PART ONE

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ACT III, SCENE 4),
KING LEAR

CHAPTER ONE

1975

Under a harvest moon FBI agent John Connolly eased his beat-up Plymouth into a parking space along Wollaston Beach. Behind him the water stirred, and further off, the Boston skyline sparkled. The ship-building city of Quincy, bordering Boston to the south, was a perfect location for the kind of meeting the agent had in mind. The roadway along the beach, Quincy Shore Drive, ran right into the Southeast Expressway. Heading north, any of the expressway's next few exits led smack into South Boston, the neighborhood where Connolly and his "contact" had both grown up. Using these roads, the drive to and from Southie took just a few minutes. But convenience alone was not the main reason the location made a lot of sense. Most of all, neither Connolly nor the man he was scheduled to meet wanted to be spotted together in the old neighborhood.

Backing the Plymouth into the space along the beach, Connolly settled in and began his wait. In the years to come Connolly and the man he was expecting would never stray too far from one another. They shared Southie, always living and working within a radius of a mile of each other in an underworld populated by investigators and gangsters.

But that came later. For now Connolly waited eagerly along Wollaston Beach, the thrum of the engine a drag to the buzz inside the car that was like an electric charge. Having won a transfer back to his hometown a year earlier, he was poised to make his mark in the Boston office of the nation's elite law enforcement agency. He was only thirty-five years old, and this was going to be his chance. His big moment in the FBI had arrived.

The nervy agent was coming of age in an FBI struggling with a rare public relations setback. In Congress, inquiries into FBI abuses had confirmed that the late FBI director J. Edgar Hoover had for years been stockpiling information on the private lives of politicians and public figures in secret files. The FBI's main target, the Mafia, was also in the news. Swirling around were sensational disclosures involving a bizarre partnership between the CIA and the Mafia also unearthed during congressional investigations. There was talk of a CIA deal with mafiosi to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro as well as murder plots that involved poisoned pens and cigars.

Indeed, it suddenly seemed like the Mafia was everywhere and everyone wanted a piece of the mysterious and somehow glamorous organization, including Hollywood. Francis Ford Coppola's movie masterpiece, *The Godfather, Part II,* had played to huge audiences when it opened the year before. A few months earlier the picture had won a slew of Oscars. Connolly's FBI was now deeply into its own highly publicized assault on La Cosa Nostra (LCN). It was the FBI's number-one national priority, a war to counter the bad press, and Connolly had a plan, a work-in-progress to advance the cause.

Connolly surveyed the beachfront, which at this late hour was empty. Occasionally a car drove past him along Quincy Shore Drive. The bureau wanted the Mafia, and to build cases against the Mafia, agents needed intelligence. To get intelligence, agents needed insiders. In the FBI the measure of a man was his ability to cultivate informants. Connolly, now seven years on the job, knew this much was true, and he was determined to become one of the bureau's top agents—an agent with the right touch. His plan? Cut the deal that others in the Boston office had attempted, but

without success. John Connolly was going to land Whitey Bulger, the elusive, cunning, and extremely smart gangster who was already a legend in Southie. The stylish FBI arriviste wasn't the type to take the stairs. He was an elevator man, and Whitey Bulger was the top floor.

The bureau had had its eye on Bulger for some time. Previously, a veteran agent named Dennis Condon had taken a run at him. The two would meet and talk, but Whitey was wary. In May 1971 Condon managed to elicit extensive inside information from Whitey on an Irish gang war that was dominating the city's underworld—who was allied with whom, who was targeting whom. It was a thorough, detailed account of the landscape with an accompanying lineup of key characters. Condon even opened an informant file for Whitey. But just as quickly, Whitey went cold. They met several times throughout the summer, but the talks didn't go well. In August, reported Condon, Whitey was "still reluctant to furnish info." By September Condon had thrown up his hands. "Contacts with captioned individual have been unproductive," he wrote in his FBI files on September 10, 1971. "Accordingly, this matter is being closed." Exactly why Whitey ran hot then cold was a mystery. Maybe the all-Irish nature of the intelligence he'd provided had proved discomforting. Maybe there was a question of trust: why should Whitey Bulger trust Dennis Condon of the FBI? In any event, the Whitey file was closed.

Now, in 1975, Condon was on the way out, his eye on his upcoming retirement. But he'd brought Connolly along, and the younger agent was hungry to reopen the Whitey file. After all, Connolly brought something to the table no one else could: he knew Whitey Bulger. He'd grown up in a brick tenement near the Bulgers' in the Old Harbor housing project in South Boston. Whitey was eleven years older than Connolly, but Connolly was oozing with confidence. The old neighborhood ties gave him the juice others in the Boston office didn't have.

Then, in an instant, the waiting was over. Without any warning, the passenger side door swung open, and into the Plymouth slipped Whitey Bulger. Connolly jumped, surprised by the suddenness of the entry, surprised he was caught unaware. He, a trained federal agent, had left his car doors unlocked.

"What the hell did you do, parachute in?" he asked as the gangster settled into the front seat. Connolly had been expecting his visitor to pull up in a car alongside him. Bulger explained that he had parked on one of the side streets and then walked along the beach. He'd waited until he was sure no one else was around, and then he'd come up behind from the water.

Connolly, one of the younger agents on the prestigious Organized Crime Squad, tried to calm himself. Whitey, who'd just turned forty-six on September 3, sat in the front seat, larger than life, even if he just barely hit five-feet-eight and weighed an ordinary 165 pounds. He was hard bodied and fit, with penetrating blue eyes and that signature blond hair, swept back. Under the cover of darkness the two men began to talk, and then Connolly, properly obsequious to a neighborhood elder who was also an icon, made his offer: "You should think about using your friends in law enforcement."

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This was Connolly's pitch to Whitey: you need a friend. But why?

In the fall of 1975 life in the city was tumultuous and changing unpredictably. From where they sat along the vacant beach, the two men could see the Boston skyline across the water. At the time the unexpected good fortunes of their Red Sox electrified the citizens of Boston. Yaz, Luis Tiant, Bill Lee, Carlton Fisk, Jim Rice, and Fred Lynn—who, after the season, would be honored as both the rookie of the year and the American League's most valuable player—were in the midst of a glorious run for the World Series title against the powerful Cincinnati Reds.

But closer to home the world was dark and unstable.

The nightmare of busing had begun its second year. In 1974 a federal court order to bus black students from Roxbury to South Boston High School in order to achieve racial balance in the city's segregated public schools had turned the neighborhood into a war zone. The rest of the country tuned in, and people were getting to know Southie through televised images and front-page newspaper photographs featuring riot police, state troopers patrolling school corridors, rooftop police snipers, and

legions of blacks and whites screaming racist chants at one another. The Pulitzer Prize in photography was awarded for a jaw-dropping 1976 picture of a black man being rammed with an American flag during a disturbance outside of city hall. Nationwide the neighborhood was seen through a prism of broken glass—a bloodied first impression that was searing and horrific.

