

# Gold Coast

By

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## Chapter One

On a Sunday morning in late spring of 1950, a limousine moves down a street called Gold Coast Avenue in a large Midwestern city. Gold Coast Avenue is the main street in the all black area of the city called Gold Coast. Stanley Greenberg and Manfred Yellowstone sit in the back of the limo and look out the window. Through the car window, the life on Gold Coast Avenue floats by in an explosion of colors and swirling forms like marine life in an aquarium.

People fill the sidewalks dressed in their Sunday-best suits. A man drives a flat bed truck with a handmade sign that says "Georgia Watermelons" and sings, "Watermelons, watermelons, red, ripe, watermelons," over and over like a chant. Another man rings a bright metal hand bell as he walks along the street. Children run out towards him. He is a type of Pied Piper. Another man carries a contraption on his back for sharpening knives and scissors. Another calls out, "Iron, rags, glass." People rub up to him with buckets full of things they have collected around the neighborhood.

Behind all of this life on Gold Coast Avenue are the jazz clubs. They are squished together along the street, one right next to the other, like the bellows of a compressed accordion. The limo moves down the street past the clubs. The Rum Boogie. The Bat Cave. Bottoms Up. Café Society. Club Jamaica. Empress Theater. The 501 Club. High Chapparal. Mr. Gs Lounge. My Brother's Place. Oceans 11. Palm Gardens. Pussycat Lounge. Red Flame. The Cadillac Club. The Flamingo. Needle's Eye. The Red Lantern. The Skyline. On many of the jazz clubs small marquees announce musicians playing at the clubs. Many of the names on the marquees are those of famous musicians like Miles Davis and Art Blakey.

The largest club on the street is the Blackhawk Theater. It's a large three-story brick building that looms over the other clubs on the street taking up almost half a block. It's large marquee announces Duke Ellington is currently appearing and that Count Basie is soon appearing at the theater.

The limo moves west on Gold Coast Avenue until there are no more jazz clubs. It passes a large white church named New World Baptist Church that sits on the bank of a river. Then it starts over a bridge across the river and heads for the jumble of skyscrapers in the downtown area of the Midwestern city.

"The Southern River," Greenberg says to Yellowstone as the limo goes over the river. Flows all the way to the Mississippi. Most of the original settlers of Gold Coast came up the Mississippi and then the Southern River. It was a great highway north for them. Now it marks the western boundary of the Gold Coast area."

After crossing the bridge, the limo moves west towards the downtown area of the large Midwestern city. The jazz clubs disappear and are replaced by a wider street with car dealerships and fancy retail stores. The buildings become taller until the limo is in the shadowy downtown canyons of the city. It is the weekend and the streets are deserted. A ghost town. The contrast with the life of the Gold Coast area is dramatic. Here and there, a bum goes through a trashcan. A tired doorman at a fancy hotel tries to look busy. A yellow taxi passes going somewhere. A black and white police car with its siren on speeds down the street and disappears around a corner.

The limo comes to a stop in front of a large granite skyscraper building in the downtown area. The name "Greenberg Building" is carved in Roman type of letters over a huge brass revolving door. A doorman opens the doors of the limo and Greenberg and Yellowstone go through the great brass revolving doors into the building.

In a few minutes the two men stand on the balcony of Greenberg's office at the top of the skyscraper. The balcony faces east towards the Gold Coast area of the city a few miles away. Greenberg points out different parts of the area to Yellowstone. The Blackhawk Theater looms over the smaller clubs along Gold Coast Avenue. The white New World Baptist Church sparkles in the morning sun. Next to the river it almost seems like a type of century post guarding entrance into the area. The Southern River is like a great silver ribbon flowing through the city dividing the downtown from the Gold Coast area. There is an explosion of colors on the Gold Coast side of the river like the random mixture of a child's colored blocks constructed without much thought. The wild colors end at the river replaced by the grey colors of the city's downtown.

"It began fifty years ago when southern blacks began migrating up here looking for jobs," says Greenberg. "At the time no one suspected it would become one of the nation's great black communities."

"Looks smaller up here than driving around it," says Yellowstone.

"Only two square miles," says Greenberg. "But size is deceiving. Within it are half-a-dozen grocery stores. Five

theaters. Ten churches. Three schools. And fifty thousand people. As near as we can guess."

"And the jazz clubs," adds Yellowstone.

"The jazz clubs of course," says Greenberg. "Maybe seventy of them. No one knows for sure. "But as you told me, it's not something the city is happy about," says Yellowstone.

"No," says Greenberg. "We'd like to see them consolidated into a few large clubs."

"Run by the city," says Yellowstone.

"Of course," says Greenberg.

"Wait here," Stanley Greenberg tells Yellowstone as he goes into his office and extracts some blueprint sheets off the top of his desk. He takes them back on the balcony and spreads them on a table before Yellowstone.

"The city has given some consideration to the development of the Gold Coast area," Greenberg says. "As you can imagine, it has the potential to be a huge new source of income for the city."

"If the income doesn't stay in the Gold Coast area," Yellowstone adds. "Like it does now."

"Yes," says Greenberg. "Too many local businesses in Gold Coast. The jazz clubs. The retail stores. It's been it's own little island too long. It needs to be integrated with the rest

of the city. We've sketched out some initial ideas for some of the things we want in the project. Just some ideas."

Yellowstone studies the pages of the blueprint on the table in front of him.

"There are a number of large buildings in the plan," he says.

"Yes, all city owned buildings. A new shopping mall. A housing development. Restaurants. An arts complex. All owned by the city. The area needs to be integrated into the city."

Manfred Yellowstone studies the landscape of the Gold Coast area a few miles east of the balcony of Greenberg's office. He leans on the railing of the balcony and is silent for a period of time. He looks at Stanley Greenberg. His eyes are a grey, dull color like the granite color of the buildings in the downtown area of the city. They look tired and old for a man in his early forties. He paces back and forth on the balcony for a minute, thinking, pondering, weighing things.

"Developing an entire area like Gold Coast is a big project," Yellowstone says. "One of the largest we've ever done. A tremendous challenge."

"I know that you like challenges," Greenberg says. "That's why we flew you all the way back here from LA. We've done our homework."

Yellowstone looks at Greenberg but does not say anything. He is still thinking. Greenberg rolls the blueprint pages up and puts them into a cardboard tube and hands the tube to Yellowstone.

"There's a lot of money in this for the right development plan," Greenberg says. "Believe me, money is no object for my group."

"Give me a few weeks to put together a preliminary development plan," he says. "We'll work your ideas into all of this."

"Good," Greenberg says extending his hand to Yellowstone. It is exactly what he wants to hear from Yellowstone, the goal of the tour of Yellowstone through the Gold Coast area this morning. After years of false starts, the city has finally got a big name developer attached to the project.

"And the mayor is onboard?" Yellowstone asks.

"Of course," says Greenberg. It is a lie, though, for the mayor had yet to be informed about the project. "Progress is important to the mayor."

Greenberg shows Yellowstone out of his office. When Yellowstone is gone he picks up the telephone on his desk and takes it out to the balcony and places it on the ledge. He looks

at the Gold Coast area for a few minutes making a plan. Then he picks up the telephone receiver and dials a number.

"Max, this is Greenberg," he says into the phone. "The development plan is on. We need to start contacting the club owners. Start with Henderson at the Blackhawk first. We need to get him on board first. You and a few of the boys pay him a visit. You know what I mean. A friendly visit."

Greenberg hangs up the phone and stands on his office balcony looking out towards the Gold Coast area. He takes a notebook out of his pocket and makes a note. "Need to get the churches aboard on the development. Contact Bernice Hudson at New World." He puts his notebook back in his pocket and focuses on the New World Baptist Church. As he focuses on it we move towards the church as if his eyes are the powerful zoom lens of a camera.

## Chapter Two

The white top of the New World Baptist Church pokes into a brilliant blue-sky morning. We slowly move down from the top of the church and through the church walls where gospel music suddenly bursts forth all around us. An animated Sunday service is in progress. The congregation moves about like waves in a raging sea. Shouting. Clapping. Swaying back-and-forth.

On one side of the church is a table. On the table is a microphone with the letters WGCB on it. A radio announcer sits behind the microphone swaying back and forth like the congregation.

At the front of the church, the choir is working themselves into a frenzy of emotion. Bernice Hudson stands in front of the choir with her back to us directing them. The choir is made up mostly of older people but there is one young boy in the choir in the front row. The boy is her fifteen-year-old son Alphonse Hudson. She looks at Alphonse from time to time. He sings and sways like the rest of the choir but he seems to only be going

through the motions not caught up in the intensity of emotions like the others.

The choir marches down from the stage and down the aisle singing the powerful song. The minister says a few closing words and the service is over.

Out in front of the church on the bright morning, Bernice holds court. She is obviously one of the leaders of the church. Her son Alphonse has found a place under a tree on the side of the church and sits looking down at the Southern River no more than a hundred feet away. He knows this Sunday routine well. It always takes his mother a while before she is ready to walk home with him. As Alphonse sits under the tree, he dreams of one day having his own saxophone so he can be more like his father. But his mother has no interest in getting him a saxophone.

"Great service Bernice," says a distinguished looking man to his mother Bernice.

"Thank you Mayor Blackstone," Bernice says. "We need to continue to answer God's call. Especially in these times of declining morality."

"I agree," says Mayor Blackstone.

Bernice pulls the mayor aside from the crowd.

"But not enough to close down some of the jazz clubs on Gold Coast Avenue," she adds.

"It's a complicated situation," Mayor Blackstone says. "The clubs are a large part of the area's business."

"The business of sin and corruption," Bernice says.

The mayor does not answer.

"Any word from Maurice?" he asks.

"Why would there be?" Bernice says. "He made a choice to leave us behind for the life of a jazz musician."

"A gifted musician," the mayor adds. "One of the best the Gold Coast area has ever produced."

"Still a jazz musician," Bernice says. "Is there really any difference between them?"

The mayor shakes his head. The two have had this conversation before. He smiles and gives Bernice a quick kiss on her cheek and then moves to an awaiting limo in front of the church. Bernice continues to talk to members of the congregation. There are meetings to arrange, announcements to be gotten out. She is a type of ground zero of community information.

When almost everyone has left the church she walks over to the tree where Alphonse sits looking at the river.

"What's wrong?" she asks. "You weren't even there today."

The boy gets up and they begin walking down the street in front of the church.

"I miss him," Alphonse says. "I think about him a lot."

"You need to get him out of your mind because if he thought of you he never would have left home."

Mother and son walk in silence for a while.

"Alphonse, you can be better than your father," Bernice says. "You need to realize this."

But the boy doesn't answer his mother. It was impossible for him to believe he could become a better musician than his father. His father had been the rising star of the Gold Coast area. The talk-of-the town.

"Christ is the way," Bernice says to her son as they walk home that Sunday morning. "The only way."

She looks at her son to see if her words have taken hold but it is doubtful. The boy is stubborn, so much like his father Bernice thinks.

"I wonder where he is now," Alphonse says.

"Who knows," says Bernice. "Why worry about where he is?"

They walk in silence for a few minutes.

"Jazz is a dead end street," Bernice says to Alphonse.

"The church is a dead end street," says Alphonse.

Bernice is angry.

"The church is never a dead end street. If it wasn't for the church there would not be any jazz."

The two come to Gold Coast Avenue where all the jazz clubs are located. Bernice quickly walks across it without looking down the street. Alphonse, though, lingers as he crosses the street, looking down Gold Coast Avenue at the jazz clubs. Bernice turns around and pulls him across the street.

"Come," she says. "He's not down there anymore. God knows where he is."

## Chapter Three

The famous Ten Spot jazz club in the Greenwich Village area of New York City is packed tonight to see the legendary John Rigsby Quartet. Rigsby is the talk of the jazz world, moving jazz into new territory the critics define as somewhere between Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. But definitions are difficult as the music Rigsby makes with his saxophone is so new and different than anything before.

Tonight, the Rigsby Quartet is joined by a new musician who has recently moved to New York City. Maurice Hudson holds his saxophone, swaying back-and-forth, lifting it up and down. The saxophone is giving birth to something new and it is one of those times he feels more like a midwife than an artist. He has a part in creating the music but there is a strong sense it comes from somewhere else.

John Rigsby stands next to Maurice, his eyes closed and head moving from side to side, caught in the music Maurice is playing. Behind them are the other members of the famous Rigsby Quartet: Silas Manner on drums, Horace Wilcox on bass and Tyner

White on piano. They push Maurice to higher and higher levels until it seems his saxophone will explode. Tyner White runs up and down the piano scale in almost a harp like invasion of notes. Silas Manner plays a counter rhythm to the piano notes that suggest a tension trying to resolve itself. The bass of Horace Wilcox always seems to find the overall context of the background, always able to anchor everyone to something after all the exploration.

The audience at the Ten Spot are caught in the spell the new unknown musician is creating on his horn. Up near the stage John Rigsby's recording engineer and manager Arthur Snow sits at a small table with a large tape recorder on it wearing headphones and twisting knobs on the machine. The tape recorder is attached to a few microphones that hang over the stage. Snow has recorded the famous live dates of the Rigsby Quartet and the four albums have helped propel Rigsby to the top of the jazz world. He is a short, stout man with a beard and he sways back-and-forth, caught in the music like everyone else, his hands quickly moving dials on the recording machine capturing as much of the moment as possible.

After a while, Maurice senses he has taken the music as far as he can and nods over at John Rigsby. Maurice steps back from center stage and Rigsby slowly lifts the horn high and soon

there is the familiar sound of the full Rigsby Quartet. When the music ends the crowd at the Ten Spot is on their feet with wild applause that goes on and on.

When the applause finally stops the band begins putting their equipment away. It is the last set of the evening and the band has already been called back for two encores. A number of people from the audience come up to congratulate Rigsby and the band and Maurice. Then slowly the club empties out. It is two in the morning and an hour after closing time. Arthur Snow carefully puts his recording equipment away. He takes the reel-to-reel tape off of the machine and waves it at Rigsby.

"Think we got another great album from tonight," Snow says to Rigsby. "Maybe one of our best."

John Rigsby nods at Arthur Snow.

"You might be right," he says.

"I'll have a master in a few days. After that, we're only a few weeks from getting the record pressed. I'll contact the record label and let them know we have something new coming."

