

Memphis Dirty: Tales From The Dirty South
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Edited by Stephen Clements

Soundtrack by David Saks

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If you don't want people dissing on you, don't
be a jerk to an entire city for 20 years.

Memphis Dirty:
Tales From The Dirty South

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Introducing Memphis

Memphis, Tennessee is a dirty place. I'm not talking so much about trash being all over the streets, because I've seen much worse. No, I'm talking about the spirit of the city: it's a place of low expectations and dirty people, a place that doesn't expect too much of itself. It's not like the capital city, Nashville, which is full of up-and-comers and really out to make something fancy of itself. See, Memphis doesn't try too hard to be something it's not; it's got problems, and it's okay with that. That's one reason I feel more comfortable there, because it's a lot like me: we're comfortable with ourselves, even though we're jacked up.

Besides being one of the largest cities in the United States, Memphis routinely competes for the most violent city in the country. Truthfully, it often ranks among the most violent places in the world. I did the math, and while I was in Baghdad, Iraq, during the Surge, I was seven times more likely to die a violent death at home than I was in a warzone, where there was an internationally-funded and organized terrorist army

actually out to get me. Here, I would have just been killed at random by some jack-ass, likely in one of our world-class car-jackings.

Memphis is the kind of place pizza delivery guys get killed for the \$4 they had on them by hood rats, riding their bicycle around at night with a shotgun in their lap. We can't have nice things in Memphis, because the young bucks who think they're going to kill somebody and become the next Tu-Pac are a dime a dozen.

I've heard it said that the Indians who lived in the area didn't settle down in Memphis, instead going down a bit to modern Southaven, Mississippi. Why? Because Memphis was haunted, a place where the souls of the grouchy dead got together. If you've ever been in Memphis, you'll find it hard to argue with that.

Memphis is the true birthplace of the blues and rock and roll (screw you, Cleveland) and gave American culture a lot of our most precious music and greatest tragedies. It has the best bar-b-que in the world, but we've had two kings here and killed them both.

Memphis started out as a den of thieves, harlots, and drug-heads out to win a quick buck. Not much has

really changed. But since Memphis and its people know how jacked up they are, it's alright to celebrate it for what it is: one of the most inspiring places in the world. I don't mean inspiring like: "skyscrapers that reach unto the very edge of Heaven", "alive with fresh artistry straight from the cutting edge", or "a nice place to raise your children". I mean inspiring like how you can look at an ugly dog and laugh, or can't help but watch a car crash. You might find you even come to love the place.

In tribute to that city of legend, some proud and some not-so-proud Memphians and I have put together this collection of short stories we hope helps bring Memphis to your thoughts again and again. Welcome to Memphis.

Stephen Clements
Editor

The Teahouse of Vile Revolution
By Stephen Clements

“WE WILL CONQUER THEM WITH OUR VICES!” read the plaque over the door to the Teahouse of Vile Revolution, before Operation Phase-10 would come crashing down all around them. But, as is said, all in its own good time, whether it’s a good time or not.

Act 1: The Desolation

Reo was his name. Smoking a Lucky Strike cigarette on the street corner, he waited. He waited for the others to show. It was a hot summer’s night, the wet brick and concrete glistening in the yellow streetlight.

There was a splashing of water in the gutter, and a mean old man with yellow, mulatto skin came humping along with his cane in his hand, more a weapon than a support. Blind Apricot Harding meant business tonight.

“What’s the score, young slacka’?” he said to Reo.

“We’s waitin’ on da rest of dem, ol’ man. Yuh bring yo’ birfday presents?”

“Bitch, you think I leave home without it?!” ol’ Apricot groaned, violently shaking his cane at the young gun. “I’ll show you young punks how to settle a score!”

“POP, BITCHES!” sounded out of the darkness, as a small, wiry young man jumped out of the shadows with a showman’s flourish.

Reo didn’t jump at the dip-stick bounding out of the alleyway across the street. Reo was too cool for that. Ol’ Apricot was too mean to flinch.

“4-way, you botha’ puttin’ on de-odorant today? ‘Cuz I don’t want to be smellin’ yo’ cheap ass all night,” barked Apricot.

“4-way” had a real first name (Derrell), but what other men would try to bury as a shameful incident that they never wanted to recall, he took as a place of pride in his life’s accomplishment.

“You want some gum, ol’ man? I can smell yo’ aufritis breaf from here,” 4-way thought he wittily retorted.

“Whuz up, guys?” asked Jerome, a fat, young man in a sweater and jacket that always looked too small on his tall frame, as he lumbered onto the scene.

That's everybody, Reo calculated. That'll be enough.

