



P.I. HARRY LYMAN

Episode 1, Part 1

The legal-sized manila folder was deceptively thin and unassuming considering it held every pertinent detail of Dr. Jameson Coleman's life. It outlined his entire existence from uncomplicated birth, Los Angeles Memorial Hospital – June 12 '65 – 2:03 a.m., to gruesome death, Beverly Hills home – August 19 '11 – 9:46 p.m., and everything in between. He liked anchovies, dyed his hair *tawny taupe*, spent every Thursday night with a mistress he'd nicknamed *Bunny*, preferred custom-made slacks that were perfectly tailored to allow his dick to hang to the left, and desperately loved his kids.

P.I. Harry Lyman lit the first of thirty-three daily cigarettes and scanned the folder's contents without reading a single word. No need. Every piece of information had been scribbled by his own hand.

Harry blew an irritated puff of smoke through his teeth and pushed back in his office chair. Dry, tattered leather crackled and metal squeaked as he began a slow and steady rhythm and soon the reassuring sound of rusty casters had lulled him into a daze. A *thinking daze*. A state he spent the majority of his waking hours in.

He closed his eyes, retraced his steps through the home office where Dr. Jameson Coleman had supposedly shot himself, not once – but twice, and jerked back to himself when the unmistakable sputtering rumble of a Harley Davidson caused his office window to rattle in its frame and a trickle of dread to creep up his spine.

"Fuck me."

Harry clamped the cigarette between his lips, freeing both hands to search for the aspirin bottle. He figured he had less than ten seconds before Joanne Mason walked through his office door. He was halfway through the contents of his bottom drawer when she sauntered in, looking for all the world like Biker Barbie's long lost, porn star sister. Life was not fair and Joanne Mason was the proof.

"Hey Harry."

"Jo," Harry said, his cigarette bobbing and ash falling on his blotter. He ran a hand through his hair, felt tufts of it stand on end and resumed his search.

"You look like shit, Harry."

She was wearing black leather pants, a white tee-shirt and black leather jacket. She did *not* look like shit. She looked like the opposite of shit. *Where the hell was the damn aspirin?*

"Late night?" she asked, adding a sweet smile.

Harry gave up on the aspirin. It was too late anyway. "Early morning?" he asked in return.

"It's a great day for a ride. I had the day off so I thought I'd head down the coast..."

"You didn't make a trip all the way down here to have a chat," Harry grumbled, pushing back in his chair and scowling, plumes of smoke almost – but not quite – obstructing his view.

Jo raised perfectly sculpted eyebrows. "Well, well, aren't you in a pissy mood?"



Harry scrubbed his hands over his face, momentarily blocking out the vision she made standing there haloed in the morning sunlight that streamed through his window. The sight reminded him of a jacket she sometimes wore when riding. It was another black leather number with the words *Heaven's Angel* embossed in bright white on the back. But, that particular jacket wasn't part of her attire today. Today she was all business. And this wasn't a social call.

"What do you want, Jo?"

"I need your help on a case."

Harry didn't move. Of all the possible answers to his question, that one had never occurred to him.

"Actually it's really more of a job," she went on when he didn't reply. "A temporary gig." She walked to the row of filing cabinets on the south wall and pulled open the top drawer of the first.

"What do you mean, *temporary gig*?" Harry asked carefully. He knew shaky ground when it shifted dangerously beneath his battered Nikes.

"It's a political case," Jo said, finishing her perusal of the first cabinet and moving to the top drawer of the next. "Some big wig businessman has pulled together serious funding and is running for mayor. He wants me to do background on all his staff and coordinate with his security team. It's too big for me alone. I'd like your help." She closed the second drawer and opened a third.

"You've got people for that," Harry said, eyes narrowed. "Besides, I have cases of my own, Jo. I don't have time to help you out – and what the hell are you looking for?"

Jo snatched a bottle of aspirin from the drawer she'd been searching and tossed it across the room. "You've got a headache, don't you?"

Harry's scowl deepened as he snapped open the cap. He chased four aspirin with a slug of cold coffee and then downed four more, wishing like hell it was whiskey.

"Like I said," Harry tried. "I'm busy with my own cases."

Jo walked to his desk, plucked up the manila folder he'd *not* been reading earlier and gave it a quick scan. "I heard about this case, watched it on the news. Suicide, right?"

Harry lifted an eyebrow and quickly lowered it again when a stabbing pain made the action intolerable. "Suicide by gunshot?" he asked skeptically. "*Two* gunshots?"

Jo shrugged. "Could happen. Sometimes you miss the crucial stuff."

Harry had been thinking the same thing. Sure, it *could* happen. But *would* it? How many people could actually finish themselves off after their first attempt went south and pieces of your insides were suddenly out? Yeah, Harry didn't buy it. Which is why he'd approached the family himself. He had slid effortlessly into cop-think like a greased-up stripper down a pole.

"No one else was home," Harry muttered to himself. "He had appointments scheduled for the following day in his Blackberry." His office chair began its rhythmic squeaking. "The mistress said he never had trouble getting it up which means he was happy. Stress free. No signs of depression whatsoever."



“I could give you a hand on this.” She snuck that casual comment into the train of thought running through his brain like a skilled surgeon with a razor-thin scalpel.

“No.”

“Why not? We worked well together before.”

“You and I obviously have different versions of history.”

“*Work* was never our problem,” she said, her voice downshifting to purr.

Harry stabbed out the already dead cigarette and lit another. At this rate he’d be through his daily allotment by noon.

“Anyway,” she continued, undeterred. “I could give you a hand with this case and then you can help with mine.”

“No.”

“Harry –”

The throaty growl of American muscle rose, crescendoed and cut off outside the thin, stucco wall of his office building. Poor Bessy was probably feeling pretty outclassed, sitting alone in the parking lot with Jo’s Harley and whatever hotrod had just pulled in. Not that a mufflerless 1970 El Dorado the color of a truck-stop urinal didn’t have plenty of merit.

“Who the hell is that?” Harry muttered, running a hand down the front of his hopelessly wrinkled shirt.

“The client,” Jo said, all innocence.

That got his attention. “Excuse me?”

“He wants the best. I told him you were it. He insisted on meeting you in person.”

Harry stared hard, but the inscrutable look in Jo’s eyes didn’t waver. “I don’t like the sound of this,” he said, puffing hard on the cancer stick between his lips. Surely death by melanoma tumor was preferable to the long, tedious, dissention into hell his life had recently become.

“Just hear him out,” Jo cajoled. “What can you loose?”

A finger, Harry decided, as his visitor stepped into the office. *Or tongue.*

In either case, he’d be getting off easy. Because the man standing in his narrow doorway, the man Jo had already signed as a client, was Eddy ‘The Worm’ Torrillo. The biggest mafia name on the west coast.

To Be Continued...