

Chapter Six

*90 minutes after Patrolman Kelton McGuinness was murdered
Nine days before Democratic Mayoral Primary*

Four blocks away from Hector Castillo's house, a BPD patrolman spotted a black Lincoln Continental crawling towards the barricade. The cop immediately recognized the driver and instantly knew who was in the back seat. He sprang to attention.

The cop cleared a pathway in the hastily constructed protective zone for the Lincoln to snake around wooden barriers and park next to a military-style truck.

In the back seat sat Mayor George Karam. The Lincoln was driven by Sergeant Brian Longworth who served as the mayor's driver and bodyguard for the past two years.

Longworth spent the last ten years of life in the BPD. He sported an eighteenth century style walrus mustache and wore a dated plaid sports jacket that clashed with mismatching plaid pants. His personnel file was filled with mediocre performance evaluations and he was cited for sleeping in his patrol car and conduct unbecoming of a police officer for relieving himself in public. His abilities and lack of drive put him on a slow boat to nowhere until his uncle pulled strings with Manny Tesani, Bridgeport's Democratic boss. Despite his shortcomings, he had what it took to be the Mayor's driver. He knew how to act deaf, dumb and blind and not forget that loyalty was valued above all else. The machine could trust him.

Longworth stared at the crowd. The crowd swayed like cocky boxers awaiting to be announced before a match. His cop's eye noted that their fingers gripped rocks or bottles. Longworth smelled danger. Violence was in the air.

"Mr. Mayor," Longworth said as deep concern washed over his face. "Please stay in the car."

Longworth didn't wait for a reply as he stepped outside the car to further assess the dangers. The mayor spied the crowd through the back window. He could hear the jeers and see fists punching the air.

Longworth saw enough. He cracked open the back door and leaned inside.

"Things are getting hot. We should go."

From inside the car, the mayor assessed the crowd as he considered Longworth's recommendation. Longworth was probably right. The crowd seemed like a clanking lid on a pot of boiling water. In a minute, the lid would blow.

"That's the mayor!" someone yelled from across the street.

"Fuck Karam!"

Mayor Karam knew Longworth's advice to retreat was sound. But Longworth was a cop. Karam was a politician and a politician couldn't be seen running from a crowd, especially not a week before the Democratic primary.

George Karam believed in fate and when he was spotted by the crowd his hand was forced. With a wave of his hand, the mayor signaled to Longworth to step back. He was going to bear the risks of walking among his constituents. Longworth shook his head with the resignation of a cop who knew he'd catch a heap of shit for allowing the mayor to enter a danger zone. But what could he do? The mayor gave the orders. Longworth stepped back with more trepidation for his career than for the mayor's well-being.

The mayor slid out of the back seat as he ran his hand over his face as if to wipe away any trace of fear. He counseled himself to emanate strength as he stood ram-rod straight.

The mayor walked around the Lincoln and eyed the gory trail of blood that stained the sidewalk, ran up the paved steps and inside the McGiveny Center's doors. His face convulsed with confusion as he stared at Angelo DeMartin's car which still dangled from the iron fence like a heavy Christmas decoration threatening to slip off a spindly branch.

Karam had second thoughts about mingling with his constituents as he eyed the destruction around him. He knew one cop had been killed and he was sure more would suffer the same fate before the night was out.

Six consecutive years in City Hall had taken a toll on Karam's fifty-one year old body. Stress had burrowed deep lines in his face, he gained ten pounds and had lost most of his hair since he was elected.

Karam wore a pugnacious scowl as he absorbed the chaos around him. He saw the angry crowd stirring across the street and his thoughts darted to the Democratic primary in nine days; everything was riding on it.

George Karam asked himself what former Mayor Joseph P. Ganim, his gutsy political mentor, would've done. Ganim was the ultimate survivor and Karam needed to draw upon Ganim's political instincts. As if searching for answers, Ganim's gritty political history flashed through George Karam's head.

Ganim was a political nobody when he challenged Republican Mayor Mary Moran. Bridgeport was on financial life support. Crime. Failing schools. A tax base that was hemorrhaging like a busted sand bag.

Mayor Mary Moran pled with Lowell Weicker, Connecticut's feisty Governor, to bail Bridgeport out. The city was going to die unless the state tossed it a financial life-line. Weicker refused to put money into the hands of incompetent and corrupt Bridgeport politicians. He told Moran to raise taxes.

