

# The Morgan Film

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“And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

President John F. Kennedy

# Chapter One

February 1969

A thin layer of blue smoke hung in the air inside the Philadelphia barroom that was filled with patrons ready to celebrate the end of the work week. Loud music poured from a jukebox as hustlers tried to outduel each other on the pool tables. Three slender waitresses wearing short skirts carried trays of beer and liquor to thirsty customers looking for a good time on a chilly Friday night.

Reporter Sean Dublin entered *Charlies* bar and rubbed his tired eyes. He paused at the entrance and scanned the room. He didn't see his contact, so he drifted toward an empty barstool and sat down on it. Jose, the bartender who seemed to work there every night, came over and placed a bottle of beer in front of Sean. "Thanks, Jose," said Sean. He laid down money on the table. "Hey, have you seen Moby in here tonight?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," said Jose. "But the night is young." He smiled at his friend before moving toward another customer. The bartender leaned in toward the lady to hear her better. He nodded and poured her some bourbon.

Sean looked up at the television above the bar. It showed images of a court room. "The trial of Clay Shaw continues in New Orleans," said a deep voice. "The businessman is accused of participating in a conspiracy to kill former president John F. Kennedy. District Attorney Jim Garrison pleaded his case with emotional tenacity."

“This whole damn thing’s a joke,” said a man sitting beside Sean. The heavy-set drinker kept the fingers of his right hand around his half-empty beer bottle. He faced a smaller man in a tan suit that feasted on peanuts from a plastic bowl. “Everyone knows Oswald did it and he did it alone. There’s no grand conspiracy.”

“Is that so?” asked the smaller man. “Then why did Ruby shoot him at the police station?” he asked. “And how did Ruby know where the cops were going to take Oswald? I’ll tell you how. Cause it was all a setup, and Oswald was the stooge.”

“You’re crazy,” said the heavy-set man. “There were a bunch of reporters at the police station. It would be easy to find him.” He sipped his beer and wiped his face with the back of his shirt sleeve. “Ruby wanted to be famous, and he knew that killing Oswald would make him famous. Just one bug killing another.”

“My nephew is in the Army,” said the smaller man. “And he told me that it would be impossible for Oswald to make those shots from that window.” He drank beer from his bottle and grabbed more peanuts. “Oswald had help. Simple as that.”

Sean picked up his beer bottle and turned away from the bar. He looked around the room again but still did not see the man he was planning to meet. He glanced at his wristwatch. It was just past 8 pm. Sean began to worry that this meeting might not happen.

A commotion by the front door drew Sean’s attention. He saw a nervous man in a black coat and torn blue jeans enter the bar with a satchel over his right shoulder. The new arrival bumped into two women with their backs to the door, and the ladies spilled their drinks. The women chastised the man for his clumsiness. The man reached into his pants pocket and pulled

out a ten-dollar bill. One of the women took the bill before telling the man that he needed to be more careful. The man apologized and did his best to get away from them.

Sean intercepted the man and put a hand on his right shoulder. “Moby, you need to learn how to enter a room without making a scene,” said Sean. The men smiled and shook hands. Sean spotted an empty table. “C’mon, let’s sit down.”

The men sat cross from each other, and Moby put the satchel down beside him. Sean leaned toward his friend. “Do you have what I asked for?” asked Sean. Moby nodded. He opened the satchel and pulled out a manila folder. He slid the folder across the table to Sean.

“Now you didn’t get this from me, right?” asked Moby. He scratched his chin and looked around the room. “I don’t want any trouble.” He sat back in his chair. “Man, what do you have to do to get a drink in here?” he asked.

Sean pushed his unopened beer bottle toward Moby. “Here, have mine,” he said. Sean opened the folder and glanced at some of the papers inside of it. He smiled widened. “This is great,” he said. “Really great stuff.”

Moby opened the bottle and drank the beer. “I’m glad you like it,” he said. “Now I’d like my money so I can get the hell out of here.”

Sean was too engrossed in the papers to register Moby’s request. He scanned some pages more closely. “This confirms my suspicions. Councilman Tom Coreman is one corrupt bastard. Look at all these jobs that went to his friends.” He let out an excited laugh. “Bribes, kickbacks, no-bid contracts. This guy was in it up to his ears.”

“Yeah, he’s been living the good life while most of us struggle to pay our bills,” said Moby. “Speaking of that, don’t you have something for me?” he asked.

Sean looked up at Moby. “Oh, right,” he said. “Sorry.” Sean reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a small, white envelope. He handed it to Moby. “Enjoy it in good health.”

Moby glanced inside the envelope before he stuffed it into one of his pockets. “I’m glad I could help. Keep me in mind if you need anything else. But if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to try to make it home before I get mugged.” Moby rose and disappeared into the crowd.

