armed robbery—and they rarely exchanged more than a few words. Theirs was an unspoken code of respect through pugilistic mayhem, and they sparred fiercely and repeatedly. But after one three-round session, Carter removed his battered headgear and found it soaked with blood. He was bleeding from both ears. He fled from Trenton that night and moved to Newark. He knew if he returned to the Philadelphia gym the next day and Liston needed a partner, he would do it again. He could never turn down a challenge, even if it meant risking serious injury.

Like Liston, Carter beat his sparring partners unmercifully. To soften the blows, Carter used oversize gloves and his partners wore a foam rubber protective strap around their ribs. In training camp, he sparred against three or four boxers a day, always punching against a fresh body. These sessions were followed by more calisthenics, then by a few rounds of shadowboxing, then by a shower and a rubdown. After a dinner of steak, fish, or chicken, Carter took a walk in the clean country air and thought about the next day's workout.

Only two years after he became a professional fighter, Carter wanted a shot at the middleweight title. He had won eighteen and lost three, with thirteen knockouts. But in October 1963, he lost a close ten-round decision to Joey Archer, and he needed a victory to put him back on track for a shot at the championship. That put him on a collision course with Emile Griffith.

Griffith was a native of the Virgin Islands who moved to New York when he was nineteen. His boss encouraged him to try his hand at boxing, and he was an instant success, winning the New York Golden Gloves. He turned professional at twenty. Griffith liked to crouch in the ring, stick his head in the other guy's chest, and pound the midsection. He could also dance and jab, backpedal and attack; he never tired. And he was deadly. In a bout at Madison Square Garden on March 24, 1962, Griffith took on Benny "Kid" Paret for the third time in less than twelve months, the decisive match in a bitter war between the two men. Paret provoked Griffith at their weigh-in by calling him *maricon*, "faggot." That night, Griffith was knocked down early, but he pinned Paret in the corner in the twelfth round

and felled him with a torrent of angry punches, prompting Norman Mailer to write later: "He went down more slowly than any fighter had ever gone down, he went down like a large ship which turns on end and slides second by second into its grave. As he went down, the sound of Griffith's punches echoed in the mind like a heavy ax in the distance chopping into a wet log."

Paret was removed from the ring on a stretcher, lapsed into a coma, and died ten days later; he was twenty-five.

At the end of 1963, Griffith was the champion of the welterweight division (for boxers 147 pounds and under) and had been named *Ring* magazine's Fighter of the Year with a record of thirty-eight wins and four losses. Now he wanted a shot at the middleweight crown (for boxers 160 pounds and under), and that led to his match with Carter.

Their bout was to take place in Pittsburgh's Civic Arena on December 20. The two men were sparring partners and friends, but in the days leading up to the match, Carter launched a clever campaign to strike Griffith at his point of vulnerability: his pride. The idea was to provoke him before the fight so that he would abandon his strongest assets—his speed and stamina—and go for a quick knockout. Carter began planting newspaper stories that Griffith was going to run and hide in the ring and hope that Carter tired. In a joint television interview the day before the fight, the host asked Griffith if he dared to stand toe-to-toe with the Hurricane.

"I'm the welterweight champion of the world," Griffith snapped. "I've never run from anyone before, and I'm not about to start with Mr. Hurricane Carter now!"

"Then I'm going to beat your brains in," Carter shot back.

Griffith laughed in the face of Carter's hard glare. "I've never been knocked out either," Griffith said. "But if you don't stop running off at the mouth, Mister Bad Rubin Hurricane Carter, I'm going to turn you into a gentle breeze and then knock you out besides." Griffith was now seething, so Carter raised the temperature a little more.

"Knock me out!" Carter said, turning to the live audience. "If you even show up at the arena tomorrow night, that'll be enough to knock me out! I oughta cloud up and rain all over you right here. You talk like a champ, but you fight like a woman who deep down wants to be raped!"

The audience, knowing what happened to Benny Paret, gasped. Griffith clenched his jaw. Carter had laid his trap.