Raising taxes was a non-starter for Mayor Moran. A mayor who raises taxes doesn't get elected. Besides, taxes were already double—*double!*—the rate of the surrounding suburbs and the suburbs had low crime and good schools. Bridgeport needed a bailout from the state. She pleaded with the governor. Fuck you. Raise taxes, Weicker replied.

Moran made a brash move. She filed for bankruptcy protection. Like an insolvent business, the City of Bridgeport would renounce its debts, renegotiate its pension obligations and start with a clean slate. Bridgeport would resurrect itself from the ashes of financial despair. Fuck you, Weicker.

Bankruptcy? The reverberations of Connecticut's largest city filing bankruptcy would be felt in every city and town in Connecticut. Connecticut's Moody and Poor's ratings would take it in the ass. No, Bridgeport wasn't going to declare bankruptcy and become the laughing stock of the country. Not under Weicker's watch. The State sued the City.

The federal judge agreed with the governor. He ruled that Mayor Moran was prematurely crying poverty. Sure, Bridgeport was poor and in dire straights but Bridgeport had enough money to pay its bills. Bankruptcy was available for cities that didn't have a pot to piss in and Bridgeport had a pot. It was rusty and crumbling but it was still a pot.

Technically Governor Weicker won. In reality, it was a Pyrrhic victory for the state. The state had to take over the city's purse strings and dole out money like a parent handing out an allowance to a spendthrift child. Times were bleak in Bridgeport. People were looking for hope.

In those bleak days, young Joseph Ganim challenged Moran. Ganim promised Bridgeport hope. Dignity. Rebirth. He promised the unions that he'd stop trying to renegotiate their contracts. Money would come from somewhere. Trust him.

The voters booted Mayor Moran and gave the keys to the city to Ganim. At thirty-one, he was the boy mayor.

Ganim's supporters and the media were intoxicated with his promises, his energy and the election euphoria that hung in the air like sugar dust in a bakery. The boy mayor's career trajectory was straight up. He put his sights on the governor's mansion and dreams of the White House danced in his head. Why not? A slick governor from the backwater state like Arkansas used the Governor's mansion as a stepping stone to the White House. Why couldn't a slick guy from Connecticut, which had Ivy league colleges and uber wealthy towns, propel himself to the White House? He walked with a swagger as Hail to the Chief played in his head.

Ganim held press conferences announcing economic revitalization and bull dozers arrived. Money began to flow. The dollars flowed through demolition contracts. Money flowed through construction contracts. Money flowed to developers, architects, lawyers, bankers, insurance brokers, unions. Ganim was re-elected.

Ganim quickly established complete control over the money spigot. He held the levers on the zoning board. He approved the variances before the developers brought them to the board. He agreed to complicated financial terms with the developers before they were rubber-stamped by City Council. He directed his tax collectors to take action or let sleeping tax liens lie.

But money wasn't flowing to the Mayor Ganim. Money was tight on his \$54,000 salary and the job's perks didn't pay his bills. Cash paid his bills.

Why was everyone but him getting rich off the fat calf he built? What was wrong with shaving a slice from your own calf?

Ganim began with thin slices. Slices from the brokers who handled the city's insurance policies. Slices from the brokers who managed the city's pension plans. Slices from the lawyers who handled zoning matters.

He then took thicker slices from the developers who built the arenas. Thicker slices from the construction companies who paved his city's roads. Who could begrudge him a slice?

Don Haley could. Haley resented being an insider who was kept on the outside. He was losing construction contracts to competitors who were kicking slices of their contracts back to the mayor. Haley seethed. He then decided to give the game a try but when he offered the mayor's men a slice he was told it wasn't thick enough. Everyone was in on the action but Haley.

Haley had enough. He knocked on the FBI's door and found the agents highly receptive. Of course they welcomed him. The media had an insatiable appetite for stories of corrupt pols. Think ABSCAM, when FBI agents posed as rich Arabs and bribed Congressman. Every newspaper ran the story for months. A movie was made. The Feds salivated at busting dirty politicians. Careers were made. Assistant U.S. Attorneys became crime busting U.S. Attorneys. U.S. Attorneys became Connecticut Attorney Generals. Attorney Generals became U.S. Senators.

Haley offered the mayor's head on a sworn affidavit. The affidavit detailed how Ganim sliced the contracts like a deli man. The FBI ran to federal Judge Charles S. Haight, Jr and got their warrants for the wire taps.