"Good," says Rigsby.

Arthur Snow motions over at Maurice.

"Hudson is really something else," he says.

"Yes, something new," Rigsby says as he walks over to him.

The rest of the band has congratulated Maurice and have left and

the two men and a few club people are the only ones left in the club.

"I knew you were special when I heard you the other night at the Empress," Rigsby says. "That's why I told you to bring your horn down here tonight."

"I appreciate you giving me an opportunity," Maurice says. "It means a lot to me."

"That music was special," Rigsby says. "Where did you learn to play like that?"

Maurice smiles.

"From you of course," he says. "I've been a fan for years."

"I appreciate the compliment," Rigsby says, "but there's so much more mixed into your sound."

"It's the sound of the Gold Coast area," says Maurice. "Where I grew up."

Rigsby smiles.

"Ah, the Gold Coast area," Rigsby says. "Once played there. The Blackhawk Theater."

"I know," said Maurice. "I was in the audience at the Blackhawk the night you were in town."

Rigsby smiles and looks at Maurice for a few seconds thinking things out. Composing some type of plan.

"What say you join the group for a while and see where it goes? I haven't talked to the boys yet but I don't think they'll have a problem with it. For a while at least. See where we can take it."

Maurice is taken aback by the invitation. It has only been four months since he left the Gold Coast area. He has played with maybe five different groups during this time. Different types of music. R & B. Blues. Jazz when he could. People everywhere had told him he would really go somewhere. Someday. But it was hard to believe them when you hardly had enough money for a cheap room in a hotel in some out-of-the-way little town. He had saved enough money to come to New York a month ago and was living in this hotel for musicians up in Harlem. Now, he was offered a gig with a jazz legend, someone he had looked up to all his life. These thoughts all run through Maurice's mind in a flurry until his head stops spinning and he regains his composure.

John Rigsby is looking at him, waiting for an answer. Maurice extends his hand to Rigsby and they shake.

"Why not," Maurice says, extending his hand to John Rigsby. "Let's see where we can take it."

It was three in the morning when Maurice got on the uptown subway for Harlem with his horn case. It was that special time

of night between late night and early morning. Most of the clubs and bars had closed and the early morning commuters were just getting out of bed. A young couple sits across from him and a few seats up an old woman is asleep against the train window. Stations flash by every few seconds. In ten minutes he gets off the train at one of the Harlem stations.

His apartment in the musician's hotel is not much larger than a prison cell. In it is a small bed, a chair and a dresser. A few weeks ago the room was littered with booze and drug needles for heroin. But Maurice had made a decision to change his life and put alcohol and drugs in his past. The demon of alcohol and drugs was the toughest demon he had ever dealt with. He stayed in his room between gigs, many nights unable to sleep with a cold sweat. Some nights he hallucinated.

But after a few weeks his head and soul began to clear and he saw the world in a fresh, new way. His music began to change also. He was able to play the sounds he had been hearing deep inside of himself for so long but sounds that always remained in the distance, caught in the haze of liquor and drugs. Now, though, the sounds were obtainable and no longer fuzzy with the narcotic haze.

This was the real reason behind the powerful music he was able to make now. It came to him naturally now, without being

beckoned out by drugs and alcohol. Came like an old friend that was always there waiting to be summoned. It was something he didn't tell John Rigsby. The real reason behind the powerful new music coming from his horn. Maurice takes his saxophone out of the case and studies it as if it possesses a life of its own.

There are no pictures on the wall except a framed photograph of his son Alphonse taken right before he left. He takes the photo of Alphonse off the wall. He sits on his bed and studies it for a while.

"I wish you had been there tonight," he says to the photo. "You would have been proud of your old man."

He places his hand against the photo as if by some magic he could communicate with Alphonse at this moment. A tear rolls down his cheek.

"I miss you so much," he says to the photo. "We'll be together again someday. I promise."

## Chapter Four

The Gold Coast High School is a sprawling red brick building with white wood trim on large old windows. It is situated on Elm Avenue at a safe distance of ten blocks from the wild activities of Gold Coast Avenue. Next to the school are the athletic fields and a huge football stadium. The Gold Coast Tigers are constant contenders at the state football playoffs.

On this Monday afternoon, Alphonse sits in his algebra class with his notebook open and pencil in hand. The room is bare with no pictures on the dull yellow walls. His math teacher, a small bald-headed man, is madly making letters and equation signs on the blackboard. He talks quickly and with an assuredness as if everything in the world is contained on both sides of equation signs.

The words of his teacher drift farther and farther away as Alphonse pulls out a photograph of his father and studies it. His father stands next to his father's music teacher Lotti McCoy holding his old high school saxophone. Alphonse dreams of one

day getting his own saxophone. This would be a special day for sure.

Lotti has been at his school forever and is now Alphonse's music teacher. She is his favorite teacher. Her class his favorite class. He never daydreams in Lotti McCoy's class like he does in math class.

Memories come back to Alphonse. His father used to take him to the Blackhawk Theater where Alphonse saw some legendary musicians. He took him all around to the various clubs. Introduced him to the musicians. Everyone knew his father. Many felt he would be one of the ones from the Gold Coast area to really make it big someday.

But all of this made little difference to his mother. She knew little about the jazz world and had no interest in trying to understand it and her husband. When they were married Maurice had a steady job working in the big auto factory on the south side of town. In those days, his interest in jazz was little more than a hobby and Bernice was willing to let him pursue his hobby at the clubs now and then as long as he sat in the pews of New World Baptist Church every Sunday morning.

Slowly, he started missing work at the auto plant and coming home late at night with his saxophone. He had been drinking and playing at the clubs down on Gold Coast Avenue. The

money got scarce and Bernice was forced to take a job in the munitions plant. One day he was fired from his job at the auto factory. He told Bernice he was going to make it as a musician. He stopped going to church on Sundays and seemed to live at the clubs on Gold Coast Avenue.

Alphonse thought of all of this as he sat in his math class at school. He daydreamed a lot about his father. Where he was right now. What he was doing. The times they had spent together at the jazz clubs.

Bernice worked the late shift at the munitions plant and did not get home until two in the morning. It allowed Maurice to take his son with him to the clubs on many nights without her knowing about it. She would have been enraged if she knew that Maurice was taking her son to the jazz clubs.

But one night she came home early to find both of them gone. There was a huge confrontation when the two of them got back and she told Maurice to get out, that she did not want him around her son anymore. There was nothing positive about the world of jazz. To her the music was infested with drugs and alcohol and women and gamblers and hustlers and her son was not going to have any part in all of this.

Alphonse remembered the day his father left very well. He remembered how long his father held him could hear his father

crying. At first his father had stayed in an apartment above the Blackhawk Theater that Moose let him have for a while. But in a month he had left town to go on the road with this R & B group that was touring back east. That was four months ago and Alphonse has not heard from his father since then.

Suddenly the class bell rings like an alarm clock waking Alphonse from a dream.

## Chapter Five

The big black limo came east over the Southern River bridge and turned right down the street where The New World Baptist Church was located and came to a stop in front of it. A chauffeur held the door open and Stanley Greenberg emerged and walked up the steps into the church. Bernice Hudson was waiting for him in her office at the church.

"And what brings such a distinguished visitor to visit?" she says to Greenberg as he sits down.

Stanley Greenberg smiles.

"I think we have finally found the right developer for the area," he says.

"I've heard that before," Bernice says.

"No, this time is different," he says. "One of the biggest developers in the nation. Done a lot of projects as large as Gold Coast."

"And the jazz clubs?" she says.

"They're all coming down," Greenberg says. "We're going to put up one large arts complex in their place. We're committed to

really cleaning up the area. I know the church has the same commitment."

"I spoke with the mayor last Sunday at church," Bernice says. "He didn't say anything about this."

"It's in the very earliest stages," says Greenberg. "We're just doing some preliminary stuff before letting the mayor know. He will be on board I can assure you."

Bernice looks at Greenberg.

"That's not the impression I got from talking to him the other day," she says.

Greenberg waved his hand.

"He will be on board," he repeated. "I assure you."

"And what do you want from the church?" Bernice asks.

"The church is a powerful force in the community," Greenberg says. "We need your support behind the new development plan."

"How do I know anything about this plan?" Bernice asks.

"We'll let you see a draft of it as soon as we have something. Probably in a few weeks."

Bernice looked at Greenberg. He was a key part of the white establishment that controlled the city and it was always difficult to trust this white establishment. The mayor was

involved in this establishment but he had been born in the Gold Coast area.

"I'll feel better when the mayor gets behind the plan," Bernice tells Greenberg.

"He will," says Greenberg. "You can take my word for it. He will."

Greenberg got up and extended his hand to Bernice.

"So we can count on the support of the church with the new plan?" he asks.

"Yes," says Bernice. "Subject to seeing the plan and knowing that the mayor is on board. The jazz clubs must go and it seems you are moving towards this."

"Thanks," says Greenberg. "We are close to revitalizing the Gold Coast area. One day it will be a model community."

"God's community," Bernice says.

"Yes, God's community," Greenberg repeats.

Bernice watched Greenberg as he left her office. It was difficult to believe him but the possibility of cleaning up the jazz clubs was something that needed support. Even supporting Greenberg.

## Chapter Six

A few days after Greenberg visited Bernice at the church, some of Greenberg's guys pay a visit to Moose Henderson at the Blackhawk Theater. Moose is a large bald headed man who grew up in the Gold Coast area and was the star of the football team. He played semi-professional football for a few years up in Canada before his knees were bruised up and he decided to come back to the Gold Coast area and start a jazz club. He has always loved music and his father was a professional musician who left the family when Moose was a young boy. Much like Maurice Hudson had left his family.

He became part owner of some jazz clubs, all the time learning the business and gaining more and more respect by musicians. Everyone knew you could get a fair deal from Moose. After a few years, the huge old Blackhawk Theater that was built in the 20s and brought all types of acts into the area closed down. Times were changing and jazz had taken over the area since the club was built. Moose put a group of investors together and was able to purchase the Blackhawk for a real steal.

It was mid-morning when a car full of Greenberg's boys pulled up in front of the Blackhawk. Four big white guys in dark suits got out of the car and walked quickly into the Blackhawk Theater. Moose and a few of his staff were cleaning up the place from the night before. In the dim, cavern-like club, he saw their big shapes against the oblong light of the open front door. The shapes stood against the doorway for a few seconds and then one of the shapes came towards Moose. As it got closer Moose recognized it.

"I keep tellin' myself I've gotta make one of the gigs at your club," the big shape says to Moose. "A great place you have here Moose."

The big shape is named Max Sneed. Moose has seen him a number of times at the club. His calls are never friendly ones but always about business. The business of Stanley Greenberg and the power brokers of the city.

"What do you want this time Max?" Moose asks. "We're all paid up on regulation fees."

Max wears a large trench-coat over his black suit. He is a big man but not as big as Moose. He motions towards one of the small round tables that are scattered throughout the club.

The two men sit at the table like two giants over a small birdbath. Max leans back in the tiny chair and clasps his hands behind his head.

"This is not about regulation fees," he says.

"What is it about then?" Moose asks.

Max looks at Moose across the little table and smiles.

"It's a new day," Max says. "Things are changing in town."

"Get to the point," Moose says.

"There's a development plan for Gold Coast in discussion," Max says.

"What kind of development plan?"

"A plan to bring the area in line with the times. A plan to revitalize the area," Max says as he sweeps his arm around in a half circle. "The whole area. Build a new shopping mall. New markets and stores. New housing."

"What about the clubs?" Moose asks.

"Of course they are also part of the plan," Max says.

"Everyone knows how important jazz is to the area."

Max leans over the table towards Moose. His big face hanging over the tiny round table like a big dark cloud.

"That's why we're building a huge new arts complex in the Gold Coast area," Max says.

"And what about the jazz clubs?" Moose asks.

"They'll be paid a fair price," Max says. "All the club owners will get good money for their clubs."

Max looks at Moose.

"Including you also," Max says.

"The plan is to tear them all down?" Moose asks.

"The new Gold Coast Avenue will be the jewel of the city. New shops. Markets. Housing developments."

"No more jazz clubs?" Moose says.

"One large arts and music center for the entire community," Max says. "Good clean entertainment. There's too much corruption associated with the clubs. Drugs. Alcohol. Gambling. Prostitution. You know this."

"I also know that the clubs are an essential part of the community," Moose says. "A community that is one of the great areas of music creativity."

"The price for creativity has become too high," Max says. "Gold Coast has to move into the modern era like the rest of the city."

"What do you want from me?"

"As the president of the Gold Coast Club Owner's Association you have a lot of influence with the owners. I want you to talk to them and convince them that selling their club is

in their best interest. They will be compensated well for their clubs."

"And if I refuse to talk to them about selling their clubs? If I refuse to sell the Blackhawk?" Moose asks.

Max pushes the little chair back and slowly gets up. He looks around the big club.

"You know what firetraps the clubs are," he says. "Never can tell when a fire might break out in one of them. And if a fire breaks out, you can imagine how quickly it might spread to the other clubs."

The big man walked back towards the other three shapes still framed by the light of the front door.

"Think about it," he said as he walked out the door. "I need an answer in a week."

Moose Henderson watched the shapes disappear through the door and heard the engine of their car start up and then fade away.

He then walked over to the phone and dialed a number.

"Harold, it's Moose," he said. "We need to call a meeting of all the club owners. It's serious. The Blackhawk tomorrow at three."

## Chapter Seven

One afternoon, not long before the end of the school year, the Gold Coast High School's marching band is engaged in their final practice before the summer break and the beginning of the fall football season. Alphonse is a member of the band and marches along playing a saxophone. It is not his own saxophone but one owned by the school. He is not the most enthusiastic member of the band and doesn't like playing an instrument while marching. But it does allow him to play his saxophone and his mother supports his membership in the school band.

As the band marches up and down the field Alphonse begins to start improvising different riffs on the music with his horn. At first it is not noticeable but soon his playing gains the attention of the band director, a dour, sad-looking man named Colonel Helmsly or the "Colonel" as everyone called him. The Colonel has come to the school from the military and brought military structure, precision and discipline into the school's

band. Alphonse is sure the Colonel has little love for music. He certainly does not like jazz as his band music never touches on any music remotely similar to jazz.

