

THE **ORIENTATION** OF  
**DYLAN WOODGER**  
A CENTRAL NEW YORK CRIME STORY



**CHIUBA  
OBELE**



**THE ORIENTATION OF  
DYLAN WOODGER**  
**A CENTRAL NEW YORK CRIME STORY**

**CHIUBA OBELE**



Fischer House  
Publications

Copyright © 2021, 2022 by Chiuba E. Obele

Published by Fischer House Publications

Boston Massachusetts

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the author, except where permitted by law.

ISBN

979-8-9851464-0-0 (Ebook – EPUB)

979-8-9851464-1-7 (Paperback)

979-8-9851464-2-4 (Hardcover)

979-8-9851464-3-1 (audiobook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021921742

Editing by Pam Elise Harris

Book Cover by Matthew Revert

# CHAPTER 3

**WHO WAS I?** Dylan J. Woodger

*Where was I?* I wasn't sure.

*What time was it?* I had no clue.

*Why was I here?* I didn't know

What I did know, was that it was fucking cold. I could feel undergrowth beneath me. My eyes darted around. There were trees as far as the eye could see. I had a raging headache. I couldn't move my hands or feet. I looked down at my prone body and saw rope wrapped tightly around my ankles. I couldn't move my hands — they were tied behind my back. My wrists hurt, and whatever bound them also cut into my arms. I had a pain in my shoulder. It hurt bad. But it was nothing compared to the pain that I would suffer once I fell into the hands of the Utica Mafia.

But we're not there yet.

In my mind, it was yesterday that my mother dropped me off at Hamilton College. I went to sleep, then woke up in the woods. It was warm and sunny when Mom left me. But now, I woke up in the freezing cold. I thought it was August and I couldn't figure out how it could get so cold. And why was I tied up? And could the pain in my shoulder be...*a bullet wound*? But how could it be a bullet wound? I'd never been shot at!

I knew I had to get outta there, or else I'd freeze to death. Most people aren't experts in rope tying. Usually, the average person without formal training doesn't know how to do a good job. And this rope tying definitely wasn't the work of a professional. So I felt confident I could escape. I managed to free my arms with some wriggling though it took more skin off my wrists. Then I focused on freeing my legs. I kicked off my shoes and pulled my feet out of the rope. Once my feet were free, I used my hands to pull the leg bonds down. I was now free, but still clueless. *Who had done this to me?* One thing I knew for sure: this was the work of an amateur who didn't know how to properly tie someone up.

Oh, and I noticed something strange about myself. I grew facial hair and had put on some muscle. *But when did that happen?* I hadn't looked in a mirror, but I doubted I was the same baby-faced boy my mom had dropped off that morning.

Just then, I heard a group of men shouting out of sync. "Hello, is anybody here? Hello?"

I felt relieved. *Did the police send out a search party for me?*

I was eager to get out of the cold, and my first instinct was to shout, "Over here!"

That was my first mistake.

As the men approached, their boots crunching on twigs and fallen branches, I rushed over to them. I kept my left arm still — the pain of

moving it alone caused my vision to flash white and my ears to ring. I stumbled a bit, but soon I could see them clear enough. The men wore plain clothes, just any random winter jacket and jeans someone might get at the nearest Walmart. They weren't uniformed as you would normally expect police to be.

"Thank goodness you're here. I thought I would freeze to death."

The men looked at each other in confusion, until one of them finally said, "Are you here with anyone?"

"No," I replied. "I found myself tied up and managed to escape, just before you got here."

"This guy is lying to us," one of them said. "This must be an ambush."

"An ambush? What are you talking about?" I struggled to keep my voice even. "I just woke up, and I haven't seen another person until you guys showed up. I'm glad you got here, though. Can you please take me home?"

Just at that moment, one of the men pulled out a gun and pointed it at me. My hands flew out in front of me, and my blood ran cold when I saw the barrel. "Wait, hold on! What are you doing?"

"You better tell us right now. Is this an ambush? 'Cause if bullets start flying, you'll be the first one to die."

"No, sir. I promise, this isn't an ambush."

“So where’s our money?” he demanded.

I was confused. Then I thought I had pieced it together. “Yeah, okay. You guys obviously want money for going through the trouble of finding me. That’s fair. My mother’s pretty well off, and she probably offered a reward to find me. I’ll make sure you get it. That’s how these things work, right? So can you please take me home now?”

