

# The Twins: A Psychological Thriller

**Book 1, Volume 1**

Rale Miller

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THE TWINS: A PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

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Written by Rale Miller.

This work is dedicated to my family and the loving memory of  
Flossie M. Thomas

I would like to thank, Kay Mitchell for his keen insight.

contact info. [rlemiller@gmail.com](mailto:rlemiller@gmail.com)

<http://www.rgthriller.com>



May 1, 10:40 am  
Shreveport, Louisiana.



“STACEY! JANNIFER! WHAT are you two doing up there?” Terry McHill shouted up to his daughters. “We’re coming, Dad,” they shouted back in unison. Today was Stacey and Jannifer’s thirteenth birthday. They were identical in every way: from looks to movements. The twins brushed their hair with the exact number of strokes. They stared at their reflections in the mirror, smiled, and then finger-waved at themselves. The twins turned toward one another and, in perfect unison, said, “Happy birthday, sister.” Then they ran from their bathroom toward the staircase for the last time.

“We’re coming, Daddy.”

Terry and Linda watched as their daughters raced down the stairs.

“Happy birthday!” Terry and Linda shouted at their daughters as they hopped off the last step. “Who wants their present first?” Terry said to his smiling daughters. The twins jumped up and down. “Me. Me!” they said together.

Stacey turned toward her sister. “I got you by forty-five seconds,” she said. Then she playfully shoulder-bumped her sister for good measure. Everyone laughed. Linda, standing next to her husband, reached into her back pocket and removed a small box. “Happy birthday, sweetie,” she said to her eldest child. Stacey removed a beautiful gold tennis bracelet from the box.

“It’s beautiful,” Stacey cooed.

“Read the inscription, baby.” Stacey twisted the bracelet around and read the inscription aloud, “*To our beautiful twin daughter, Stacey.*”

“Me next, me next!” Jannifer shouted as she danced in place. Linda gave her youngest daughter the same bracelet.

“We love you, Mommy and Daddy.”

“Now, we need you two to close your eyes,” Linda said. Terry counted down from three; then, he flung open the front door. “Surprise!”

Stacey and Jannifer were awestruck. Terry and Linda had turned their front and backyards into a mini three-ring circus. Two mimes approached them as soon as the twins stepped outside and did their mime routine. Stacey and Jannifer squealed with delight. Linda said, “Are you two surprised?” The twins both nodded their heads, too overwhelmed to speak. Terry placed a party hat on Jannifer’s head, and Linda did the same for Stacey. All of Stacey and Jannifer’s friends from the local church were there—everyone had a magical time.

Terry and Linda watched their daughters say their prayers; a loud noise interrupted their solemn moment.

“What was that?” Linda asked her husband.

Terry looked at his wife and said, “A raccoon probably bumped into the door. I’ll go check it out.” Terry stepped out of the room and closed the door. A minute later, Linda and the twins heard shouting from the living room below. Linda stood up and walked over toward the door.

The twins were visibly shuddering. “It’s okay, girls... I’m going to go downstairs and check on your father.”

“No, Mommy, please don’t go!” the twins pleaded.

Linda hugged and kissed her daughters, “It’s fine, girls; I’ll be right back.”

Linda’s jaw dropped as soon as she got to the staircase.

Her husband was lying on the carpet, shaking as if he were having a seizure. The mime that the McHills hired to entertain the children earlier that day stood over Terry. He was cutting Terry’s clothing off with a knife. The mime also held a Taser in his right hand. The pantomime was naked except for the cellophane that covered his body. The intruder looked up at Linda McHill and smiled. His makeup was different; it looked monstrous.

“What are you doing to him?” Linda shouted as she raced down the stairs. “Leave him alone!” When a second mime exited from the hall closet, Linda stopped in her tracks. He, too, was naked, except for the cellophane wrapped around his body. The second mime wore a black party hat on his head, and his makeup was also hideous.

