**Power and Prestige**

by

L.O.R.D.

**CHAPTER 3**

*TWO YEARS LATER*

It was still light outside, only 5:00 p.m., as a score of different media outlets were setting up equipment, yelling at underlings, sending out coffee orders, and scrambling to prepare for the night. Every broadcasting giant—Fox News, CBS, ABC, NBC, and beyond—had their vans, cameramen, writers, and best reporters on site in front of the correctional facility. It was an absolute frenzy. However, the associated press weren’t the only ones who had arrived early. It looked as though every black person from the city of Bridgeport was outside of the prison. There were even NAACP representatives, civil rights activists, and prominent leaders from African-American communities all across America, each holding up picket signs and chanting passionate words of protest.

“You know, I remember when this case first took place,” said Angela Price, reporting live on the scene for CNN. Every hour on the hour, the network was broad­casting live segments leading up to the main event.

For viewers watching from home, they saw a split screen with Angela Price on the left side. On the right-hand side of the screen was Kathy Lambert, a legal analyst for the network who was commentating from inside CNN studios.

“I think we all remember,” Kathy replied. “As a matter of fact, it was just a little over two years ago when it first happened. For those of you at home, we’re talking about the murders of Kalicia Jenkins and her unborn child, who were relentlessly shot to death by Connor Rothchild. Just to bring you up to pace, Connor Rothchild is the son of financial tycoon and well-respected businessman Thomas Rothchild.

“Connor Rothchild, in March of 2010, was arrested and charged with robbery one and two counts of capital felony murder. He was accused of robbing his pregnant heroin dealer and shooting her in the stomach during the process, causing the deaths of both her and the fetus. Six months after the incident, a jury trial took place in Stamford’s Superior Court. Throughout the trial, Connor Rothchild’s defense team insisted that their client was a victim of addiction. A young man who went to score heroin from a drug dealer and wound up getting into a life-threatening tussle for a gun, which accidentally went off and caused unintended death.

“But the prosecution argued that Rothchild did exactly what he came there to do. They even presented an eyewitness, a gas station attendant who was first alarmed by the gunshot, then watched in awe as Rothchild rummaged through the young lady’s pockets as she bled out. The state also contends that, had it not been for Rothchild taking time to search for and retrieve ten bags of heroin from her purse, he would have never been apprehended on the scene with the drugs in his pocket and gun on his waist. So as one could imagine, there’s . . . there was some pretty compelling evidence against this guy.

“However, what really put the nail in the coffin is the fact that the state was able to prove that the gun which was used, a .38 pistol, was registered to Connor’s father, Thomas Rothchild, and had the initials ‘TR’ engraved into both sides of its pearl handle. So all of this evidence disproved the defense’s theory at trial, claiming that their client was a victim of addiction who just went out to score some heroin. Obviously, the jury convicted him on all counts, and he was later sentenced to death, which is what brings us here today.”

“Well put, Kathy,” Angela admitted. “I couldn’t have explained it better myself. As we all know, this case is one that had received international attention from the very beginning. But tonight, it will have reached its final stage as the execution of Connor Rothchild will take place at 10:00 p.m.

“If you look behind me, you can kind of get an idea of what the atmosphere is like out here tonight. Yet,” Angela further elaborated, gripping the microphone in one hand while holding the opposite arm stretched open, “actually being here you can just feel the energy, and the tension, constantly building with each passing moment as the time of execution grows closer and closer. And when that time arrives, we’ll be here . . . Angela Price, reporting live for CNN.”

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“Fifteen minutes left, Mr. Rothchild,” said the deep voice of one of five burly guards posted inside of the private visiting area.

The aura was tremendously heart-wrenching within the fairly small room as Connor sat calmly across from his mother, handcuffed and shackled.

“Why didn’t Dad come?” Connor tearfully inquired, with his voice beginning to crack as tears merged with his running nose. “He said he’d be here!”

Connor could hear the faint but steady buzz generated from voices and noise coming from the crowds of people chanting for justice outside of the jail.

“Please be strong, Connor,” Dianne gently implored with a stream of tears rolling down her face. Following a sniffle, she quickly used both hands to clear the tears from her eyes as she gathered her strength and smiled. Spontaneously, Dianne snatched the scarf from her head, revealing a hairdo just as shiny as Mr. Clean’s.

Connor burst into a fit of laughter, cracking up at his mother’s bald head. Her weight loss was obvious, but he had no idea that the chemotherapy had taken all of her hair. Still and all, her act of solidarity warmed his heart and brought him extreme comfort.

Along with Dianne’s cancer diagnosis, a lot had taken place over the last two years. Connor’s legal situation, of course, was the pinnacle of it all. However, the attention that his case created had caused a significant domino effect. From the moment of his arrest, the press was all over it like famished vultures tearing into a fresh carcass. Gossip websites, television networks, newspapers, tabloids—they all had a ball publishing still images of the blood-spattered .38 with Thomas Rothchild’s initials so prestigiously engraved in its pearl handle.

Without a doubt, Thomas Rothchild was well recognized as a man of respect and a phenomenal business mind. But the bad press had a negative effect on his reputation that was becoming near impossible to shake:

Family of Two Killed with Billionaire’s Gun

Rothchild Murders Mother and Child During Robbery Attempt

Son of Thomas Rothchild Slays Pregnant Drug Dealer and Unborn Fetus for Ten Bags of Heroin

The headlines were endless.