The Feds launched Operation Hardball.

Operation Hardball put the Honorable Joseph P. Ganim in its crosshairs. Over a twenty-month period, FBI agents netted over 53,000 tapes from wire taps and bugs in cars, diners, restaurants and fax machines. Operation Hardball became the FBI's most expensive investigation in Connecticut's history.

But the costs paid dividends. Operation Hardball validated Haley's insider information. Over and over, the wire taps revealed Mayor Ganim and his bag men discussing payments, discussing favors, fighting over their slices. Ganim and his cronies sounded like small time mobsters squabbling over their share of the mayor's pay-to-play scam.

The FBI leapt.

The Feds pressured the mayor's bag men. Looking at decades in pin stripes, his bag men buckled like folding chairs. They agreed to testify against the mayor. The FBI squeezed the developers. The developers shrugged; it was just part of the game. They got caught and agreed to testify against Ganim.

The evidence, the testimony, the bank accounts, the gifts, all pointed to a slam dunk conviction. The Feds had their man cornered.

The Feds offered the cornered Ganim a deal. Plead guilty. Spend a few years in a low security prison. Be out in four years with good behavior. Stay clear of politics forever.

The pugnacious mayor snarled. The Feds and their tapes threatened his dream of occupying the Governor's mansion. The Feds threatened to block his path to the White House. With Hail to the Chief playing in his head he told the Feds to go fuck themselves. He'd take his best swing in court.

The Feds swung back. They got the grand jury to throw the prosecutors' kitchen sink at the corrupt mayor. Joseph P. Ganim was indicted for racketeering, extortion, bribery, tax evasion and mail fraud. Fancy legal charges with lengthy jail sentences. Karam's mentor was looking at 120 years in prison.

Ganim's instinct was to absorb the government's blows and deny. Deny. Deny. Deny. He'd gaslight the jury. No, his bag men were liars. No, the developers were connected to the mob and untrustworthy. No, the trail of bank records didn't mean a thing. No, his college friend who kicked back a slice of his sales' commission couldn't be believed.

He kept denying. The sixty three tape recordings introduced in court didn't amount to zilch. The wine he asked his body guard and driver to hide for him didn't mean anything. Deny. Deny. Deny.

The U.S. Attorneys convinced a jury to believe. The twelve person jury found Ganim guilty of 16 criminal counts including racketeering, extortion, bribery, tax evasion and mail fraud.

U.S. District Judge Janet Arterton spent months listening as Ganim lied, day after day, under oath. She said his misdeeds had "contaminated the fabric of democracy." The Judge would make an example of the dirty, unrepentant politician.

The Assistant U.S. Attorneys were triumphant. "Bridgeporters demand integrity from public officials. And that is what this verdict said: Public office is not for sale."

The Feds dressed the mayor in an orange jump suit and marched him off to federal prison.

The law won.

Well, at least for a little while. Maybe Judge Arterton's lofty words were lost on the voters. Maybe the U.S. Attorneys' celebrations were misplaced. Maybe Bridgeporters didn't demand integrity from their mayors. Maybe they could live with a contaminated democracy.

After prison, Ganim returned to Bridgeport and reunited with political boss Manny Tesani. The men plotted the once unthinkable. A return to power for Joe Ganim.

Ex-Mayor Ganim's first stop on the election path was the black churches. With teary eyes, he apologized for his past sins. Weren't there hundreds of redemptive stories in the Bible? Weren't there comeback stories in Bridgeport? Why not for Joe Ganim? Who amongst them didn't know someone who sinned? Who amongst them didn't know someone who spent time in prison? He was just a regular guy.

He campaigned in the social clubs. He met the men and women in the streets. He filled the local air waves with his slogans about retaking the mayor's office. Redemption. Forgiveness.

With the backing of his political machine, George Karam, only twenty-three-years-old, became Ganim's campaign chairman when ex-con Ganim challenged the incumbent Democratic Mayor Bill Finch. With the energy of a desperate man seeking the only public office available, Ganim regained his old political support with schmaltz and promises. Promises to the police not to cut overtime. The police union saw no irony in backing a convicted felon to run their city. Ganim for Mayor. Promises of city grants. Pastors saw no irony in backing a convicted felon for stealing from the poorest of the poor. Ganim for Mayor. Promises of jobs to city council members. Politicians saw no irony in telling their constituents to vote for the man who stole from the city. Ganim for Mayor.