"So we gonna whip some ass or stare at each other all night? We got some honor to A-VENGE!" boasted ol' Harding.

"Listen, ol' man, I don't know why we're makin' a big deal out of it. Every beauty's got ta go out wiff an idiot," said 4-way.

"Is that how you keep getting dates, stank ass?" asked Apricot.

Plaid sleeves and bare limbs flew in the air, as the two went at each other. The smaller men were quickly separated by big man Jerome.

"Can we just save it for the real enemy, guys? Just this once?" pled the big man with a kind face.

While 4-way continued squaring off by himself, old Harding acquiesced.

The wizened man spoke, saying, "Man, I just get all worked up wit' a quickness, when one of my girls gets hurt like that."

"Let's go," Reo said calmly. "Too much talkin', time to get stompin'." He dropped his cigarette, leaving it hissing on the ground.

The posse followed him into the tearoom, an abandoned diner built when Memphis knew a better, less violent age. They grabbed things they'd need from boxes, pantries, and hiding spots: handcuffs, wire, a bag of fertilizer, a can of gasoline, and a half-drunk bottle of Hennessy thrown in for the road. They came here for a noble purpose, even if they were about to get dirty. They had a disgraced angel to avenge.

Act 2: The Descent

The ratty, day-glow door flew off its rusty hinges with a bang, blowing up a cloud of dirt and cigarette butts in its wake. At the far end of a dilapidated, shotgun shack just off South 3rd Street, Leon sat enthroned, his white suit and straight, black hair unimpressed by the dramatic intrusion. Three bloods moved protectively from behind his chair, trying to appear united while concealing their fear. They had expected retaliation for what their boss had done to that poor woman, and now it had come.

“That’s right, mutha fuckas! We up in this shit like dat!” pronounced 4-way as he bounded to the front of the room. Twirling a Little League Slugger, he made

room for Reo, Harding, and Jerome to march in for the slaughter.

Lowering his smoldering cigar from his lips with a grace earned from abandoning church, Leon asked, “What’s this about, Reo?”

“It’s about HONOR, you punk!” bellowed the cane-shaking Apricot, trembling with fury. Reo nodded once, because that’s all that needed to be said.

It was on.

“It ain’t got to go down like this, Reo. Let the past lay,” said Leon, accompanied by the sound of his fist rocking a scrawny jaw and the 4-way attached to it hitting the floor.

“Wut you did ain’t cool, Leon. You busted MY MOMZ, TRICK!” Reo shouted, finally losing his cool and clenching his eyes in rage.

One of Leon’s boys charged Reo, but the battle-ready Harding clocked him with a hard right and a string of expletives.

Jerome jumped between two thugs and 4-way’s crying body, shovel in hand. Reo went at Leon, swinging his bike chain like a man possessed. Leon stood placidly,

parrying and deflecting Reo's metallic assault with the mastery of his chrome dice-capped pimp stick.

"PANG" declared a solid shot against one of the thugs' skulls by Jerome in this epic struggle. Apricot wasn't so lucky, as he got hit by another thug, and then he hit the floor, his cane scuttling away from him across the scuffed-up floor.

"Boy-toy, toss me the Hennessey!" he implored 4-way. "And quit cryin', you little skillet! Get in da fight: PUT JO' WEIGHT ON IT!"

4-way lay there crying, as Jerome got tackled into the wall beside him. The old man helpless, Reo swept the almost empty bottle to the seasoned citizen, all the while still whipping his bike-chain like mad at the villain who started all this.

Leon's hair was unperturbed by this pathetic offensive.

Licking his stubbly lips as he groped the bottle, old Harding swigged down the contents before throwing it in a beautiful overhand arc straight into the back of the dude who was kidney-punching Jerome senseless. The thug went down, much to the wheezing fat boy's salvation.

“For Reo’s momma,” Jerome breathed weakly, as he brought the shovel down again. Rushing unsteadily to help the chain-wielding Reo, a swift planting of Leon’s chrome-topped cane in his face sent Jerome to his back, out cold.

Reo seized the moment of distraction and slapped Leon like a bitch on a toilet. That was the last thing he and his friends would remember that night.

Act 3: Denouement

Reo came to, his left eye swollen shut and the taste of cigarette smoke and metal in his mouth. Squatting beside him, Leon’s white suite was pristine. His hair was slightly mussed.

“Look, man, I just spoke the truth. We didn’t have to do it like this,” said Leon in a kind voice.

“REVENGE!” shrieked old Apricot, still stuck on his seized back.

“Chill out, old man,” Leon spat over his shoulder, without malice in his voice

“IT WAS HIS MOMZ, YO!” squealed 4-way, now tied to a folding chair.

