

Not Much of a Crime

A Tale of Political Corruption, Intrigue, & Murder
in a small Nevada town

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Paula Dorsey, rejoicing about the call from her doctor, walked from her office to South Coast Plaza for a celebratory lunch with her husband, Cameron. While they could easily afford an occasional meal at any of the five star restaurants in the Plaza, Paula was currently craving the Voo Doo Tuna at Z'Tejas Southwestern Grill located on Level 1 near the Carousel Court. She was a bit early because she wanted to buy something for their twin girls so they could feel a part of the celebration as well.

Always careful, especially now that she was pregnant with the son she and Cameron prayed for, it wasn't unusual for Paula to look both ways twice before stepping off a curb. Yet, her caution did nothing to save her from the car hurtling down on her through the South Coast Plaza parking lot. Paula was thrown 40 feet by the impact of the car into a chain link fence that separated the parking lot from a drainage channel to the south of the Plaza. She died within seconds of impact when her throat was ripped open by the top of the fence.

The car that hit Paula didn't stop. It didn't even slow down. It just tore up the ramp, ignored the yellow light at the top, hung a right turn and disappeared heading south across the Bristol Street overpass to the 405 Freeway.

At first, it didn't really seem to be much of a crime, half a crushed pomegranate laid on the shattered granite kitchen countertop. However, this simple act of vandalism brought about big changes in the small desert town of Charleston, Nevada.

Allison King froze as she entered her house from the attached garage. Not fully aware of what stopped her, she listened. The sound of ripping paper and falling books came from the back of the house. Then someone bumped into some furniture and cursed loudly. It was a voice from her past. One she hoped she'd never hear again as long as she lived. Slowly she placed the groceries at her feet. Reaching into her purse, she pulled out her cell phone and dialed 911. Removing her stun gun, she held it in her right hand as she waited for the police operator.

Charleston, Nevada is located less than 100 miles from Las Vegas and was nothing more than a wide spot in the road until 10,000 acres were subdivided into one, five and ten acre home sites on poorly maintained gravel roads. In less than 15 years, the town grew from 1,700 people to over 40,000. But the problems of such unprecedented urban growth were never addressed. There was no citywide sewage system, no citywide water service, no entertainment venues, no hospital, and no industry of any kind other than real estate, gambling, government, and legal prostitution. And yet, the town continued to grow and so did its problems.

Charleston is the only large town in Nevada with five legal brothels just outside the town limits. However, a very small minority of community activists wanted to see them closed down for the 'health and moral well-being of the children of the town'. This generated three exceptionally well-attended town hall meetings to discuss the pros and cons of the brothels continued operations. And one of the most vocal proponents for the brothels' continued existence was Allison King. She felt strongly that before the town council eliminated a legal business that contributed six and a half million dollars annually to the town revenue.

None of the town council members or audience had any suggestions as to how to replace the brothel revenue. Due to King's strident opposition to closing the brothels with no replacement industry at hand, she began to make enemies and friends almost immediately.

Allison's home was on a one-acre parcel, situated down the middle of the block of a cul-de-sac. It was the only house on either side of that particular street. Two years previous, when she moved to Charleston, she had been promised by the developers that they were just weeks away from starting construction of a golf course these five acre estates were to surround. She was still waiting on the golf course to break ground, the promised paving of the road, and neighbors.

At that moment, Allison stood in the middle of her gravel street. Dressed in a yellow Gucci business jacket, matching skirt and red ruffled silk blouse, she paced apprehensively in the first 100° heat of the season. Even though a gentle breeze lifted a small dust devil from the gravel road in front of her house, it wasn't enough to keep her from sweating through her blouse and coat. By the time the sheriff arrived, forty-five minutes later, King was overheated, thirsty, and angry.

When the sheriff stepped from his tan Ford Crown Victoria, he was wearing a uniform so stiffly starched he had trouble lifting himself out of the car. He saw Allison King, a tall, statuesque woman, just passed her uncelebrated 31st birthday. Her long, flawless oval face was framed in a tapered cascade of shoulder length brunette hair. Her sparkling brown eyes, petite nose, and wide, full-lipped mouth, created a face few people could ignore and many found ravishingly beautiful.

And she had used that beauty to create a video empire in The Industry as Amy Goodlove, the most popular porn star for the last ten years. Early in her career, she had taken control of her own image and her own projects. As a result, Allison King now owned a small studio and production company in southern California.

As her popularity grew, and the success of her videos and DVDs exploded, she found the annual Adult Video News conventions populated with some overly enthusiastic fans. While some were lesbians, most were men fantasizing she was their lover. But only one, Quentin Schaefer, had ever been convicted of stalking her.

“Sorry it took so long. There was an accident on the highway and I had to wait for the NHP to get there,” Dogstar said walking up to King with his hand out. “Nice to finally meet you.”

Ignoring his hand she just looked at the tall, overweight, mid-50’s man in khaki. The only colors on his uniform were his chrome star, the sheriff’s department patch on his left sleeve and the Nevada State flag on his right sleeve. The black leather belt held the ubiquitous gun, nightstick, handcuffs, mace and ammunition clips for his pistol were housed in matching black leather attachments.

