

It was a cold Chicago night around the first of November. Albert and I decided to get off the streets and have some fun at the Four Deuces Club. We went in and became immediately aware of a few furiously flying fists and two men shouting crazily. Another argument over cheating at poker had turned into a bloody brawl. I snickered as I watched one man receive a brutal hit in the nose, starting a flowing river of red. He shook his head and threw a punch at the other man's jaw, sending him to the floor. The manager of the club, Ralph, quickly broke the fight up.

Ralph was the older brother of Al Capone. Al had become Johnny Torrio's right hand-man and his favorite, ever since Al had put the hit on "Big Jim" Colossimo for Torrio. Johnny and Colossimo had never agreed on whether or not to enter the liquor rackets, and Torrio had decided that the gang needed a new boss, one who would get the gang involved in the liquor business, himself. Albert and I chatted with some lovely ladies as we sipped our cocktails.

Albert and I were part of the South side gang of Chicago, and our boss, Johnny Torrio had just recently been released from the joint. A while back, the North side boss, Dan O'Banion, had told Johnny that he was getting out of the liquor rackets, and wanted to sell his Sieben Brewery for a half million bucks. The truth was, O'Banion had been tipped off by one of his numerous sources a few weeks before, and heard that the feds were going to pay a visit to the brewery. Torrio bought the brewery. O'Banion had suckered ol' Johnny into taking his blow.

All Johnny wanted was revenge. Normally, Torrio, the wise man nicknamed "The Brain" kept his emotions hidden, and acted as if nothing bothered him. But now, out of jail, he was in a huge furious fit. I had never seen this man act like he was. I guess he

thought the time behind bars was a waste of his life or something. Whatever it was, the man was not acting normal at all.

A week later, Mike Merlo, the one man responsible for keeping the violence between Torrio's and O'Banion's gangs relatively low by being a negotiator, died of cancer. The day after that, November ninth, Johnny called us together.

"Okay boys," Torrio said, when we were in the conference room, "Here's what's goin' on. You all know that ol' Merlo died yesterday. Well, it's not a bad thing he's gone. Boys, you all know that I've been wantin' to pay back that son of a gun O'Banion. I'm gonna need some of you men to step up and give the bloody Irishmen the bag. Now who's gonna do it, eh? I'll tell you who is. My old partner Mr. Frank Yale," he said, nodding to Yale, a man Torrio had known for years. "And I'm gonna need two others," he pointed at Albert. "You, Anselmi. And last," he said, grinning, "Scalise." He was looking at me.

I nodded, accepting the task. I swallowed, knowing it would be hard to take on the North side boss on his side of town. Torrio excused all the other gang members and briefed Frankie, Albert and I. "Gentlemen," Johnny said, "You'll have to get up to the other side Madison Street, and hit O'Banion as he waters his petunias."

"So all we gotta do is shoot 'em up?" asked Yale.

"Yeah, that's it. Make as big a mess as you want, cuz we ain't cleanin' it up."

Yale snickered, "All right boss."

"Okay," The Brain continued, "Mike Genna will drop you fellas off and pick you up."

"And when are we doin' this?" Anselmi said.

“Tomorrow at noon,” was Johnny’s answer.

After that I went back to the Four Deuces and played some pool with Albert. He and I were close, and he was the only man living I could trust wholeheartedly. We were often ordered to whack somebody, along with “Machine Gun” Jack McGurn. We were good at our jobs, what can I say. The life of crime was not for everyone. You had to have a nose for trouble, and some smarts and some wits about you. Well, Albert, Jack and I had all that, plus some guts for killing.

Albert and I had moved to Chicago from Marsala, Sicily, where the sky was always beautiful blue, the pasta always delicious, and the olives always ripe and juicy, a few years ago, when murder charges were brought against us. We had joined the Genna gang, who were now helping us kill O’Banion, but had joined with Torrio when the Genna gang wanted us to lay the hit on Capone. These gangs were always double-crossing and lying to each other.

Albert and I were not the most righteous, Christian of men. We were nasty and vicious. I hate to admit it, but onetime, our victim got on his knees and begged for mercy. He raised his hands in prayer, and as he did this, we shot them off. Then we shot him in the head. I guess we were merciless.