The Colonel abruptly halts the band and walks over to Alphonse. This is not the first time an incident like this has happened with Alphonse.

"This is a marching band Mr. Hudson," he says to Alphonse. "Not a jazz group."

"Maybe that's part of the problem," Alphonse says.

Alphonse could see the Colonel's face turn red under his band director's cap. He was not accustomed to any insubordination. He grabs Alphonse's arm and pulls him out of the band.

"That comment just got you an appointment with the principal," he says to Alphonse.

"Take over," he tells his assistant as he walks Alphonse inside the school building and up to Principal Davis' office.

"Wait here," he orders Alphonse as he knocks on the door of Principal Davis and goes inside. He comes out in a minute and motions Alphonse to go inside. Then the Colonel leaves.

"Alphonse, come in and have a seat," says Principal Davis motioning to one of the chairs in front of his heavy oak desk. He is a middle-aged man with white hair and a beard. He has been

principal of the school for thirty years and is as close to an institution as one can get.

It is a warm afternoon in late May. The window behind Principal Davis is open and the sound of the marching band comes into the room.

Principal Davis leans back in his large swivel chair and slowly rocks back-and-forth for a few seconds. He studies Alphonse with a slight smile on his face. It is Alphonse's first year at the high school and the first time Principal Davis has met Alphonse.

"You look so much like your father," Principal Davis says to Alphonse. "He was one of my students when I was a teacher here. One heck of a musician."

The boy watches Principal Davis trying to figure out where he is going with his lecture, what moral lesson is about to be imparted.

"You are also one heck of a musician," he says. "I've heard it from your music teacher Miss Lotti. I've even heard it from Colonel Helmsly. He tells me you could play first saxophone in the band if you just learned to read music a little better."

"I'm not interested in reading music or playing first saxophone in the band," Alphonse says. "I want to be a jazz musician. Like my father."

Principal Davis smiles and shakes his head as he gets up out of his chair and walks over to a framed photograph on the wall.

"Mayor Blackstone was also one of my students," he says. "He was a classmate of your father and they were good friends. Both loved jazz and had one of the school's first jazz bands. And both were in the marching band."

Principal Davis let these words sink in for a few seconds before continuing.

"But your father never learned to read music while the mayor did," he says. "And the mayor beat your father out for first saxophone in the band."

Principal Davis walked back to his desk and sat down in the swivel chair.

"When that happened," he said, "I noticed a change in their friendship. The mayor quit their jazz band and your father started hanging out at the jazz clubs more and more. But the mayor moved away from jazz. It wasn't that he didn't like it anymore. It was just that it wasn't something that consumed him like it consumed your father."

"So if one wants to be a mayor someday they need to get away from jazz?" Alphonse says.

"Jazz is a great art form," Principal Davis says. "Our art form. Why I'm a big jazz fan myself. I love Duke Ellington and Count Basie. But it extracts a huge toll from jazz musicians, those who practice this art form. There are only a few Ellingtons and Basies in the world."

"Maybe I want to try and be another Ellington," Alphonse says.

Principal Davis smiles and shakes his head.

"Your father also wanted to be another famous jazz musician," he said. "Talked about Coleman Hawkins all the time."

"And he became famous," Alphonse says. "Everyone knew him along Gold Coast Avenue. He took me to hear him play at the Blackhawk Theater and Moose Henderson over there says he is one of the greatest musicians to ever play the club. And you should have heard him at the Empress Lounge or the 503 Club."

Principal Davis smiled.

"I also knew your mother Bernice," he said. "She was one of my students. I know about her work with the church and know how she felt about her husband exposing you to jazz. She saw no future in it for you. She told me this."

"My father will be a famous jazz musician someday," Alphonse says. "And so will I."

"Perhaps," Principal Davis says. "Maybe someday he'll be known outside of the Gold Coast area. But I'm just telling you that the chances are stacked against him to do this. Even being the great musician he is. Playing jazz takes too much of a toll on jazz musicians. Drugs. Alcohol. Gambling. Divorce."

He pauses and looks at Alphonse.

"Leaving one's family to live a life on the road. Too much of a toll."

Principal Davis pushes his chair back and gets up and walks over and puts his hand on Alphonse's shoulder and walks him to the door of his office.

"Just give some thought to this," he tells Alphonse. "I've lived a long time, seen a lot of things. The world is bigger than the jazz clubs down on Gold Coast Avenue. Much bigger."

Alphonse looks at Principal Davis but does not say anything. It is almost impossible for him to believe that there is a world beyond Gold Coast Avenue and clubs like the Blackhawk. That there are more honorable men than Moose Henderson.

Principal Davis watches the young boy go down the hallway carrying his saxophone and then disappear down the steps. He walks over to the window and watches the marching band and looks for Alphonse to report back to Colonel Helmsly. But the boy does

not appear on the field. In a few seconds he sees Alphonse walking home with his saxophone case and wonders about the future of the young boy. It is one thing to have a love of jazz. It is another thing altogether when a love of jazz is so closely woven with a love for a father.

He looked at the photograph of the mayor again. His prize student over the years. His student who loved jazz like Alphonse's father but knew enough to get out of the jazz world before it was too late. Principal Davis wondered what had happened to Maurice Hudson since he left the family a few months ago. More than likely, he was in some cheap hotel and strung out on drugs and booze. This is something he felt pretty sure of but something he couldn't say to Alphonse.

## Chapter Eight

The new member of the John Rigsby Quartet is the talk of the New York City jazz scene in the few weeks after the date at the Ten Spot. Maurice Hudson's name begins to appear in the newspapers around town and even *Downbeat*, the big national jazz magazine, calls to schedule an interview. The group played a number of other famous clubs in the city and the crowds continued to grow with each date until there were lines waiting outside the clubs waiting to see the new phenomenon.

Arthur Snow had called the group out to his studios in New Jersey to listen to the tapes of the night at the Ten Spot. Everyone agreed it was one of the most powerful dates the group had ever recorded, one of those special, magical evenings when the muse of music pays a visit on her own free will. An intersection of synchronicities where each member of the band pushes the others into new, unexplored territories. But after listening to the tapes, everyone agreed that it was Maurice Hudson who seemed somehow at the center of the phenomenal

evening of music. His music was almost otherworldly, coming now from the club that night but from somewhere else.

There was some final mixing with Rigsby helping Snow obtain that special sound of the quartet he wanted. And then, the tapes were sent off to be pressed into records. Like he often did, Arthur Snow wrote the liner notes for the album and an avant-garde beatnik artist in the Village created a stunning cover for the album with a painting of Rigsby that appeared to be something between Salvador Dali and Picasso. The contribution of Maurice Hudson to the album was duly noted by Arthur Snow in the liner notes and his playing was likened to that of a young John Rigsby. The title of the album was *The Rigsby Quartet, Live at the Ten Spot*.

One evening after a sold-out engagement of the group at a club up in Harlem, Arthur Snow handed out the new albums to the group. He gave a number of copies to each member of the band.

Back at his hotel room that evening, Maurice studied the album and read what Snow said about his playing. There were also quotes of other well-known jazz critics in the liner notes and they also echoed the praise of Arthur Snow for the music of Hudson. The walls of the hotel room now had reviews of Maurice Hudson's playing from various newspapers on the walls. But the

photograph of his son Alphonse still remained in the center of all the articles.

Maurice sat on his bed and composed a note to his close friend Moose Henderson at the Blackhawk. "Moose," he wrote, "It's been an unbelievable time for me in New York. Have joined the John Rigsby Quartet. Still not sure if all this is a dream. Enclosed find two copies of the new live album I made with Rigsby at the Ten Spot. Hot off the press. You are the first to hear it except the crowd at the Ten Spot the night we recorded it. One copy is for you and one is for Alphonse. I would send it to him directly but I don't think he would get it. His mother has a way of intercepting things. Please give it to him and tell him I love him and miss him very much. Will call you one of these days. Take care. Maurice."

Then Maurice went in his closet and took out a beat up case and put it on the bed and opened the case. Inside was his first saxophone. The one he had in high school. He hadn't played it for years. He lifted it out of the case and played a few quick riffs. It still sounded good. He had always intended to give it to Alphonse and now seemed the right time. He wrote a short note to Alphonse and put it in the case then closed it.

The next morning, he took the saxophone and the two records down to the post office and mailed them. He sent the records

Moose Henderson at the Blackhawk Theater. He sent the saxophone to his old music teacher Lotti McCoy with instructions to give the horn to Alphonse. He felt good. There wasn't anyone he wanted to hear his music more than Moose and Alphonse and Lotti.

## Chapter Nine

On a cloudy Friday morning with tall dark clouds threatening the onslaught of a Midwestern thunderstorm, Stanley Greenberg leaves his downtown office and drives north past the great state university and then the manufacturing plants and the outlying suburbs until he is out of the city and into the countryside. Farms flow by his window in a quilt-work pattern of different crops and farmhouses.

Then there is the white fence of the Bluegill farm. The fence goes on for half a mile. Behind it are not crops but Herman Bluegill's prize Arabian horses. Greenberg slows his car at the front gates of the estate. They are open this morning as Bluegill is expecting his visit. He winds the car up a quarter mile driveway past a lake on the left and horse stables on the right. On both sides of the lawns are perfectly manicured and landscaped like fairways of a championship golf course. The road winds up a hill towards a vast white mansion that sits on top of the hill. A beam of sunlight slips through the dark storm clouds and lands its beam directly on the big white house so that it

seems to briefly possess some religiosity about it almost like some great biblical ark that has come to rest on a hill after a number of months on stormy seas.

As he drives up to the great home of Bluegill, Stanley Greenberg gets that familiar feeling again. He is proud to be working for the most powerful man in the city. Proud to be his "front" man who deals with people on behalf of the secretive Bluegill. The deception of city control has been maintained well over the years. Everyone thinks he and the mayor run the city. But he knows it is really Herman Bluegill who controls the destiny of the city.

He stops his car in the large circular driveway in front of the big house. It has large columns in front of it and looks similar to the home of some great southern plantation owner. This seems appropriate to Greenberg as Bluegill runs the city almost like a plantation.

Bluegill's Chinese servant leads him down the long hallway and into the big office library and closes the heavy oak doors. Herman Bluegill sits behind a massive desk.

"Tell me about our new development man Yellowstone," Bluegill says. "You sound excited about him."

"He's a big developer from LA," Greenberg says. "Done other projects as large as the Gold Coast area. I'm confident he's our man."

"You gave him our ideas for the area? The blueprints?" Bluegill asks.

"Yes, he's got them. I took him on a tour of the area a few weeks ago and he's close to having a preliminary plan for us to look at."

"What about the citizens of the Gold Coast area?" Bluegill asks. "Are they on board with the plan?"

"My guys have talked to Moose Henderson, the head of the Club Owners Association. As you know, the clubs are an essential part of the Gold Coast economy. We need to have them buy into the development plan. I paid a visit to one of the key leaders of the Gold Coast church community. The church people would like nothing better than to see the jazz clubs shut down. Having them on our side is important."

"Good," Bluegill says. "We're close to integrating Gold Coast into the city. Local communities like Gold Coast are a thing of the past. They once served a purpose. But not any longer. Money needs to flow out of them and into the city."

"Yellowstone is presenting the development plan to me and the mayor in a few days," Greenberg says.

"Does the mayor know the extent of the plan?" Bluegill asks.

"No, he doesn't," Greenberg says. "I've given him just some basics on it. He knows there is a development plan for the area but that's all."

"We need to be careful with the mayor," Bluegill says. "Break the magnitude of the development to him slowly. He was born in the area and grew up there. He's not going to want to see his old neighborhood disappear without some good reasons."

"Progress for the citizens of Gold Coast," Greenberg says. "A better lifestyle. New stores and streets and cultural venues. The new shopping mall. The new housing development. I can convince the mayor."

"Make sure you do," Bluegill says. "I want this whole thing to flow smoothly. We don't need a big battle on this."

"I've got it under control," Greenberg says. "I think you'll be impressed with Yellowstone and the development plans."

Bluegill shakes his head.

"Let me know when the plan is ready," he says. "I want final approval over everything of course. But I also want to stay in the background on all of this."

"Right," says Greenberg. "Of course."

## Chapter Ten

The package from Maurice arrived at the Blackhawk Theater one afternoon. The club was closed and there was no one in the club except Moose who was cleaning things up getting ready to open the doors at seven tonight. He opened the package and read the note from Maurice. He was startled to learn that Maurice had joined the legendary John Rigsby Quartet. It was almost too much to believe. Something out of a dream.

He took the two albums out and set one aside for Alphonse. He read the liner notes and the praise for Maurice. He could not believe the album he held in his hands.

Then he walked over to the club's record player attached to the club's powerful sound system. He began to put it on the turntable and then stopped. Maybe it would be better to listen to the music with Alphonse he thought to himself. He knew that Alphonse had Lotti's music class as his final class of the day. He called the school and left an urgent message for Lotti to call him. She called ten minutes later.

"Don't tell me," Lotti says when she calls. "You're about to hire another one of my music students at the Blackhawk. You want my opinion."

Moose laughs. He is always calling his old music teacher to get her advice on musicians who had come up through her class. Almost all the great musicians of Gold Coast had gone through Lotti's music class and been inspired by her passion for music.

"Almost," Moose said. "Only this time I've got an album from one of your former students I want you to listen to."

"Let me check my schedule," Lotti says. "I can come over perhaps sometime next week."

"This is important Lotti," Moose says. "You'll see when you get over here. Can you stop by after school today?"

"Well, " Lotti says hesitating for a second.

"Please Lotti," says Moose. "I want you to listen to something with me. I think we should both hear it together for the first time."

"I seldom hear you so excited about something," Lotti says. "I'll stop by after school today."

"Good," Moose says. "And bring Alphonse with you."

"Alphonse?"

"Yes," says Moose. "It's important you bring Alphonse with you."

"OK," says Lotti. "Alphonse and I will stop by in a little over an hour."

"Good," Moose said.

He held the new album in his hand and looked at it for a few seconds. He smiled and shook his head. There was a sense of pride in Moose that his good friend Maurice was playing with a jazz legend. It was a confirmation of his faith over the years in Maurice. I was a confirmation of his faith in the quality of the musicians that played in the Blackhawk Theater. But even more, it was a confirmation of the quality of music that the Gold Coast area was producing.

