

Chapter Two

A man alone is in bad company—Valery

Moisha Goldfarb had always wanted to change his name. Not because it was Jewish, but because it was an old man's name. Growing up in New Orleans he never met anyone under 65 named Moisha. The Goldfarb's moved to California the month he turned ten, and there the name situation got worse. Kids on the playground went gleefully crazy, chanting, "Moisha Mushy, Moisha Mushy, Moisha!" Content with Goldfarb as a last name, Moisha planned to eventually legally rechristen himself Big John Goldfarb. This aspiration ended when fellow Great White Army member, Big Bobby Sykes, told him to forget it. Bobby, big and intimidating, usually got his way. Moisha wasn't big, but the loss of the adjective hurt.

The Monday before he got shot, Moisha had an eight a.m. appointment at the DMV, and finally changed his name. Stunned at the simplicity of the process, he realized that his mother had lied. When Moisha turned 18 she told him that changing your name required a trip to Washington D.C. where you had to find a government office that had no

address. If you found the office, the FBI would question your reason for the name change. It cost thousands of dollars, some applicants were thrown out of the country and occasionally people disappeared.

The truth is: in California a trip to the DMV and six dollars changes your name to whatever you want. People changed their names every day to things like Dog Head, 7 and Dirt. Moisha became Johnny Bravo, and resented his mom. He'd hardly had any friends his whole life because of her vivid lies and unnatural attachment to the name Moisha.

Johnny Bravo reckoned he would have friends now, regardless of the past or the present. As a neophyte Aryan there were a number of secrets he held back from the Great White Army. Until Officer White and his minions opened Johnny's eyes to the nigger problem, he was unaware that such a problem existed. Luckily, the Army held daily indoctrination sessions at the local titty bar.

Officer Goldfarb had been on the job only five months when he screwed up. On patrol one evening with his partner, Officer Mark Bates (of the African American persuasion and Moisha's best friend—one of the secrets), they came upon Alfonso the Rock sitting in his car out in front of Gordon's Liquor Store, brazenly selling crack. The two cops snatched the Rock out of his aging SUV and threw him into the back of their patrol car to be transported to the station for insults and interrogation.

Officer Bates took the college boys who'd been buying the cocaine to the other side of the parking lot to question. While they were left alone, Alfonso offered Officer Goldfarb 150 bucks to be released. Moisha accepted. He didn't need the money so much as he simply liked to accommodate people. Alfonso scurried off into the darkness. When Mark Bates got back to the car he couldn't believe what Moisha had done.

Officer Bates would have let his partner off with a warning and a speech except that he'd already called in the arrest during a warrant check. Alfonso had outstanding warrants for every kind of petty crime on the books including three shoplifting tickets, 22 trolley citations from San Diego, and a pandering charge in Tijuana. State, federal and foreign cops, up and down the coast wanted Alfonso "The Rock" Sitani to at least check in with them. Bad fate on top of bad luck, Alfonso moonlighted as an informant for Internal Affairs Detective Manny Goodman. The same evening that Moisha let him go, Alfonso the loose cap got arrested a second time. He used his phone call to contact Detective Goodman and turned in Officer Moisha Goldfarb as a cop on the take. Alfonso was given his 150 dollars and crack cocaine back and released.

The review board decided that Officer Moisha Goldfarb wasn't a bad cop, rather just sluggish. They gave him a short suspension, one month, ample time to contemplate his error. While on suspension, Moisha met Lonnie and Donnie Dawkins, suspended for posting racist jokes on the station's web site. They thought Moisha might like to join their racist army, impressed him with tales of their adventures, then took him to meet their leader, Officer White. A lot of what White said made sense to Moisha, though he was alarmed to discover that as a Jew he would be lumped in with the bad dark races. Fortunately, he was one of those hard-to-detect Jews, and all vestiges of his heritage disappeared as soon as he changed his name.

The matter of the initiation didn't seem like a big deal. New Great White Party members were directed to go into the ghetto and kill a gang member. A scary proposition, but Johnny was a cop and gang banging drug dealers shot each other constantly. The truth of the matter: Office White and Big Bobby Sykes were the only Great White Aryan Army

members who'd shot and killed anyone in their lives. White shot two or three Mexican drug dealers and at least a dozen homeless people. It wasn't that he had anything against the dealers or the vagrants (publicly he claimed to) – they were just less likely than ordinary citizens to complain to the police about getting shot. When White was in a gracious mood he told himself that the homeless people were going to a more comfortable place. Bobby Sykes killed a gangbanger for his initiation and felt virtuous about it because he wholeheartedly bought into White's cockeyed philosophy. It also made him feel important to end someone's life, no matter who they were.