Leon's caramel face grimaced, as he raised the back hand of his hand to the young moron. Just the threat was enough to shut him up.

Jerome slouched against the poster-riddled wall. He was still breathing, but out cold.

Raising his elbows on the dirty fast food wrappers all over the floor, Reo protested, "You broke her, Leon. How's she supposed to go on now? You took everything away from her!"

"That old turkey was dry, man. That's just a fact. Weren't no gravy, neither," Leon spoke consolingly, but firmly. "I just said what everybody at the church potluck was thinking."

Reo looked thoughtful. "Well, you right. You still coming to dinner Sunday afta church?"

"Tell your mom I can't wait for more of her fried chicken," Leon offered, extending his right hand to help Reo off the filthy floor.

"Aight," said Reo, taking Leon's hand.

Peace had come at last to the ghetto.

The River Hippies Like Me

By Jeff Klitzner

It happened one day, while I was exploring the banks of the Wolf River in a small town out east of Memphis. I wasn't paying too much attention to the world around me, aside from the Guns and Roses CD blasting from the rather large boom box I was carrying. It was 2005 or 2006, I think. I'm not really sure which, because the whole date/year-thing never really mattered much to me. On this walk, I was examining the darkest regions of my past over and over again in my mind.

I kept replaying things I had fucked up in my life, people I had hurt and who had hurt me. Maybe if I did that enough, I'd remember that things didn't really happen that way, that the world didn't actually have the scars I thought it had. Maybe things would be better, if life really didn't turn out like it did.

That's when I caught the stench that was familiar to me at one point in my life. Well, okay, for my entire life. As the stench of sweet, stanky weed hit my nostrils, I knew it was only fit and proper for me to find

the source, introduce myself, and see if I could bogart some of that fellowship.

As I walked down past the used tires that had washed up on the riverbank, I couldn't help but think to myself, "Man, it's been a while since I've seen a hippie smoking a joint rolled with actual papers, and not those nasty, cheap cigar wraps." Now I could feel that I was getting close, and as I walked up to a clearing in the grass on the riverbank, I noticed two men and three women sitting around on what could only be described as a raft made of plywood and several inner-tubes tied together, with a large tent resting on top. They were floating just off the muddy bank, anchored by some make-shift device. Potheads all think they are the next coming of MacGuyver, because where there's a will, there's a way. Especially if getting high is at the end of the rainbow.

As I was walking up, my anticipation grew. When I hit the muddy bank, my stride changed up: like a natural instinct, I went from a casual stroll to dropping my knee almost to the ground followed by a twist of my hips to pull it back up. It was a way to stay unstuck in that much muck, and it went like gang-busters, even

though I hadn't done that in years. My boots were almost gliding across the top of the mud, but I got cocky and tripped on the tires. I lost control of my boom box, and the CD skipped. I could see a few heads poking up and turning towards me, and I heard the voices mumbling.

I was now faced with a hard choice: I could get my tunes or my body to safety on the plywood refuge that was floating closer to me, but not both, as gravity was once again trying to push me down. (Let me explain that bit about gravity: see, a lot of people think gravity is pulling you down, but they're wrong. Gravity is *pushing* you down, like the Man trying to keep you down. Mother Nature is the first and greatest oppressor) I wasn't happy with the choices, so I did the first thing that popped into my head when confronted with danger: Stop, Drop, and Roll! With my roaring boom box flying through the air towards the raft, bumping that classic by Hall and Oates "Out of Touch" as it went, I leapt out of my roll and landed on the raft like a mackerel aboard a fishing vessel's deck. I flopped from my stomach to my back and caught my most prized possession, just as it

grazed the top of the shallow water. It's called skills, don't hate.

At this point, I couldn't help but notice the three dirty, hairy people lying beneath me. I also saw an outstretched hand with a joint in it. It was pointed flame-out, as was custom amongst polite smokers offering to one another. Of course, I accepted and then gently rolled off the two ladies and one rather confused gentleman. We all sat up, and I took two puffs off that sweet, sweet weed. Being a good person, I then passed it to the left. After exhaling, I began to speak with my new-found friends, figuring I could at least introduce myself. You know, after jumping on them and smoking their weed.

"I apologize for my rude intrusion onto your vessel, but I have never been able to resist the sweet aroma that is now before me. I trust none of you were harmed in the demonstration of my Magic Ninja Powers? My given name is Jeff, but my friends call me Tennessee," I said, looking concerned.

They stared at me, glassy-eyed and expecting something else. I flashed my blunt, toothy grin, and the urge to laugh overcame us all. After a few more rounds of uncontrollable laughter, the man I landed on spoke.

