

John Roméo

“Dead of Night”

By

Gene Cartwright

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Thanks.

My thanks to the eclectic mix of all human creation which exemplify the best and worst of possible outcomes.

I am also grateful for the support of my few real friends, and for the kindness of strangers and pets; for my publisher, a wonderful, supportive organization unafraid to embrace the new.

Finally, some have asked me to elaborate on my biography, so here goes. I was born, I live, and I will die. Beyond this, little is important. All that matters is that part of me that will live on in the hearts of those who succeed me.

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John Roméo

”Dead of Night”

“John Roméo has an eye for beauty, and a nose for murder.”

A John Roméo Novel

A Poem

How Long You Gon' Be Dead?

Gene Cartwright

When did the last note of promise
fade from your heart's song?
When did the final thread of hope
unravel from the tapestry of your life?
When did faith in your dreams
turn to hopelessness and despair?
Tell me, when did you die,
and how long you gon' be dead?

When did the light in your eyes
grow dim, your gaze lose its aim?
When did your belief in tomorrow
lose itself forever in yesterday?
When did your hunger for success
melt like last winter's snow?
Tell me, when did you die,
and how long you gon' be dead?

When did you consign your thinking to the corrupting minds of others? When did fear consume your soul, wilt your fiery desire and passion? What words sowed seeds of doubt, crushing your boundless ambition? Tell me, when did you die, and how long you gon' be dead?

When did your soul lose its vision,
your flame become merely a flicker?
How did your step become uncertain,
your joy and laughter disappear?
When did your spirit fail to lift you,
to restore you, to arm you as before?
In other words, when did you die,
and how long you gon' be dead?

Now, ain't the time for fluttering hearts.

Gaze into your mirror and see hope
resurrected in your eyes, your faith reborn.

Turn a deaf ear to the voices of those
who only take pleasure in your failing.

Seize every thread of possibility.

Devour every crumb of inspiration.

Rise and walk. You ain't dead yet!

Take A Deep Breath
and Slowly Exhale.

John Roméo

“Dead of Night”

Don't skip this, all right?

The name is Roméo, not Romeo. Got it?

I'm not afraid of dying; it's living that scares me shitless. The former is inescapable, the latter, unpredictable. I'm a cop. I *was* a cop. Hell, I am still a cop. And notwithstanding my hard-nosed, take no prisoner's facade, I am subject to the same fears, frailties and foibles as most mortals.

My obligatory vow to *Protect and Serve* sprang not so much from saccharin-laced altruism, as from overvalued ego, coupled with a desire to curry favor with my late father. To secure reasonable expectations of physical and emotional survival, I made my own Faustian deal with the devil. The devil won. That should come as no surprise.

I confess it has taken a long time for me to come to grips with the maelstrom that engulfed me a few years ago. The *officially* concluded serial murder investigation I headed was a bitch—a pain in the ass, in more ways than I can count.

In the aftermath, I have found myself immersed in self-appraisal, undertaking amateur self-analysis, grappling with the

psychological trauma my professional experiences have inflicted upon me.

Murder is an ugly business; investigating it takes its toll. Do not be misled by television shows and films depicting the most complex murders being solved in an hour or two. It ain't so. And once the case is done, it is not easy to compartmentalize and simply move on. But we do... move on, carrying with us whatever ill effects attain.

Serial murder cases are even more frustrating. They can drive you mad in an anguished search for answers, while the body count climbs. The pressure to solve grows daily. Each succeeding murder denotes a greater failing than the previous. Often, the psychopath seems to delight in exhibiting deeper and deeper levels of depravity. This case I dub *Dead of Night* was such a case.

If I never see another mutilated stiff sliced or blown to hell and lying in bloody chunks before my jaded eyes again, that will be fine with me. After thirteen years in LAPD Homicide, I've had more than my fill of gory images, the clinging stench of decaying human flesh.

However, I confess to having a morbid fascination with the depravity of many of my fellow beings. I am not being melodramatic. There is something about savage acts perpetrated by so-called human beings that can savage one's sensibilities. Disturbingly, I find myself requiring a greater and greater degree of savagery in order to be fazed or repulsed; that bothers me.