And then there was Special Agent Edward Adams. Ed Adams was the FBI agent in charge of overseeing the surveillance tape in Operation Hardball. He spent thousand of hours with head phones on listening to every word of incriminating evidence that sent Ganim away. Adams was the government's first witness at Joseph Ganim's trial. He was called to authenticate the FBI's surveillance tapes. Adams methodically outlined how the government handled the tapes. Each tape was recorded on two recorders to ensure the FBI captured the incriminating evidence even if one recorder malfunctioned. Too much was at stake for the FBI. Adams personally vouched to the court that the FBI's tapes were accurate and recorded pursuant to the court-approved search warrants.

When Ganim returned ten years later to recapture the mayor's seat, Adams was searching for a change. He found it on the ex-Mayor's campaign team. It smelled like curdled milk to every DOJ prosecutor and FBI agent who considered Ganim the personification of corruption. But it was legal for a

retired FBI agent to support ex-con Joseph P. Ganim for Mayor. This is America. Redemption is possible for corrupt politicians. Ganim campaigned with Adams by his side. He pointed to him like he was the FBI's good housekeeping seal of approval. Look, the FBI agent who brought down Joe Ganim is now on his side. How corrupt could he be? Ganim pledged to adhere to the law and make Ed Adams his Director of Ethics. Ganim for Mayor.

There were plenty of high-brow naysayers who warned Bridgeport that a leopard doesn't change his spots. A crooked politician will steal from you as sure as a Labrador will devour an unguarded bowl of food. Just give him an opportunity.

On the eve of the election, Connecticut's U.S. Attorney held a press conference with the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who sent Joseph P. Ganim to prison. She believed in redemption for ex-cons. Just not for politicians who brazenly stole from the public. Ganim abused the sacred public trust. She pled for Bridgeport's voters to keep the keys to the city away from the convicted felon. Her pleas fell on deaf ears.

On election night, after seven years in prison and a year of political groveling, Ganim rejoiced at his comeback victory. Standing on a table at his campaign's office, Ganim hugged his young campaign chairman, George Karam. Ganim's beaming smile said it all. Fuck them all. The boy mayor was now the middle-aged comeback guy. Fuck the self righteous U.S. Attorneys. Fuck the pious federal judge. Fuck the preening editors. And most of all, fuck the team of cunning FBI agents who took so much pleasure gathering the evidence that sent him away. Fuck all of them except former Special Agent Ed Adams, the city's new Head of Ethics.

George Karam served as Ganim's troubleshooter for eight years. His loyalty pensions vested and he realized his dream Governor's mansion was more of a delusion announced his retirement and pulled the into City Hall.

Tonight George Karam needed to pull. A riot would threaten everything. Riots challenger, Council President Lorraine George Karam's plans to fulfill his mentor's Governor's mansion. No, he would do scale riot that would allow a flunky Council President to defeat him.

"Mayor, we need to go," Longworth advised. "SWAT teams are starting door-to-door sweeps." His voice grew more strained as the decibels of danger rose around him. "This place could blow."

Karam pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and covered his nose and mouth as a gust of tear gas mixed with the acrid smell of burning rubber blew over him. He flinched as the distinctive popping of guns and the squeals of heavy machinery in the distance filled the air. Things were already blowing.

Mayor Karam's hand held Longworth at bay. He spied Chief Gonzalez in a heated discussion with State Police SWAT team leaders. Gonzalez waved his hands and pointed in the direction of the shooting but Karam was too far away to hear what he was saying. All he knew was Gonzalez was pissed off and wanted the troopers to take action. Fast.

Karam strode towards Gonzalez. By the time he reached his police chief the SWAT team leaders were gone, leaving Gonzalez looking pale and distressed as if the argument had drained him.

"This is a fucking disaster," Mayor Karam seethed under the handkerchief he held to his mouth. Chief Gonzalez's thoughts were too jumbled to respond.

"We can't have another Ferguson here!" Karam screamed to Gonzalez as he watched white cops in riot gear stand toe to toe against the all-black crowd. The vision of violent riots and destruction played in Karam's head. It was his worst nightmare nine days before the primary.

"How many people have been killed?" Karam asked through his handkerchief.