Linda's blood ran cold when the intruder said, “I wanna play with the twins.” Linda looked up toward her daughter's bedroom. Stacey and Jannifer were standing at the top of the staircase. “Run, Stacey! Take your sister—” The second intruder grabbed Linda by the hair and dragged her away from the stairs. The twins stood rooted at the top of the staircase. “Come on down, girls. Don't you wanna play?” the intruder growled.

The twins could not hear him.

The second intruder strolled toward the staircase and beckoned the girls to come down. Stacey and Jannifer McHill could not see him.

The twins' hearts were racing, but they could not feel it. Although the twins' eyes were wide open, they were conscious of nothing.

χ



Upper Manhattan, New York City  
May 1, 4:35 am  
Three Years Later



ANTHONY JENKINS SR. sat at the window inside his second-floor apartment, watching his son conduct a drug deal. *Damn drugs messed up the neighborhood*, he thought as he stared down at his boy.

Mr. Jenkins had lived at the Wagner Housing Complex for the past thirty-five years. His beloved wife had died while sitting in the chair that Mr. Jenkins sat in. She had a heart attack after watching her eldest son's murder. He died three feet from where Mr. Jenkins' youngest son now stood. "Damn drugs done messed up the neighborhood," he said. Mr. Jenkins watched as two teenage girls approached his son. *Crackheads*. The trio entered the building. "He's going to take those girls up to the roof." Last week, four young people were thrown from the rooftop of his building. Mr. Jenkins had warned his surviving son that he would come after him if he ever went up to the roof. Forty-five minutes later, Mr. Jenkins grabbed his keys and cell phone and stormed out of his apartment.

At the elevator, the two female crackheads stumbled out. The girls said nothing as they walked, arm in arm, out of the elevator and toward the back staircase. Mr. Jenkins shook his head. *Damn, drugs messed up everybody*. The elevator stalled on the eleventh floor. He forced the door open and walked the rest of the way up.

Mr. Jenkins had to step over human feces as if he were in a mine-field. “Damn drugs,” he muttered through clenched teeth. At the roof door lay a pile of human waste. Mr. Jenkins stepped over it and opened the door. He noticed his son sitting on a metal chair. His back was facing him. He also saw that his son's clothing was cut and tossed around the chair. He called out his son's name.

He got no answer.

Mr. Jenkins moved closer. A black party hat sat on his son's head, and there were empty spools of duct tape in front of the chair. He called out his son's name again.

No answer.

As soon as Mr. Jenkins came face-to-face with his son, the old man's hair turned snow-white from fright. His screams caught in his throat as he backed away from his son's body. Mr. Jenkins ran toward the door. He heard his ankle pop when he slipped on the human feces he had maneuvered around only minutes ago. The old man tumbled down the concrete steps, rolling through human filth. A used needle had lodged into his right hand and feces covered the left before his back smashed against the wall. Mr. Jenkins pulled the needle from his hand and retrieved his cell phone, which had fallen from his pocket and landed in a puddle of urine. He dialed 9-1-1. Mr. Jenkins felt a sharp pain in his chest.

The operator on the other end said, “9-1-1? What's your emergency?”

## 2



Detective Iris Williams rubbed the knuckles on her right hand as one of her colleagues held her back. A young rookie detective staggered to his feet.

“You, crazy bitch, you broke my nose!” the rookie shouted.

Iris glared at the young fool. “The next time, you’ll think twice,” she said as she tried to take another swing at the rookie.

“Iris, take it easy; he’s had enough,” her colleague whispered. She pulled away from her fellow officer and angrily marched toward the restroom.

Iris slammed the door behind her. She gripped the sides of the sink with both hands and shook it. She stopped when a piece of plaster fell to the floor. Today, the sink at the Double 0 precinct in Harlem took the brunt of the detective’s anger. Someone had talked the young rookie into doing something foolish. He’d taped a tampon dipped in ketchup onto her locker. She had caught him in the act. Iris knew most of her male counterparts were jealous of her success within the department.