The man kept the gun pointed at me. I heard a click and knew he had cocked it. I realized then, that this was no *ordinary* search party.

“What’s going on here?” I asked, with fear creeping in.

The man with the gun shouted at me. “Stop playing games and tell us where our money is!”

I furrowed my eyebrows at him. He was an olive-skinned man. I pegged his age at around forty. He was bigger than average with shaggy black hair and unkempt facial hair.

“You’ve got me confused with someone else,” I said. “I don’t have anybody’s money.”

“Nice try, kid, but I’m not a *babbeo*. Whatever tricks you’re trying to pull, they won’t work. Stop acting like we’re suckers and tell us where our money is! I’m not gonna ask you again.”

*Babbeo?* I wondered. *What language is that? Could it be Italian?*

“Look, I already told you that if you take me home, my mom will be glad to help you with some money. Now can we please—”



Before I could finish speaking, the man with the gun slapped me with it. I grabbed my jaw and fell backward. My head exploded with pain.

One of the men said, “Shit, Tony. This guy is useless. Let’s finish him off and get outta here.”

Another man replied, “Wait, Tony. The boss sent us to collect the money. We can’t kill him. We have to make this kid talk.”

“All right,” Tony said. “Let’s take him back to the warehouse. And then we can really start having fun.”

I knew what he meant by “fun.” They were going to torture me.

“Help!” I screamed. “Somebody help me!”

A loud bang rang out. Before my ears could even begin ringing, the bullet ripped into my thigh, stopping like red hot steel somewhere inside of me. My vision flashed white, and I fell to the ground. Pain pulsed out from the wound. I wasn’t aware of myself at that moment. Maybe I cried out, or maybe it was more of a scream. What I knew, though, was that Tony had shot me in the leg.

“Shut the fuck up!” he said, waving the gun around. “I better not hear one more word outta you, or the next bullet is going straight through your head. Don’t test me!”

The men grabbed the ropes I had untied and started binding me. All the while, I felt my pants getting soaked with warm blood. My temples pounded with my racing heart as I begged for my life. “Please, you have

to believe me. I haven't taken anyone's money!"

One of the men said, "Well, if you didn't rob us, then explain how you got that bullet wound in your shoulder. Huh?"

The men paused and waited for me to answer. For a moment, I forgot about the pain in my leg. I looked over my shoulder, and I could see someone had bandaged me up.

"I don't know where I got this from," I said.

"Don't lie! I specifically remember shooting someone in the shoulder when the guys who robbed us were running away. You mean to tell me that's a coincidence?"

"Look, I don't know what you're talking about. Please let me go."

Tony went into a rage and began kicking me relentlessly in the gut. I tried to curl into a ball to protect my stomach which was near impossible thanks to the rope bonds. "Stop pretending to be dumb!" he said. "You're getting on my fucking nerves!"

"Tony, relax!" one of the men said. "Remember, we gotta keep this guy alive until we know where our money is."

The men gagged my mouth with a dry kitchen cloth and carried me into their van. Then the van drove off. The windows were tinted black. I tried kicking. I tried screaming. But none of it worked. After they placed me into the van, one of the men pulled a bag over my head. I couldn't see a thing, but I could still hear them speak. One of them sounded like Tony—a baritone smoker. He was apparently speaking on the phone.

“Yeah, Vinny,” he said. “Tell the boss we found someone...I don’t know who it is...I already told you, I don’t know who he is! It’s just some kid who’s putting on an act.”

I heard Vinny shouting on the other end of the call. “You didn’t even ask him his for fucking name, Tony?”

Tony jerked the bag off my head and yanked the gag from my mouth. “What’s your name, kid?” he asked.

I scrambled for a plan. *Should I give him a fake name? What if they catch me in a lie? That wouldn’t be so smart.* I thought about whether I should cooperate. Then I simply said, “I’m not saying a damn word.”

At that point, Tony pulled a knife from his pocket and repeatedly stabbed my leg wound. White-hot pain seared through my mind. I nearly passed out from the pain and the sight of blood pouring out of me.

“Stop! Please, stop!” I cried out.

One of the men said, “You could make this a lot easier, kid, if you just tell us your name.”

“Dylan!” I screamed. “My name is Dylan!”

“Dylan who?” Tony asked.

“Dylan J. Woodger!”