BRIDGEPORT CITY HALL

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know which strings to would open the door to his Turner. Riots would derail goal to move into the anything to avoid a full-

“Nine. Maybe a few more.” The instant Gonzalez’s words passed his lips a bottle shattered five feet from the mayor, spraying glass shards over his pants.

“Shit!” Mayor Karam yelled as Longworth acted like a human shield and ushered him behind a patrol car as rocks rained down on top of the cop cars and the military trucks.

“Karam, you’re a fucking thief!” a voice yelled through a bullhorn as more rocks bounced off the cars.

Karam’s eyes met Longworth’s. “You’ve got to be fucking me,” the mayor seethed. “Who brings a bullhorn to a riot?”

Karam fumed as more debris fell around them. He looked over the edge of the car. “Turner is behind this,” he mumbled loud enough for Longworth to hear. Karam was sure he was right. He was sure that Turner had sent her men into the eye of trouble to whip up more trouble. He was sure that the chaos around him was all staged in the hope that the newspapers would print a story that the protest and destruction was directed against Mayor George Karam.

Karam peeked over the roof of the patrol car to get a better look at the guy holding the bullhorn. He picked the wrong time to raise his beak. Just as his nose passed above the car’s roof, a rock caromed off the top of it and ripped into his nose like a sledgehammer, tearing a half inch gash of skin across the bridge of his nose. Blood sprayed like a stream from a hole in a garden hose.

“Shit!” Longworth yelled as he covered the mayor as more bottles and rocks rained down on them. An oversized State Police Humvee outfitted for urban warfare screeched to a halt next to the mayor. Troopers in riot gear jumped out of the truck and rescued Longworth and the mayor as more rocks and bottles careened off the Humvee’s armor.

“We’ve got to get to the hospital,” Gonzalez screamed as he scrambled into the Humvee after the mayor. His voice was almost completely drowned out by the rocks thudding off the Humvee’s roof.

The mayor fingered his nose and covered it with his white handkerchief. “Shit. I think it’s broken,” he said as blood streamed through his nostrils making him sound as if was drowning in his own blood.

“Let me look at it,” Gonzalez said, gently pushing the mayor’s hand aside. The chief hid his shock as his eyes ran over the slice of flesh that hung over his exposed cartilage.

“Bridgeport hospital!” Gonzalez yelled to the troopers in the front seat.

“No!” Karam protested. Visions of a photos of a him as a bloodied and wounded politician ran through Karam’s head. He couldn’t look weak and injured so close to the primary. George Karam knew that Joe Ganim would never be seen limping into a hospital before a primary. Never. He pledged to himself he wouldn’t either.

“Get a doctor to meet us at the BPD.”

Gonzalez understood. The chief tapped the metal screen that divided the front seat in the Humvee.

“Take us to the rear entrance of the BPD!” Gonzalez shouted to the troopers. The troopers nodded and the Humvee roared to life.

“This could explode like Baltimore or fucking Minneapolis,” Karam seethed, holding his handkerchief to his nose like he just lost a fist fight. Visions of race riots — Ferguson, Baltimore, Minneapolis, L.A.—ran through the mayor’s head as the Humvee began moving.

“That ain’t going to happen,” Gonzalez replied confidently. A split second later a brick thundered on top of the Humvee’s reinforced roof as if the crowd was answering him. You don’t think so, motherfucker? Just you wait and see. Everyone flinched as the vibrations echoed through the armored truck.

“Holy shit!” Mayor Karam shouted back as he scanned the area through the window slits as the truck rolled further away from the mayhem. The mayor seemed on the edge of shock.

Gonzalez turned to the mayor and gripped his shoulders. “This ain’t going to turn into a Ferguson,” he shouted over the roar of the truck’s engine and wail of sirens. “You’ve got to trust me on this.”

The mayor glared at him. He wasn’t going to trust anyone. *His* election was at stake. “How are you so damn sure?” he mumbled through his bloody handkerchief.

“Number one, one of ours—a black cop—was killed,” Gonzalez explained. “That changes everything. Number two, the guys we shot are Hispanic, not black.”

George Karam softened his grip on his nose and his eyes peered out under his handkerchief at Gonzalez. His eyes were glazed like a boxer’s after fifteen rounds. Gonzalez looked squarely at Mayor Karam as if eye contact would clear everything up.

“In Minneapolis a black guy was killed. In Ferguson a black guy was killed. In Baltimore a black guy was killed. These guys were Hispanics.”