“My name is Mark, and this is my soul-mate Jennifer. That’s Harry, but he doesn’t talk anymore: he gave that up a few months ago,” he trailed off.

He was followed by the blonde I fell on, who said, “I’m Monica, and this is my sister Lilly. She is kind of shy. I think she likes you already.”

Before I could say anything, Lilly pulled a flower out of her hair and offered it me; it was she who had offered me the joint upon my landing. I accepted the flower, and it happened to be my turn in the circle for another toke. Finding myself on this raft with the free-love types, I decided it would be rude for me to not ask about the vessel and their unique habitat.

Before I could speak, though, Mark asked me with great intensity, “How did you gain your Magic Ninja Powers?” I could tell the concept was causing bouts of deep thought in him.

I explained that I was one of the select few members of the only truly top-secret organization in the world, known as the Supreme Soviet. The questions began to follow, but I had to keep mum. I had already said too much: I knew the penalty for those who spoke too much about our role in modern society. Hell, I came

up with the penalty, so it wasn't pleasant thinking about what I would have to do to myself if I said any more.

I quickly changed the subject. "Hey, silent dude, why did you give up speaking?"

He proceeded to make a bunch of random hand gestures, and I couldn't figure out what the hell he was doing.

"You look like a quadriplegic having a seizure," was the only sensible response.

He didn't look too pleased.

Then his chick said, "He went mute, so he could better understand the value of a word."

Mark asked me, "Why do you place such value on your boom box? You shouldn't value your possessions so much."

I informed him, "The value isn't monetary, neither is it for status. Rather, I have a deep, emotional connection to that song, as it helps me control my emotions."

Lilly asked me, "Why would you want to control your emotions?"

I couldn't help but feel bad for her young heart. It was obvious she had never known the pain of a heart

breaking, nor the satisfaction of knowing that life is nothing more than a series of random daggers to the heart. I began to explain that while life has many beautiful things in it, the one constant in my life has been tragedy. I could tell by the look in their eyes that I had thrown them a line, and they bit.

I looked up to see the setting sun, and I uttered these words, which still haunt my very existence. “Just as the sun sets and the moon will surely rise, my life has been filled with the knowledge that I was never meant to be. While it is true that one day my life will end, my pain exists in the hearts of men. I was forced into this world and never understood the point of it all. I know just as the sun comes up, it will surely go down, and it all appears rather pointless.

“I know that no matter what I do, I will find a way to be happy, and that the quest is normally more fulfilling than the goal itself. But when the sun goes down, I’m still alone, with no real home, no real family, no real friends to call my own. As the moon rises, I generally find ways to make sense of a day that ended, with nothing more than me standing around with my dick in my hand. Now it’s true, I could go off and find a

nice girl, but I've known the pain of love. The pleasure of depression is that you tell yourself that you're better off alone than with the pain. The man that said, 'It's better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all,' was a fool.

“When I lose something, I tend to try to find it, no matter the cost, no matter the time. I can't sit idly by and do nothing, as I have lost my very will to live; I must go out and hunt it down. Just as the moon falls and the sun reappears in the morning, I know that I must find that which I have lost. Why? Because it haunts my dreams at night, and this is why I reside in a state of constant misery.”

The tears were mounting in the eyes of those who heard the pain in my voice, as I described the search for that which I had lost.

Lilly asked, “What was it that you lost?”

I looked her in the eyes and said, “Happiness. I can't really explain it, but I can't recall the last time I was genuinely happy, to the point that I question whether I had ever really been happy.”

Now I could see the heads start to shake, and Lilly gave me a hug and proceeded to attach herself to my arm.

Mark asked, “Why bother searching?”

I explained that, “The thrill of the hunt is what makes my life worthwhile, so I just keep on moving, like a cowboy in search of a perfect bottle and a nice trail.”

He explained why they drift on the river. It wasn't thrill-seeking, but a journey to find something more. I agreed that life just seems like flat soda most of the time, and even if I had never drunk a soda, I would still find a flat one to be worthless. That was just how I felt about life. Even though I was wandering around, I still hadn't even come close to what seemed like a good place to squat, and that just bothered me.

Lilly kept stroking my hair and beard, like David playing the harp before the Lord. I could tell she was just trying to get to know me, in the kind of way that one chimpanzee searches another for ticks.

It was around this point that Mark informed me that there was indeed room for one more on the raft, if I wanted to call it home for a while. I decided that while I've never been a fan of drifting, I could give it a try.

Why not? I had nothing better to do, and I asked if I could make one quick stop first to grab my last jug of white lightning I left back at my campsite.