The pain in my leg was so bad I could barely breathe. I trembled uncontrollably. Soon, I felt lightheaded. “Can you please wrap my leg?” I

begged. “I’m bleeding badly. And I—”

Before I could finish speaking, Tony gagged me again and pulled the bag over my head. He continued talking on the phone.

“Okay, Vinny. He said his name is Dylan...Dylan Woodger...Yeah, we’re on our way to the warehouse, and—”

At that moment, I heard the shriek of a police siren.

“Shit!” the driver muttered.

“What is it?” Tony asked

“It’s a cop! We’re being pulled over.”

A wave of obscenities reverberated throughout the van.

“Everyone, calm the fuck down!” Tony yelled.

I felt something hard being shoved against my crotch. It was the familiar feel of a gun.

“You better not say a word, kid,” Tony said, “or I’ll shoot you in the balls.”

The van halted abruptly. A minute passed. I heard footsteps outside on the road, the glide of shoes on gravel.

“Hello, Officer,” the driver said calmly, “What seems to be the problem?”

“License and registration,” said the cop.

“Sure. Not a problem.” The driver gave the cop his license and registration.

“Do you know why you’re being stopped?”

“Was I speeding?”

“No. Your van has tinted windows. Tinted windows are illegal in the state of New York.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know that,” the driver said. “I just bought this vehicle last week, and the car dealer failed to mention that. I’ll be sure to get the windows changed.” The driver laughed nervously. “So, I guess I’ll take that ticket and be on my way.”

“Not so fast,” the cop said. “I still have a couple of questions to ask you...Where are you coming from?”

“Oh umm...We’re just a few fellas going out hunting in the woods. We just got finished not too long ago, and now we’re heading home.”

“And where’s home?” the officer asked.

“Utica, sir.”

“Well, you’re only allowed to hunt animals between November first and December twentieth. Hunting season ended last week.”

“Yeah, sorry about that.”

“I’d like to check your vehicle.”

“Sure Officer. Go right ahead. I’ll unlock it for you.”

When I heard the rear door unlock, I nearly let out a cheer. It was as if the officer could hear my heart pounding its way through my chest. But as soon as I heard the rear door of the van creak open, a barrage of bullets tore open the air. I heard a body drop to the ground.

One of the men inside the van hissed, "Shit, he's still moving. He's probably got a vest on."

Another man said, "I'll go finish him off."

"No! Hold on." Tony stopped him. He pulled the bag off my head and said to me, "I want you to see what happens to those who get in our way."

Tony stepped out of the van. Through the open door, I could see the officer on the ground, writhing in pain and begging for his life. "Please," he said, "Don't do this...I have three kids and a wife."

At that point, Tony fired two gunshots straight into the officer's head. Blood splattered onto the pavement. Tony got back into the van and said to me, "I wanted you to see that, so you know we're capable of killing *anyone*. If you fuck with us, you'll end up joining this guy here."

# CHAPTER 4

**WHO WAS I?** Dylan J. Woodger

*Where was I?* At first, I had no idea. But the officer and the driver provided useful information. I knew from their exchange that I was still in New York State, and we were most likely driving to Utica.

*What time was it?* I knew it was late December since—according to the dead cop—we just passed hunting season. But I didn't know what year it was. Clearly, some time had passed, and perhaps it's been several years since I arrived at Hamilton. *But how did I get here? Did I somehow travel to the future?*

*Why was I here?* I still didn't know. So what did I know?

- (1) Someone had tied me up, and judging from their poor job, it was most likely an amateur.
- (2) I was apparently shot at in the shoulder by one of the men holding me captive. Afterward, someone had bandaged me up.
- (3) Someone was robbed, and they think it was me who was responsible.
- (4) These men were Mafia types from Utica, and they seemed to defer to this guy named Tony, who was a loose cannon capable of killing without remorse.

and (5) Tony and these men work for someone they called “Boss.” But who exactly was this person? I didn’t know.

We kept driving for an hour before we arrived at the warehouse. I still had the bag over my head, but I could hear the van door opening. Then a person said, “Jesus Christ, Tony! I thought you were going to keep this guy alive. Look at all this blood. He’s a mess!”

“Stay out of this, Vinny! If you had let me post extra security at the boss’s home, we wouldn’t be in this position. So why don’t you stick to what you’re good at: giving bad advice.”

The men carried me out of the van and into the warehouse. Tony spoke up again. “Drop him on the ground and take off his clothes.”