Sean studied the papers closely. Moby had delivered him copies of city government documents that proved Coreman’s involvement in illegal activities. There was more than enough evidence to secure an indictment. Sean gathered up the papers and put them back into the folder. He zipped up his coat and moved joyously toward the front door.

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The manual typewriter clinked under Sean’s fingers as he typed out his story for the *Philadelphia Colonial*. The daily newspaper was the second largest in the City of Brotherly Love, and Sean aspired to rise up through the ranks to become the city editor. He knew that stories like this one would help him get there. He just needed to be patient.

It took over an hour to finish writing his article. Sean reread it four times, making small corrections in pencil. He sat back in his office chair and smiled at his accomplishment. At this late hour, he was the only person in the newsroom. A cleaning lady had come by earlier, but she had finished her rounds and was long gone.

Sean excitedly rushed to his editor's office. The door was locked, but there was a slot in the door for stories to be dropped off. Sean carefully put his article into the slot, and he heard it land in an in-box on top of a filing cabinet. He spun and jogged down the stairs toward the exit in the front of the building.

The reporter was too excited to go to his lonely apartment, so he walked the four blocks back to *Charlies*. It was more crowded than earlier. Sean slipped past the other partiers as he made his way to the bar. He saw Jose, and his friend placed a fresh bottle of beer on the counter in front of him. Sean paid for the drink. He lifted the bottle and drank the beer. Sean turned around and looked over the people around him.

He spotted three women standing near the juke box. Sean felt the need for human companionship. He drifted over to the ladies and smiled at them. "Great song," he said to the woman closest to him. She was a brunette with short hair and slender legs.

"I don't really like it," she said. "It's too mellow for me. I like songs that make you move your body." She shook her hips to accentuate her point. "I like to move my body."

"I can see why," said Sean. Though he had no idea what song was playing on the juke box, he moved his head in rhythm to the slow song. He looked past the first girl and smiled at the other two. They were both blondes, but one was much shorter than the other. "How are you ladies doing?" he asked.

The taller blond smiled at him, while the shorter one rolled her eyes and walked away from the group. Sean inched closer to the taller blonde. "I think I offended your friend," he said.

"Don't worry about her," said the taller blonde. "She just broke up with her boyfriend and she's in a really bad mood." She offered a friendly hand. "I'm Kathy," she said.

Sean shook her hand. "I'm Sean," he replied. He glanced at the departed woman before he turned back toward Kathy. "I don't think she's coming back," he said.

"Good," said Kathy. "She was a real bummer anyway." Kathy drank beer from a bottle in her right hand. "We tried to raise her spirits by bringing her here, but that didn't work."

Sean noticed that the brunette had abandoned them too. The slow song ended, and an upbeat tune replaced it. "This is a good song," said Sean. "Would you like to dance?"

Kathy shrugged. "There's not enough room here with all these people," she said. "How about we grab a table instead?" She pointed to a nearby table. "That one is free."

They slithered through the crowd and got the table before anyone else could take it. Sean pulled the chair out for Kathy before sitting across from her. He took a deep breath and tried to relax. His eyes landed on Kathy's.

"I haven't seen you or your friends here before," said Sean.

Kathy smiled. "We don't normally hang around this part of town," she said. She pushed a lock of hair away from her face. "But we wanted to try something new."

"What do you think of the place?" asked Sean. He sipped more beer.

Kathy shrugged. "It's okay, I guess." She looked around the room before settling back on Sean. "It's a bit cozier than what I'm used to." She rested her hands in her lap.

Sean nodded. "Yeah, it's a dump," he said. "But it's our neighborhood bar and the drinks are pretty good." He smiled. "The people are nice."

"You live around here?" asked Kathy.



“Yeah, just a few blocks away,” he said. “And my office is nearby too.”

Kathy looked intrigued. “What do you do for a living?” she asked.

Sean tilted his head slightly to his right. “I’m a newspaper reporter,” he said. “I write for the *Colonial*. Mostly political stuff.” He drank more beer and rested the bottle on the table.

Kathy’s smile widened. “I’m studying Journalism at Temple University,” she said. She leaned closer toward Sean. “I want to be a newspaper reporter.” She paused and shrugged. “My parents wanted me to be a nurse or a teacher, but I love to write, and I love newspapers.”

Sean picked up his bottle and tapped Kathy’s. “Welcome to the world of newspaper reporting,” he said. “It can be exciting, but you have to start with dull stuff, like covering township meetings, and writing obituaries, and interviewing the winner of the county hog contest.”

Kathy lowered her eyebrows. “Winner of the what?” she asked.

“Don’t laugh,” said Sean. “That was one of my first stories. I had to travel to Bucks County and interview the owner of a hog that won a skills contest. I knew it wouldn’t win me a Pulitzer Prize, but you have to start somewhere.”