Mayor Karam’s eyes darted around nervously to see if anyone other than Longworth was listening. He breathed easier as he saw the SWAT team in the front seats were consumed with their radio communications.

“Listen, I know this stuff cold,” Gonzalez continued. Gonzalez slowed his pace. “Race riots are triggered when a white cop shoots a black guy or a white cop does something to a black guy. We don’t have that here.”

The mayor’s face contorted. “What the fuck do we have here? Peaceful protests?”

The blue-collar cop who barely passed high school algebra had immersed himself in the history of U.S. urban riots. Gonzalez could recite that from 1963 to 1967 there were 957 race riots in 133 different American cities. He could cite what caused upticks in 1980, 1987, 1992, 2016 and 2020. He could quote from the 1968 Kerner Commission’s report on the riots. He could quote from the Moynihan report on the disintegration of the black family structure. He knew the history of race riots as Bridgeport’s top cop. And now was his chance to share his wisdom. Gonzalez gestured with his hands like a professor with an expertise in an esoteric subject trying to communicate a complicated theory to first year students.

“Listen. I know this shit cold. Chicago. 1919. A white crowd threw rocks at a black kid in Lake Michigan and the black kid drowned. When the white cops wouldn’t arrest anyone, the blacks erupted. Buildings were looted and burned. Same thing in Harlem. In 1935 there was a rumor that a black kid was killed by a white cop after he was arrested for shoplifting. The blacks burned down Harlem. It was only a rumor. The kid wasn’t even beaten up. In 1945, again in Harlem, a black guy was shot by a white cop when the guy interfered with an arrest. The blacks burned down Harlem. Same thing in 1964. A white cop shot a black kid and the blacks broke out in a full scale riots. That’s what happened in Minneapolis, Ferguson and Baltimore. White cops and blacks. It has to be a white-black mix or it doesn’t explode,” he said with the certainty of a chemistry teacher explaining the essential components of urban combustion. Without a white cop and a black guy, nothing ignites. It just fizzes. It was just science. Just a fact of urban chemistry.

Gonzalez attended classes that analyzed what sparked riots, arson, sniping and looting. No instructor ever said it explicitly but Gonzalez connected the dots. Every cop connected the dots. Race riots were sparked by white cops shooting or beating blacks. Detroit, Watts, Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Baltimore, Ferguson, Minneapolis, Atlanta. Gonzalez knew that every police chief in America breathed easier when a white or Hispanic guy was shot by a cop or a black cop fired the gun. Gonzalez didn’t waste any time grumbling that it wasn’t right or fair. He just knew it was a fact. He knew what caused explosions and what didn’t. It was that simple.

Gonzalez paused for effect before continuing with his lesson. “There’s going to be grumblings and bullshit protests but there’s not going to be any riots over these killings.”

The mayor stared at the chief as if trying to clear a pathway to Gonzalez’s brain. “You better keep this theory to yourself.”

Gonzalez started to say something but Mayor Karam cut him off. “If you say this in public I’m not going to get re-elected. You understand?”

Gonzalez began to reply, but the mayor interrupted him with a wave of his forefinger. “If you repeat this in public, Turner will make you look like a racist red-neck. If my Chief of Police looks like a red neck, I’ll look like one. You get what I’m saying?”

Gonzalez drew a deep breath. “Yeah, I get it,” he said as he gripped the hand rails as the Humvee took a sharp turn. “I just want you to know what will cause the city to blow up and what won’t. This won’t.”

The Humvee passed a string of fire engines with their sirens blaring.

“You better be right,” Karam snapped after a long pause.

“We have videos of our guys being fired upon. This ain’t Ferguson or Minneapolis.”

Mayor Karam eyed Gonzalez skeptically.

“Trust me. I’m dead right on this,” Gonzalez added, confident in his mastery of social chemistry. “You need a white cop and a black guy for urban combustion.”

“I don’t know,” Karam said quietly as he mulled over Gonzalez’s theory on race riots and nursed his bloody nose.

“Nine deaths,” Karam’s voice trailed off as he thought of how the night would haunt him when he runs for higher office. “The investigations will be in the papers for years.” His words tumbled out of his mouth as if he was talking to himself.

The Humvee pulled to an abrupt stop and a trooper pulled the side door open. An ambulance was waiting for Mayor Karam.