She stared at her reflection in the mirror, which had a long crack running down the middle. The damage was from her last outburst. As Detective Williams stared at her reflection, her mother’s voice invaded her mind: *you can’t let them get to you, baby*. Iris ran her hand through her short, platinum afro; she’d been suspended twice for striking a fellow officer. Iris sat on the banged-up toilet seat. Another inanimate object that took the brunt of her anger. She placed her hands over her face; emotions stirred deep within her. Iris took a deep breath; *I won’t cry, I won’t cry*.

Detective Iris Williams has been on the force for fourteen years. Her arrest and convictions are the highest the department has seen in the last twenty years. Some say she's obsessed with being a detective—it was true. Iris swallowed hard, stood up, and stared at her reflection again. She thought about her anger management counselor and what he would say about her loss of control. Or her shrink, Dr. Wilcox. *She's going to kill me*, Iris thought.

Today was not starting right for the detective. Aside from what had happened in the locker room, Iris would be getting a new partner today—something she dreaded.

A psychotic woman had killed her last partner: his wife. The woman thought Iris and her husband were having an affair, which they were. Iris had dropped her partner off in front of his apartment building after they'd had sex at the Lincoln Tunnel Hotel in North Bergen, New Jersey. Her partner had promised his wife he would take her to a nice restaurant that evening. His wife had other plans for Iris' lover.

As soon as he stepped out of Iris' Durango, the wife burst from their apartment building, brandishing one of his guns. She'd fired the weapon striking her husband in the face. She'd then pointed the gun at Iris and pulled the trigger, but the gun misfired. With the quickness of a gunslinger, Iris freed her Glock and squeezed off two rounds. One bullet tore through the woman's left eye, and the other hit her in the throat. She died four hours later at Mount Sinai Hospital. The boys at 1 P.P. (1 Police Plaza) ruled the shooting justified.

Iris did not want a new partner. Not today, not never. But her mentor, boss, and friend, Lt. Leroy Stone, insisted it was time.

Iris chewed on her bottom lip as she stared at her reflection. She picked up the habit fourteen years ago after her mother died. "Iris, are you all right in there?" someone called out from the other side of the door.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Iris looked inside the sink. She stared at the rust-colored water stain that had formed around the drain. Iris turned on

the faucet and waited for the water to clear up. She placed her hands under the tap and splashed the water onto her face. Iris reached for the towel dispenser, but it was empty. Iris rubbed her hands over her butt; then, she passed her hands through her hair. She stared at her reflection again and tried to smile, but it looked as if she was in pain. Iris opened the door and marched out of the restroom. She spoke to no one as she headed toward the exit of the Double 0 precinct.



DETECTIVE ANDREW S. Taylor pulled his BMW into the parking area at the Double 0 precinct. Today was his first day as a homicide detective. He gripped the steering wheel so hard that his knuckles had turned white. “Ffuckk!” he shouted at himself. “You’re such an asshole!” Taylor shook the steering wheel as he cursed himself.

Taylor had been transferred out of the 7-5 in East New York, Brooklyn. The hookers in the neighborhood had all signed a petition to have the detective removed from the precinct. They’d promised to march on the big house—One Police Plaza—if their demands weren’t met; Detective Andrew Taylor was transferred to the Double 0.

The last thing in the world Taylor wanted to be was a cop. But coming from a family of cops, he had no choice. Taylor sat inside his vehicle, fuming. He removed his keys from the ignition and cursed at himself again. Taylor stepped out of his BMW. The detective was deep in thought when he bumped into a lady.

“Hey, watch where the hell you’re goin’, fool!” the angry lady shouted.

“I’m so sorry; please forgive me.”

“Whatcha need is a freakin’ seein’-eye dog.”

“I said I was sorry, lady.”

“Fuck your sorry, asshole!” the lady shouted as she wiped the hot coffee off her blouse.

“Well, fuck you too,” he said.

The lady shot him a killer look. “What did you say?”

“You heard what I said.” Taylor could not get over how beautiful the lady was. Even when angered, the woman seemed to ooze sex appeal.

“I’m out of here,” Taylor said as he flung open the door to the Double O.

“You better go, creep.” She took a swing at the air.

