

CORPORATE THUGS



BRIDGETT RENAY

CHAPTER 1

Slink never hesitated to take advantage of an opportunity to exasperate someone's day... usually for no valid reason. His grown ass crept his way across Marcus' front porch chuckling like a mischievous little boy. He literally rubbed his hands together excited to be the first to witness and expose a young man's degradation. "YOU ARE STRAIGHT BUSTED! Didn't yo momma teach you about playin' in the mud?" he laughed as he allowed the glass storm door to slam behind him while stepping into Marcus' living room.

He'd spotted Fallon Davis leaving Marcus' house from all the way down the street. Fat Fallon was just as easy to spot from a distance as she was about giving up the ass. She had to weigh at least two-fiddy so Slink couldn't let it go without clowning Marcus.

"What are you talking about?" Marcus also laughed as he fell back onto the couch, stretched his arms out on its back, and slammed his bare feet on the marble coffee table like he was some kind of czar.

Slink slouched down in one of the stylish wingback chairs by the window. "Oh, I see. So you're saying I didn't just see Fat Fallon wiggling her ass out of here less than a minute ago? Don't even try it. You know you hit that, didn't you?"

Marcus was book-smart and tried to mislead Slink into not recognizing what he'd just witnessed with his own eyes – and since walking through the front door, his own nose, "I'm telling you man, it's not even like that. She just stopped by to holler at me about our class finals – a history project we got teamed up on." It proved fruitless. His portrayal of innocence was no match for Slink.

"Man please! I could smell her worn out kitty before I even got out my car. Stop trying to front."

Marcus took a playful whiff but couldn't avoid actually smelling the stench one would expect would be left behind after having spent time with a girl like Fat Fallon. He grinned and lowered his head a little because he knew he was caught. He didn't want to appear too embarrassed so he played it like it was no big deal, "So what! Man, she practically threw it in my face. And I guarantee she's gonna do all the research for our project. So...no harm, no foul."

Slink knew there was a joke in there somewhere when "Fat Fallon" and "foul" are a part of the same sentence, but he wasn't clever enough to think that fast on his feet so he tried another angle at antagonizing Marcus, "Well, well, well! You mean to tell me that The Professor ain't in the mood to impress whitey? What, you going soft...or in your case...hard?"

The comment irritated Marcus. He took his studies seriously and didn't appreciate being criticized by someone of Slink's ilk, "Shut up, man. I just got a lot of work to do if I'm gonna bust a twenty-four hundred on the S-A-Ts. What you know about that?" he said with confidence as he purposely held his chin up high.

“I don’t know shit about S-A-Ts, but I know if you keep fooling around with Fat Fallon you gonna bust more than your scores,” Slink said off-the-cuff proving that he was actually capable of thinking fast on his feet.

“I’m not even trippin’.” Marcus got uncharacteristically vulgar, “I just wrapped my anaconda in a Hefty bag and went for a dip, that’s all.”

Slink still warned him, “Whatever man. That bitch got some serious issues. You better be careful.”

Gerald was coming home from his job at the Burger Hut and noticed Slink’s car parked in front of Marcus’ house so he made a b-line over. He wondered to himself why Slink was kickin’ it at Marcus’ house. It was Gerald who had introduced Slink to Marcus. Gerald always thought Slink sorta belonged to him. He felt good about himself when an older, more complex dude like Slink allowed Gerald to be one of his sidekicks. Slink even had his own apartment. Marcus was supposed to envy that and not indulge himself in it. Marcus was already the light-skinned, handsome and intelligent ladies’ man. He could at least let Gerald be the athletic thug – the Michael Vick of the crew.

Gerald walked into Marcus’ house without knocking as if he was expecting to catch them in the act of doing something – something sinister – like bonding together as friends. “Yo man, what up?”

Gerald was actually talking to Slink, but Marcus answered, “Just kickin it.” Then Marcus taunted Gerald, “What’s up man...coming in my house smelling like taco grease.” He then glimpsed over at Slink to get some kinda approval for his little joke.

Slink laughed so hard he had to double over and was barely able to belt out, “He smells better than that sinkhole you just got out of a few minutes ago.”

Slink knew exactly what he was doing playing Marcus and Gerald against each other like that, but they were too naive to recognize when they were being exploited, especially by someone like Slink. He was a master of trickery – one of the shadiest cons this side of the Mississippi. And not just in his peer group – black, white, rich, poor, young, old, straight, or gay – nobody was more determined to wreak sheer havoc than Slink.

Born Troy Lewis, Slink was fated to live a life that revolved around crime. He was conceived in the back room of a strip club and born in prison. His mother was convicted on federal drug charges and by the time she gave birth to Slink in a women’s prison, his father, or who his mother believed to be his father, was convicted and serving time on larceny charges.

Slink spent the first seven years of his life caught up in the anarchy of the foster care system until his maternal great-grandmother, Nana Kay, took him in. Nana Kay was a sweet enough old lady. She was in her late sixties and unfortunately had just about every illness listed

in the New England Journal of Medicine. Slink had been committing crimes practically before his testicles had a chance to drop so there was little she could do to control his madness.