However, I still cringe whenever I recall the Glazer case. Rachel Glazer was a 23-year-old mother-to-be in her late third trimester. On November 23, 2007, she was brutally raped, her brains scattered over the walls and floors of her Laurel Canyon home, her fetus ripped from her womb by some sadistic maniac of the extreme sort.

The sick bastard left semen deposits on the carpet next to the mutilated body, having apparently masturbated before or after his murderous orgy. I still regret having to enter that murder scene. Half a dozen seasoned detectives, including me, broke down that day.

The memory is searing, numbing, an image forever imprinted upon my psyche. It took us eight months to nail the monster: a former hospital orderly from Riverside. At the conclusion of a two-hour freeway chase ending near what is now Ontario Mills—a sprawling shopping mall on I-10—he stuck a .45 in his mouth and blew his brains out. Score one for taxpayers.

Four fetuses were later found in the suspect’s rented home. They were preserved in glass containers filled with formaldehyde and locked in a large, red and white Igloo cooler. I later disposed of an identical one I owned. I wanted no reminder. To this day, we have no idea if the Glazer fetus was among them. Anthony Glazer, the husband and father, declined DNA matching analysis.

I sometimes have flash dreams about the Glazer death scene. All the self-important, all-knowing, tree-hugging psychologists in the world cannot erase crap like that from my mind. The deepest sleep offers little refuge. And the last thing I want to hear from some glib-tongued, bleeding-heart apologist is that the poor psychotic bastard had an abusive childhood. Screw him and his entire dysfunctional family.

My solution: Give me one minute alone with any of these antisocial pricks. And I’m a card-carrying liberal. I even have a faded tattoo of Big Mama Thornton on my black ass. I voted for John Kerry. So do not color me as some heartless, compassionless, law and order, ultra right-wing nut who never had a mother, let alone anyone else with whom to bond. I have a habit of reserving my compassion for victims. I am weird, that way.

Presently, I welcome a chance to get back to the womb-like environs of home, back to my Macintosh, back to my cocoon. I relish immersing myself in my own *escapist reality*—my writing.

Yet, even now, I am loath to confess what I realize I must inevitably confess. I come late to this decision, after much agony, deep introspection, and the boisterous objections of that persistent inner voice that is my ego, not my conscience. The latter often speaks to me in much lower decibels. And though not easily heard, it is much more persistent, even nagging—ever nudging me toward truth. I know it sounds like bullshit but I am serious.

There is little doubt those who have always longed for my scalp will delight in the more titillating revelations that follow. They will likely get off on it—blow some juice. I know how the game is played. I don't mean to sound so pissed, but to hell with my detractors and assorted critics. As far as I am concerned, they can kiss my ebony ass, particularly some of my former associates.

And I can imagine some of you hissing at my use of a few expletives—cuss words, for my brothers in the 'hood. My publisher probably will not like it either. In fact, we have had some very spirited discussions about it, and other aspects of this book. They were a little queasy about my frank portrayal of certain members of the LAPD.

It is not that I dislike LAPD cops, just specific ones. I still find, as I did when I was an active officer, that while most cops are dedicated, honest people, a few are low-life, egomaniacal scum buckets with guns. Some others could use a damn spine transplant. As in any organization, they should be rooted out.

My publisher was also concerned I would come off as having too much edge; that I needed to soften my self-portrayal. The concern was that some women readers would be turned off by a hard-edged persona. Are you kidding me? My response was to assure them I would simply be honest. I am not perfect. The truth is, before I became a cop, I was two credits shy of a Masters

Degree in pacifism. You will definitely see my warts, weaknesses, and imperfections. You cannot do what I do and come off like Bishop Tutu or Mister Rogers.

Others have also raised well-meaning questions regarding my edge and my anger, as they put it. “*What are you running away from? What are you trying to mask,*” they ask. My answer? I have seen enough gore and depravity to put an edge on the Pope. And I am not attempting to mask anything. I admit I am beset by my own demons that are not easily banished.

Still, I do have a soft side. I am really a lamb at heart. Perhaps, by the end of this book, you will recognize that fact. But remember: This is not a *Bridges of Madison County* story. We are talking murder, here.