Taylor stopped in front of a large desk that sat on a platform. He had to look up at the sergeant who sat behind it. “Detective Andrew Taylor reporting for duty.”

The desk sergeant looked down at the detective and said, “One moment, Detective.” As Detective Taylor waited, he thought about the lady he’d argued with moments ago. *Pretty, but mean.*

“Detective Taylor,” the sergeant called out. The desk sergeant’s voice brought the detective out of his daydream.

“Yes, sir.”

“You are to report to Lt. Stone, homicide, on the third floor,” the sergeant muttered and pointed toward the stairwell without looking at the detective.

“Thanks.”

Detective Taylor tapped on Lt. Leroy Stone’s door. The lieutenant sat behind a mahogany desk. He’d been on the phone when Taylor arrived. Lt. Stone was a big man. He stood at six feet one and weighed two hundred and twenty pounds. His head was bald, and he sported a thick goatee.

He had Detective Taylor’s file in front of him. Stone waved him in. “Have a seat; I’ll be with you in a second.” Taylor nervously sat down in a small wing chair. *Is that my file?* Taylor thought. *Of course, stupid...*

Lt. Stone hung up the phone and stared at the detective. *He knows* Taylor thought as he shifted from one butt cheek to the other in the small wing chair.

“So, you spent all your career at the 7-5 in Brooklyn?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Four years, huh?” Lt. Stone stared at Taylor, who wore a fifteen-hundred-dollar suit. The detective was thirty-five years old but could easily pass for twenty-five.

“Yes, sir. Four years.”

“It says here that you put in for a transfer.”

“Yes, sir.”

Lt. Stone closed Taylor’s file and stared at the detective again. “So, you’re looking for a change?”

Relieved the incident with the hookers had been removed from his file, Detective Taylor shifted in his seat again. *I hate this job, and I want to fucking quit, he thought.* “Yes, sir, a change is what I’m looking for.”

“Well, a change is what you’re going to get. I’m going to partner you up with the best female... well, she’s the best damn detective in the city.”

“Female, sir?” Taylor asked.

“Yes, detective, a female. Do you have a problem with that?”

“No, sir,” Taylor replied.

“Good.” At that moment, there was a tap on the door. The woman he’d encountered earlier entered the room. “Iris, come on in,” Stone said. Iris looked at Taylor. He jumped to his feet when the detective walked into Stone’s office.

“Oh, hell no, this can’t be him.” Iris turned toward Lt. Stone. “Sir, tell me this is not my new partner... please.”

“I’m not working with this crazy lady,” Taylor said. He stared at Detective Williams.

Iris balled her hand into a fist. “This asshole made me spill hot coffee all over myself. I could’ve burnt my nipples off.”

“Children behave,” Stone said as he tried to hide his laughter. He shook his head; then, he got serious, “Listen, you two will be working

with each other, and I want you to play nice.” Lt. Stone looked directly at Iris. “Do you understand me, young lady?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Sit down, both of you.” Just then, Stone’s landline rang. He picked it up; then, he searched for a pen. Iris found one under Taylor’s file and gave it to her boss. The lieutenant wrote on a piece of paper. He hung up the phone and handed the piece of paper to Iris. “We got one, Wagner project. The M.E. is already at the scene. The shit is nasty.” Stone said.

Iris jumped out of her seat. “I’m on it, sir.” She and her new partner headed for the door.

“Iris!” Stone called out.

“Yes, sir?”

“Heard what happened down in the locker room this morning.”

Iris looked at the floor. She had no comment.

“Don’t worry about it. I was told that the little prick deserved it.”

“Yes, sir, he did.”

Stone smiled at his favorite detective and waved her out of his office.

Taylor followed Iris as she marched down the path that led to the stairwell. She stopped by her desk and picked up a 5x8 picture frame. The picture was that of an older lady. Iris kissed the photo; then picked up another small picture frame; a teenage girl smiled. Iris kissed that one too. There was also a photo of a smiling middle-aged woman. She stared at the picture for a few seconds, then sighed. “C’mon, dude, let’s go.”

