

withdrawn in a flash and used on the likes of Gilly or any other assailant. It was foolish and he knew it, but he wasn't himself either and he was quite aware of that. He was dead-tired, sleep-deprived for the third night in a row, just a little tipsy from three scotches, determined to get the money safely hidden, and scared of getting stopped again.

Even the winos had given up at three in the morning. The downtown streets were deserted. But as he entered the parking garage, he saw something that terrified him. At the far end of the mall, passing under a street lamp, was a group of five or six black teenagers. They were moving slowly in his general direction, yelling, talking loudly, looking for trouble.

It would be impossible to make a half-dozen more deliveries without running into them. The final plan was created on the spot.

Ray cranked the Audi and left the garage. He circled around and stopped in the street next to the cars parked illegally on the curb, close to the door to his apartment. He killed the engine and the lights, opened the trunk, and grabbed the money. Five minutes later, the entire fortune was in his hands, where it belonged.

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At 9 A.M., the phone woke him. It was Harry Rex. "Wake your ass up, boy," he growled. "How was the trip?"

Ray swung to the edge of his bed and tried to open his eyes. "Wonderful," he grunted.

"I talked to a Realtor yesterday, Baxter Redd, one of the better ones in town. We walked around the place, kicked the tires, you know, whatta mess. Anyway, he wants to stick to the appraised value, four hundred grand, and he thinks we can get at least two-fifty. He gets the usual six percent. You there?"

"Yeah."

"Then say something, okay?"

"Keep going."