Forgive my manners. My name is Roméo, John Roméo, pronounced *Ro-may-o, alright?* I have always insisted on that pronunciation. Doing so has not always been easy. For most of my childhood, I was a frail, shy, introverted, stuttering, dyslexic kid who seldom spoke above a whisper and rarely got angry. I still have to work hard to overcome the stuttering and dyslexia.

My ‘boys’ back in my Harlem hood did not give a damn about medical problems with fancy names. All they knew was that your ass ‘was’ different; that you were ‘flicted. So you tried to hide that shit...pretend all those little twitches and screwed up expressions were being done on purpose.

As if that were not enough, I had to put up with the crap I received because of my last name: Roméo. Besides the endless questions regarding the whereabouts of Juliet, there was the attitude that black folks were not suppose to have names like Roméo. Hell, truth be told, Africans on the Middle Passage did not have names like John, Bruce, Kashonda, Leroy or Lamont, either.

And my face was a disaster zone. I was nearly twenty-one before I finally rid myself of oozing zits and blackheads with at-

titude. Guys who say those things do not concern them are liars. My biggest challenge growing up was coping with the innate cruelty of other kids.

One day, during my junior year in high school, having endured as much teasing about my stuttering, my zits and my last name as I could take, I jammed an annoying classmate into a row of wall lockers outside Mrs. Washington's room. I then crunched him with a hard right that left his nose bleeding, and a left hook that closed his right eye. He was in pain, but *I* was in shock. This was not who I was, or was it?

All the suppressed rage I had always locked away, one day suddenly erupted like Mt. Vesuvius onto this unfortunate kid. Thomas Arceneaux was his name. I often wonder whatever happened to Thomas. He really was not a bad kid, just stupid. Today, boys treated similarly to me tend to react much more violently towards those perceived as oppressors.

Following my violent outburst, I was suddenly popular with fellow students who never had two words for me before the incident. But I did not want their friendship and let them know it. Truth was, I respected Thomas more than I did them. The two of us became good friends and remained so until the day we graduated and went our separate ways.

Immediately following the incident, I told my mother that from that day on, my last name would be pronounced Ro-may-o. No more "*Hey Romeo! Where forth is Juliet*" crap. Mother smiled lovingly, shook her head, dried her hands on her favorite, hand-made, red plaid, white lace-trimmed apron and said sternly:

"Take out that trash, finish cleaning that filthy room like I told you this morning, cleanup whatever died under your bed, and do your homework. By the way, I got an urgent call from Mrs. Washington. You just wait."

My mother, a 5'-3," chocolate dynamo with a disarming smile and laser wit, had a way of cutting through the bullshit

and going straight for the aorta. Had my father been alive, he likely would have toasted my decking of Thomas Arceneaux by hoisting a beer. My attempts at subterfuge and deflection seldom worked with mother. I never raised the subject of changing my name again, at least not in *Sweet Caroline's* presence.

Those days now seem an eternity ago. Whatever difficulties existed then; whatever trials I endured, pale when contrasted to my adult life—particularly my career with the LAPD. And what of those years—years that gave me the highest highs and the lowest lows? How did I arrive at this moment in my life?

Keep Reading

For thirteen eventful years, I was an LAPD cop with middle class lifestyle; a postgraduate education; a blue-collar, New York attitude; love for the music of Miles Davis, Otis Redding, Nancy Wilson; and a taste for pork rinds chased with Pabst Blue Ribbon beer years past its prime. Go figure.

I ate, slept, bled, and crapped blue. All this represented a baffling dichotomy to those familiar with my more liberal lineage and penchant for quiet moments spent watching sunsets and writing poetry.

I spent eleven of those years in Homicide where I discovered I was more than well suited. And if I may be permitted a smidgen of immodesty, I was not just good at what I did, I was damn good. Still am. Even my enemies concede this fact, though grudgingly. They say I have an eye for beauty and a nose for murder—a sixth sense.

That is why whenever Homicide slams into a brick wall and cannot navigate their way through, around or over it, they call me. I am flattered by their confidence in me. Do not misunderstand, the nearly eighty members of LAPD Robbery/Ho-

micide, and especially those in Sections 1 and 2 are some of the best detectives anywhere. My working these cases without the constraints afflicting permanent officers gives me distinct advantages. For one, I am not looking for a promotion or in need of a job.