His baldness was hidden under the Stetson set squarely on his head. Only the sides of his closely cropped black hair was visible. His dark complexion was stretched tight across his high cheekbones and his dark, almost black, deep-set eyes assessed whether or not Allison would be a potential threat to him. While he wasn’t a Greek god, Allison saw the sheriff had been a good-looking man in his prime.

Still, the look of disapproval she gave him made the sheriff squirm as if he was still in the Moapa River Indian Reservation grade school and Mrs. Lee had found him cheating on his arithmetic test again.

“Is he still in there?” the sheriff asked, breaking the spell of Allison’s disapproval.

“No one came out the front,” Allison answered. “But, I did hear a car drive away shortly after I got out of the house.”

“Know the make or model?”

“No. All I heard was the sound gravel being thrown around.”

“And you didn’t see the car?” the sheriff asked again.

“No. Rockland runs east/west. It was driving away from me behind the house.”

“Okay. I’ve got back up on the way. When he gets here we will clear the house for you. I asked you to stay on the line with 911, have you called anyone?”

“I called my lawyer in California. I had a stalker a few years ago and I wanted to know if he’s back in jail.”

“Is he?”

“No,” she answered. “He got out about three years ago.”

“You think he might be responsible?”

“I don’t know. I think so. He used to leave orange peels and half eaten apples at my house, on my car, even on my desk at work, one time. But I didn’t see anyone. I just heard the window breaking in the back of the house.”

Another sheriff’s car pulled up at that point.

“Is the front door unlocked?”

“No. I went in through the garage,” she answered handing him her keys.

“Okay. You stay here while we clear the house,” Dogstar said.

He then drew his 9mm Glock 19 and with hand signals, indicated to the deputy that they were to go in the front door.

As they neared the door, the deputy whispered, “Do you know who that is, Wayne?”

“Keep your mind on the job, Wilson.”

“That’s Amy Goodlove, the porn star...”

“Wilson, shut the fuck up and get your head into the job. We’ve got an intruder and I don’t want to be telling your wife you were shot because you had your mind on some other piece of ass.”

“Yes sir.”

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Five minutes later, the sheriff came out of the house. "It's clear. Apparently, when the perp heard you come in, he smashed his way out one of your sliding glass doors with a sledgehammer.

It's still on the patio. I'd like you to do a quick walk through to see if anything is missing."

She nodded. "Thanks."

Allison couldn't believe the mess.

All of the black leather of her living room furniture was sliced to shreds and her wide screen plasma HDTV was ripped from the wall.

In her office, where the shattered sliding glass door was, her favorite painting was missing from the wall, many of the books from her shelves were ripped in half and tossed on the floor, and a trail of lingerie led outside, across the patio, and through the vacant lot behind her home.

Her bedroom had been torn apart, clothes and hangers strewn on the bed and the floor. All of her dresser drawers lay empty shattered on the floor and all of her lingerie was missing. In her master bath, the toilet bowl had been shattered. The bathroom and her bedroom was an inch deep in freestanding water.

"Besides the obvious missing lingerie, I am missing a valuable painting that was on the office wall. It's three feet by four feet, approximately, in a gilded frame. It's titled *Backlit Mountains* by Robert English. It was painted in 1902."

"What's it worth?"

"Actually, Sheriff, I don't know. I inherited it from my grandfather. It's currently insured for \$250,000, but I'd like you to keep that under your hat. The last thing I need is to have people think I'm made of money."

"Of course. Well, I guess this is a bit more than simple B&E vandalism case."

Allison stood silently looking at him. There wasn't anything to say.

The sheriff found himself wilting under her disapproving gaze again.

"Do you have a place to stay the night, Ms. King - No! Don't touch anything. I want to get someone in here to dust for prints and see if the perp left anything of himself behind.

"Once that is done I'll have the fire department come in and suck up the water. I'll also get them to board up your back door. I assume you will want your insurance agent out here tomorrow."

"Yeah. Thanks. I'll probably try the Silver Strike."

"Talk to Jack Osage. He's the manager. I'm sure he'll give you a good rate. You can tell him I sent you.

"One more thing, Ms. King - is this yours?" the sheriff asked holding a small plastic baggie containing several small pebbles of a white substance.

"No. What is it?"

"It's crystal meth. Are you sure it isn't yours?"

"Yes," she answered indignity. "Where'd you find it?"

"It was on your desktop in the other room. It probably belongs to the perp, then."

"Well it sure as hell isn't mine, Sheriff. I don't do drugs and I never have."

"All right then. I'll let you go. Thank you for your cooperation."

She was still pissed off it had taken him 45 minutes to drive less than five miles

from the sheriff's station to her place. And really pissed that he had probably taken the time to stop by his house and change into a fresh uniform. She wasn't stupid enough to think that he could keep that starched look through six or eight hours of work. But as long as he caught the son of a bitch who broke in, she'd let it pass.

"I'll need to get my purse from the kitchen."

"Of course."

"And I suppose the ice cream can be tossed in the garbage can. Right?"