The men placed me on the ground. They took the bag off my head and removed the gag from my mouth. Once they had untied me, they stripped me naked. Goosebumps formed all over my arms and legs. Tony then proceeded to unzip his pants. *Was he going to rape me?*

“Now it’s time to talk. Where’s our money?”

“I already told you. I don’t know what you’re talking about. Please let me go. I’m—aagghh!”

Before I could finish speaking, Tony began to urinate on my face. He laughed.

“C’mon, fellas! Why don’t you join in?”

Several of the men approached me and urinated on me. The



unpleasant stench of their unwanted fluids splashed on my head and body. I covered my face to prevent the piss from reaching my eyes and mouth. The men peed on me until their bladders had emptied. I had never felt so humiliated.

“Let’s try this again,” Tony said. “Where is our money?”

I laughed. “You know, I’m kinda surprised, Tony. You strike me as the kind of guy who has to sit down while he’s pissing.”

Laughter erupted across the room. Tony shouted at the men. “You think that’s funny? Shut the fuck up!”

They all stopped laughed. One of them said, “Tony, you gotta admit...this guy has some balls.”

Tony continued with a scoff, “Let’s get him up on the chains.”

The men picked me up and handcuffed me to chains that were hung from the ceiling. I then heard a zapping noise. Tony grabbed an electrified prod. I could only recall seeing those in action films...and horror movies.

“I’ll ask you again. We can either do this the easy way or the hard way...Where is our money?”

“Hold on, Tony! Wait a second.” It was Vinny. He walked up to me with heavy footsteps. He was an odd-looking guy with dark hair, light brown eyes, and a crooked nose. I could see that he was mostly bald with short greasy black hair growing on the sides of his head. His satin suit contrasted with the casual fashion of the men working under him. I

pegged his age at around sixty-five.

Vinny asked, “Your name is Dylan...right?”

I nodded.

“Dylan, we really don’t want to hurt you. We just want you to tell us where our money is. We know you were involved in the robbery because we got information that you were involved. Quite frankly, I don’t care why you did it. We just want to know where our money is.”

“Okay,” I said, “Here’s what I know. My mom dropped me off at Hamilton College. It feels like this happened yesterday in August. Now all of a sudden, it’s December or January! I don’t know how I got here. I don’t even know what year it is! I woke up and found myself tied up in the woods. I was able to escape, and that’s when you guys showed up. Like I explained, my last memory was being dropped off at college. I’m just as confused as you are. I don’t know what’s happened!”

Vinny seemed unconvinced, giving a slight frown. “Dylan, you need to stop trying to outsmart us. It won’t work. For the love of God, just admit that you stole from us.”

“Why do you keep saying I stole from you? What gives you that idea?” My voice sounded shrill, thick with fear and desperation.

Vinny replied, “Like I said, we got an anonymous phone call from someone claiming to be involved in the robbery. They said that we could find both the money *and* the person responsible for the robbery, tied up in the woods, exactly where we found you. And you happen to have a

bullet wound in your shoulder. So please, Dylan, don't lie to us. Just tell us the truth."

"Sir, I *am* telling you the truth. I swear! I want to help you. I just don't remember anything."

"Oh well. I tried to give you a fair chance," Vinny said, giving a slight shrug of his broad shoulders. "Tony, do whatever you gotta do to get him to talk."

As Vinny walked away, I cried out for his help. "No! Please, come back. Don't leave me with this monster! Please, Vinny!"

Tony quickly inserted the gag into my mouth. He then grabbed the electrified prod. The picana is a prod or wand that delivers high-voltage electric shocks at the push of a button. It's difficult to express in words the agony these shocks produce — they cause the body to violently convulse, and if a victim's mouth isn't stuffed with a piece of cloth, he or she might bite themselves to the point where they're unable to speak or eat.

Using the picana, Tony proceeded to interrogate me for the next several days. He asked the same questions repeatedly, and I gave him the same answers. When my answers failed to satisfy him, he moved the picana onto the most sensitive parts of my naked body—my lips, ears, genitals, nipples, abdomen, nose, and anus. The shocks made me scream, jerk, and shudder. I had never experienced such pain in my life. My skin became burned. I was barely conscious. I fought pain and delirium. I wished for death. I hadn't eaten anything in what seemed like days and

although Tony gave me water, it was never enough. I felt dehydrated and weak. I wasn't going to survive this much longer. I needed to find a way to make the pain stop. I had to convince Vinny that I was telling the truth.