A little over an hour later there was a knock on the front door of the Blackhawk. Moose opened it to find Lotti and Alphonse standing there. He welcomed them into the club and closed and locked the door. This was a private event.

Lotti walked around looking at the club. In her younger days she had spent many evenings listening to music at the Blackhawk but she had not visited the club for a while now.

"You've added a new stage," she says.

"Yes," Moose says. "We're booking more big bands into the club these days. Sign of the times."

Moose pointed up at the huge speakers that hung down from the ceiling on both sides of the stage.

"Also added a new sound system," Moose says. "State of the art stuff."

"Impressive," Lotti says.

Moose went over and grabbed the jazz album and the note from Maurice. He directed them to a table.

"You need to be sitting down when you read this," he says.

Lotti begins reading the note, her jaw falling open in disbelief. She passes the note to Alphonse and examines the cover of the jazz album and then reads the liner notes on the back of it. She then passes the album to Alphonse.

"That's your album," Moose tells Alphonse.

Alphonse grips the album tightly in his hands.

Moose walks over to the turntable record player where his copy of the jazz album sits ready to go. He turns the record player on and the record begins to rotate. He turns on the music system's power and waits a few seconds for it to warm up. Then he walks to the table where Lotti and Alphonse are and sits down and waits for the music to begin.

The music of the John Rigsby Quartet begins to come from the large speakers that fill the cavernous space of the Blackhawk Theater. The music envelops the space like a powerful presence. Moose had been following the legendary John Rigsby for a long time but he has never heard this type of music coming

from Rigsby. This new live album from the Ten Spot in New York is truly something different. Something special. Even revolutionary. The quartet is reaching new musical territory. Lotti also listens with a growing sense of excitement and anticipation. Like Moose, she has heard Rigsby before but she has never heard this type of music from him. For Alphonse, the music of John Rigsby is something new but he seems fascinated by it.

On the final piece of the album, a new sound joins the quartet. Everyone recognizes it as the saxophone of Maurice. Although the style is recognizable there is distinctly something new and different about it. Moose and Lotti try to figure out what this new sound is.

When the piece ends and the needle lifts from the record the three sit at the table in silence, unable to phrase what they have just heard, the experience they have just gone through.

"I feel like I've just been to a revival meeting," Lotti finally says.

"What is it?" Moose asks. "A spirituality in the music. A sacredness."

"Yes," says Lotti. "A power and authority in music I've seldom heard before."

"A new tenacity. An assuredness," says Moose. "An absence of Maurice's old tentativeness."

"What did you think Alphonse?" Moose asks the young boy.

In the dim light of the club Moose can see that a slight tear runs down Alphonse's cheek as he holds the album to his chest.

"I am proud of my father," he says. "Very proud."

"You should be," Lotti says.

When Lotti and Alphonse left the club Moose went over and played the last piece of the album featuring Maurice. He played it again and again trying to define the powerful new sound in the music. When he took the album off the turntable he realized an hour had passed with the swiftness of a few minutes.

Then he went back to getting the club ready for the evening's music. Soon, his employees arrived and the club was full of the activity of getting it ready for another night of music. Moose continued to turn over the music he had just heard in his mind. He had never felt so proud of a friend. And, he had never felt so much pride in the Gold Coast area that produced this amazing musician. Right before the club opened for the night, he got an idea. He called the Vice-President of the Jazz Club Owners Association.

"I'm still trying to get a time together when everyone can meet," his Vice-President told him. "It's hard finding a time."

"The Blackhawk is dark next Thursday night," he tells his Vice-President. "We'll meet Thursday. I want everyone here. Everyone. No excuses. Eight o'clock Thursday. There'll be heavy fines for those who don't show up. No excuses."

"I've got my work cut out for me," said the Vice-President of the Jazz Club Owners Association.

"Eight o'clock Thursday night," Moose repeated.

## Chapter Eleven

For the past week, Manfred Yellowstone's group has taken over a suite of rooms at the exclusive old Regency Hotel in the downtown part of the Midwestern city. The rooms of the hotel suite are filled with drafting tables and blueprints and Yellowstone's architects and engineers. Yellowstone walks around the hotel suite discussing final details with employees. He wears his usual enigmatic expression but he is generally happy with the progress of the plan. It is one of the largest projects his firm has ever undertaken and he thinks Greenberg will be pleased with it. His people have been able to incorporate the blueprints and plans that Greenberg gave him into the development.

He walks into a makeshift conference room in the suite of hotel rooms. In the middle of the room a large model of the Gold Coast area sits on a table. A few employees are putting final touches on the model. Yellowstone stands next to the table and looks over the model. The most noticeable difference between the current Gold Coast area and the scale model on the table is in

size of the structures in the model. The current Gold Coast area is a jumble of small little stores and jazz clubs and houses. The model on the table replaces many of the little structures with a few large ones. The little clubs are replaced by a huge arts complex. The little stores replaced by a huge shopping mall. The small homes of the Gold Coast neighborhoods are dwarfed by a few huge housing projects.

Yellowstone picks up the phone in the conference room and calls Stanley Greenberg.

"We're ready to show you the plan," he says.

"Good," says Greenberg. "I'll get back to you on a meeting time."

Stanley Greenberg hangs up the phone and quickly dials Herman Bluegill's number.

"The plan is ready to take a look at," he says to Bluegill.

"Good," Bluegill says.

"Should I contact the mayor and invite him to the meeting?" Greenberg asks.

"No," says Bluegill. "Let's keep him out of the loop on this first meeting. We'll pull him in later."

"Right," says Greenberg.

## Chapter Twelve

Lotti McCoy can't get the music of the Rigsby album out of her mind. Especially the incredible solo of her old student Maurice at the end of the album. The music has stayed with her since she heard the album at the Blackhawk a few days ago.

In her music classes, she has seen the profound effect the music of his father has had on Alphonse. The boy carries the album with him everywhere like something that possesses magical powers. She sees a sudden change in the boy. A new pride in his father. A type of confirmation of something the boy suspected and hoped for. She knew his mother Bernice and wondered how she would react to all of this if she knew. But she knew that Alphonse would never tell her about the album.

A few days after hearing the amazing music of Maurice Hudson at the Blackhawk, a large box arrives at school one morning for Lotti. She opens it to see a familiar sight. The beat up saxophone case that Maurice used to carry his saxophone around school in. She opens the case to find a note to her instructing her to make sure that Alphonse gets the saxophone.

Lotti smiles.

Maurice is finally reaching out to his son.

This makes her feel good.

She will give him the special gift after class tomorrow.

## Chapter Thirteen

Radio station WGCB was the only radio station in the Gold Coast area. It's owner and on-air personality was a diminutive little man who was always seen around town wearing a purple beret. His name was Midnight Howl or just Midnight. He got this name because each night he would actually let out a huge wolf howl at midnight. People in the Gold Coast area even claimed you could set your clock by his howl. No one was sure why he let out his howl each night at midnight but some of his listeners theorized it marked the beginning of the late night hours of the station when he played a lot of avant-garde jazz and off-the-wall stuff.

Midnight was on a mission to make sure his station was a voice for both the music and the issues of the area. It was an important job because the rest of the media of the Midwestern city hardly ever mentioned news of the Gold Coast area. For them, the life of the area went on in a continual silence, its music and news hardly ever escaping out of the area to infect the general populace of the city.

The radio station was located in a little house Midnight owned on a side street off of Gold Coast Avenue. His studio was a converted bedroom in the home with the walls of the room turned into shelves holding hundreds of jazz albums. It was almost an equal distance from both the New World Baptist Church and the Blackhawk Theater and this fact amused Midnight for it seemed to symbolize in a geographic manner the perpetual blending of church music and jazz on the station. Church leaders like Bernice Hudson were always pushing for the station to play more gospel music while club owners like Moose Henderson wanted the station to program more jazz. At times, Midnight almost felt like a referee in some perpetual battle between two grand forces represented by the church and jazz: the music of God and the music of the Devil.

He knew the two forces well as the two had always done battle in his own life. His father had been one of the first preachers in the area while his mother a blues singer influenced by the sultry voice of Billie Holiday. Both types of music infiltrated his life when he was growing up without a final victory ever going to one or the other.

But the growth of the jazz clubs in the Gold Coast area was a defining period in his life as he got to know the local jazz musicians and become close friends with a number of them. He

actually played a decent jazz piano himself and at times was allowed to sit in with some of the musicians. One of his best friends was Maurice Hudson and Midnight often wondered what had become of Maurice. He was one of the most talented musicians the Gold Coast had ever produced but he had just seemed to disappear since leaving the area four months ago.

\* \* \*

It is right before midnight and Alphonse lays in his bed listening to Midnight's program on the radio, hearing the mixture of church music and watered down jazz, waiting for the midnight hour when the good music would come on WGCB. Like his father, Alphonse listens to the station almost every night. It is much more than just a radio station to him but rather some great voice in the darkness of the nights that tells him he is not alone. Often, Midnight plays some of his father's music on the radio that the station recorded at the Gold Coast clubs over the years.

Alphonse has his father's album under the bed covers like some stuffed animal young children carry around with them for security. He has carried it with him ever since Moose gave it to him the other day at the Blackhawk. He has listened to it over

and over again on his the record player in the living room when his mother was at the church, being careful to watch for her return.

In a few minutes the little luminescent hands on his bedside clock are both straight up at midnight and there is the familiar howl over the radio. Alphonse laughs. He loves Midnight Howl and has met him a number of times with his father. If he didn't want to become a jazz musician like his father, Alphonse thinks that he might want to be a jazz DJ like Midnight.

Tonight, after his howl, Midnight gives one of his radio "sermons" or "radio howls" as he calls them. These are short editorials that allow Midnight to give his opinion on the state of the world or really anything that is on his mind at the time.

"I don't know about you," Midnight begins, "but I've noticed an alarming decrease in the quality of jazz coming from the Gold Coast. Maybe it's a decrease in the quality of jazz all over the world. Maybe a sign of our times. It's almost like the musicians are simply waiting for something or someone to inspire them again like Parker once did. Like Armstrong once did. Waiting for someone else, unable to believe in the possibility that inspiration might come from within. From themselves. Musicians today seem like so many dark celestial bodies reflecting the light of others rather than radiating their own

light. The next tune is dedicated to a good friend of mine, wherever he is right now. His name is Maurice Hudson and this is Maurice live at the Blackhawk Theater a year ago."

Alphonse lays in his bed and listens to his father's music over the radio. It was not the first time he had heard it on the late night show. But tonight seemed special. Maurice moves closer to the radio to better hear the sound of his father's horn.

As the tune comes to an end Alphonse has a sudden idea. He turns the radio off and gets out of bed and finds the flashlight in his dresser and turns it on. He puts on his pants and a t-shirt and his sneakers and grabs the album his father has send and quietly pushes up his room window, climbs through it and quickly walks across the lawn of his home and down the sidewalk.

\* \* \*

At half past midnight, when he was playing "Temptation" by Earl Bostic, Midnight hears a knock on his door. This does not worry him very much as he is used to having people stop by the station at all hours of the night. Sometimes it is a musician friend coming off a gig at one of the clubs. Sometimes it is one

of the late night "poets" of the Gold Coast area that find inspiration after a number of whiskeys in the clubs.

But tonight he is very surprised to find Alphonse Hudson at the door.

"Your mama would skin you alive if she knew you were here," Midnight says to Alphonse.

"Please Midnight," Alphonse says. "I need to talk to you. It's very important."

"And then she'd skin me alive," he says, "for letting you in."

"Please Midnight," Alphonse repeats.

Midnight leans out the front door of his house and quickly surveys the street and then pulls the boy inside and shuts the door.

"What you doin' runnin' around late at night," Midnight asks. "Especially on a school night."

Alphonse pulls the record album from under his shirt and hands it to Midnight. The little man looks at the cover.

"A new Rigsby album!" he exclaims. "Always an important event. How did you get this? I thought I always got the latest stuff."

"It just came out," Alphonse says. "My father sent it to me. He's on it."

Midnight laughs and shakes his head as he leads Alphonse back into his studio.

"That would be nice," he says. "Very nice. And perhaps someday he might record with a legend like Rigsby."

Midnight sits down in front of the broadcasting console and motions Alphonse to pull up a chair alongside of him. Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia" is playing on the station turntable.

"Read the liner notes on the back of the album," Alphonse tells Midnight.

Midnight turns the album over and begins reading. In a few seconds Alphonse can see Midnight's jaw drop a few inches.

"Unbelievable!" he exclaims. "I can't believe it! And I thought your father had disappeared."

"You've gotta hear it," says Alphonse.

"Of course," Midnight says. "I'll play it right after Dizzy."

Midnight then pulled Alphonse up and walked him to the door.

"But you need to get back home right now," he tells Alphonse as he ushers him to the front door. "Before your mama finds you missing. I'll make a tape of the album and you can get it back tomorrow."

Alphonse walked back to his home. A few blocks away he could hear the music coming from the different clubs over on Gold Coast Avenue and over the trees see the red and yellow haze of the neon coming from them. It was only one in the morning. The night was still young at the clubs.

When he was back in his bed he turned on the radio and heard the first pieces of the Rigsby Quartet. He laid in bed listening to the ethereal music.

Then there was the last piece on the album and the music of his father. It felt good to be listening to his father over the radio at night.

When the album was over there was a long silence. "That my friends is our own Maurice Hudson with the John Rigsby Quartet," he says in a breathless voice. "Yes, you heard me right. And yes, you weren't just dreamin'. What can I say. We now know what happened to to one of our favorite musicians. He's made the big time. You're going to hear a lot more of this album on this station."

## Chapter Fourteen

Eight o'clock Thursday night at the Blackhawk Theater.

Moose Henderson stands in front of the owners of the Gold Coast jazz clubs. His threat has worked and the owners of the fifty jazz clubs of Gold Coast are all present tonight.

"I know you're all a little pissed at me for forcing you here tonight," he says. "But you need to listen to what I have to say."

Moose paced back and forth in front of the group for a few seconds. He knew the guys in the group like a bunch of brothers. They had been through so much over the years. They were all in competition with each other but they were united in certain things.

"A few days ago I had a visit from some of Stanley Greenberg's boys," Moose says. "A friendly visit but a threatening one at the same time."