"If it is something you brought in with you. Yes."

"All right then, Sheriff, thank you."

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When Allison checked into the Silver Strike, the manager insisted on upgrading her to a suite at no additional charge, rather than a simple room she was expecting. As she closed the door to the suite, she realized she would have to buy some new clothes. Everything in the house was off limits at the moment and what she was wearing was too stained and dirty to wear any longer without being sent to the cleaners. It was time to bite the bullet and start dressing like the locals. If only she didn't have to travel to Vegas to find a decent clothier.

But first, she needed to talk to her lawyer, again.

"Tanner, Cunningham, & Dorsey, how may I direct your call?"

"Mr. Tanner, please."

"One moment, please."

"Mr. Tanner's office, how may I help you?" Allison heard an unfamiliar woman's voice say.

"This is Allison King. I need to speak with Mr. Tanner."

"I'm sorry. Mr. Tanner is currently in a meeting. May I take a message?"

"How about Paula?"

There was a pause before the woman answered, "I'm sorry, Ms. Dorsey is no longer with the firm."

Paula Dorsey had been with the firm from day one. She started out as the receptionist. Paula had taken night and weekend courses and passed the bar three years previous. While not a trial lawyer, she was one hell of a researcher and knew just about everything about Allison's legal troubles. There would have had to be a major blow-up to force her from the firm.

"Look, I need to talk with Todd right now. I don't care if you have to drag him out of his meeting. I only need a minute or two. Tell him it's Allison King."

"I'm sorry, Ms. King. I'll have to take a message."

"Damn it! Tell him I need to talk with him... What is your name?"

Allison's question was answered with a click as the other woman hung up the phone. She stared at the phone in disbelief. They'd hung up on her! She couldn't believe it. That was no way to run an office. Especially not a legal practice!

Todd's gonna fire somebody when he finds out, she thought.

Two hours later, as she was returning from her shopping trip, her cell phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Allison, this is Todd Tanner. Sorry I couldn't take your call. Paula's just been killed. Hit and run."

“What!?! Oh my God! Todd, I’m so sorry. Is there anything I can do for you or her family?”

“No. The police found the car about a mile away. It was stolen. They’re still processing it, but who knows how long that’ll take.”

“Yeah,” she answered. After a pregnant pause, she continued, “Look, Todd. I need a good criminal defense lawyer here in Nevada.”

“Why? What’d you get yourself into now?”

“Nothing, yet. But I have a feeling I’m being set up for something.”

“What makes you say that? Not the break-in?”

“Yes and no. The sheriff took 45 minutes to drive five miles. He said something about an accident on the highway and needing to wait for the NHP to show up. I called the Highway Patrol. There was no accident. Then at the house, he showed me a baggy of crystal meth or rock cocaine or something and asked if it was mine. He said he found it on my desk. You know I don’t do drugs.”

“Well, Allison, I don’t know anyone in, Charleston...”

“Oh, God, no! I don’t want any of the locals. I’ll go to Reno, if I have to, but, I’d prefer Vegas.”

“Okay, I’ll get Paula...” Allison heard his voice catch. “Let me do some quick research and I’ll get back to you as soon as I can.”

“Thanks, Todd. And I’m really sorry to hear about Paula. Let me know where and when the funeral is, I want to come home for that.”

“Yeah. Will do. Talk with you soon. Bye”

“Bye.”

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It took the police three days, swarming over her home looking for more non-existent clues, before they released “the scene of the crime” back to King. Two days later, after she and her insurance agent had walked through the house a second time taking inventory and estimating the damage, the repairs were beginning to show. The toilet bowl and wide screen plasma TV had been replaced. The waterlogged bathroom and bedroom walls were being taped and textured. The sliding door in her office had been repaired. Her living room furniture had been sent out to be reupholstered. A new Stickley bedroom set ordered. Her damaged books had been inventoried and reordered. A new granite counter had been ordered and delivery was expected within 3 weeks.

Thankfully, the idiot burglar, when he began ripping her books apart, started with the bottom shelf and not the top one which contained several first editions from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The lingerie and the painting were the only things missing.

And, while she couldn’t prove it yet, she knew who was responsible. The only problem was Allison didn’t know where he was.

Todd Tanner started a private investigation without having to be asked. The first thing they found was that Quentin Schaefer, age 26, had disappeared. He had been convicted of stalking Allison and sentenced to 4 years in a California State prison. He had not attended any of educational classes offered through the prison, nor had he participated in any of the behavioral modification classes offered to first-time offenders.

So, with the prison overcrowding and time off for good behavior, Schaefer had been

released in 18 months.

After reporting once to his parole officer, he vanished. And his whereabouts was still unknown two and one-half years later. A bench warrant had been issued, but no one was actively pursuing the matter.

Allison knew where he was. Or at least where he had been on the day of the break-in.

But, how the hell did he find her? That was what worried her the most. If he knew where she lived, then she would need to find a way to protect herself from him in the future.

And, with no neighbors within a quarter mile and the lack of response from the Sheriff's Department, Allison knew it was up to her to protect herself.