The following night, the city's steel plants and foundries spewed smoke into the frozen air. Inside the Civic Arena, Griffith's mother was in the crowd, and the champion entered the ring as a confident 11–5 favorite. Griffith started out methodically, firing jabs, standing toe-to-toe, swapping punch for punch. He wanted to prove that he could take Carter's best shots and win a slugfest. This was exactly what Carter had hoped for.

Carter popped him in the mouth with a stiff jab; Griffith responded with an equal jolt to Carter's mouth. Carter pumped a jab to his forehead; Griffith fired one back on him. Carter backed up, looked at him, snorted, then raced in with a jab followed by a powerful left hook to the gut.

The air came out of Griffith, who tried to grab Carter, but Carter slipped away. "Naw-naw, sucker," Carter mumbled through his mouthpiece. He drilled home another salvo of lefts and rights —"You gotta pay the Hurricane!" Carter yelled—then dropped Griffith with a left hook.

"One! … Two! … Three."

The crowd was stunned into silence, then stood and cheered. Griffith staggered to his feet to beat the count, but he was now an easy target. Carter smashed left hooks to the body and devastating rights to the head. Griffith dropped to the canvas, badly hurt. He tried to stand but stumbled instead. The referee, Buck McTiernan, stepped in and stopped the fight. The time was two minutes and thirteen seconds into the first round. "A left hook sent Griffith on his way to dreamland!" the television announcer yelled.

Carter's upset cemented his reputation as one of the most feared men in boxing. It also earned Carter a shot at the title the following year. But the Griffith fight marked the pinnacle of his boxing

career. Carter lost his championship bout on December 16, 1964, to Joey Giardello, a rugged veteran whose first professional fight had been in 1948, in a controversial fifteen-round decision. Giardello's face was puffed into a mask while Carter was unmarked, and a number of sportswriters who saw the fight thought Carter won. But challengers typically have to beat a champ decisively to win a decision, and Carter didn't.

The bout occurred on December 16, 1964. The following year, Carter received another jolt —this time, political. He was invited to fight in Johannesburg, South Africa, a country about which he knew virtually nothing. He had never heard of Nelson Mandela or the African National Congress or even apartheid. But just as the Army exposed him to bigotry in the Deep South, boxing now put him in the midst of a more virulent racism. Arriving in Johannesburg a couple of weeks before his September 18 bout, he was guided around the city by Stephen Biko. In years to come, Biko would become the leader of the Black Consciousness movement, advocating black pride and empowerment, and would found the South African Students Organization. But in 1965, he was an eighteen-year-old student and fledgling political activist, and he gave Carter a quick education in black oppression. Walking through Johannesburg, the American's roving eye glimpsed a tight-skirted white woman. "Whoa, man!" he said. Biko grabbed Carter's arm. "You can't say that. They'll kill us! They'll kill us!"

Racial strife was indeed high. The previous year, Nelson Mandela and other black leaders were handed life sentences for conspiring to overthrow the government. The ANC had been banned in 1961; but clandestine meetings were still being held, and Biko took Carter to some of these nocturnal gatherings. There he learned about black South Africans' bloody struggle, dating almost two hundred years, for political independence. He also had his own encounter with the South African police. He was almost arrested one night for walking outside without a street pass.

The boxing match was against a cocky black fighter named Joe "Ax Killer" Ngidi who had a potent right hand. More than 30,000 fans packed into Wemberley Stadium on a sunny afternoon, and as Ngidi danced about the ring in a pre-bout warm up, Carter noticed that some of the fans were carrying spears.

"I don't know what that means," his advisor Elwood Tuck told him, "but get that sucker out of there quick."

Carter was confident. South African boxers, he believed, viewed the sport as dignified and noble but lacked savagery. That shortcoming could not be applied to Carter, and even though he was a foreigner, his ferocity made him a crowd favorite in South Africa. When he KO'd "Ax Killer" Ngidi in the second round, fans stood on their feet, raised their spears and yelled, "*KAH-ter! KAH-ter!*" But after Carter reached his dressing room, he was pinned in by a mob of supporters, and the scene turned ugly. To leave the stadium, a battalion of gun-carrying Afrikaner cops formed a wedge and told Carter and his entourage to follow its lead. As they pushed through the crowd, a white officer pummeled several black fans. Carter, outraged, moved to strike the cop, but was blocked by one of his handlers and was once again reminded that such a move would ensure his own demise.