"Greenberg and the city want more regulatory fees again," one of the club owners yells out.

Moose shakes his head in disagreement.

"I wish it was just more regulatory fees," Moose says. "But it is much more than this."

Moose stops pacing and looks over the club owners.

"He wants to buy all of us out," Moose says. "They have a plan to develop the Gold Coast area. They want to tear down all the jazz clubs and build one big arts complex. They tell me they'll give everyone a fair price for their clubs."

There is total silence in the club after Moose says this.

"On top of all of this," says Moose, "Greenberg's guy threatened all of us."

"What'd the bastard say?" one of the club owners asked.

"He said our jazz clubs are real firetraps," Moose said.

There is a buzz of conversations among the jazz club owners. The conversations become louder and louder. Moose walks over to the long bar and opens some bottles of whiskey and passes them around the tables with some glasses. The meeting is going to be a long one tonight.

The jazz club owners are united in their hatred of Greenberg and his boys. They have been fighting them for years to stay alive. But they also realize that Greenberg has a lot of tough thugs at his call and that the city plays hard-ball. They remember the fate of one club owner a few years ago who refused to pay the city's regulatory fees. He was found floating in the

Southern River one day. Or the club owner who started an investigation of Greenberg's business interests in the city. His club was burned to the ground one night.

And too, some of the jazz club owners were simply tired after all the years of running a club. They had lost the passion of those early years when the area was young and the music was fresh. But many were not sure it was worth carrying on the battle. If they could get out of the business for a good price, many seemed willing to at least consider this.

An hour or so after the conversations started, Moose Henderson appeared in front of the owners again. He was angry with many of them.

"I can't believe how quickly we forget our history," he says to them. "How we forget what an important part of Gold Coast our clubs have been. How we forget what important musicians have appeared at our clubs. The incredible creativity our clubs have spawned."

"Maybe once," said one of the owners. "But things are changing quickly today. Jazz is watered down. Doesn't have the power it once had. I can't think of one important musician the Gold Coast area has produced here. I challenge anyone here to name one."

Moose is quiet for a few seconds. Then he walks over to his record player and turns on the turntable and the sound system.

In a few seconds, the music of the John Rigsby Quartet fills the Blackhawk Theater. The owners listen with increasing excitement. At the beginning of the last piece, Moose announces Maurice Hudson is the soloist on the piece.

There is a stunned silence at the end of the album. Moose passes the new album around among the club owners.

"The Gold Coast still produces visionary music," Moose says. "You all know Maurice Hudson, know how much a part of the Gold Coast he was. How important it was to him. He is one of us. His son Alphonse is still in school here. Do we collapse the area that created this great musician? This revolutionary music? Pull up stakes and move on like a bunch of gypsies?"

Moose looks out over the group of club owners. The album is gingerly being passed around almost like it is some religious object.

"I've never heard music like this," one of the owners says. "Something has come over Maurice."

"Yes," another jazz club owner agrees.

"What do we do?" one of the owners asks Moose.

"We need to stay united on all of this," Moose says. "We can only stand up to them if we remain together on this. We need

to oppose the developers buying us out. Need to oppose them at all costs. We need to realize it's our music at stake, our clubs. All that makes Gold Coast what it is has been in the past and what it is today. What it can become. Without music we have no community anymore."

As Moose spoke there was a growing murmur of talk among the jazz club owners.

"I'm going to contact the mayor on this," Moose tells the club owners. "I can't see him backing this. I'll let everyone know what he says."

The meeting ended with a vote to reject the offer of the developers to sell their jazz clubs. No one knew what future was ahead of them but after hearing the amazing music tonight, they again had faith in a type of future for a new type of jazz music. They had heard a little part of this new music tonight and it had brought a new passion and inspiration into them. Into the Gold Coast area.

## Chapter Fifteen

It was the most exclusive suburb in the city with estates that sat back from the street behind walls, gates and large trees and across wide sweeping golf course lawns. Stanley Greenberg lived in the largest estate in the suburb. It looked like a rambling castle extracted from some fairytale kingdom of long ago and magically plopped into the modern world.

The three men stood on the patio behind the big castle sipping expensive French wine and munching on fancy hors'douvres passed around on solid silver plates by a few of Greenberg's house staff. Herman Bluegill sips wine and talks to Manfred Yellowstone. The two seem to get along well together. Yellowstone keeps attempting to find out who Bluegill is, what part he plays in all of this. But Bluegill as usual is crafty about all of this and only tells Yellowstone that he is an interested investor in the development plan.

"Will the mayor be joining us tonight?" Yellowstone asks.

"Not tonight," Greenberg says. "You'll meet him later."

There is more discussion between Yellowstone and Bluegill. Yellowstone tells Bluegill about a number of his developments. The Yellowstone projects have been instrumental in developing many of the nation's inner cities. He has been brought into cities usually by city mayors desiring to have self-sufficient communities like Gold Coast integrated into the city economy.

"That's one of the great challenges today," Bluegill tells Yellowstone. "Integrating ethnic communities into cities."

"Of course," agrees Yellowstone.

"Let's take a look at the plan," says Bluegill.

"Absolutely," says Greenberg leading the two men into the large library of his home.

In the library are a few of Yellowstone's employees. They stand next to a number of blueprint drawings on easels placed around the library. In the middle of the big library room is a table covered with a sheet.

Manfred Yellowstone stands next to the sheet.

"I'm proud to present the development plan for the Gold Coast area tonight," he says as he pulls up the sheet and reveals the elaborate scale model of the new Gold Coast area.

Bluegill and Greenberg walk up to the table and look over the model. Yellowstone takes a pointer and begins explaining

parts of the model. Bluegill smiles as Yellowstone explains the model.

"Finally, a structure over the area," he says. "Something lacking all these years. The area has grown in a haphazard way. Little stores here and there. Streets placed without much reason. Music clubs sprouting everywhere. Like weeds. But finally, an order, a structure placed on the whole thing."

"Gold Coast will be so much better off with the new development," says Stanley Greenberg. "We're bringing the citizens of Gold Coast into the twentieth century."

"Yes," said Bluegill. "Into the twentieth century."

Yellowstone moves over to show Herman Bluegill and Greenberg the drawings on the easels surrounding the big scale model in the center of the room. But Bluegill has seen enough and is convinced that Yellowstone's plan is the plan for Gold Coast.

"Go with it," Bluegill says to Yellowstone as he shakes Yellowstone's hand. "Good job."

Bluegill walks out of the library.

When he is gone Yellowstone turns to Greenberg.

"Can he give approval just like that?" Yellowstone asks Greenberg. "What about the mayor?"

Greenberg smiles and shakes his head.

"Don't worry about the mayor," he says. "The project is a go. Congratulations."

## Chapter Sixteen

Lotti McCoy's music class was an island of creativity at Gold Coast High School. For years, she had been a type of mid-wife to musicians at the school. Her love of gospel music and jazz something so deep and powerful that just being near her was enough to inspire many young people.

It seems she has been the music teacher at Gold Coast High School forever - her students everyone from Mayor Blackstone, the current principal of the school, Maurice Hudson, Bernice Hudson, Moose Henderson. And now, Alphonse Hudson.

Lotti McCoy's class is Alphonse's favorite class. It is so much different from his other classes. His math class. He never daydreams in Lotti McCoy's class like he does in other classes. He is all there in the class.

Today Lotti McCoy plays and sings something very beautiful on her upright piano. After the piece she tells the class that it is an old spiritual from the 1850s. The music seems so out-of-place to Alphonse. But he respects Lotti for bringing him something that is out-of-place.

Lotti plays a few other pieces to the class from the distant period of time and explains them to the class. They are also beautiful to Alphonse. Something he never hears today in current music.

When the class is over and the kids file out Lotti tells Alphonse to stay behind.

"I have something for you," she says.

Alphonse sits in his chair and watches Lotti McCoy disappear into the storage room of the class. In a few seconds she appears carrying a saxophone. She hands the saxophone to Alphonse.

"You father's old saxophone," she tells Alphonse. "The one he used in high school when he was your age. He sent it to me and asked me to give it to you."

Lotti hands the saxophone to Alphonse. He slowly takes it from her. He moves it around in his hands examining it. The saxophone is not shiny and bright like the one he uses in the school band. Its brass dull and dusty from all its years in storage. But to Alphonse it is the most beautiful instrument he has ever seen.

"Your father used to take that horn with him everywhere," Lotti says. "He carried it around like a child carries around a special blanket. It was a type of safety blanket for him. He

felt secure with it. One of his favorite places to play was by that big oak tree down by the river. He would sit there for hours and play it."

Alphonse's fingers went over the buttons on the sax as he lifted it to his mouth and played out a few bars.

"School's out in a few days," Lotti says, "You've got the whole summer to practice your music. You can stop by my place anytime for a lesson or just to play. I think we might make a pretty good duo. Me on piano and you on saxophone."

"Thanks Lotti," Alphonse says hugging the old woman. "Just remember," Lotti says. "It's a magic horn."

"You mean it has special powers?" Alphonse asks.

"Yes," she says.

"What kind of special powers?" Alphonse asks.

"The special powers of things passed on from father to son," Lotti says.

Alphonse takes the saxophone case and his books and begins to leave the classroom.

"It's a good idea that your mother doesn't know you have it," Lotti says. "You can always keep it over at my place if you want to."

"I have a special place for it."

"Good," Lotti says.

As Alphonse walked home thinking from school that day, it seemed like it was the beginning of some new period in his life. This new period did not have much definition yet but there was something different in the air. It had started when he heard his father's music a few days ago at the Blackhawk. And now, to receive his father's old horn. He knew that his father thought of him. And he knew that someday they would be together.

Again.

## Chapter Seventeen

Moose Henderson drove his large black Cadillac convertible west on Gold Coast Avenue heading for Mayor Blackstone's office in the downtown part of the city. The Mayor and Moose had been good friends in school. Both united by their love of music and both students of Lotti McCoy. But the mayor had made a conscious decision to leave his early foray into the jazz world while Moose just went farther and farther into it. The mayor though had never given up his love of jazz and was a frequent visitor to the clubs along Gold Coast Avenue, especially the Blackhawk Theater.

It was a sunny day in early June but the downtown area of the city was in shadow from all the tall skyscrapers. Moose looked up at the buildings as he drove his big car. Although he was only a few miles east of downtown, he seldom made the trip downtown. To him it was another world, a foreign city he knew little about or cared to know about. Like many residents of the Gold Coast area, his world was contained in its twenty-block area of the city.

The mayor's office was in the old City Building. It was a large old stone structure that was built when the city only had a few thousand residents and the outlying suburbs of the city no more than little villages connected by country roads.

In all the years, Moose had only been down to visit the mayor once before to ask his support to set up a retirement fund to help the jazz club owners in retirement. He felt sure the mayor would be enraged upon hearing of the efforts of Greenberg's boys to close down the jazz clubs.

The inside of the City Building was lighted by large old globes that hung on chains from the tall elaborate ceilings like so many dull yellow moons in a dim universe. Moose walked down the hallway paneled in dark wood with doors on both sides with frosted windows and various departments labeled on them in gold leaf decals.

Mayor Blackstone's office was at the end of the hall behind another frosted window that simply said "Mayor" in gold letters. The mayor's secretary recognized Moose when he came in a pushed an intercom announcing Moose and then waives him into the mayor's office.

The mayor gets up from his desk and comes over and gives Moose a hug when he walks in. The two had grown up only a few blocks from each other, their fathers best of friends. Both had

played on the high school football team. In fact Moose was the team's big tackle who opened holes for the mayor the team's star halfback.

The mayor motions Moose to sit down.

"I hear Basie is coming to the Blackhawk," the mayor says.

"In a few days," Moose says.

"Need to make it over there for the Count," the mayor says.

"One of my favorites."

"Be good to see you at the club," Moose says. "Been awhile."

The major laughs and shakes his head.

"I'm working myself to death," he says. "Need to get out more often."

"Everyone likes to see you," Moose says.

The mayor leans back in his desk chair.

"So what do I owe this visit?" he asks Moose. "You said it was something important and urgent when you called."

"It's about the Gold Coast development plan," Moose says.

"And what about it?"

"I had a visit from some of Stan Greenberg's friends the other day," Moose says. "They wanted me to convince all the club owners to sell out for the development."

Moose could see the mayor's jaw drop. He couldn't believe what Moose just said.

"That can't be," the mayor said. "Impossible."

"Why?" Moose asks.

"Greenberg said nothing about this," the mayor said. "He just told me that the development plan involved creating a small new shopping center. That's all. He said absolutely nothing about selling the jazz clubs."

"Greenberg's guys asked me to call a meeting of the club owners and get them behind all of this," Moose said. "They even made a threat. They said the clubs are real firetraps."

The mayor was standing now and pacing back-and-forth, thinking.

"That son-of-a-bitch Greenberg," the mayor said. "He never mentioned any of this to me."

"I called a meeting the other night of club owners," Moose said. "Told them about all this. Many of them are afraid. You know the trouble they've had with Greenberg's boys before. I told them I'd meet with you on all this."

The mayor is standing by the large leaded glass window in his office looking down at the street below.

"Do you know if you were followed down here?" the mayor asks.

"No idea," says Moose. "I wasn't paying much attention."

"This meeting never happened," the mayor tells Moose.

"OK," says Moose.

"We need to come up with some plan to stop Greenberg," the mayor says. "They're trying to destroy the entire Gold Coast area. It's not the first time they've tried. But it's the first time they've been so damned cagey about it. Trying to trick me into thinking there was just a small development project."

"Why destroy the area?" asks Moose.

"Right now it's too much of an isolated little neighborhood. Too much money stays right in the Gold Coast area. Greenberg wants more money flowing out of Gold Coast and to the powerbrokers of the city."

"They've given me just a few more days to give them an answer," Moose says. "What do I do?"

"Wait to hear from me," the mayor says. "I need to come up with some plan."

As Moose gets up to leave he takes the John Rigsby record out of the beat up leather briefcase he always carried with him. He hands the record to the mayor. The mayor looks at it and turns it over and starts reading the liner notes on the back.

"I'll be damned," he says. "Maurice Hudson has finally made a name for himself."

"Wait till you hear the music," Moose says. "Something new. Something that makes it worth fighting to keep the Gold Coast area going. I played it for the club owners the other night. It inspired them in the midst of all this."