Still, many are not enamored of the arrangement. I am sensitive to their sensibilities. Some think I am cocky and brash. I am just self-assured and quick to recognize God-given gifts, even if they reside within me.

More often than not, I accept these “special, off-the-book assignments” without rubbing my detractors’ collective noses in it. I happily confess I had nothing to do with the O.J. Simpson case; I wasn’t there. As far as the LAPD is concerned, it is and was never a mystery. Publicly, the Department and the DA’s office expressed little doubt concerning whodunit.

That was not the first or last mistake they made. I know they privately acknowledged serious concerns about the quality of certain aspects of their own scientific investigations. But hell, that’s history now.

Lately, I have been less willing to tear myself away from my real work, my passion: writing. I do find time to travel extensively in Europe, Africa, the Far East, and recently South America. When not at my Beverly Hills digs, I can be found ensconced at my villa in the South of France, the Tudor in the pastoral English countryside or my condo on Maui. The travel reinvigorates and inspires me. It is my elixir. It is also tax-deductible.

Realizing that lesser minds will be eager to pounce on any perceived inaccuracies, I want to be precise. I lease the villa and the mansion when I’m traveling in Europe. However, I do own the Beverly Hills Estate and the condo. I never actively seek special assignments from Homicide; I do not have to. The real difficulty is avoiding them. Sometimes I feel stupid after accepting

them. After all, one of the reasons I retired was to put that chapter of my life behind me.

But it's hard to say no to Captain C.E. 'Bear' Nicholson—head of Robbery/Homicide Division; a 6'-4" hard-ass, square-jawed ex-marine with a dragon exterior and the heart of a teddy bear. Every one of his guys would follow wherever he led. While giving orders is in part what leaders do, Nick would rather show than tell.

Perhaps what is most endearing about Captain Nick is the fact he still identifies so intensely with the 'street cop.' He remains one at heart. And his role as head of RHD has not changed him. What is more, he has no desire to move beyond Parker Center's 3rd floor.

So, when I get his call, I know it heralds a challenge. And honestly, I find it easier to walk on hot coals than resist a worthy challenge. Yet, I have no scarcity of obligations that could more than justify a *no* to the good Captain. He is one persuasive man. He reminds me of my dear, late father—an iron-willed, ex-Bronx cop with an acid tongue and a marshmallow heart.

About my father, he spent more than twenty-eight callous-building years strapped to the 41st precinct, known as Fort Apache, located in the south Bronx at Simpson Street between East 167th Street and Westchester Avenue. For some reason, that is where he wanted to be. It became a decadent symbol of all things wanton, lawless, and evil. The "Fort," a crucible that tested the mettle of every decent cop there, on a daily basis, especially in the 60's and most of the 70's, made mincemeat of lesser men, but not Alexander Roméo.

My father's boundless love for my mother and his desire to please her and provide us all the best life he could was always clear. I miss him and my mother more than I can say. My only regret is that I have no sisters and only one brother.

I get a bit emotional speaking about my family. Had fate not intervened so tragically, I would have two sisters and a second brother, each older than me. It was not until I was eleven years old, that mother revealed my sisters had been stillborn, three years apart; and my older brother had died from SIDS (*sudden infant death syndrome*) at age three months. Of course, back in the day, we had no idea what the hell SIDS was.

My mother and father had all but given up on having more children, until I was, admittedly, accidentally conceived six years later. The following nine months were filled with torturous anxiety for both. Even after I was born, and until nearly four, my mother hardly permitted me out of her sight. Father would call home from the precinct several times a day to see if I was all right.

After all the heartbreak my parents suffered, I was their “miracle child.” It was a burden I did not relish then or now. It made me feel that every step I took was weighted with imagining that my parents’ very lives—their happiness either rose or fell on whatever I did.

What should have been normal, anticipated childhood diseases for me became causes for alarm. My folks exaggerated reactions burdened me so, that by the time I was 7 or 8 years old, I began concealing the slightest scrape or injury. I seldom told them when I felt bad. The danger in my decision is obvious, but that was how I found relief from their exaggerated concerns. I swore to never go through the torment of losing children as my parents had, vowing if I ever had children, I would adopt them. Let’s change the subject. I can’t afford to get emotional this early in the book.