The room where I was being kept looked like a torture chamber out of the Middle Ages: a scuffed, filthy floor, bare walls, and a sink with a faucet that dripped constantly. It looked like I was in some sort of abandoned factory, and they had locked me in the backroom. There were no windows, and the floor was made of raw concrete. The only source of light was a bare bulb that hung from the ceiling, the sort of thing you see in bad slasher movies.

When Vinny appeared, it had been several days since he last spoke to me. “Are you ready to talk now?” he asked.

“Vinny, somebody is trying to set me up. They framed me! I don't know what happened. But I'm just as much a victim as you are. Please, you have to believe me!”

“Dylan, I want to believe you. I have a son around your age, who is also a college student. But you're not making this easy for us. Why can't you just be honest?”

“Vinny, I *am* being honest. Go to my mom and ask her. She just dropped me off at Hamilton in August. Here, I'll give you her phone number. She will confirm everything I'm telling you.”

“Okay,” Vinny said, “Let’s give her a call.”

Once I gave Vinny my mother’s phone number, he called her right in front of me, using a gray smartphone. Surprisingly though, the number was disconnected. I heard a robotic woman speaking: “The number you dialed is incorrect or unavailable ...”

Vinny squinted at the phone, then glared at me, a deep scowl set on his narrow, oily face. “Oh great! Now you’re giving me phony numbers. I told you not to play games with us!”

“Can I see your phone, Vinny?” I asked. “I think you must’ve dialed it wrong. I just spoke to her recently.”

Vinny called her phone a second time. And once again, it appeared to be disconnected. This nearly sent me into a blind white panic. *Where the hell was my mother?*

“I’ve had it with you! I’m trying to give you a fair shake, Dylan, but you just keep lying to us. For a college kid, you’re a lot dumber than I expected.”

Vinny turned to Tony, saying with a wave of his arm, “Tony, he’s all yours.”

“No Vinny! I’m not lying! Why would I lie? Please!”

The tortured resumed. This time, Tony resorted to waterboarding me. He handcuffed me to a board placed on a modified gurney, tipped so that my head was near the ground. A black cloth was pulled over my head. While laid out on the gurney, Tony would pour water onto the

cloth, concentrating on my nose and mouth. The water pouring could last up to twenty seconds, then last another twenty seconds, then last forty seconds. During the water pouring, I felt like I was drowning, and my chest was about to explode from the lack of oxygen. I spasmed and vomited, squirming on the gurney as if having a seizure. Over the next several days, I pleaded and begged, screamed and cried. Yet none of it worked. The pain wouldn't stop.

At some point, I decided I'd had enough. I was angry, and I wasn't going to let Tony torture me without trying to stand up to him. While waterboarding me, Tony sometimes took a break to drink cold water and wipe the sweat from his face. I took this opportunity to say something to him.

"Tony, I'd like to tell you a story. There was a nine-year-old kid named Peter Bryant. He had a peeing problem and was ruthlessly teased with the nickname 'PEE-ter.' On the bus ride to and from school, he would be called names. I had no interest in joining along with the bullying. After all, I march to my own drumbeat. I'm not the kinda guy to go along with the crowd. However, one day on the bus to school, Peter had one of his peeing incidents. Everyone instantly laughed at him. At first, I didn't pay any attention, but then I noticed that his urine spread on the floor and got caught on my bookbag. When I noticed this, something possessed me into a rage. I got up and walked up to Peter, who was a few seats in front of me. I grabbed him by the hair and slammed his head against the window. Everybody stopped laughing. Peter looked at me in horror. It took a few seconds, but he began crying."

Tony looked confused. “So why are you telling me this?” he asked.

“Because, Tony, if I’m willing to smash someone’s head against a window for something as silly as getting my bookbag wet, what the fuck do you think I’m gonna do to you?”

Tony paused. “So you’re saying you want to kill me?”

“No, Tony. You’ve got it all wrong. I don’t *want* to kill you...I *will* kill you. Bet on it!”

Tony promptly removed me from the gurney. My weakened body fell to the ground. He handcuffed my hands behind my back and then shoved me against the wall. Tony then took off his pants and whispered into my ear, “You think you’re so tough. Well, you won’t be acting tough when I’m done with you.” And with that, Tony proceeded to rape me.