"Thanks," the mayor said. "I'll listen to it tonight."

And then he added, "With a stiff drink."

## Chapter Eighteen

Summer was a special time for Alphonse. His world grew from the confines of school classrooms to encompass all of the Gold Coast area and even beyond. It meant more time with his father following him around the clubs and listening to jazz. It meant rides in the country with his father in his convertible listening to Duke Ellington on the car radio.

Not surprisingly, his mother did not approve of this freedom and viewed these summer months as filled with temptations from the Devil pulling Alphonse away from goals set by the church and school. She attempted to lessen his summer freedom by arranging work for Alphonse at the local grocery or volunteer work at church.

But the first days of summer vacation was a time she had little control over Alphonse because she always left town for the annual church retreat a few hundred miles away and left Alphonse alone with his father. This summer was different, though, because it was the first summer without his father. However, there was no way she was going to leave Alphonse alone

so she worked out an arrangement with her brother Chester to stay with Alphonse for the period she was at the church camp.

Bernice thought she understood her brother pretty well and was proud of him for giving up drinking and getting some part time jobs and even going back to church. But she had not seen him for awhile and did not realize he had started drinking again.

Chester was clean and sober the day he showed up to watch Alphonse and listened to his sister as she laid out the schedule for the week she would be away. But that evening he began hitting the bottle and was deep asleep by nine o'clock with the music of Count Basie coming from the Midnight Howl program on the big console radio in the living room.

It was like this every night for the entire week Bernice was gone and Alphonse experienced more freedom than he had ever experienced before. The nights were warm and Gold Coast Avenue clubs were filled with music and hundreds of people. Some well-known musicians were in town and their marquee names brought out much of the Gold Coast population to the clubs.

Alphonse wandered up and down the street slipping in and out of clubs and talking to musicians and club owners and sipping on the Coke the club owners would give him. Normally a

teenage boy would not be allowed into the clubs but everyone knew his father and Alphonse so he was welcome in all the clubs.

Maurice Hudson had become a celebrity along Gold Coast Avenue after the club owners heard it at the Blackhawk or others heard it over and over again on WGBC. People would come up to Alphonse and tell him what an incredible musician his father had become and how proud they were of him. Pride in his father gave them pride in themselves and faith they could someday be another Maurice Hudson. Many wanted to know where Maurice was right now or when he was coming back home. But Alphonse just shook his head when they asked him these questions. He had no idea where his father was or if he was ever coming home.

The initial euphoria of freedom soon gave way to a feeling of great loneliness in Alphonse. He remembered this time as a special time spent with his father and now his father was gone and he wasn't sure he would ever see him again. This made him angry about his father and the fact that his father had left him. The feeling of loneliness and anger mixed with the sense of pride in his father and all of this caused a vague confusion in his mind. He loved his father but wondered if his father loved him. It was a strange feeling he had never experienced before.

One of the nights when his mother was still away, Alphonse went over to see Moose at the Blackhawk. It was a busy night at

the Blackhawk and Moose had his hands full but found time to come over and talk to Alphonse when things quieted down a little.

"I was just thinking," Alphonse said to Moose. "What do you think about the idea of inviting the John Rigsby Quartet to come to the Gold Coast?"

"You really miss your father don't you? Moose said.

"Why doesn't he come back?" Alphonse asked.

"Maybe he will someday," Moose said. "But he's busy now becoming famous."

"You could have my father and the Rigsby Quartet at the Blackhawk," Alphonse said.

"That's not a bad idea," Moose said. "I'll keep this in mind."

And it did seem like a good idea to Moose. But it wasn't all that clear to Moose how the whole thing with Greenberg and his boys to shut down the clubs was going to play out. Despite his outward attitude, he wasn't all that sure the Blackhawk Theater would be around much longer. Greenberg's guys were playing hardball and even the mayor wasn't aware of their plans.

Alphonse spent the days working part time at the corner grocery store and practicing his saxophone under the big tree down by the river. A few days he went over to see his teacher

Lotti McCoy and they played music together and she gave Alphonse lessons on the horn. His uncle Chester would sit in the rocking chair out on the front porch of his sister's home and listen to the radio and doze in the heat of the warm summer days.

## Chapter Nineteen

Stanley Greenberg was wearing a big smile when he met the mayor outside his office in the Greenberg Building and walked him back to his large corner office. It was another warm day in early summer and the big door's in his office were open out to the wide balcony. The mayor walked through Greenberg's office without saying anything and out to the balcony and stood there for a few seconds looking east at the Gold Coast area.

"Something's on your mind," Greenberg says.

"It's a special place," Mayor Blackstone says. "Means a lot to me."

"Of course," says Greenberg. "That's why we're taking so much care with the new Gold Coast shopping mall."

"There's not more about the development plan you haven't told me?" the Mayor asks.

Stanley Greenberg laughs.

"More to the plan than building a great shopping mall for Gold Coast?" Greenberg asks.

"I'm asking you," Mayor Blackstone says.

"More like what?" Greenberg asks.

"Something larger than just developing a shopping mall," the mayor says.

"That's absolutely ridiculous," Greenberg says.

"And are you even the one behind the whole plan?" the Mayor asks.

Greenberg smiles and shakes his head.

"I don't know where you're getting these ideas," he says.

Mayor Blackstone looked at Greenberg and thought briefly of telling him about Moose Henderson coming to him about the club owners being threatened by Greenberg's boys. But it didn't seem wise to reveal his hand at this time. Best to keep some things from Greenberg.

The meeting wasn't long. It was obvious that Greenberg wasn't going to tell the mayor anything else about the plan.

When the mayor had left his office, Greenberg picked up his phone and called his key assistant Max.

"We need to move quickly on the jazz club owners," he said. "Need to have them start selling their clubs immediately. We can't wait any longer for them to decide. Things need to move forward quickly."

When he hung up the phone Greenberg called Yellowstone.

"How far are you from moving dirt on the new development?" he asked Yellowstone.

"Just waiting for your word," he says.

"Good," Greenberg says. "You'll get it soon."

On the street below, Mayor Blackstone's limo moves back to his office through the downtown area of the city. Next to him in the back seat is his good friend Harold Gibson, Chief Detective in the city's Police Department. Like the mayor, Chief Gibson is also a product of the Gold Coast area.

"Just as I suspected," he says to Gibson. "Greenberg didn't tell me anything I don't already know about the Gold Coast development plan."

"Didn't mention the threat to the jazz club owners to sell out?" Gibson asks.

"No, not a word about it."

"What do you want me to do?" Gibson asks.

"I need to find out about the full plan," the mayor says. "The extent of the whole thing. Who's behind it. I suspect it's not Greenberg. We need to move quickly. I sense there's not much time left."

"I'll get right on it," Gibson says.

"Good," the mayor says. "But watch yourself. I have a hunch we're up against something pretty big here."



## Chapter Twenty

The next morning, Moose had his second visit from Greenberg's thugs at his club. It had been a few weeks now since their first visit and he knew that Max wanted an answer if the club owners would sell their clubs. Moose told Max he had called a meeting of the club owners and discussed the whole thing with them. He told him there was no decision yet on whether they would sell. He didn't tell Greenberg's boys he had gone to the mayor on the whole thing.

Greenberg's guys were angry that he had not been able to get the owners behind selling out for the development and Greenberg was even angrier when he heard this.

"We've gotta start playing tough," he told Max when Max called him about his talk with Moose. "Start going around to them tomorrow and getting them to sell their clubs. I'm tired of dealing with Moose and their association, going through channels on all this. Time is getting short. Start contacting them tomorrow. Use whatever means you want to get their signatures."

## Chapter Twenty-One

That evening, Manfred Yellowstone's offices were broken into and copies made of the full plans for the Gold Coast area. Photos were also made of the scale model of the plan. It was a professional job and the next day Yellowstone had no idea that anyone had been in his office.

The next morning Detective Gibson placed the development plans on the desk of the mayor and plopped down the hundred-page document outlining the plan.

"A little more than just the construction of a new shopping mall," Gibson says to the mayor.

Mayor Blackstone looks over the elaborate plans with a look of anger and disbelief in his face.

"This is a plan not to develop Gold Coast but rather destroy it," he says.

"That was my thought also," Gibson says.

"And it looks like Bluegill is behind the whole thing," the mayor says.

"Yes," says Gibson. "It's not surprising. He's been trying to merge Gold Coast into the rest of the city for a long time now."

"Gold Coast is too much of a community for Bluegill," the mayor says. "Too much money staying in the community and not going into the city. Bluegill wants to change all of this."

The mayor picks up the phone and makes a call.

"Moose," he says, "I've got something to show you. I'll be at the Blackhawk in half an hour."

A little over half an hour later, the mayor's car pulls up in front of the Blackhawk Theater and the mayor and Detective Gibson get out and walk into the club. Gibson carries a large briefcase full of the development plans. For the next hour Moose looks over the plans spread out over the tables of the club. The mayor has made a copy of the hundred-page document containing the plan outline and gives the copy to Moose. He reads through it. Like the major he is angered and astonished at the extent of the plans.

"We've gotta fight this at all costs," Moose says.

"Otherwise the whole area will be destroyed."

"Yes," says the mayor. "But things will get violent. Greenberg and Bluegill play for keeps."

"But we can't let this development go through," Moose says. "If we do you won't be able to recognize Gold Coast in a year."

The mayor looks over at detective Gibson.

"The city can offer a certain amount of protection," the mayor says. "But you know as well as I do the influence that Greenberg and Bluegill have over powerbrokers in the city."

"I'll call a special meeting of the club owners," Moose says. "Tell them the full extent of the plan. Show them the outline you gave me. I'm sure they'll be shocked like we are when they hear about it."

"Good," the mayor says. "We need to stand up to the developers to save the community."

"You're not going to get much good media coverage," Moose says. "Bluegill owns all the big media in town."

"That's OK," the mayor says. "I'm not in a popularity contest."

Then the mayor holds his hand up in a motion to be quiet.

In the silence we can hear the voice of Midnight Howl on WGBC as he announces another piece of music. Like most jazz club owners, Moose listens to WGBC all day at the club.

"Besides, Gold Coast has its own media," he says. "Moose, I want you to take the plan outline over to Midnight at the radio

station and let him read it and begin telling the community what's happening."

"Right," Moose says. "I'm on my way over there right now."

"This whole thing is not going to be easy," the mayor says.

"Nothing worthwhile is easy," says Moose.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

There was an emergency meeting at the Blackhawk Theater the next day. Moose talked about his meeting with the mayor and the full development plans and outline for the Gold Coast the mayor had obtained. He passed the outline around to the club owners. It did not come as a surprise to most of them for WGCB radio had been telling the community about the development plan since Moose went to see Midnight Howl yesterday.

"Things are going to get tough," Moose told them. "We've gotta all stick together on rejecting Greenberg's offer buy the clubs."

There was a large roar of agreement from the club owners.

That evening, it started. Greenberg's boys began coming around to the club owners asking them to sell their clubs. Ten club owners were approached the first night and ten owners told Greenberg's guys they would not sell their club. Some of the owners who refused to sell found the windows on their cars smashed and their car tires punctured. But none of them changed their minds.

Another group of owners were approached by Greenberg's guys the next night and again all of them refused to sell their clubs.

Max called Greenberg the following morning and told him they were not having much luck with the owners. Greenberg called Bluegill and said they needed to talk.

Herman Bluegill was sitting on his back patio and reading the newspaper he owned when Greenberg came over the lawn. It was obvious that Greenberg was anxious and nervous.

"The owners are refusing to sell," he told Bluegill. "We need to give them a little more incentive," Bluegill says.

"Offer them more money?" Greenberg asks.

Bluegill laughs.

"No," he says. "Just more incentive."

"More incentive?" Greenberg asks.

"Yes," said Bluegill. "Didn't you tell me that Max and the boys mentioned that the clubs were real fire traps?"

Stanley Greenberg looks at Bluegill and a smile slowly breaks across his face.

"Yes," he says, "real firetraps."

When Greenberg got back to his office he called Max and told him what to do.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

The big fire started in the Rum Boogie Lounge and quickly spread to the Empress next door and then the Red Door Grill and Bubbles Lounge. It got too big for the local fire department in Gold Coast to handle and the city fire department was called in. But for some reason they took a long time to respond to the call so by the time they arrived on the scene an entire block of clubs were engulfed in a raging inferno.

There was little doubt about the cause of the fire among the club owners. But the big newspaper in the city owned by Bluegill put the cause on the ramshackle construction of the clubs. "Fire Finally Erupts in Firetrap Clubs in Gold Coast" read the headlines of the newspaper next day. The article went on to talk about how the entire club area was one big firetrap simply waiting to happen. Much better, argued the writer at Bluegill's newspaper, that the clubs be torn down and something new put up in their place.

Mayor Blackstone walks through the smouldering ashes of the burned out clubs the next morning with detective Gibson and Moose.

"The owners are afraid," Moose says to the mayor. "They want to stand up to the developers but they are finding it more difficult. Refusing to sell is one thing. Losing everything you have is something else. The rest are afraid the same thing will happen to them. We were barely able to stop the fire from spreading. Next time we might not be able to."

"We've got a lot of calls at my office," the mayor says. "People talking about moving out of the area. They've heard about what's coming and don't think its worth it to fight it."

It is a grey day that matches the grey ashes of the burned out clubs. The great life and color seems gone from the street and it now looks dead as if the soul of the street had left it and gone somewhere else. The sense of deadness is something that hovers over everything and all the men feel its presence like the presence of some great ghostly spirit.

But as they walk along the street there is the sound of music in the air and it gets louder and louder until it can be recognized as the music of the John Rigsby Quartet and the solo piece of Maurice Hudson. It gets louder and louder as they walk and they realize that it is coming from the radios inside the

jazz clubs that have not been burned down. The owners have come out of the clubs and stand defiantly in front of them and watch the three men walk past.

"I have an idea," Moose says. "Actually an idea that Alphonse Hudson gave me a few days ago."

"I'm open," says the mayor.

"We contact John Rigsby and ask him to come to Gold Coast to do a concert to benefit the fire victims. Everyone is listening to Maurice these days. It might instill a new spirit in everyone."

Mayor Blackstone stops walking and looks at Moose.

"We need to get them here fast," he says. "I doubt it's possible but give it a try. I'll back you on it."