Six years ago, at the tender age of thirty-three, with degrees in criminology and psychology, and having always fancied myself a man of letters, I wrote my first novel: *Shadow of Death*. It

earned millions, in hard and soft-covers, the top spot on the New York Times Best Sellers list for months, and a ridiculously lucrative movie deal. I also wrote the screenplay, while enduring the “*Who the hell do you think you are insisting we tell your story the way you wrote it,*” attitude of more than a few nauseating studio twits.

However, I did insist, within reasonable limits. The movie grossed 248 million dollars, worldwide, before DVD release. It did not take a nanosecond to decide what the hell I was going to do, from that point on. The know-it-all, pseudo-sophisticates in Hollywood, who had earlier whispered when I passed, and cast snotty glances, were now bowing, scraping and kissing my suddenly genius posterior. It was clear they only wanted *more*—more of the same, always more of the same.

While most of my fellow cops gave me congratulatory back slaps, and expressed toothy congratulations, there were a few dickheads who viewed me as an opportunist. Several accused me of unfairly using my LAPD experiences as grist for the literary mill; of selling my shield for a few lousy millions. I lost no sleep over these accusations by those who would have gladly traded places with me.

Now, after one of the most bizarre serial murder cases ever in Los Angeles or anywhere else, I now, in this docu-dramatic account, explain my role in helping investigate it. Here, I have set about to tell what I personally know and have learned from: notes, diaries, threats, forced confessions, snitches, books, newspapers, audio tapes, video tapes, rap sheets, victims, pimps, whores, the Farmer’s Almanac and, of course, the Department.

This story is not linear—not a straight-line progression; murder investigations seldom are. This account is based, primarily, on substantive aspects of an actual case. The names of some individuals, excluding my own, have been changed to protect my net worth.

It may surprise some I spare myself no embarrassment. I have always said when the time comes, I will write my own tell all book which exposes me from *my* perspective. To date, my darling ex-wife, Claire, has not attempted to preempt me. I am not proud of some of my actions herein revealed. However, I am prepared to suffer the consequences.

At the insistence of my agent and my publisher, I agreed to work with author, Gene Cartwright. Everyone felt I was and am too close to these events to author the book alone, notwithstanding the degree of fictionalization. Actually, having a writing partner gives me plausible deniability, regarding parts of the story. I have no objections and will provide all the information, facts and a major portion of the writing. This proves I *am* capable of setting aside my much-maligned ego for the greater good.

To the extent possible, I have tried hard to remain objective. Have I succeeded? Who knows? I tried. I confess that, where first, second, or third-hand information is not available, I have taken liberty to draw upon my deep reservoir of experience. At times, I provide what I call logical *extensions* of known facts.

Do not be so surprised. That is the way it is often done. I have the chutzpah to tell you. You are free to believe whatever you like and draw whatever conclusions you feel bound to draw. I have no desire to create a monolithic view of my work or of myself. Simply judge me on the facts.

My only obligation is to be as honest as I can. I cannot be burdened by some phony attempt to be sensitive to everyone—to be politically correct. If you are squeamish, are offended by my frankness or my language, I am sorry. You have the option of continuing or stopping here. I have no doubt some will think me egotistical and self-centered. Nonsense, I am simply a self-assured individual with a penchant for telling the unadorned truth. Some find truth unpalatable.

Are you still reading?

*They don't want John Roméo,
but they sure as hell need him.*

One

The Deadpool

“Talk dirty to you?”

Modesty be damned. Computer software magnate Colin Sumner had little use for it. He always got what he wanted, lucky bastard. Wealth and pleasure were not only his obsessions; he judged them his birthright and indulged himself without constraint.

When the board of San Jose based Sumner Technologies bounced him as Chairman and CEO in 2004, he cashed in his chips, took his genius, his patents and his money, left Silicon Valley and returned to his southern California playground. Six months later, he launched a much-anticipated tech venture, iF-OGO.com, while the stock value of his former company plummeted to single digits. Sumner was savoring the sweet taste of revenge.

His was no geek physique. At 43, six feet, clean-shaven, wearing only his tan skin, Sumner stood on the deck of his heated in-