He never stood a chance. While Nana Kay was in and out of hospitals, he was in and out of trouble. Despite it all, Slink had learned to survive by being tranquil, mystical, and clever. Add that to his cunning stride and his slender physique and you'd be describing a Slinky – Slink for short. He used every talent he had to manipulate those that were unfortunate enough to cross his path.

Slink had arrived in Atlanta via Jackson, Mississippi. As usual, he found himself right in the middle of some serious bullshit in Jackson. Two men were found dead in the back alley of a pool hall just hours after being seen arguing with Slink. Slink got word that the police were asking around about him so he decided he needed to get out of town. He wasn't a stranger to transporting dope across state lines and when he found out about a huge drug run to Atlanta he made his move.

Not only did the drug lords know Slink by reputation, they also knew he was desperate to get out of town for a while so they offered him twenty-five thousand dollars to transfer a shitload of their product to Atlanta. They also knew that as crazy as he was, he wasn't suicidal enough to try to run off with it.

Slink knew where to draw the line and who to draw the line with – depending on what was at stake of course. He also knew he was being played short because a run like that could easily go for fifty thousand at the least, but the last thing he needed was a run-in with one of Jackson's finest so he took the deal.

When Slink got to Atlanta and delivered the dope he was twenty-five thousand dollars richer and had about five pounds of dope of his own. That was all he needed to start up his own dope-slinging operation. On his drive from Jackson to Atlanta he stopped at a campground near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, pitched a tent, and carefully removed a few ounces from each of the bricks he was transporting. Slink always got what he felt was his in the end. Fuck honor among thieves.

He didn't even sweat driving an SUV full of dope across two state lines because Slink was nobody's dummy. He understood America. He didn't walk around with his pants hanging down to his knees. No way was Slink getting locked up trying to keep up with thug fashion. He always dressed like a perfect little gentlemen. His pants and shirts were professionally pressed. He wore sneakers only while wearing athletic gear. Slink even wore a tie every now and then. He was the portrait of a man on his way to visit his sweet, elderly momma for a Sunday dinner.

It was in the middle of Marcus and Gerald's junior year of high school when Slink moved into an apartment a few miles from the Burger Hut. He didn't know anything about healthy eating so he immediately began to frequent the restaurant. He came in one day while Gerald was behind the grill flipping burgers. When Slink walked up to place his order he recognized Gerald from the sports section of the neighborhood newspaper and was impressed. His low-key, semi-thuggish behavior intrigued Gerald as well so they talked often.

Slink enjoyed turning young brothers out so he played the role of one of those non-threatening thugs – the kind that may steal, but would never kill. Gerald was fooled by Slink's

big puppy-dog eyes and his slender frame. All of the malnutrition he suffered growing up gave Slink the appearance of a nineteen-year-old. Gerald didn't know Slink was twenty-six-years-old and straight-up demented.

The two became quick friends, therefore, Marcus soon became a friend. The more Slink realized how bright Gerald and Marcus' future looked, the more he tried to gain their confidence. Slink didn't like seeing brothers sincerely happy and legitimately successful. He felt it was his duty to put an end to all that. If his soul couldn't be emancipated, neither could anyone else's.

Slink knew Gerald would be curious about the sinkhole comment he made about Fat Fallon so he didn't waste any time manipulating the conversation. "Yeah man, your boy was in here taking his turn with Fat Fallon. Got this place smelling like The Kitty Pool over on Metropolitan." Slink got up to go use the bathroom, but could sense his words would create tension between the two teens regardless of how juvenile the subject-matter was.

Marcus was the more mature of the two and when he glanced over at Gerald he braced himself for another one of Gerald's "episodes". Gerald didn't disappoint. He gave Marcus a disapproving look while waiting to hear the bathroom door shut then harshly whispers, "Man you know your mom's gonna slip into convulsions if she came home and sees Slink kickin' it in her living room like he owns the damn place! And Fat Fallon! I know I didn't hear that right! What were you thinking?!" Gerald melodramatically asked.

But he really just wanted it the way it always was up until then – him, Slink, and Marcus kickin' it at his house, not there at Marcus'. He was petty that way. And not because he was an only child and was spoiled. Gerald just believed the world owed him – no questions asked. Besides, it was always better at Gerald's house. His mother never paid attention to who her son hung out with. As long as he did his thing on the football field, she seemingly didn't have enough time to care about whatever else her golden goose was up to.

When Slink came out the bathroom Marcus had put his shoes on and was spraying air freshener all over the place, "Hey man, were gettin' ready to go across the street and hang out at Gerald's – you coming?"

Slink could've easily manipulated the plan and stole control of the scene, but on this occasion he was happy to oblige to keep things cool. He didn't want to play his real hand until he had his plan all figured out. Over the last few months Slink had purposely transformed Gerald into his bitch while Gerald thought Slink genuinely admired him for his athletic notoriety – as if Slink was another one of his sappy fans. Gerald had in his head that once he went pro, Slink would become *his* bitch.

He couldn't have been more disillusioned.