Outside, Iris said, “We’re using my ride, and we’ll always use my ride, got that?”

“Yeah, whatever,” Taylor said as he hopped inside Iris’ Durango. Iris placed her key into the ignition and started her truck. The vehicle came to life and took off toward the crime scene.

Detective Iris Williams, who was originally from Far-Rockaway Queens, loved Harlem. The feel, the sounds of this new Harlem, was a turn-on for the detective. Gone are the days of the street hustler. Harlem was more diverse now.

“Look, man, I’m sorry for how I spoke to you earlier,” Iris said to her new partner. Taylor did not respond. He stared at the people on the street as Iris’ Durango sped toward the crime scene. “Hey, I said I was sorry.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” Iris hit the brakes on her vehicle, and Taylor’s whole body launched forward. “Look, if we going be partners, we’re going have to be civil to one another, like it or not.”

“What the hell are you doing? Are you crazy?” he said. Motorists honked their horns. “O.K., I got it. Can we get moving now?”

“Yeah, now can we get moving?”

Taylor stared at his new partner like she was crazy.

“And if we’re going to be partners, we’re going to have to be straight with each other. We can’t bullshit one another. You got my back, and I got yours...” Iris paused and stared at her new partner. “Just don’t lie to me or do anything stupid to embarrass me, and we’ll be o.k., you got that?”

Taylor nodded his head, “Yeah, I got that.”

“Oh, and one more thing. Fasten your damn seat belt.” Iris parked her truck behind a crime scene investigator’s van. She looked over at Taylor. *He’s cute*, Iris thought. Taylor’s sandy brown hair was freshly cut. He was slim and stood at five feet, ten inches tall. Iris figured that he was about one hundred and fifty pounds and that they were about the same age. Taylor had no facial hair, which made him even more attractive. *He looks exactly like Tom Brady. But I will never get involved with a fellow officer again*, she thought as she switched off the ignition and removed the key. “You ready? Earth to Taylor... earth to Taylor, come in, Taylor.”

Taylor whipped his head in Iris' direction. "I'm sorry, did you say something?"

"Get your head in the game, man. It's detective time."

### 3



“Stacey! Janny! Get up! You all know we got to see that lawyer this morning,” Aunt Jackie shouted to her nieces. “It’s money day!” Aunt Jackie marched into the twins’ bedroom. The twins were awake, and Stacey was applying makeup to Jannifer’s face. “Oh, my bad, I didn’t know y’all were already up.” Aunt Jackie leaned against the door-jamb and stared at her nieces.

The twins said nothing, nor did they acknowledge their aunt.

“I know my sister couldn’t have shown you how to do that because she was all thumbs when it came to applying makeup. That’s some professional shit you’re doing, Stacey.” The twin said nothing as she continued to work on her sister’s face.

Jackie Dubois had adopted the twins six months earlier. She was the twins’ maternal aunt.

Jackie Dubois was a heavy-set woman in her middle forties. She had no children of her own. After her sister and brother-in-law were killed, Jackie had put in the paperwork to adopt her nieces. It took two-and-a-half years to get custody of her nieces; her drug problem was the reason. Aunt Jackie stayed clean long enough to get full custody, but now...

“Listen, before we leave, I want you two to go downstairs.”

Stacey and Jannifer hated going downstairs.

“I’m going give you some money, Stacey, to give to Tray.” Aunt Jackie disappeared. When she returned, she was holding an envelope full of cash. “Give this to Tray, and he’s going give you something for me. Y’all know I can’t function without my medicine.” That’s what Aunt Jackie called her drugs. She held out the envelope to Stacey. “Here.”

Stacey stopped doing Jannifer's face, and both twins looked at their aunt.

"C'mon, Stacey," Aunt Jackie pleaded. "I don't feel so good."

Stacey and her sister hated buying drugs for their aunt. Stacey snatched the envelope from her aunt's hand.

"Thanks," Aunt Jackie said with a smile. "Now hurry up, 'cause we got to get over to that lawyer's office... 'cause it's money day," she said as she did a little dance.