All of the partners whom Thomas was in business with prior to his son’s mess had stuck by his side. Yet it was his future prospects that suffered: the 40 percent stake he was to acquire in an African-based company who teamed up with the government for proprietary rights of mining Angola’s diamond mines, the deal he negotiated with development guru The Koch Group to construct a chain of six 5-star resorts spread across the British West Indies, the partnership he was supposed to ink with Chevron to purchase and co-own miles of natural gas and crude oil pipelines. All of this, coupled with Connor’s previous brushes with the law, left Thomas frustrated, embarrassed, and infuriated with his son. But the loss of a few investments was just the tip of the iceberg when it came down to the Rothchilds’ firestorm.

During the pretrial phase of the case, Dianne didn’t just get the best defense attorney in the state to represent her son, she also hired the entire criminal division of his law firm to work on Connor’s defense. No expense was spared as she forwarded payment to hire a jury consultant firm, and also dispensed funds to conduct two mock trials. Both test runs ended with guilty verdicts. This led Dianne to hear for the first time with two clear ears what her attorney told her from the start: “This case might be close to impossible to win.”

Thomas wasn’t exactly happy with the lengths his wife was taking to secure Connor’s freedom, but he didn’t complain . . . that is until her desperation became public:

“Well, hell-o, Dianne!” said the always jubilant Emma Gould. The elderly woman was enormously happy to see Dianne seated at a table having tea with three other women inside the opulent Greenwich Country Club.

“How are you doing, Mrs. Gould?”

“I’m fine. I’m doing swell. And I want you to know that no matter how many stories they print, I know Connor is a *good boy*!”

“Thank you, Mrs. Gould . . . Oh, geez,” Dianne let out, rattled with urgency as she noticed her target appear in the distance. “Ladies, would you excuse me? I have to go to the bathroom.”

After taking an inconspicuous stroll to the other side of the room, Dianne extended her hand to an older-looking gentleman just as he was sitting down.

“Mr. Rosenberg, how are you?”

“Fine, ma’am. But I don’t think we’ve met.”

“Oh, please forgive me. My name is Dianne.”

“And how may I help you, Dianne?”

“Mr. Rosenberg, do you have children?”

“Yes. I do.”

“So then you understand parental instinct and the measure one would take for the love of his or her child?”

“I guess I do. But why are—”

“I’m sorry to bother you, but it’s my understanding that you’re very influential in your work. I also know that you have several colleagues who work in this district who can alleviate my situation.”

“*Excuse me?* Ma’am, what did you say your name was again?”

“Dianne . . . Dianne *Rothchild*!”

“Uh-ha,” he cordially responded, with the name sounding alarms in his head. “Now I see.”

“Sir, my husband is a very wealthy man. If you were to assist me in this matter, I can guarantee you a monetary compensation significant enough to cover Ivy League educations lasting throughout your children’s grand­children’s children’s lives.”

“Please excuse me. But I have to go now.”

Two weeks later, Dianne was indicted for attempting to bribe a superior court judge. And once again, Thomas Rothchild experienced another wave of shame, embarrass­ment, and frustration stemming from the result of his son’s ill behavior.

Although Dianne’s indictment got dismissed just as quickly as it appeared and set her free before getting criminally charged, her marriage was in ruins. They had reached their boiling points. Thomas was fed up with the backlash of all that was going on, and Dianne hated him for his ability to be so uncompassionate to their son. The two argued and fought all the way up until Dianne was diagnosed with cancer. That time period is when things began to change.

Just as Thomas anticipated, people had come to be more empathetic. Instead of constantly criticizing, folks began showing more respect for their private life, giving them the much-needed space to breathe as they traveled the rocky road that life had set them upon. But there was still one big problem that needed to be resolved once and for all in order for Thomas and his wife to receive peace:

“How are you, Dad?” said Connor, smiling while communicating through a phone on the opposite side of a one-inch-thick glass partition. This was the first time he’d seen his father since losing trial and being sentenced to death.

“It’s rough out here, son . . . That’s why I came to speak with you. I need peace. For God’s sake, your mother needs peace. Connor, it’s time to end this once and for all. Your mother’s health is ailing, and the more this drags along, the more it’s tearing her to pieces!”

“What . . .” Connor began to mutter, feeling a lump forming inside his throat as his eyes welled with tears. “What are you saying, Dad?”

“I’m saying don’t drag this thing out for ten, fifteen years. Your mother doesn’t have that kind of time left. Forfeit your appeals, get right with God, and accept your fate . . . Peace, Connor! We all deserve to have some sort of peace at this point. There’s no need for any of us to have to continue living life full of mental anguish when we all know that you’re not going to be spared. You need to request that all your future appeals be forfeited so that they can start the process. It’s time for closure, Connor.”

Thomas hated the content of his last conversation with his son. It cut him deeply to have to verbally relay such a harsh reality. Yet, given the facts within, Connor took his father’s advice. Which explained why he was being executed today rather than fifteen years down the line.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Rothchild,” the prison guard announced. “But visiting time is up.”