Whitey's younger brother Billy was in the middle of it all. Like all the neighborhood's political leaders, Billy Bulger, a state senator, was an implacable foe of the court-ordered busing. He never challenged the court's findings that the city's schools were egregiously segregated. He did, however, strongly oppose any remedy that forced students to travel out of their home school districts. He'd gone to Washington, DC, to complain and present their case to the state's congressional delegation, and once there, he delivered a speech to a group of antibusing parents in the pouring rain. He hated the view outsiders were getting of his neighborhood, and he denounced the "unremitting, calculated, unconscionable portrayal of each of us, in local and national press, radio and television, as unreconstructed racists." To him the issue was his neighbors' legitimate worry for the welfare and education of their children. Back home Billy Bulger spoke out regularly against the unwanted federal intervention.

But busing would not go away, and the summer that had just ended had not gone well. In July six young black men had driven to Carson Beach in South Boston and ended up in a fight with a gang of white youth that left one black hospitalized. In his younger days John Connolly had been a lifeguard along the beaches of South Boston, just as Billy Bulger had been before him, and now the sandy beaches had become another battleground. On a Sunday in August police helicopters circled over Carson Beach and Coast Guard boats patrolled offshore while more than one thousand black citizens drove to the beach in a motorcade of several hundred cars. They were accompanied on their "wade-in" to the beach by more than eight hundred uniformed police officers. The cameras rolled.

By the time Connolly had arranged to meet Whitey along Wollaston Beach, the schools had reopened. Student boycotts and fights between blacks and whites were regular events. Thinking it might help ease the

racial tension, officials for the first time tried to integrate the football team at South Boston High School. But the four black players who reported to the first practice had to do so under police protection.

The neighborhood was torn apart, and Connolly knew that, could feel that pain, because it was his neighborhood as well, and he had played off this bond in lining up his meeting with Bulger. But although the bond might have gotten him an audience with Whitey, he now had to pitch a deal to his boyhood hero. Connolly most of all wanted to exploit the wider underworld troubles brewing between the Boston Mafia and a gang Bulger had signed on with in neighboring Somerville. Bulger, in charge now of the rackets in Southie, had hooked on with the Somerville crime boss Howie Winter. The gang operated out of a garage in the Winter Hill section of the small city just across the Charles River to the west. In the past year Whitey had paired off with another member of the gang, Stevie "The Rifleman" Flemmi. They got along, found they had certain things in common, and had begun to hang out.

By the time Connolly and Bulger met, the young FBI agent had done his homework. He knew Bulger and the Winter Hill gang were facing a two-pronged threat from a local Mafia that for decades was controlled by the powerful underboss Gennaro J. Angiulo and his four brothers. Pending at that moment was a dispute between the two organizations over the placement of vending machines throughout the region. There had been wiseguy bluster about shootouts as a way to settle the matter. With all this instability, Connolly argued, a wiseguy could use a friend.

Besides, Angiulo was wily and inscrutable. He had a knack for setting up for arrest those he no longer had any use for. For example, a few years earlier a mob enforcer had veered out of his control. Angiulo, the story went, had reached out to his contacts inside the Boston Police Department, and the mob renegade was soon picked up on phony gun charges after crooked cops planted weapons in his car. No one knew for certain whether Angiulo in fact had the kind of access to manipulate an arrest like that. But this was the story making the rounds, and Whitey Bulger and the rest of Howie Winter's gang believed it. As Connolly well knew, perception was all that actually mattered.

Bulger was clearly concerned about Angiulo setting him up. "What if three cops stop me at night and say there was a machine gun in my car?," Whitey had complained. "Who is the judge gonna believe? Me or the three cops?" Connolly had positioned himself to play off such crosscurrents of underworld paranoia.

The two men sat in the Plymouth, the city lights rippling on the water. "You should use your friends," Connolly stressed—a line that caused Bulger to consider the agent intently, sensing an opening for the upper hand.

"Who?," Whitey asked at last. "You?"

"Yeah," replied Connolly to a ruthless man who used up people and threw them away. "Me."

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Connolly's proposal was simple: inform on La Cosa Nostra and let the FBI do the rest. Bulger knew, Connolly recalled, "that if we were chewing on the Mafia, it was very difficult for the Mafia to be chewing on them."

In fact, the moment Connolly had indicated he wanted a meeting Bulger knew what the FBI wanted. For weeks Bulger had already been working the proposition over in his mind, weighing the pros and cons, figuring the angles and potential benefits. He'd even gone and consulted with Stevie Flemmi. Bulger brought up the subject one day when the two of them were in Somerville at Marshall Motors, the auto repair shop Howie Winter owned. The one-story garage was a faceless building made of cinder blocks. It resembled a concrete bunker and served as a business front for the gang's wide-ranging illegal enterprises, which since 1973 had expanded to include fixing horse races up and down the East Coast.

Bulger told Flemmi that the FBI agent John Connolly was making a bid for his services. "What do you think?" Bulger asked Flemmi when the two were alone. "Should I meet him?"

The question hung in the air. Flemmi later decided that if Whitey Bulger was confiding in him about an FBI overture, he was signaling that he already knew something about Flemmi's own secret "status." Flemmi had a history with the Boston FBI—and what a history it was. He was first enlisted as an FBI informant in the mid-1960s. Flemmi adopted the code

name "Jack from South Boston" for his dealings with his FBI handler, an agent named H. Paul Rico (who was Dennis Condon's partner).

Rico, a dashing senior agent who favored a Chesterfield topcoat and French cuffs, cultivated Flemmi because of his access to the New England Mafia. Flemmi was not a made member of the Mafia, but he knew all the leading players and was frequently in their company. The Mafia liked Flemmi, a former army paratrooper who went from a juvenile detention center at age seventeen to serve two tours of duty in Korea with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team. He had a reputation as a tough killer, even if he was only average in height, five-feet-eight, and weighed about 140 pounds. Flemmi worked on his own out of his Marconi Club in Roxbury, a combination bookie joint, massage parlor, and brothel, where he got messages, took calls, and held meetings. A popular guy with his curly chestnut hair and brown eyes, a guy who enjoyed cars and the late-night company of young women, Flemmi got around.

Even the New England godfather, Raymond L. S. Patriarca, revealed a fondness for him. In the winter of 1967 Flemmi was summoned to Providence. He dined with Patriarca and Patriarca's brother Joe, a lunch that lingered long into the afternoon. They talked about family. Patriarca asked Flemmi where his parents were from in Italy. They talked about business. Patriarca promised to steer cars to the new auto body shop Flemmi had opened. They talked a bit about Flemmi's brother, Jimmy the Bear, who was in prison serving time on an attempted murder rap. In a gesture of goodwill Patriarca gave Flemmi $5,000 in cash to put into the auto shop.

Back in Boston Flemmi mostly moved around with a boyhood pal, Frank Salemme, whose nickname was "Cadillac Frank." The two had grown up in Roxbury, where Flemmi's family lived in the Orchard Park housing project. His father, Giovanni, an immigrant from Italy, had worked as a bricklayer. Flemmi and Salemme worked the streets together as enforcers, bookmakers, and loan sharks. They frequented the North End, the tight-knit Italian neighborhood where underboss Gennaro Angiulo had his office, and they often ended up at late-night blowouts in the company of hard-drinking Larry Zannino.

