

Prologue

October, 2004

The man scratched the gray stubble of his three-day growth and fixed his gaze on the autumn sun as it began its descent behind the housing projects to the west. He shivered from the cool breeze unusual for this time of year; angry at himself for leaving behind his worn cotton suede jacket, a hand-me-down from his grandfather, a fisherman like himself. He hooked his last live shrimp to his line and shuffled to the edge of the river bank. Twenty minutes more, then he'd gather his gear and catch the Overtown bus home. He knew better than to be here alone after dark.

As the last traces of daylight all but disappeared, the old man's line grew taut. Instinctively, he began to reel, but whatever was out there just wouldn't budge. He bent on one knee over the neck of the river and tried his best to steer the shadowy object toward him. His pulse raced as thoughts carried him back to more than twenty years ago and the days of Miami's cocaine cowboys when it was not uncommon for fishermen to scoop up 'square groupers,' or wrapped bales of marijuana tossed overboard from speed boats smuggling their loads in from the Bahamas.

Grudgingly, he cut his line and hurried down the river bank for a better look at his bounty. Inching closer, he froze in horror. "Dear Mother of God," he cried. Aided by a strong current, the partially decomposed body of a brown-skin man drifted toward him, his dark eyes fixed open in a grotesque stare, his throat slashed from ear to ear.