When the mayor and detective Gibson left to drive back to city hall, Moose got on the telephone and began calling his contacts to find out how to reach Maurice Hudson. He left a message at a hotel in Chicago he heard Maurice was staying at with the Rigsby Quartet. It was late that night when Moose was ready to close the Blackhawk for the night that Maurice finally called him back.

It was good to hear the voice of his old friend and they spent a few minutes catching up.

"You're a celebrity in Gold Coast these days," Moose told Maurice. "The album is incredible. I played it for all the club owners and then gave it to Midnight to play on the radio. Your music is everywhere."

"Good," said Maurice. "And how is Alphonse?"

"He's doing OK," Moose said. "Carries your old saxophone everywhere."

"I miss him," Maurice says. "I hope you're taking good care of him. Like you told me you would."

"Of course," says Moose. "But things are going bad here."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean bad," Moose says. "Greenberg's guys are at it again. Only this time they don't want more fees but rather they want to close all the jazz clubs down."

"What?" exclaims Maurice.

"There was a huge fire the other night and ten clubs were burned down. The Rum Boogie. The Empress. I know you started playing at the Empress."

"What happened?"

"The club owners refused to sell out to Greenberg's guys and they paid for it."

"What the hell does Greenberg want to do this time?"

"It goes beyond the clubs," Moose says. "He wants to tear down the entire Gold Coast area and rebuild everything. There's a huge development plan to rebuild everything. The old area we grew up in will no longer exist if he gets his way."

"Is Alphonse OK?"

"He is now," Moose says. "But what kind of neighborhood will he grow up in if Greenberg gets his way?"

"What can anyone do?"

"The area is losing its old spirit," Moose says. "People losing their faith in music, in jazz."

"I wish something could be done," Maurice says.

"Maybe something can be done," Moose says.

"What's that?"

"We've thought about the idea of a benefit concert to help the burned out fire victims. We thought about having you and the Rigsby Quartet come to Gold Coast and play."

"Impossible right now," Maurice says. "We're due to play in the Chicago Jazz Festival and then off for a date in Seattle."

"Actually, the idea of the concert was not my idea," says Moose. "But an idea of someone else. Someone you know well. It was Alphonse's idea. He suggested the idea of a concert to me. He needs you a lot right now."

There was a moment of silence on the phone.

"It's just impossible to change our schedule at the last minute," Maurice said. "I wish I could."

Moose held the phone to his ear until he realized that Maurice had hung up and was gone.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

During the next few days things got worse in Gold Coast with more club owners losing faith and feeling the only way was to sell out to Greenberg's boys. Moose held meetings at the Blackhawk but the old fighting spirit he had first seen was no longer present in the people. During the days a number of cars pulling trailers headed out of Gold Coast.

People talked of relocating to other cities. Perhaps the only people happy were those deeply religious people like Bernice Hudson that saw the end of the jazz clubs as a moral victory. But the church groups were never able to admit to the magnitude of the plan and the fact that it foresaw the change of the entire area and not just the jazz clubs.

At noon one day, Bluegill, Greenberg and Yellowstone met for lunch at the exclusive City Club across from the Greenberg Building. It was a big old brownstone building that looked like a branch of the Federal Reserve. Inside the rooms had tall elaborate ceilings and heavy overstuffed furniture. Thick burgundy curtains fell over the windows so that no light from

outside could infect the smoky dim staleness of the old club. Here and there, an old guy dozed peacefully in one of the big overstuffed chairs with a copy of the Financial Times in his lap.

The three men sat at a table in a private room. Bluegill lifted his glass of wine towards Greenberg and Yellowstone in a toast.

"Here's to progress," he says. "To a new era in the history of the city."

Yellowstone and Greenberg lifted their glasses and drank the expensive wine Bluegill had ordered for the occasion.

"I think we'll have all the owners signed over in a week," Greenberg says. "And then we can start bringing in the bulldozers and demolition crews."

"My guys are ready," Yellowstone says.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

On warm Friday nights in summer, Gold Coast Avenue was usually filled with hundreds of people at the various clubs. But on this Friday night the place was like a ghost town. Here and there music could be heard coming from one of the clubs that were still open but even the music sounded defeated and lacking spirit. The Blackhawk was dark tonight and Moose stood out in front of the empty club observing the demise of the whole thing.

A few cars come around the corner and stop in front of the Blackhawk. The door to one of the cars opens and Maurice Hudson gets out. Then the door to another car opens and John Rigsby gets out followed by Tyner White and Silas Manner and Horace Wilcox. In a few seconds Maurice and the John Rigsby Quartet is standing around Moose Henderson in front of the Blackhawk Theater.

"Maurice told me about the situation in the Gold Coast area," Rigsby says to Moose. "He's quite convincing. This place meant a lot to me once. Still does. We can't let it disappear."

"But all the dates you guys had," Moose said.

Rigsby just waived his hand in a dismissive manner.

"Dates are just that," he said. "They can be reset. They're not like places that can be destroyed."

"Thanks for coming," Moose said. "Maybe we can turn things around yet."

Moose took the group up to the rooms he kept for musicians on the second floor of the Blackhawk Theater. They all came down later and sat at the bar with Moose and drank some expensive whiskey that Moose kept for very special occasions.

"Here's to miracles," Moose said lifting his glass in a toast to the musicians.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

On Saturday afternoon Alphonse had a music lesson at Lotti McCoy's house. Lotti had been giving Alphonse lessons for a few weeks since he got his father's saxophone and Alphonse was making much progress. It was the first time he had visited Lotti since the big fire a few nights ago at the jazz clubs and now the fire and the possible closing of the jazz clubs was in the top of the news. On WGCB, Midnight Howl was constantly talking about how the community had to fight the big development plan that would destroy the area. Alphonse was not sure what was happening but he knew things were happening quickly. His mother seemed pleased the jazz clubs had burned down and others were considering closing down. There were many church meetings on the crisis.

When he saw Lotti, it was obvious this news was on her mind. Her usual cheerful and friendly spirit was gone and she seemed tentative and sad. It was a different look than what Alphonse had ever seen on her face.

"What's happening in Gold Coast?" he asked Lotti when he walked into her house.

Lotti shook her head in frustration.

"The same thing that always happens," she said. "Greed. Money. Corruption."

"But I know a lot of the club owners," Alphonse said. "They don't seem corrupt to me."

She smiled at Alphonse and shook her head.

"It's not the club owners," she said. "It's the greed of corrupt people who want the money the club owners are making."

"Will there still be jazz in the Gold Coast?" Alphonse asks.

Lotti seems distracted and stares at something outside her window.

"There'll always be jazz," she says. "Maybe no longer in jazz clubs on Gold Coast Avenue. But there'll always be jazz."

She turns to Alphonse.

"Now lets, get that saxophone out of the case," she said as she set up the musical stand with the sheet music in front of him. "We've got work to do."

Alphonse pulls his saxophone out of the case and looks at the sheet of music in front of him for a few seconds and then begins playing. Lotti closes her eyes and sways her head back-

and-forth and waives her hand. She is pleased with the music she hears coming from Alphonse.

"Excellent," she says. "You've got a lot of your father's musical talent."

It's true. Alphonse is one of the most talented musical students Lotti has taught and she has taught hundreds of talented musical students during her years at the high school.

"Even your father's style and technique," Lotti adds.

This is not surprising to Alphonse. He has spent hours and hours watching and listening to his father play.

After awhile Lotti goes to her upright piano and begins playing a popular jazz piece. Alphonse follows her on the saxophone offering counter-melodies and rhythms to the piano. They play a number of other tunes and Alphonse begins to improvise on them, relishing the tunes with his own distinct style.

When the music lesson is over, Alphonse puts his saxophone away and gives Lotti a hug.

"Things will work out OK," he says.

"Oh I know they will," Lotti says. "They always do."

"There'll always be music," he says.

"Yes," Lotti says. "Always music."

But as Alphonse left he could see Lotti had a sad look on her face as if she wasn't sure there would always be music.

\* \* \*

He walked down her street and then down Gold Coast Avenue for a few blocks. It was early evening and the street lamps were beginning to come on. There was a strange mood that seemed to hover above the street like a great dark storm cloud. It made the street seem like something foreign and alien. It was something he had never felt before on Gold Coast Avenue. Many of the retail shops along the street were closed and there were only a few people on the street with distant, confused looks on their faces. He saw a number of club owners huddled together in discussion and said hello when he passed but they were preoccupied and hardly acknowledged him.

When he reached his special tree by the river he put his case in the tall grass and just sat and looked out at the river for awhile. There was so much to think about all of a sudden.

Across the river he could see the lights of the downtown outline of the big Midwestern city and he could hear the sounds of traffic flowing through the city like the constant roar of a river. The roar was punctuated by bells and whistles and sirens

and horns and jackhammers and buses. Perhaps the music of the city he thought. But a very different type of music from the music of Gold Coast. He wondered if this strange music from across the river would come to replace the jazz music of Gold Coast. If it did, he felt that he didn't want any part of it.

In all of this, the only thing that seemed the same and unchanged was the great flowing river right below him. It alone seemed unaffected by all the recent events in the Gold Coast area. The city was little more than a point on its banks. It had come from somewhere else and was going to somewhere else. And it had been doing this long before the city was built and it would continue doing this long after the city was just dust along its banks.

These thoughts flew through Alphonse's mind like scattered papers in a storm and he was only able to sense their general shapes rather than put all of this in words. Rather they came like a spontaneous piece of music that was either caught in the moment or lost forever in the deep space of time.

It was twilight that brief piece of suspended time between day and night, light and darkness. The lights from the downtown area of the city across the river were reflected in the river so that the river seemed to carry pieces of fiery gold past him. He took his father's saxophone out of the case and leaned against

the big old elm tree and begin playing the song he was hearing at the time. It was a strange song he had never played before. Somewhat like the lullaby his father used to play for him at night when he put him to bed when he was a few years old. Somewhat like a fairytale ballad that seemed to tell a story. Only Alphonse had little idea what the story was about but only that it contained the life that all stories possess.

Suddenly, there was the sound of another saxophone coming from somewhere in the fading day. It danced with the music he was making like an old dance partner that knew all your steps. It blended perfectly but also suggested other avenues to explore. It was a powerful sound. Reflective like his music but moving forward into the night with the elegance and grace of a great old sailing ship.

Alphonse continued to play against the sound of the other saxophone until it seemed everything that needed to be said was said. When he finished playing he felt a hand on his shoulder. He didn't have to look to see who it was. He knew it was the hand of his father.

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

The next day, word spread fast that the legendary John Rigsby Quartet and Maurice Hudson were in town. People saw them all around town and stopped to talk to them. It was a homecoming for Maurice as he visited many of his friends up and down Gold Coast Avenue with Alphonse. The two of them had talked for a few hours down by the river until Alphonse had to leave to go home. His mother had instituted a curfew for him throughout the summer.

Moose Henderson put up an announcement on the big marquee on the front of the club that the quartet was playing a benefit concert at the Blackhawk in a few days. Soon, there was a long line in front of the Blackhawk to buy tickets. That evening the members of the quartet spread out and went to various clubs. No one knew they were coming. They simply walked into clubs unannounced and sat in with the various musicians. John Rigsby came up on stage at the Rum Boogie to back up a fairly well-known R&B group from Pittsburgh. Tyler White sat in on keyboards

at the Empress for a gospel group out of Detroit. Silas Manner and Horace Wilcox ended up giving a short seminar at the Red Lantern Lounge and then backing up a blues group out of St. Louis.

News of the appearance of Rigsby Quartet members at the clubs that night filtered quickly into the community so that the recently quiet clubs were packed towards midnight. Mayor Blackstone heard about all of this while listening to Midnight Howl on WGCB and hurried over to the Rum Boogie around one in the morning to hear Rigsby with the R&B group.

Alphonse spent most of the afternoon with Maurice in his room above the Blackhawk watching his father practice and put the final touches on a special suite he had written especially for the Gold Coast area. There was much to tell his father and much for Maurice to tell his son about New York and the legendary jazz clubs he had played at. Alphonse noticed a new sense of purpose in his father. A clearness of intention and purpose in life he had never seen before. He also noticed that his father had stopped drinking and smoking and taking all the colored pills he used to take and that his father's eyes were now full of life and hope and there was a new sparkle in them he had not seen for many years.

The Blackhawk Theater had an over-capacity crowd in it the night of the concert. Moose figured there were over five-hundred in the theater that night and the club capacity was no more than two-hundred and fifty. Mayor Blackstone sat up front at a table with Alphonse, Lotti McCoy and Principal Davis from the high school. Next to their table Midnight Howl had set up his equipment for a live broadcast over WGCB of the concert. Arthur Snow checked sound levels on his recording board as the concert was being recorded.

And in the back of the theater, there was a woman in a big flowery hat wearing sunglasses. Bernice Hudson had quietly slipped into the club for the concert in this funny looking disguise because she didn't want anyone to know she was there. Especially not her husband Maurice. She knew that Alphonse was going and had heard about the concert from him but had told him she had a church meeting and couldn't attend.

The concert got underway when Moose came out on stage to make an opening announcement.

"For many years our community has been a very special community," he began. "In a sense, it's existed as its own little island inside our city. Our citizens shopping at our own stores. Going to our own schools and churches. Listening to our own music at our own clubs. In the past few weeks, all of this

has been threatened by people who want to blend our little island into the larger city with a huge new development project."

Moose paused for a few seconds and looked out over the quiet mass of faces at the club.

"Let one thing be clear," he said. "The purpose of the development plan for Gold Coast is not to improve our community. No, not improve it. But rather to destroy it. We can't let this happen!"

As Moose said this there was wild cheering and applause in the theater. People got up out of their chairs with raised fists.

"No, no, no!" the crowd chanted. "No, no, no!"

"As everyone knows," Moose continued, "a week ago there was a suspicious fire that burned down ten clubs. It has presented our community with one of the biggest challenges it has ever faced. Do we fight to rebuild these clubs or do we give in and sell out to the developers. I know many of you have been thinking about this. For me, there is no question. We fight to keep our community, to rebuild our clubs!"

There was a huge cheer of agreement in the crowd as Moose said this.

"Yes, yes!" the crowd roared. "Fight, fight, fight!"