Zannino was the brutal and bloodless mafioso whom Angiulo relied on to bring muscle to the Boston LCN enterprise. In turn Zannino relied on Flemmi and Salemme to put some of his loan-sharking money out on the street. But although everyone liked Stevie, the feeling was not mutual. Flemmi didn't trust the North End—not Angiulo and especially not Zannino. When drinking with Zannino, Flemmi would pace himself, careful not to let down his guard. But Zannino and the others didn't notice, and they took Flemmi further in. There was the night, for example, in the summer of 1967 at Giro's Restaurant on Hanover Street, a night spent with a lineup of local wiseguys Zannino, Peter Limone, Joe Lombardi. Flemmi was with Salemme. They ate and drank, and then Zannino insisted they retire to a nearby bar, the Bat Cave.

Over more drinks a slobbering Zannino and Limone indicated that they'd all decided to sponsor Flemmi and Salemme "for membership in our organization."

Peter Limone, swaggering, then put his arms around Flemmi and Salemme. "Ordinarily, before you're a member you'd have to make a hit," confided the senior mobster, "and I'd have to be with you as your sponsor to verify that you made a hit and report how you handled yourself. But with the reputation you two have, this may not be necessary."

Flemmi wanted no part of joining the Mafia, however, and resisted the recruitment drive. For one thing, he didn't like the brutal Zannino, who was capable of hugging you one moment and blowing your brains out the next. The same could be said for Angiulo. Besides, Flemmi had Rico, and Rico had Flemmi.

Given the gang war and all the shifting alliances, Flemmi's life was always up for grabs. More than once he'd told Rico he "was a prime target for an execution," and in other reports Rico noted that Flemmi had no permanent address because if "the residence becomes known, an attempt will probably be made on his life." Flemmi grew to rely on Rico to alert him to any trouble the FBI might have picked up from other informants.

More than that, Flemmi came to expect that Rico would not push him about his own criminal activities—not his gaming, his loan sharking, or

even the killings. In the spring of 1967, following the disappearance of gangster Walter Bennett, Flemmi told Rico, "The FBI should not waste any time looking for Walter Bennett in Florida, nor anyplace else, because Bennett is not going to be found." Rico then asked what actually happened to Bennett. Flemmi shrugged off the inquiry, telling Rico there wasn't any "point in going into what happened to Walter, and that Walter's going was all for the best." Rico simply let the matter go at that. By the late 1960s Flemmi was a suspect in several gangland slayings, but the FBI never pressed him hard to talk about the murders.

In early September 1969 Flemmi was finally indicted by secret grand juries in two counties. He was charged in Suffolk County for the murder of Walter Bennett's brother William, shot to death in late 1967 and dumped from a moving car in the Mattapan section of Boston. Then in Middlesex County Flemmi, along with Salemme, was charged in a car bombing that had blown off a lawyer's leg.

Just before the indictments were handed down, Flemmi received a phone call.

It was early in the morning, and Paul Rico was on the line. "It was a very short, brief conversation," Flemmi recalled. "He told me that the indictments were coming down, and he suggested that me and my friend leave Boston—leave immediately—or words to that effect."

Flemmi did just that. He fled Boston and spent the next four and a half years on the lam, first in New York City and then mostly in Montreal, where he worked as a printer at a newspaper. During that time Flemmi often called Rico, and Rico kept him posted about the status of the cases. Rico did not pass along any information about Flemmi's whereabouts to the Massachusetts investigators who were trying to track him down.

Even though Rico had instructed Flemmi that he was not to consider himself an employee of the FBI and had gone over with Flemmi some of the FBI's other ground rules for informants, the agent and Flemmi regarded most of those instructions as an annoying formality. What was important was that Rico had promised Flemmi that he would keep confidential the fact that Flemmi was his informant, and this was the key to their alliance. It was a pledge most agents customarily gave to their in-

formants, a pledge viewed as "sacred." But in Rico's hands the promise was sacred above all else, even if it required that he commit the crime of aiding and abetting a fugitive. Rico promised that as long as Flemmi worked as his informant, Rico would see to it that Flemmi wasn't prosecuted for his criminal activities.

For obvious reasons such a deal had proven advantageous for Flemmi. He also liked how Rico did not treat him like some kind of lowlife gangster. Rico wasn't the pompous G-man ready to spray the room with disinfectant immediately after he'd left; he was more like a friend and an equal. "It was a partnership, I believe," said Flemmi.

Eventually the criminal charges against Flemmi were dropped after key witnesses recanted, and in May 1974 Flemmi was able to end his fugitive life and return to Boston. With the help of the FBI he'd survived the gang wars and outlasted the murder and car bombing charges. But Flemmi had no intention of going straight. Once back in Boston he'd hooked up with Howie Winter and gone back to what he knew best. And now he was standing alongside Whitey Bulger at Marshall Motors. "Should I meet him?" Bulger had asked. Flemmi thought for a moment. He had been back less than a year, and it was obvious to him that things were in flux. It was clear that some new arrangement was in the works. He'd even met on his own with Dennis Condon, a short meeting at a coffee shop where he was introduced to John Connolly. Flemmi regarded all the huddling as a kind of "transition," with Connolly being set up to take over now that Paul Rico was transferred to Miami and nearing retirement. Over time, of course, Flemmi had experienced a strong upside to his FBI deal. But he was just Stevie Flemmi, not the already legendary Whitey Bulger.

Flemmi cautiously opted for a short answer. It was an answer soaking in subtext, but short nonetheless.

"It's probably a good idea," he told Bulger. "Go and talk to him."

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Connolly wasn't in any rush to make his pitch. "I just want you to hear me out," he told Bulger in the car along Wollaston Beach. Connolly carefully

played up the double-barreled threat that Bulger and his Winter Hill gang presently faced from Gennaro Angiulo's Mafia. "I hear Jerry is feeding information to law enforcement to get you pinched," he told Bulger. They talked about how Jerry Angiulo definitely had an advantage over the rest of the field, able to call on a crooked cop to do him a favor. "The Mafia has all the contacts," Connolly said.

Then Connolly moved along and stoked the vending machine dispute. Word on the street, observed Connolly, was that Zannino was ready to take arms against Bulger and his friends in the Winter Hill gang. "I'm aware that you're aware that the outfit is going to make a move on you."

This last remark especially caught Bulger's attention. In fact, the LCN and Winter Hill had always found a way to coexist. Not that there weren't disputes to work out, but the two groups were closer to being wary partners than enemies on the verge of a war. Even the vitriolic and unpredictable Zannino, the Mafia's Jekyll and Hyde, could one moment angrily denounce Winter Hill and promise to mow them down in a hail of bullets and then suddenly turn operatic and proclaim lovingly, "The Hill is us!" Truth be told, Angiulo was at this time more concerned about threats he was receiving from a runaway Italian hothead known as "Bobby the Greaser" than he was about imminent war with Winter Hill. But for Connolly's purposes it was better to play up the beef percolating between the LCN and Winter Hill over the vending machines, and Connolly could tell right away he'd hit a hot button with the fearless Bulger when he mentioned the potential for violence. Bulger was clearly angered.