Given a pistol stolen from the property room, Johnny Bravo hadn't a clue as to the make or the model or the why of it. Serial numbers and all other identifying marks had been expertly removed from the deadly and anonymous hunk of steel. Not grasping the concept of the throwaway gun, Johnny left it at home. He liked his standard issue firearm.

A dark, dirty rain fell over the city, and every drug dealing gangbanger in town looked to be prowling Los Angeles Boulevard. Downtown, where the risk of getting shot is a constant concern, a high percentage of the populace is armed. The local thugs usually don't give free reign to their hatred of the police by shooting them, but Officer White had upset the balance on the street by indiscriminately shooting gangsters. Officer Bravo, only minimally aware of this danger—being drunk on his new name and new life with friends—held on to one thought: find a gang member to kill. Evening arrived as the last bit of daylight slid behind a skyscraper.

On sixth and Los Angeles, near the Greyhound terminal, stood a Mexican kid wearing a large drab olive fatigue jacket, the obligatory bandana, fantastically oversized

brown slacks, and a shaved head. A sneer parked on his face, he smoked a joint, his eyes fixed on Officer Johnny Bravo.

Bravo pulled the car up over the curb, barely missing his target's foot, gave the siren a squeal, and hopped out of the patrol car. "Hey, you! What the hell are you smoking? Up against the car!" Bravo said, relieved that a guilty subject had made himself available for the initiation.

"Get fucked."

"You're under arrest. What's your name?"

"Little Loco, an I ain't under nothin' foolio." With that, Little Loco flicked the joint, hitting Officer Johnny Bravo in the chest.

Johnny's confidence fled. He wished someone had come along with him. The little maniac leaned against the front of his patrol car and started doing stretching exercises. Evidently, he had no fear of the police. Johnny took a deep breath and fumbled with his handcuffs. "Come on stupid, you're under arrest." He couldn't get the handcuffs untangled from his utility belt. What in theory should be second nature, felt awkward.

While Officer Bravo, needing to avoid witnesses, had to transport his target to somewhere deserted, no such guidelines held Little Loco the gangster. He whipped out a dented, worn .357 revolver that had been hidden by his inordinately baggy clothes and leveled it at Officer Bravo.

Bravo's desperate fumbling focus jumped from his handcuffs to his gun. Little Loco enjoyed the cop's bewildered blundering about until, out of the corner of his eye, he saw three Ninth Street Crips slide around the corner. With their usual mad confidence, the Crips took in the scene. Juju, the leader, drew his gun because he considered the corner Crip

territory. Crazo and Abdul reflexively pulled their guns and trained them, one on Johnny, one on Little Loco.

"Ho, shit," Little Loco said, causing Johnny to notice the Crips, whereupon he screamed. In an upstairs apartment overlooking the street, old bitter Edgar Fuentes, always looking for trouble, jarred awake from his late afternoon nap by the commotion, cursing lyrically in Spanish, came out onto his second floor balcony and threw his wife's perpetually enraged Chihuahua at the group in the street. Fuentes ducked back into the apartment to grab an iron and without even looking tossed it over the side of the balcony. Edgar gazed around the living room for more ammunition.

Little Loco and Crazo yelled at each other about gangland protocol, waved their guns and struck threatening poses. Johnny Bravo ducked as a bottle of milk sailed past his head. More Crips appeared and there were Mexicans everywhere. They weren't gang members; it was that part of town.

In less than a minute, Bravo had gone from confident police officer to scared witless and out of his depth. The little gangster had turned into a Magnum bearing lunatic, Crips appeared seemingly from nowhere, an angry Chihuahua with a broken leg rolled around yapping and nipping at Bravo's pant leg, an aging terrorist upstairs was currently poised with a typewriter over his head.

And Johnny couldn't get his gun out.

"God damn it," he sobbed and managed to undo the strap. Jerking his pistol from the holster, hands shaking and grimy with fear, no grip at all, the gun slipped out of his hand into the air. Time slowed, the setting sun hit the spinning pistol and lit Johnny Bravo's face.

"What a beautiful gun," he murmured to himself. Peripherally surveying the menace all around, he wondered why Officer White had sent him out there to die.

A gunshot exploded.

The Crips ran, pursued by real and imaginary demons.

Johnny said, "Whuh . . ." as a portion of his head vaporized.

Little Loco leaned over, ripped off the dead cop's badge, picked up his police gun,
and loped off into the city.