"With this in mind, there was an idea to contact the legendary John Rigsby and our own native son Maurice Hudson. Mayor Blackstone and I discussed this and I called Maurice. But the real idea for the concert came from Maurice's son Alphonse."

As Moose said this he pointed at Alphonse and the crowd stood up and applauded him. Alphonse never looked so proud as he did at that moment.

"All the money from the concert tonight, and any money donated in the next few days, will go to rebuilding the burned down jazz clubs and fighting the big developers of the area. Believe me, we're up against a powerful group and need all the help we can get."

There was more cheering in the crowd as he said this.

"Now, it gives me great pleasure to introduce the legendary John Rigsby Quartet featuring our own Maurice Hudson on saxophone. Tonight, a special suite about Gold Coast has been written by Maurice Hudson."

The big purple curtain behind Moose slowly pulled back to reveal the Rigsby Quartet with John Rigsby and Maurice Hudson out in front of it. The suite called "Gold Coast" that Maurice had written was in four parts. There was the first part about the early years of Gold Coast when the first settlers came up the river from the south. The second part was about the years of

growth and development when the area became a true community with its own distinct type of music. The third part was about hardship and strife experienced by the people of the area over the years. Finally, the fourth part addressed hope and faith and the future of the area.

Maurice Hudson exchanged solos with John Rigsby throughout the suite and the exchange was spellbinding to those present. In forty minutes the audience heard one of the most powerful musical history's of an area they had ever heard.

When the suite was over the crowd applauded for maybe five minutes. Moose had never heard it such loud applause. Even for big acts like Count Basie and Duke Ellington who had played the Blackhawk. Alphonse was more excited than he had ever been before and more proud of his father than he had ever been.

In the back of the Blackhawk, the woman with the flowery hat and sunglasses wiped a tear from her cheek and then quietly slipped out of the theater.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

The concert at the Blackhawk Theater quickly gained an almost legendary status. It's live broadcast over WGCB and the enthusiastic commentary of Midnight Howl gave it a huge audience in the Gold Coast area. But the broadcast over WGCB was even heard outside the area in parts of the city surrounding the Gold Coast and those in these areas who heard it began raving about the music also.

Not everyone who heard the concert raved about it. Stanley Greenberg listened to the broadcast over WGCB at his home in the suburbs. He heard the wild screaming of the crowds, heard the opening announcement made by Moose Henderson. And in the next few days he watched a new type of spirit overtake the Gold Coast area.

Something had to be done. Although it seemed impossible a week ago after the big fire, he sensed the development plan was now in jeopardy. He called Bluegill and told him about all of this. A meeting was set up in Bluegill's office at the local newspaper the Bluegill family owned.

The Citizen Journal newspaper was the major newspaper in the city and the center of the Bluegill family media empire that controlled media in the city since the early part of the nineteenth century. Besides the newspaper there were also two radio stations and a local magazine owned by the family.

Stanley Greenberg walked towards the downtown headquarters of the newspaper with a worried look on his face. It was hard to believe that they were celebrating over their anticipated victory just a few days ago at the City Club.

The newspaper building was directly across from the Mayor's office and City Hall. This seemed appropriate since the Bluegill family had such a close connection to the workings of the Mayor and city officials. It's name "Citizen Journal" was written in twenty-foot tall letters and placed on a large billboard that sat atop the newspaper building. At night the big letters were outlined in red neon almost as if they were meant to serve as a reminder that nothing escaped the gaze of the Bluegill family.

Herman Bluegill was in his big corner office on the top floor of the newspaper building. It was a warm afternoon and the windows were open and a fan swirled above his grey metal desk. He was anxiously pacing back-and-forth and smoking a large cigar when Greenberg came into his office. The smoke from his cigar was pushed about like tiny storm clouds by the large ceiling fan

so that the office appeared to be in the midst of a miniature storm.

"I thought we had this whole thing under control," he said.

"I did too," said Greenberg. "But things have changed thanks to a concert the other night that got people stirred up. A jazz concert."

Bluegill shook his head in disbelief.

"How the hell can a concert do this?" he asked. It was difficult for him to believe that music had this type of power.

"I'm not sure," says Greenberg. "I heard the concert on the radio. Our friend Moose Henderson gave a summary of what we are trying to do before the concert. It got the audience fired up. Mayor Blackstone was there. There's word they're thinking of rebuilding the burned out clubs. Something has to be done."

Herman Bluegill puffed on his cigar and paced around the office. He stood in front of the window and for a few moments. Then he sat down at his metal desk.

"There's more than one way to skin a cat," he said.

He pushed the intercom on his desk and barked a name into it. Five minutes later a short, heavysset man named Herb Kraut walked into Bluegill's office. Kraut had a face like a bulldog and a personality to go with the face.

"You've done some stories over the years on corruption in the Gold Coast clubs," Bluegill says to Kraut. "Links to organized crime. Prostitution. Gambling. Drug smuggling."

"The usual stuff," says Kraut. "But we've never been able to make anything stick."

"And Moose Henderson and his Blackhawk Theater," Bluegill continued.

"We thought there was a connection to organized crime with his club," Kraut said. "But as you know we were unable to find a connection."

Bluegill leaned back in his chair and puffed on his cigar. Then he leaned forward across the desk and looked at Kraut for a long time.

"Well, we need to find one now," he said. "Not next month or next week. We need to find a connection now."

Even the big bulldog face of Kraut seemed to twitch when Bluegill said this to him.

"I want Moose Henderson destroyed," he said to Herb Kraut.

Herb Kraut made some notes on his tablet.

"And I want his relationship with the Mayor explored," Bluegill added as Kraut made his notes. "The two go back a long way. There's been sweat-heart deals for his theater over the years."

"The mayor?" Kraut repeated.

"I put Blackstone in power," Bluegill said. "I can take him out of power."

Bluegill waved his hand at Kraut.

"You've got work to do," he said.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

John Rigsby was stunned by the music clubs of Gold Coast. In all his years playing all the big cities of America, he had never witnessed such an incredible community of music and musicians. He got to know the club owners and merchants of the area and even talked of one day coming to Gold Coast to retire.

An immediate result of his newfound love for Gold Coast was that the quartet cancelled a number of previous engagements and stayed in town for an entire week playing more dates at the Blackhawk. The crowds never let up and each night seemed as big or bigger than the night before. Maurice was magnificent as he explored new territories with his horn. Seeing him on stage with the jazz legend did more than anything else could do to inspire the up and coming young musicians of the area.

Maurice spent his days with Alphonse doing things that they used to do in the summer. They went fishing at this secret pond out in the country. They rented a boat and rowed down the river. They walked together for miles just talking about life and

music. One day they even visited Lotti McCoy and had an impromptu jam session.

Bernice knew the two were together and she saw it as a good thing. Some change had come over Maurice. She saw it in his attitude. His spirit. Heard it in his words and music. She listened over and over again to rebroadcasts of the concert over WGCB radio. The music was no longer just jazz but it was now church music. Spiritual. What had happened to Maurice she wondered?

During the evenings Alphonse sat at the Blackhawk and listened to his father's music with the quartet. When his father was not playing the two of them wandered around to the clubs together like they used to do.

One day, newspapers appeared on the street with headlines about a huge gambling scandal at the Blackhawk Theater. The club's owner Moose Henderson was directly linked to an unsolved kidnapping and murder a few years ago and he was tied to activities of a prostitution ring. There was evidence that he had escaped prosecution for all of this because of his connections with powerful people in the city. The mayor's name was not directly mentioned but it didn't take much to make the connection between the mayor and Moose Henderson.

The articles in the Citizen Journal were relentless with more stories appearing every day all in headline form in the newspaper. The newspaper stories were repeated over the big radio stations of the city. After a few days, Moose Henderson was the key topic of conversation in the city. There was even talk of a possible indictment of him by the City Attorney.

All of this angered Maurice Hudson a great deal. The mayor and Moose were good friends from school and the old neighborhood and he knew the stories were a fabrication. It wasn't the first time the city papers had tried to shut Moose and the Blackhawk down. He remembered a series of similar articles under Herb Kraut's byline a few years ago. He was sure the stories were dug up again to move the development forward. It made sense.

One day he marched over to WGCB radio with Alphonse and expressed these thoughts to Midnight Howl. Midnight listened with interest and started shaking his head in agreement with Maurice. It made a lot of sense to Midnight also.

"You've gotta counter the charges on the station," Maurice told Midnight. "Everyone knows that Moose has been an amazing leader of the Gold Coast and that the Mayor has done much for the area over the years. The allegations in the newspaper article are bogus. Cooked up to push forward the development."

Midnight was excited and angry at the same time. When Maurice and Alphonse left he was already working on the beginning of a campaign over the radio station to combat the stories in the Citizen Journal.

## Chapter Thirty

The Citizen Journal was a powerful newspaper in the Midwestern city. But WGCB was a powerful radio station in the Gold Coast part of the city. It was a matter of trust. The citizens of Gold Coast simply did not trust news in the big city paper but trusted news from Midnight Howl and WGCB.

And John Rigsby and Maurice got behind Moose and the mayor in the smear battle. The town was really becoming agitated towards the Citizen Journal. On a rainy Saturday morning hundreds of citizens of Gold Coast marched down Gold Coast Avenue in support of Moose Henderson and the mayor and protesting the development of the area. Signs in the crowd read things like "Keep The Gold Coast Community" and "No Big City Development" or "Save Our Clubs."

Even Bernice convinced the various church groups of the Gold Coast to join in the march when she realized that the battle was much greater than just saving the jazz clubs but really involved saving the entire community.

The day after the big rally a large group of people arrived in front of the burned out jazz clubs and began work of clearing the rubble and erecting new buildings where the old ones once stood. Much of the money to rebuild came from the concerts at the Blackhawk and some of it came directly out of John Rigsby's own pocket. There was a sense of community spirit that reminded many of the old days of the area. With the rebuilding of the jazz clubs the store owners returned to the street and soon Gold Coast Avenue was buzzing with life and music again.

## Chapter Thirty

On a rainy Saturday night the Rigsby Quartet left the Gold Coast area to drive back to New York City. There were some big contractual engagements that they simply could not cancel. Maurice hugged Alphonse as he got in his car and wiped a tear off of both their faces. The boy looked at his father with a look of sadness and betrayal. It was as if his father had weighed his career against being with his son and Alphonse had come out on the short end of things. Maybe he knew that his father would ultimately have to go back with the band but he secretly hoped he would stay with him.

Alphonse walked home that night wondering what he could have done differently to make his father stay. What he could have done differently to make his father love him more.

As he approached his home, he heard the familiar sound of the concert at the Blackhawk coming from the radio. He walked up on the porch and looked into the living room and saw his mother sitting in front of the radio listening to Maurice play the

saxophone. He watched her for a few minutes and could see there was a different look in her face.

When Alphonse walked into the house his mother looked at him.

"He's gone, isn't he," she said.

"Yes," Alphonse said.

## Chapter Thirty-One

Manfred Yellowstone stands in the suite of rooms at the hotel where the development plan was put together. A few weeks ago it was a beehive of activity but now the offices are deserted. There is a half finished bottle of bourbon on a table next to him and next to the table his suitcase is packed and ready for the trip back to LA. He pours another glass of bourbon and tosses it down and wonders how the development plan has been defeated.

The only thing remaining in the room is the scale model of the proposed development. He walks up to the table the model is on and studies it for a few moments. He is proud of the development plan. The big new "Greenberg Shopping Mall" occupies a large square space in the model. It is to be built after clearing away five blocks of homes. Bernice's and Alphonse's home will be paved under for the big parking lot of the shopping mall. And so will Midnight Howl's little home that houses WGCB and Lotti McCoy's little white place on the quiet tree lined street. Next to the shopping mall are four large rectangular

shapes that represent the big housing project planned for the area. Bernice and Alphonse and Midnight and Lotti will have a new home in an apartment overlooking the vast shopping mall below them.

And not far from the shopping mall and housing complex is a large square cardboard block that rises above a strip of black paint on the model and is labeled Gold Coast Avenue. The big block is labeled "Bluegill Arts Complex" and it replaces all the tiny little clubs that once infected the street.

Yellowstone looks at the model for a few seconds and pours himself another glass of bourbon and tosses it down. Then he goes over and picks up his suitcase and begins to walk towards the door. Before he leaves he looks at the glass in his hand and then throws it at the model.

The glass hits the Bluegill Arts Complex block and knocks it off the model and onto the floor. Yellowstone walks over to the cardboard block and crushes it under his shoe and then he is gone.

## Chapter Thirty-Two

On a Sunday morning, Stanley Greenberg and Herman Bluegill stand on the balcony of Greenberg's office watching an airplane take off from the city airport to the east and head west over the city.

"I'm not finished with this whole thing yet," Bluegill says. "There's too much money at stake to let this thing die."

"Communities like Gold Coast are a thing of the past," Greenberg says. "There time's almost up."

Bluegill laughs.

"Almost," he repeats. "Almost."

The two men stand on Greenberg's balcony and look out at the Gold Coast area. They envisioned massive buildings rising from the area in little more than a year. But all they see now is the familiar jumble of tiny little places all tossed almost haphazardly together like a child's play blocks.

And on the western edge of Gold Coast, right next to the Southern River, the New World Baptist Church makes a distinct

figure with its steeple poking into a brilliant blue-sky morning.

Inside the church this Sunday morning there is an unusual mixture of music. Bernice Hudson leads a gospel choir but in front of the choir Alphonse Hudson plays his saxophone. The congregation moves about like waves in a raging sea. Shouting. Clapping. Swaying back-and-forth.

On one side of the church is a table. On the table is a microphone with the letters WGCB on it. Midnight Howl sits behind the microphone swaying back and forth with the congregation. In the congregation Mayor Blackstone sits between Moose Henderson and Lotti McCoy.

Alphonse plays his heart out this morning, pushing his saxophone as far as he can.

Suddenly, there is another saxophone sound that joins his from the back of the church. The congregation turns around to see Maurice Hudson as he slowly comes down the aisle playing his saxophone and stopping to play it in the row of the mayor, Moose and Lotti. Then he comes up on stage and joins his son and they play together while Bernice directs the gospel choir behind them.

At the end of the song Maurice puts his arm on Alphonse's shoulder and turns around to face Bernice.

"I'd like to try again," he says to her.