"You don't think we'd win?" Bulger shot back.

Connolly actually did think Bulger could prevail. He fully believed Whitey and Flemmi were much tougher than Angiulo and his boys—"stone killers" he called Bulger and Flemmi. But that wasn't the point.

"I have a proposal: why don't you use us to do what they're doing to you? Fight fire with fire."

The deal was that simple: Bulger should use the FBI to eliminate his Mafia rivals. And if that alone wasn't reason enough, the FBI wouldn't be looking to take Bulger himself down if he were cooperating. In fact, at that moment other FBI agents were sniffing around and making inquiries

into Bulger's loan-sharking operations. Come aboard, Connolly said. We'll protect you, he promised—just as Rico had promised Flemmi before him.

Bulger was clearly intrigued. "You can't survive without friends in law enforcement," he admitted at night's end. But he left without committing.

Two weeks later Connolly and Bulger met again in Quincy, this time to cement the deal.

"All right," he informed Connolly. "Deal me in. If they want to play checkers, we'll play chess. Fuck them."

This was music to John Connolly's ears. Incredibly, he'd just brought Whitey Bulger into the FBI. If developing informants was considered the pinnacle of investigative work, Connolly was now, he proudly concluded, in the big leagues. In a single bold stroke he'd put FBI grunt work behind him and now belonged to an upper crust occupied by the likes of the retiring Paul Rico. If, in Connolly's mind, Rico was the agent whom a slew of the new young turks in the office wanted to model themselves after, Bulger was the neighborhood legend all the kids in Southie were in awe of. Connolly had to sense that the moment marked the slick merger of both worlds.

Moreover, this particular deal had a certain élan to it. The last gangster anyone in Boston would suspect of being an FBI informant was Whitey Bulger of South Boston. Indeed, through the years Connolly was always sensitive to this seeming incongruity. Among his FBI colleagues Connolly rarely, if ever, called Bulger an informant, a rat, a snitch, or a stoolie. He would always grate when he later heard other people use those labels. To him Bulger was always a "source." Or he used the terms that Bulger requested: "strategist" or "liaison." It was as if even the man who convinced Whitey to become an informant couldn't believe it himself. Or maybe it was just that the deal from the beginning was less a formal understanding with the FBI than a renewed friendship between Johnny and Whitey from Old Harbor. And though Connolly was surely thinking about his career, the deal wasn't about what might come; instead, it was about where he had come from. A circle, a loop, the shape of a noose—all roads led to Southie.

Connolly always remained deferential to the older Bulger, calling him by the birth name he preferred, Jim, rather than the street name that the

media preferred. Such things might have seemed like petty details, but they were details that made the deal palatable. Bulger, for example, insisted that he would provide information only on the Italian Mafia, not on the Irish. Moreover, he insisted that Connolly not tell his brother Billy, then a state senator, about this new "business deal."

There was a certain charged and inescapable irony to this deal between Bulger and the FBI, coming as it did during the second year of court-ordered busing in South Boston. The tableau, in its entirety, was bizarre. The people of Southie, including leaders like Billy Bulger, had been helpless in their efforts to repel the federal government, which was plowing through the neighborhood to enforce busing. The federal authority was mighty and despised and would not go away. This was the harsh reality of the neighborhood's public life. But in a different part of Southie, Whitey Bulger had cut a deal that would freeze the feds. The FBI needed Whitey and would not be looking to do him in. The rest of the world might belong to the feds, but at least the underworld did not. Whitey had found a way to keep them out of his Southie. In an odd way he'd succeeded where his brother had not.

Immediately the information highway was up and running. More meetings were held. Bulger blended in Flemmi, and a package deal was forged. For his part, Bulger clearly recognized the value of teaming up with Flemmi, given Flemmi's rich access to mafiosi and the kind of information Connolly so badly wanted. Flemmi, meanwhile, had to recognize the value of teaming up with Bulger, not just for his cunning mind but also for his marquee status, particularly with Connolly. He could see something special pass between them right from the beginning: "They had a relationship."

For Connolly, Flemmi was a hand-me-down, but Bulger was his own, a coup for the FBI in Boston. It was a beast of a deal, a high-five achievement, with Connolly in charge of two midlevel gangsters positioned to assist the FBI in its stated campaign to cripple the Mafia enterprise. But the new deal hardly meant that Whitey would curb his style. In fact, just five weeks after the Whitey Bulger informant file was officially opened on September 30, 1975, Whitey chalked up his first murder while on FBI

time. He and Flemmi took out a longshoreman from Southie named Tommy King. The hit was part power grab, part revenge, and mostly Bulger hubris. Bulger and King, never friends, had gotten into an argument one night in a Southie bar. Fists began flying. King had Bulger down and was pounding away on him when others finally pulled him off. Payback for Bulger came November 5, 1975. No doubt buoyed by the secret knowledge the FBI would always be looking to curry favor with him, Bulger, Flemmi, and an associate jumped King. The longshoreman vanished from Southie and the world. Not surprisingly, Bulger mentioned none of this in his meetings with Connolly; instead, one of Bulger's first reports was that the Irish gang unrest and bloodshed supposedly pending between Winter Hill and the Mafia had fizzled—much ado about nothing. The streets were calm, reported Bulger.

So it began.

CHAPTER TWO

South Boston

In order to wait for Whitey at Wollaston Beach, John Connolly had to first get himself home from New York. Flemmi's boyhood pal "Cadillac Frank" Salemme would be his ticket.

Salemme's arrest happened on a cold bright New York afternoon in December 1972, when the good guys and the bad guys floated past each other on Third Avenue. A face in the crowd suddenly clicked with Connolly, who told his FBI companions to unbutton their winter coats and draw their guns. A slow, almost comical footrace on snow ended with jewelry salesman Jules Sellick of Philadelphia protesting that he was not Frank Salemme of Boston, wanted for the attempted murder of a mobster's lawyer. But indeed he was.

The young agent had no handcuffs with him and had to stuff Salemme into a taxi at gunpoint and bark at the bewildered cabbie to drive to the nearby FBI headquarters at East Sixty-ninth and Third. His boss chided him good naturedly about the handcuffs, but there were envious smiles and back slaps all around for bagging one of Boston's most wanted mobsters. Some were amazed that Connolly had been able to recognize Salemme, but in fact it wasn't quite as lucky as it first appeared. An old

pro in the Boston FBI office had taken a shine to Connolly and earlier had sent him photographs and likely locations for spotting Salemme, gleaned from informant reports. It was a perfect example of how valuable informants could be. Connolly's apprehension of Cadillac Frank resulted in a transfer back home, an unusually quick return for an agent with only four years of duty under his belt.