Terry and Linda McHill had left a will, which stipulated that their twin daughters would receive all their holdings if anything happened to them. The McHill's were worth over 10.6 million dollars. Terry and Linda McHill also stipulated that their daughters' legal guardians could borrow from the McHill's estate, provided the money was for the twins' benefit. Aunt Jackie had plans for the money she would borrow today, but so did Stacey and Jannifer.

Aunt Jackie returned to the twins' room to find Jannifer doing Stacey's face. "C'mon, you two..." Aunt Jackie pleaded, "For God's sake, Janny, she looks okay. Now would you please go and get my medicine?"

The twins stared at their aunt and said, "We're going."

"Good." Aunt Jackie stepped out of the twins' bedroom and disappeared down the hall again. Stacey and Jannifer checked each other out. The twins didn't need a mirror—they were their own mirrors. Stacey and Jannifer had short brown, curly hair, black pupils, and a light brown complexion. Stacey's makeup was flawless, and so was Jannifer's. Stacey wore a tight-fitting black mini with a pair of white New Balance running shoes. Jannifer wore a pair of white Apple Bottom jeans and a pink and white tank top—she too wore a pair of New Balance running shoes.

"We're leaving now," the twins said in unison.

"Please, hurry up," Aunt Jackie said from her bedroom.

Five minutes later, Stacey and Jannifer re-entered their aunt's apartment and gave her the drugs. "Here," they said as Jannifer handed her the drugs. "We're going to the store, Aunt Jackie—we'll be right back."

Stacey and Jannifer stood in front of their aunt's apartment building at West 147th Street and rechecked their makeup. They walked away from the apartment building for the last time, carrying the money their aunt had given them to buy her drugs.



AS SOON AS IRIS EXITED her vehicle, she shouted, "Hey, you!" Pointing at a male officer. "Make sure that those people stay beyond the barrier." Detective Taylor watched his new partner as she checked every officer on her way toward the crime scene.

"Are you always so... so..." Taylor was trying to find the right words. He didn't want to alienate his hot-tempered partner. "... Forceful?"

"Yes," Iris said as she stopped in front of a male police officer standing guard at the building's entrance. "You have to be. That's the only way you'll get respect. Don't forget that, rookie."

"I won't," Taylor said as he walked into the building behind Iris. The detectives walked up to an elevator where another police officer was standing. "Whatcha got?" Iris asked.

The police officer flipped open her notepad and said, "We got the body of an elderly man in the stairwell on the sixteenth floor and another one on the roof. The medical examiner is up there now."

"Any witnesses?" Iris asked.

"Nobody came forward. You know how these people can be."

Iris pushed the button for the elevator as she glared at the officer.

"Sir... I mean, Detective, I didn't mean for that to sound..." the officer paused.

"I know what you meant, Officer." Iris pushed the button for the elevator again.

“Detective, the elevator’s broken.”

“So, I’m going have to walk sixteen floors?”

The police officer shrugged her shoulders. “Detective, one more thing.” The officer removed her hat and blotted her brow.

“What is it, Officer?”

“Well... it’s the body.”

Williams pulled open the door to the stairwell and said, “It’s nothing I haven’t seen before, Officer.”

*You’ve seen nothing like what you’re about to see, Ms. Big Time Detective.*

The smell inside the stairwell got worse with each step the detectives took. “My God, it stinks in here,” Taylor complained just before he covered his mouth and nose with both hands.

“You’ll get used to it,” Iris said as she ascended the steps.

“You’ve been doing this too long, Williams.”

On the tenth floor, the detectives heard the crackling sound of radios. Taylor kept his eyes glued to the concrete steps as he avoided the human filth that littered the stairwell. “This is disgusting,” he said.

On the sixteenth floor, two young technicians were staring down at the body of an older man. “Detective Williams, what’s up?” one of them asked.

“Whatcha got, Dean?”