Sometimes I wondered what life would be like if I was not a mobster. I mean all this killing, was it really right? It puzzled me, but I could never bring myself to change. I loved my life too much. The thrill of the kill, the constant rivalry between the two gangs, these were the things I loved most about my life, even if they were the worst, morally wrong parts about it. If I was not involved in organized crime, I don’t know where I’d be or what I’d be doing. I would probably just be doing an ordinary job, such as working at a

gas station or at a grocery store. But that would be boring. What job is there that is more exciting than being a gangster? Not one that crosses my mind.

We were not going to be able to use any of my favorite weapons, such as the Tommy gun or the shotgun. We were going to have to use pistols, and be a little bit stealthy. "I beat you, John," Albert looked up at me after he knocked in the eight ball.

"Yeah," I said.

"You seem all down," said Albert. "You worried about tomorrow?"

I shrugged. "I guess so." The truth was that I was nervous.

"Well don't be. It'll be the same as all the other people we've killed. And there's a lot of those," Anselmi said, grinning.

Someone else entered the room.

"How are you gentlemen?" said the man. I saw the talcum powder on his left cheek. The powder was hiding a scar the man had got from a knife fight in his teens.

"Hello Al," said Albert.

"How are you, Capone?" I said.

"I'm all right," Capone answered. "I hear Johnny's got you guys takin' out that stupid Irishmen tomorrow, eh? Well tell him I said hi."

"Will do," said Albert.

I went to get some rest after that. I would need it for tomorrow. I got up at seven the next morning, took a shower, and got dressed. I loaded up my gun, and hid it in my jacket. I put my white hat on, and walked to the coffee shop where Yale, Anselmi, Mike Genna, and I were going to grab breakfast.

Yale was already there, but the others were not. I ordered some coffee, and so did Yale. His coffee was black, like he always got it. It was just a few minutes before the others came.

“Genna,” said Yale, “You’re gonna drop us at Superior Street, and then wait there until we’re done with our business at Schofield’s. We’ll be out in a flash after we make the hit, so you gotta be ready to drive.”

Schofield’s was the flower shop that O’Banion operated out of. The mob boss had a knack for flowers.

“All right,” said Mike.

Then it was time. We hopped into Mike’s Jewett, and headed north. We passed Madison Street, the natural boundary between the two gangs. Genna dropped us off, and waited on Superior Street. Frankie, Albert, and I walked casually. It was a cool morning, and the breeze was nipping at my nose and ears.

I hoped that there were not any of O’Banion’s men on duty watching over their boss today. The northsiders such as Vincent “The Schemer” Drucci, James Weiss, “Bugs” Moran and “Two Gun” Louie Altere, were some tough hombres. Luckily, there were not any inside Schofield’s.

Albert held the door for Frank and I, and we strolled on in. We walked towards the middle of the building until a stout, rosy-cheeked man came out from back to greet us.

“Are you the swell fellows from Mike Merlo’s?” The man asked, holding out his hand to Yale. I guess he thought we were picking up some flowers for Mike’s funeral. The man was Dan O’Banion. He commonly called strangers swell fellows when he

greeted them. O'Banion had a pair of clipping shears in his left hand. I wondered if they were for defense, but decided he had been clipping some flowers when we came in.

Frank Yale met his hand with O'Banion's, smirked, and clenched our target's fist with a deadly grip. The man winced. Albert and I drew our guns. I fired two bullets into O'Banion's chest, and Anselmi fired two into his throat. Then he fell to the floor.

"Capone says hi," I said.

"Looks like Torrio gotcha back, huh?" said Albert.

O'Banion could not answer, because a couple of bullets were stuck in his windpipe.

"Goodnight, swell fellow," Frankie said, as he fired one last bullet into O'Banion's jaw. The floor was covered in blood.

We had completed our mission.

Our trio ran to the flower shop's door, and sprinted towards Genna. We hopped into the dark blue car, Mike zipped onto Dearborn, and we were off.

The South side was by far the dominant gang of Chicago. We had gotten rid of Torrio's largest nemesis and made sure that he would never have a chance to mess with us ever again. Now we would just continue to expand our control of Chicago.