By 1974 Salemme was off to fifteen years in prison and Connolly was back to the streets of his boyhood. By this time Bulger was the preeminent Irish gangster in the flagrantly Irish neighborhood of South Boston. When Connolly returned, Bulger had just solidified his hold on Southie's gambling and loan-sharking network, the culmination of a slow, steady climb that began in 1965 with his release from the country's toughest prisons.

The two men spoke the same language and shared deep roots in the same tribal place. They came together as book ends on the narrow spectrum of careers available to Irish Catholics who lived in splendid isolation on the spit of land jutting into the Atlantic Ocean. Their cohesive neighborhood was separated from downtown Boston by the Fort Point Channel and a singular state of mind. For decades Southie had been immigrant Irish against the world, fighting first a losing battle against shameful discrimination from the Yankee merchants who had run Boston for centuries and then another one against mindless bureaucrats and an obdurate federal judge who imposed school busing on the "town" that hated outsiders to begin with. Both clashes were the kind of righteous fight that left residents the way they liked to be: bloodied but unbowed. The shared battles reaffirmed a view of life: never trust outsiders and never forget where you come from.

A retired cop once recalled the constricted choices a young man had coming of age in the South Boston of the 1940s and 1950s: armed services, city hall, utility companies, factory work, crime. "It was gas, electric, Gillette, city, cop, crook," he said. The decades of travail made Southie residents quick to fight for limited opportunities.

Bulger and Connolly, crook and cop, grew up in the first public project in Boston, a spartan village of thirty-four tightly spaced brick tenement buildings. A contractor friend of the legendary Mayor James Michael

Curley built it with money from the Public Works Administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Both men were revered in the Bulger home on Logan Way—Curley for his roguish repartee and Roosevelt for saving the workingman from the ravages of capitalism.

Connolly's parents—John J. Connolly, a Gillette employee for fifty years, and his stay-in-the-background mother, Bridget T. Kelly—lived in the project until John was twelve years old. In 1952 the family moved "up" to City Point, which was Southie's best address because it looked out to sea from the far end of the promontory. Connolly's father was known as "Galway John," after the Irish county of his birth. He made the church, South Boston, and his family the center of his life. Somehow the father of three pulled the money together to send John to the Catholic school in the Italian North End, Columbus High. It was like traveling to a foreign country, and John Jr. joked about a commute that required "cars, buses, trains." The Southie instinct for patriotic duty and a public payroll also led Connolly's younger brother James into law enforcement. He became a respected agent with the US Drug Enforcement Administration, a subdued version of his swaggering older brother.

The Connollys and Bulgers reached adolescence in a clean, well-lit place by the sea surrounded by acres of parks and football and baseball fields and basketball courts. Sports were king. Old Harbor had intact families, free ice cream on the Fourth of July, and stairwells that were clubhouses, about thirty kids to a building. The twenty-seven-acre project was the middle ground between City Point, with its ocean breezes and lace curtains, and the more ethnically diverse Lower End, with its small, box-shaped houses that sat on the edge of truck routes leading to the factories and garages and taverns along the Fort Point Channel. To this day the neighborhood consistently maintains the highest percentage of long-term residents in the city, reflecting a historic emphasis on staying put rather than getting ahead that engenders fierce pride. As South Boston bowed slightly to gentrification along its untapped waterfront in the late 1990s, its city councilor sought to reaffirm traditional values by outlawing French doors on cafés and roof decks on condos facing the sea.

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The us-versus-them mentality at the core of Southie life goes even deeper than its Irish roots. Before the first major wave of Irish immigrants washed over the peninsula after the Civil War, an angry petition to the "central" government had arrived at city hall in 1847 complaining about the lack of municipal services. It would be a couple decades before the famine immigrants, who stumbled ashore in Boston as the potato blight wracked Ireland from 1845 to 1850, made their way to the rolling grass knolls of what was then called Dorchester Heights. The famine had reduced Ireland's population by one-third, with one million dying of starvation and two million fleeing for their lives. Many of them headed to Boston, as the shortest distance between two points, and spilled into the fetid waterfront tenements of the North End. By the 1870s they were grateful to leave a slum where three of every ten children died before their first birthday.

The newly arrived Irish Catholics took immediately to Southie's grievance list with outside forces. Indeed, it became holy writ as the community coalesced around church and family, forming a solid phalanx against those who did not understand their ways. Over the decades since then, nothing has galvanized Southies more than a perceived slight by an outsider who would change The Way Things Are. In the Irish Catholic hegemony that came to be, a mixed marriage was not just Catholic and Protestant; it could also be an Italian man and an Irish woman.

Although Boston had been an established city for two centuries by the time the bedraggled famine immigrants arrived, South Boston did not become a tight-knit Irish community until after the Civil War, when newly created businesses brought steady employment to neighborhood residents. In the war's aftermath the peninsula's population increased by one-third to its present level of thirty thousand. Irish workers began to settle in the Lower End to take jobs in shipbuilding and the railroad that spoke to the era. Soon local banks and Catholic churches opened their doors, including St. Monica's, the Sunday destination of Whitey Bulger's younger brother Billy and his tag-along pal John Connolly.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century most men worked on Atlantic Avenue unloading freight ships. Women trekked across the Broadway Bridge after supper to the city's financial district, where they scrubbed floors and emptied wastebaskets, returning home over the same bridge around midnight. By the end of the century the Irish Catholic foothold was such that residents congregated according to their Irish county of origin—Galway was A and B Streets, Cork people settled on D Street, and so on. The clannishness was part of the salt air. It was why John Connolly of the FBI could quickly resume an easy relationship with an archcriminal like Whitey Bulger: certain things mattered.

Beyond common ethnic roots, the magnet of daily life was the Catholic Church. Everything revolved around it—Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Last rites, Wakes. On Sundays, a day apart, parents went to early mass, and sons and daughters attended the children's mass at nine-thirty. There was a natural cross-fertilization with politics, with one of the first steps toward public office sometimes being the high-visibility job of passing the hat along the pews.

Like Ireland itself, Southie was a grand place—as long as you had a job. The Depression swung like a wrecking ball through South Boston's latticed phalanx of family and church. The network that had worked so well collapsed when the father in the house was out of work. A relentless unemployment rate of 30 percent badly damaged the Southie worldview that the future could be ensured by working hard and keeping your nose clean. It changed the mood in a breezy place, and ebullience gave way to despair. And it wasn't just Southie: Boston's economy had calcified, and well into the 1940s, the formative years for the Bulger boys and John Connolly, the city was a hapless backwater down on its luck. Its office buildings were short and dreary, and its prospects were dim. Income was down, taxes were up, and business was lethargic. The legacy of a ruling oligarchy of Brahmins who lost their verve afflicted the city. The dynamic Yankees of the nineteenth century had given way to suburban bankers indifferent to downtown, a generation of cautious coupon clippers who nurtured trust funds instead of forging new businesses. In tandem, hopeful immi-

grants became doleful bureaucrats. Nothing much changed until the urban renewal of the 1960s.