In the following days, Carter was named a Zulu chief outside Soweto and given the name "Nigi"—the man with the beautiful beard. He was now an African warrior, and he wanted to apply the same principles in his second homeland that he always applied in the U.S.: blacks must use whatever means necessary, including violence, to defend themselves. From what he could tell, South African blacks were defenseless, armed with rocks and spears against the Afrikaners' guns and rifles. Before Carter left Johannesburg, he pledged to Stephen Biko that he would return.

Carter had committed crimes before, but now he was going to do something far more dangerous. He was going to smuggle guns to the ANC. First, he prowled bars in New Jersey and New York, where hardluck customers traded their guns for drinks and tavern owners ran a second business in arms sales. Carter accumulated four duffel bags for their weapons, then persuaded Johannesburg promoters to set up another fight. This time, his opponent would be an American, Ernie Burford, against whom Carter had split two previous matches. That Carter would travel all the way to South

Africa to fight another American made no sense to outsiders, and he told few people about his true motivation, not even Burford. If the South African authorities caught him running guns to the ANC, he would probably never have left the country alive. But the trip turned out to be a great success. He delivered the guns to a grateful Biko, and he knocked out Burford in the eighth round on February 27, 1966.

Eight months later, Carter was arrested for the Lafayette bar murders, and he never heard from Stephen Biko again.

In a few short years, Biko founded the Black Consciousness movement, advocating black pride and empowerment, and he would become one of the most celebrated leaders of black South Africans' fight against a murderous regime. His activism, however, frequently placed him under police detention, and in 1977 he died from head injuries while under custody, provoking international outrage. He was thirty years old.[*]

After Carter's loss to Giardello, his boxing career lasted for twenty-two more months. During that period he won 7, lost 7, and had 1 draw. (He ended his career with 28 wins, 11 losses, and 1 draw.) He blamed the losses on increased police and FBI harassment, in New Jersey and elsewhere, and there is credibility to that excuse. The *Saturday Evening Post* article, which included Carter's intemperate remarks about the police and his own ruffian past, was published in October 1964. Carter, according to Paterson police records, was arrested twice in the next six months on "disorderly person" charges. (He was found not guilty on one charge and paid a $25 fine on another.) In a sport that requires complete focus, Carter's concentration was no doubt disturbed by these rising tensions with the law.

But Carter's own stubbornness hurt him. He worked out with intensity but resisted his trainers. One, Tommy Parks, devised an ingenious double-cross. He began giving Carter "opposite commands." If he wanted Carter to do roadwork the next morning, he would instruct his fighter to sleep late. Five A.M. would roll around and, sure enough, Carter was ready for roadwork. His footwork needed sharpening? Parks told him to concentrate on his punching. Invariably, Carter followed the "opposite command," thereby doing exactly what Parks desired.

Carter also lacked discipline. During training, he would get bored at night, sneak out of camp, and go to Trenton or another town to meet women and carouse. He never drank in front of his trainers, but Parks thought he knew when Carter had been tipping the bottle. His skin seemed to grow yellow and his eyes were in soft focus. Carter once had a sparring match in Newark with a tough but unaccomplished fighter named Joe Louis Adair. Carter had been drinking the previous night, and he was sluggish in the ring. Adair knocked him down in the first round, and a newspaper published a story about the Hurricane's improbable pummeling. "Rubin was a Mike Tyson with heart," Parks said in an interview years later. "But drinking was the bane of his career." Carter, asked about that assessment, agreed.

Parks specialized in working with troubled kids, but he was removed as Carter's trainer in 1963 because the boxer's manager wanted a white trainer to improve Carter's marketability on television. But the change hurt in the ring. Carter preferred black trainers like Parks and said his subsequent white trainers varied in effectiveness. His own effectiveness may also have been diminished because he stopped scaring opponents. His invincible armor, once cracked, gave his competitors more confidence. Carter's image and tenacity still made him a crowd favorite, though, and at the end of 1965 he was ranked fifth among middleweights by *Ring*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.