“Mr. Anthony Jenkins, age sixty-seven...” The young technician paused as he looked at Detective Taylor, who looked like he was in pain. “Is he going be all right?” the tech asked Iris. Iris turned to look at her new partner. “This is Detective Taylor; he’s my new partner.”

The technician continued, “C.O.D. seems to have been a massive heart attack.” Taylor stared at the feces that covered the dead man’s hands.

“Raymond is on the roof with the other body,” the tech said to Iris. “And get this: the body on the roof is the old man’s son.” Iris looked at the older man’s body and shook her head.

“The body on the roof is really messed up, Detective.”

Iris looked at her partner. “C’mon, Taylor. Let’s go have a look, shall we.” Taylor stepped over a pile of shit that someone had stepped in. As he stepped onto the roof, he wiped off his clothes; then ran his fingers through his hair.

“You okay, Taylor?” Iris said, grinning.

“What the hell are you grinning at?”

“Take it easy, dude, I was just...”

“Just what?”

“Never mind.” The first thing that Iris noticed was the boy's clothing. They were all cut up. The body was sitting upright on a cushion-less metal chair. A forensic photographer frowned as she took pictures of the victim's body. When Iris reached the body, what she saw made her bones quake, she turned away from the victim and took a deep breath. Taylor threw up all over the female photographer's shoes.

Iris took a deep breath and turned to face the victim.



Tanya Jamerson stepped out of the subway station at 125<sup>th</sup> Street and looked around. She was there to meet Stacey and Jannifer McHill. Still, on the most famous street in America, the early morning crowd made it nearly impossible to spot the girls. Tanya, who was the mother of four, worked at the DMV. And with four mouths to feed, she did whatever she had to do to keep food on the table.

“Tanya! Hey, Mommy, over here!” a voice called out to her. Tanya whipped her head left, then right. She spotted the girls standing in front of Payless Shoes, a few feet from the DMV building.

“Hi, Mamí,” Jannifer said in a perfect Latino accent. “I’m glad you could make it.”

Tanya looked at Stacey. She’d seen the girls around the neighborhood, but they’d never spoken to one another. The young mother was curious to know what the girls wanted with her.

The morning sun was hot for early May. Tanya wiped the sweat from her forehead. “So, what can I do for you two?”

Jannifer went straight to the point. “We need you to get two non-driver’s licenses for us.” Stacey removed two wallet-size photos, one of herself and one of Jannifer, and held them toward Tanya.

Tanya stared at it. She stood approximately twenty feet from her job, and this was making her nervous. “What’re you talking about? I don’t know what people have told you, but.”

Stacey still had the photos in her hand.

“Will you please put those away?” Tanya snapped at Stacey.

“Watch your tone, Mamí,” Jannifer said to the young woman, her brow knitted. Jannifer held out an envelope. It was full of cash.

“What’s this for?”

“It’s for you, Mamí.”

“How much is in there?” Usually, Tanya got three hundred dollars for forging documents and creating fake licenses.

“A thou.”

“A what?” Tanya felt sweat sliding down from her armpits. She snatched the envelope out of Jannifer’s hand and stuffed it into her purse. Tanya knew she was being watched at her job, but greed had consumed her. “Y’all need two, right?”

Stacey, again, held out the photos. “Here, you’re going to need these.”

This time Tanya took them. “There’s another thou in it for you when you deliver the IDs.” Tanya’s heart skipped a beat, and she fanned her blouse against her chest.

“Okay,” she said. “When do you need them?”

“We need them as soon as you can make them. I tell you what, Mamí, meet us at Wagner project.” Jannifer smiled. “We’ll be there at one.” She gave Tanya the address. “Don’t be late.”

At 12:55 pm, a cab pulled up in front of 94 Paladino Ave. Tanya stepped out, smiling. There seemed to be a massive police presence a block away. Three minutes later, another cab stopped in front of the same building. Jannifer and Stacey stepped out.

“By the look on your face, everything went okay,” Jannifer said.

“Everything is everything,” Tanya responded. The twins led the unfortunate young woman toward building ninety-four. Two and a half minutes later, Stacey and Jannifer left the housing complex alone.