It was to this hard time and place that James and Jean Bulger arrived in 1938, looking for a third bedroom for their growing family in the first public housing project in Boston. Whitey was nine, Billy four. The Bulgers would raise three boys in one bedroom and three girls in another. Although the Old Harbor project was a massive playground for the children, parents had to be nearly broke to get into it. The Bulgers easily met this criterion. As a young man James Joseph Bulger had lost much of his arm when it was caught between two railroad cars. Although he worked occasionally as a clerk at the Charlestown Navy Yard, doing the late shift on holidays as a fill-in, he never held a full-time job again.

A short man who wore glasses and combed his white hair straight back, James Bulger walked the beaches and parks of South Boston, smoking a cigar, a coat hanging over the shoulder of his amputated arm. His hard life had begun in the North End tenements just as the Irish neighborhood of the famine era was giving way to another immigrant wave, this one from southern Italy in the 1880s. He had a strong interest in the issues of the day; one of Billy's boyhood friends remembered bumping into him on a walk and being waylaid by a long discussion of "politics, philosophy, all this stuff." But the father was a loner who stayed inside the apartment most of the time, especially when the Red Sox were on the radio. In contrast, the loquacious Jean was usually found on the back stoop at Logan Way, chatting with neighbors, even after a hard day of work. Many of the neighbors recalled Jean Bulger as a sunny, savvy woman who was easy to like and hard to fool. They say Billy was like her—friendly and outgoing, running off to the library with a book bag or to the church for a wedding or funeral, his altar boy cassock flying over his shoulder.

But Billy also shared his father's concerns for privacy and his solitary ways. In a rare interview about his family Bulger talked wistfully about his father, his stoic manner and hard-luck fate, wishing that they had talked more and that there had been more shared moments. He recalled the day he went off to the army toward the end of the Korean War, his parents

tight-lipped with worry because their son-in-law had been killed in action two years earlier. James and Jean took Billy to South Station for the train to Fort Dix, New Jersey. His father, then nearly seventy years old, walked behind him down the aisle, following him to his seat. "I thought, 'What's this?' You know how kids are. My father, and this was unusual for him, he took my hand and said, 'Well, God bless you, Bill.' I remember it because it was quite a bit more than my father was inclined to say."

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Billy Bulger ran for public office in 1960 because he needed a job as he neared graduation from Boston College Law School and married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Foley. John Connolly was one of his campaign workers. Originally, Bulger was going to stay a few terms in the House of Representatives and then leave for private practice as a criminal defense lawyer. But he stayed on, juggling a small law practice, the legislature, and a booming family. The Bulgers would have nine children, about one a year during the 1960s. Billy moved up to the Senate in 1970 and went on to be president of the chamber longer than any man in Massachusetts history.

As he progressed through the legislature Billy came to epitomize South Boston, with his jutting jaw and conservative agenda. He became a provocative statewide figure who delighted in tweaking suburban liberals who thought busing was a good idea for *his* neighborhood but not for their own. He had a passion for refighting old lost battles, none more emblematic than the statewide referenda he forced on an indifferent electorate in the 1980s to right an ancient wrong he found in the state constitution. An anti-Catholic 1855 provision banned aid to parochial schools, and although Bulger readily admitted it had done no lasting harm, he wanted it smitten because of the original intent. That the correcting amendment was overwhelmingly rejected twice at the polls made no matter. The fight was the thing.

It was all part of what made him one of the dominating politicians of his time, a paradoxical figure who drew on a rare mixture of scholarship and mean streets. At once he was a petty despot and masterful conciliator, a reserved man who loved an audience, a puckish public performer who

had a dark side and took all slights personally. His bad side remains a precarious place to be.

Though Billy Bulger was well known for his scholastic and high-minded style, he could show another side as well. In 1974, when antibusing protesters were arrested outside a neighborhood school, Bulger was on the scene and denounced the police for overreacting. He went nose to nose with the city's police commissioner, Robert diGrazia, jabbing his finger at him about his "Gestapo" troopers and angrily walking away. DiGrazia yelled a retort about politicians lacking "the balls" to deal with desegregation earlier when things could have been different. Bulger spun around for more, working his way up to the much taller diGrazia. "Go fuck yourself," the senator hissed into diGrazia's face.

As busing turned Southie on its ear, even Whitey Bulger got into the act, but in the incongruous role of peacemaker. He worked behind the scenes to try to bring some calm to the streets among his followers. His exhortations were hardly the stuff of civic altruism. By raising the prospect of a protracted police presence in South Boston, busing was simply bad for business. So Whitey spread the word to his associates not to exacerbate the tensions boiling over in the schools.

Despite the fractious 1970s, Billy rose quickly in the Senate and ruled it with an iron hand by decade's end. But he would struggle with an image steeped in Southie lore, the good and the bad. It made him a hero in the town and anathema in a liberal Democratic state. His dilemma was captured in the late 1980s when he was fighting off the latest reform movement to bring debate and democracy to the Senate. A colleague tried to convince him he could be a hero if he loosened his grip on the chamber ever so slightly. But Bulger just shook his head. "No, not guys like me," he said. "I'll always be a redneck mick from South Boston."

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As a project kid Connolly got to know both Bulger brothers. He became good friends with Billy, drawn to the maturity and humor that made Billy as distinctive as Whitey was notorious. Billy was the one who Connolly tagged along after on the way home from mass at St. Monica's and who

got him into books, though Connolly and his friends generally thought that was a crazy notion in such a sports-mad environment.

Connolly also came to know the infamous Whitey as the hellion of Old Harbor who kept the project in an uproar with his street fights and audacious antics. Indeed, everyone knew Whitey, even eight-year-old kids like Connolly. Once Connolly was in a ball game that turned ugly. An older boy decided Connolly was taking too much time retrieving a ball and fired another one into the middle of his back. His back stinging, Connolly instinctively picked up the ball and fired a high hard one into the kid's nose. The older boy was all over the smaller Connolly, pounding away, beating him up pretty good. Then, from the margins of the playground, Whitey swooped in to break up the one-sided fight. Bloodied, Connolly staggered to his feet, forever grateful. At some level Connolly would always stay a poor city kid looking for acceptance in a hardscrabble world, permanently susceptible to the macho mystique of Whitey Bulger.

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When John Connolly was a toddler on O'Callahan Way, Whitey Bulger was already tailgating merchandise off the back of delivery trucks in Boston's minority neighborhoods. He was thirteen years old when first charged with larceny and moved on quickly to assault and battery as well as robbery, somehow avoiding reform school. But he was nevertheless targeted by the Boston Police, who frequently sent him and his fresh mouth home more battered than they'd found him. His parents worried that the bruising encounters would only make him worse, and indeed, the stubborn teenager exulted in his confrontations at the police station, swaggering around the tenement and daring younger kids to punch his washboard stomach so he could laugh at them. In a few short years he became a dangerous delinquent with a Jimmy Cagney flair, known for vicious fights and wild car chases. His probation files reveal him to have been an indifferent student who was lazy in school, the polar opposite of his brother Bill. He never graduated from high school, but he always had a car when everyone else took the bus.