Sean and Kathy interviewed each other for another half-hour until Kathy’s friends showed up at their table. Sean politely rose and Kathy got to her feet. Kathy extended her right hand and Sean shook it. “It was nice meeting you, Sean,” said Kathy. “I have to take them home. Maybe I’ll see you around sometime.”

“That would be great,” said Sean. “Drive carefully.” He remained standing until the three women disappeared into the crowd. Sean sat down and rubbed his forehead. His eyes burned and felt heavy. He knew it was time to go home.

Sean walked over to the bar, and he waved at Jose. The bartender rushed over to his friend. “I think I’ll call it a night,” said Sean. He shook hands with Jose.

“You struck out with the blonde?” asked Jose. He leaned on the bar.

Sean laughed. “I wouldn’t say that. We had a nice time talking. Besides, she was too young for me. Still in college.” He gently slapped Jose’s right shoulder. “Take care. I’m going home to my lonely bed.”

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Sean walked into the newsroom on Monday morning and found a copy of that day’s paper on his desk. His corruption story was the lead on the front page. He sat down and read the story as colleagues stopped by to congratulate him. Sean leaned back in his seat and stared at his byline. He still got chills whenever he saw his name in print.

The phone on his desk rang. “This is Sean,” he said, answering it. He kept his eyes on the headline. He made a mental note to send a copy of the front page to his father.

“Sean, it’s Barry,” said the voice on the phone. “Please come to my office.” The caller hung up and Sean replaced the receiver onto the base. He rose, pushed his chair in, and confidently walked toward the city editor’s office.

Sean knocked on the door and entered after hearing Barry’s reply. The editor sat behind a handsome desk that was cluttered with papers, folders, news clips and a rotary phone. Barry

looked the part of a city editor. He was sixty years old, with thin, white hair, and a bulge around his midsection. “Sit down, Sean,” he said, as he pointed to the empty chair in front of the desk.

“Your story on Councilman Coreman has caused quite a stir,” said Barry. “We’ve gotten calls from city council members, the DA’s office, and the mayor’s office.” Barry happily slapped his desktop. “Damn fine work, my boy,” he said.

Sean nodded. “I’m glad you liked it.” He eased back into the chair. “I learned from the best.” Sean glanced at the awards on the wall behind Barry. As a reporter and editor, Barry had won numerous accolades, but the one that eluded him was the Pulitzer Prize. Sean knew that ate a hole in his boss’s gut, and that pushed Barry to cultivate a protégé.

An eerie quiet permeated the room for a moment. Sean sensed danger.

“Sean, you’ve done some terrific work at this newspaper,” said Barry. He slowly rose to his feet and moved toward the front of the desk. “I think your skills and experience could be a great benefit to others. That’s why I selected you to participate in our paper’s mentor program.”

Sean rolled his eyes. “I appreciate the thought, boss, but I’m only 28-years-old,” said Sean. “We have reporters here with far more experience than I have. Wouldn’t it be better to let one of them become a mentor?”

Barry rested a hand on Sean’s right shoulder. “You are the best choice,” said Barry. “Now I know that you prefer to work alone, but think of this as an opportunity to grow as a journalist. Part of that growth is learning how to work with others.”

Sean laughed. “Let me guess, you’ve already asked other reporters to do this, and they all turned you down.” He narrowed his eyes. “How many? Six, seven?” he asked.

Barry cleared his throat. "You would be number nine." Sean raised a hand in protest, but Barry cut him off. "Look, we have an agreement with a local college to offer mentors to their students and I really need you to do this." He turned and walked toward his office door. Sean rose and followed him. "It's good for the community," said Barry. "And it's good PR for the newspaper."

Barry exited the office with Sean on his heels. They walked quietly through the busy newsroom until they entered a break room. Barry closed the door behind them.

Sean stopped dead in his tracks when he saw a tall, blond woman rise from a chair in the breakroom. He didn't say anything.

Barry offered a hand to the woman. "Thank you for waiting," he said. The editor turned back toward Sean. "This is Kathy Cooper," said Barry. "Kathy, this is Sean Dublin, one of our best newspaper reporters."

Sean uneasily shook Kathy's hand as they said hello to each other.

"Sean wrote today's front-page story," said Barry. "I think you will find working with him to be extremely educational."

"I'm sure I will," said Kathy. "Thank you again for this opportunity." She glanced at Sean but said no more.

"I'll let you two get acquainted," said Barry. "Sean, show her around the newsroom. Introduce her to our staff. Get her feet wet." The editor smiled at Sean and left the breakroom.

"Well, this is awkward," said Kathy. She nervously adjusted her blouse.

“Very much so,” said Sean. “Thank you for not mentioning how we met.” He motioned toward the door with his right hand. “C’mon, I’ll give you the grand tour.”