One Bulger contemporary, who grew up in Southie before going into the Marines and law enforcement, played in the ferocious no-pads football games on Sundays and recalled Bulger as an average athlete but a fierce competitor. "He wasn't a bully, but he was looking for trouble. You could sense him hoping someone would start something. There was some admiration for the way he handled himself. At least back then, there was a sense he would be loyal to his friends. That was the culture of the time. It was incredibly tribal, and the gang affiliation meant so much to poor city kids."

Bulger did most of his tailgating with the Shamrocks, one of the successor gangs to the mighty Gustins. The Gustins had had a chance to be Boston's dominant crime organization during Prohibition, but its leaders reached too far in 1931 when they sought citywide control over bootlegging along Boston's wide-open waterfront. Two South Boston men were murdered when they went to the Italian North End to dictate terms to the Mafia and guns roared out at them from behind the door of C&F Importing. Law enforcement still views the Gustin gang's fate as a demarcation point in Boston's crime history. Boston's stunted Mafia would survive in Italian sections of the city, and the more entrenched Irish gangs would retreat to South Boston, ensuring a balkanized underworld in which factions stayed in ethnic enclaves. Sometimes, for the sake of high profits, the two groups collaborated. But Boston, along with Philadelphia and New York, would be one of the few cities where persistent Irish gangs would coexist by putting the Mafia loan-shark money out on the streets of their neighborhoods.

The Gustin gang's standoff with the Mafia also gave Whitey Bulger the freedom to move around South Boston's freewheeling crime circuit, graduating from tailgating trucks in Boston to robbing banks and, at age twenty-seven, doing hard time in the country's toughest federal prisons. His prison file portrays a hard case who was fighting all the time and doing long stretches in solitary. He was viewed as a security risk and once did three months in the hole in Atlanta before being moved to the ultimate maximum-security prison, Alcatraz, because he was suspected of planning an escape. He wound up in solitary there too, over a work stoppage, but

finally settled down to do his time, moving east to Leavenworth in Kansas and then to his last stop—Lewisburg, Pennsylvania—before returning to Boston. Bulger went to prison when Eisenhower was still in his first term in 1956 and returned home in 1965 when Lyndon Johnson was firing up the Vietnam War. His father, who had lived long enough to see Billy elected, had died before Whitey's release.

Bulger came home as a hard-nosed ex-con who nevertheless moved back in with his mother in the projects. For a while he took a custodian's job, arranged by Billy, at Boston's Suffolk County Courthouse. The job reflected the politics of South Boston—a magnified version of Boston's old-style ward system in which bosses built fiefdoms by controlling public jobs. In the old days this system had been a lifeline for unskilled immigrants with large families, but in the 1960s it could result in a janitor's job for an ex-con. After a few years of keeping his nose clean on parole, Whitey took a deep breath and jumped back into the underworld, quickly becoming a widely feared enforcer. The Southie barroom patrons from whom he collected gaming and shylock debts were seldom late again.

The disciplined, taciturn Bulger was clearly a cut above in the brutal world he so readily reentered. For one thing, he was well read, having used his decade in prison to focus on World War II military history, searching for the flaws that had brought down generals. It was part of an instinctive plan to do it smart the second time around. This time he would be a cagey survivor, mixing patience with selective brutality. He would no longer provoke police with flip remarks but rather present himself as someone who had learned the ropes in prison, someone who would assure detectives during routine pat-downs that they were all good guys in their small gathering and he was just a "good bad guy."

A couple years after being released from prison in 1965, Whitey Bulger did much of his work with Donald Killeen, then the dominant bookmaker in South Boston. But after a few years Bulger developed misgivings about Killeen's faltering leadership and incessant gangland entanglements. More important, Bulger began to fear that he and Killeen would be killed by their main rivals in South Boston—the Mullen gang of Paul McGonagle and Patrick Nee. One of Bulger's closest associates had been gunned down

in a desperate run for his front door in the Savin Hill section of Boston. It seemed a matter of time before Killeen or Bulger himself met the same fate.

In May 1972 Whitey's dilemma about standing with the beleaguered Killeen was resolved when he ruthlessly chose survival over loyalty; even though he was Killeen's bodyguard, Bulger entered into a secret alliance with his enemies. In order to survive, Bulger had to make a hard choice about business partners in Boston's bifurcated underworld: subordinate himself to the Italian Mafia, which he detested, or forge a deal with the Winter Hill gang, which he distrusted.

But Bulger was in a bind that could never be resolved, with stubborn Donald Killeen calling the shots and the Mullen gang bent on revenge. There would be no truce with the Killeen brothers, what with Paulie McGonagle's brother being murdered, Buddy Roache paralyzed for life by gunfire, and the nose that got bitten off Mickey Dwyer's face.

Desperate for mediation, Bulger chose the lesser of two evils and went, hat in hand, to Winter Hill. In the spring of 1972 he sought a secret truce with the Mullens through the aegis Winter Hill boss, Howie Winter. The terms: Bulger would help arrange the end of Donald Killeen, and Winter would guarantee the end of the Southie gang war and sanction Bulger as the town's new boss. Bulger's wedge was that he controlled the lucrative gambling and loan-sharking business and the Mullens were hand-to-mouth thieves.

The clandestine meeting, held at Chandler's Restaurant in the South End, ran several hours into the early morning. Bulger faced off with four Mullens, with Winter sitting in the middle of the table and ultimately ruling that the conflict was long past the point of diminishing returns and, not incidentally, there was plenty of money to go around. Whitey agreed to cut truck hijackers into the steady income to be had from hard-luck Southie gamblers.

Shortly afterward Killeen was called away from his son's fourth birthday party. As he was starting his car he saw a lone gunman racing at him from the nearby woods. As Killeen went for his gun under the seat the gunman pulled open the driver's door and jammed the machine gun near

his face. He then fired off a fifteen-bullet burst. The gunman fled down the driveway to a revving getaway car. No one was ever charged with the shooting, but it became part of Southie lore that Bulger was behind it. The finishing flourish occurred a few weeks later when Kenneth, the youngest brother in the Killeen family, jogged past a car parked near City Point with four men in it. A voice called out "Kenny." He turned to see Bulger's face filling the open window, a gun tucked under his chin. "It's over," the last Killeen bookmaker standing was told. "You're out of business. No other warnings."

The fast, bloody "Godfather" takeover was the stuff of legends. It was the kind of dramatic, decisive move that by nightfall would be known throughout Southie, a formal notice to the underworld that Bulger was soon to manipulate and control.

It was a new era awash in blood, as Bulger eliminated the Killeens and then showed up for work at the Marshall Motors garage in Somerville that served as Howie Winter's base of operations. Bulger spoke for all the South Boston rackets and was looking for bigger opportunities. Whitey had Southie, and, for a short time, Howie had Whitey.

Though his wealth grew exponentially, Bulger's lifestyle would never change. He was the antithesis of the gaudy mafiosi of the North End—no Cadillacs, no yachts, no oceanfront homes. Bulger seldom drank, never smoked, and worked out daily. His one weakness was for a Jaguar that he kept garaged in City Point most of the time. Overall, he lived a quiet life with his mother in the Old Harbor project, staying with her until her death in 1980.

His new agenda was to stay disciplined and not give in to the anger of his youth, when he had been charged with rapes in Boston and in Montana while in the air force. He would indulge neither the restlessness that had led him as a fourteen-year-old to bound impulsively out the door in Old Harbor and join Barnum & Bailey's circus as a roustabout, nor the recklessness of the young gangster who walked into an Indiana bank with a silver gun and his accomplices to take away $42,112 in deposits from an Indiana bank. Gone were his days as a crook on the run who dyed his hair black to go into hiding from the FBI, only to be arrested at a nightclub

surrounded by agents. No, the second time around he would stay in control and behind the scenes. Those years of reading in prison libraries had sharpened his instincts, and his mind had become an encyclopedia of law-enforcement tactics and past mobster mistakes. Like a chessmaster, Bulger was confident that he knew the moves, that he could watch your opening and lead you straight to checkmate. He vowed to friends that he would never, ever go back to jail.

Like all mobsters, Bulger worked the underworld's night shift, starting out in the early afternoon and ending in the wee hours. He presented a studied, icy detachment for those in his world but a small smile for his mother's aging friends at the project, where he would hold doors for them and tip his hat. For a time he delivered holiday turkeys to families in need at Old Harbor. In his own way he remained devoted to his family and was fiercely protective of Billy. When their mother died in 1980, Whitey kept a low profile for his brother's sake, fearing that a news photographer would put him and the new president of the Massachusetts state senate in the same frame on page 1. His furtive and alienated life was such that he sat up in the balcony behind the organist during the services and then watched as his five siblings slowly walked the casket out of the church below. As a parish priest summed it up, blood is blood.

But Bulger had a fearsome mystique about him that terrified Southie's rank and file. When a resident accidentally bumped into him coming around a corner in Bulger's liquor store, the cold, hard glare he got was enough to make him soil his pants. As John Connolly conceded, "You cannot have a problem with him."

Ellen Brogna, wife of the usually incarcerated Howie Winter, had been around gangsters most of her life, but Whitey Bulger chilled her. Not long after Bulger began working out of the garage in Somerville, they were all having dinner one night. For some reason Bulger had to move Brogna's Mustang. She flipped him the keys, but he came raging back in when he was unable to turn the car over, not realizing there was a button to press before the key would turn. She tried joking with him that he should be an expert now that he was hanging around Marshall Motors. Bulger just stared daggers at her and then stormed off. Later that night she told

Howie that dealing with Bulger was like looking at Dracula. Howie just thought it was funny.

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The post-Alcatraz Bulger was still a volatile man, but one who had learned the value of controlling himself. He was a poster boy for the stoic, stand-up Southie, with a chiseled, macho look that gave him an instant presence. His ice-cold manner cut like a cleaver to the heart of the matter. This trait, of course, made him the perfect informant, which is why Dennis Condon, the wily FBI agent who worked organized crime for decades, had kept after Bulger in the early 1970s. But though he came from a similar background across the harbor in Charlestown, Condon didn't come from the unique place at issue—South Boston. Condon closed out the Whitey Bulger informant file with great reluctance, sensing it might work for the bureau if he could just put Bulger with a "handler" from "the town." The young agent John Connolly was from central casting—streetwise, fast talking, and, best of all, born and raised in the Old Harbor project.

Condon had first met Connolly through a Boston detective who knew them both. Connolly, finishing up a stint as a high school teacher, was attending law school at night but eager to join the bureau.

After Connolly signed on with the FBI in 1968, Condon kept in touch with him during his tours of duty through Baltimore, San Francisco, and New York. They talked when Connolly came home to marry a local woman, Marianne Lockary, in 1970. While Bulger bobbed and weaved for survival, Condon took steps that would help Connolly get transferred back to Boston. It was believed that the precise details on Frank Salemme's whereabouts, given to Connolly by Condon, came from Stevie Flemmi, who had had a falling out with his boyhood buddy.

Connolly returned to the smaller, more intimate scale of Boston, readily swapping Brooklyn for Southie, Yankee Stadium for Fenway Park. He left an office with 950 agents focusing on New York's five crime families for one with 250 agents who were barely up to speed on Gennaro Angiulo. He could see that playing field better, and he knew the people by their nicknames. He was a Boston boy and he was back home, raring to fill out

the G-man's suit with style. But Connolly was also an empty vessel who got filled up by those around him. As a teenager he was seen as a "shaper," a wanna-be who looked good in a baseball hat but was never much of a player. As an agent he was more about playing the role than doing the work. He was always more glib salesman than hard-eyed cop. When he returned home from New York, he was an impressionable young agent suddenly plunged into a movie-script life. His dream assignment became getting close to a bad guy he had long admired. John Connolly fell in love.

It was a fatal attraction to the seductive personality of Whitey Bulger. Bulger was magnetic in the reverse glamour way of elite gangsters who break all the rules and revel in it. For Connolly it was an enthralling prospect, a future assured. Working with Whitey—what could be better? What could be easier? It sure beat being one of 250 selfless agents riding around in a government car. Whitey would be the head on Connolly's glass of beer.

In the first few years of his renewed relationship with Whitey Bulger, Connolly's "209" informant reports were split between accounts of disenchantment within the ranks of Gennaro Angiulo's chronically unhappy Mafia family and more concrete tips about Bulger's rivals within South Boston. Connolly did not remind Bulger that he had originally pledged to inform only about the Italians. And though the Mafia information was mostly generic gossip about problems in the House of Angiulo, the rat file on South Boston came with addresses, license plates, and phone numbers. For instance, Tommy Nee, one of a handful of homicidal maniacs who were regularly committing mayhem out of South Boston barrooms in the 1970s, was arrested for murder by Boston Police, with an assist from the FBI, in New Hampshire—just where Whitey said he would be.

But the FBI priority was the Mafia, not sociopaths like Tommy Nee. Through Flemmi, Bulger found out that Angiulo had removed his office phone for fear of wiretaps. Angiulo and his brothers, Bulger told Connolly, were talking only on walkie-talkies. Gennaro was "Silver Fox" and Donato Angiulo was "Smiling Fox." Bulger even recommended a Bearcat 210 automatic scanner to monitor conversations.

In the button-down FBI office in Boston, such reports were impressing the top bosses even as Connolly's increasingly brash ways were irritating

his colleagues, who began jokingly to call him "Canolli" because he dressed and acted like a slick mob dude, with jewelry, chains, pointed shoes, and black suits. But for his part, Connolly was unconcerned. He knew what he had in Bulger and what it was worth to his career. Bulger's 209 files were a coup for him and the bureau, a synergy possible only because of who he was and where he came from: South Boston Irish. "Whitey only talked to me," Connolly bragged, "because he knew me from when I was a kid. He knew I'd never hurt him. He knew I'd never help him, but he knew I'd never hurt him."

But sometimes in Whitey's world, not hurting could be very helpful.