Lilly ventured off the raft with me, as I attempted to retrace my steps to find my stuff. We got lost, and it was getting late, so I said, “It’s ok, I don’t need it that bad. Let’s just go.”

Lilly suggested that we stay and watch the stars. Who was I to argue?

Alas, I knew this would be another reason for my heart to ache, but I couldn’t bear the thought of hurting poor Lilly. I tried to tell her I was no good.

I asked her about life on the river, and from what I gathered, there was a lot of fishing, smoking, drinking, and just good old fun. Depending on the river, there was even some bartering going on. I myself was always partial to the barter system, because most of the time it made more sense than swapping around worthless pieces of paper. Life on the river sounded good, and Lilly was smoking hot, so I decided to go for the gold. The next morning, I boarded the raft with my boombox and the clothes on my back. (end excerpt)

Bumpi Takes Over

By Stephen Clements

“Give me yo’ money!” threatened the hood rat, as he flipped open a gleaming knife under the dim street light flickering on and off on South Parkway. The flashing of the light glistened off the moist, fake gold teeth of the young black man, as he moved within cutting distance of his victim.

The man he stared down was blacker still, with jet black skin that had been cured in the cruel sun lording over people who lived on the Equator. Under his thread-bare hoody, Bumpi felt his blood rush, and he felt it all the more when the thug’s two friends stepped out behind him from the shadowy driveway walls they had used for concealment.

Bumpi Obajawe knew suffering. He spent his first 22 years in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which one reliable news source described, charitably, as: “A hellscape of death and human misery.” Bumpi was the second youngest of seven kids, brought up by their fleeing mother. She had fled the river valley for the

eastern Congo, because Bumpi's father had been hacked to death with machetes on his little brother's first birthday. A dozen armed men from a neighboring tribe visited Bumpi's village when they learned of the birthday celebration, demanding the young boy's birthday presents as ransom for sparing his family's lives. They wouldn't believe Bumpi's dad when he said that there weren't any, so they hacked him limb from limb, and then they raped his mother and sisters, none older than 14.

Two of Bumpi's sisters disappeared after the family had fled east, looking for UN peacekeepers in the hopes of being safe with them. He thinks he found his sisters' skulls and shattered bones, covered with rotten flesh, when he was playing in a sewage ditch by himself one day. Three of his brothers were killed at random, as they hid behind the jungle trees and were sprayed down with bullets by two opposing rebel groups. The peacekeepers weren't doing a very good job. The Ulungi, the taller rebel faction, ate one of Bumpi's playmates alive, believing that pygmies had magical powers you could gain by eating them.

Bumpi himself spent most of his life near starvation, but other than almost dying in a rogue crocodile attack where some missionary doctors saved him from certain death, he was a lucky guy. When he got of age, he paid what little money he, his mother, and his younger brother could scrape together and prayed to whatever cruel gods existed for him to enter the US State Department's Visa Lottery program. Apparently, the gods were still full from the neighboring village having been burned to the ground and let him win.

The immigration officials decided that Bumpi should be settled in Memphis, after considering the ethnic diversity of the area (it was mostly black and poor), and the fact that the Iraqis they settled there from their war-torn country were doing well. They showed him pictures of this lush, green place with actual roads and houses that weren't all burned-out. It looked like a place Bumpi would like. At any rate, it wasn't the Congo, so off he went. He knew some halting English, which was still more than a lot of Memphians, but he wasn't prepared for the Promised Land he had been given. He hadn't even heard of Elvis.

But Bumpi knew what to do with some punk-bitches who wanted to take something that wasn't theirs. You grab the tree branch lying in the pile of refuse on the busted-up sidewalk, and you beat the shit out of them. The weak knick the first bitch gave him didn't even make Bumpi slow down the primordial ass-beating he laid down on the two he caught.

He didn't walk around armed: Bumpi didn't want to hurt anybody. But he knew if you start off with a stiff blow to the stomach and follow through with your whole body, that's getting off on the right foot. Not only is it a big target, but you knock all the wind out of your opponent, which usually makes them drop what they're holding and try to back up as fast as they can, in their desperate attempt to breathe.

When a wounded person is trying to back up on uneven ground, that's a great time to smash something really hard into their knee, because they are guaranteed to go down. Then you can turn around and smack the other guy in the face with the splintered, dry wood: it might not be a sure-fire killing blow, but nobody likes to have their face hit with sharp splinters, let alone get some in their eyes.

They try to back up, and at least one hand is going to try and protect their face. That's when you grab an elbow and pull it in an off direction, so they lose their footing and trip. While the other guy is scrambling away and happy to breathe again, you grab this one by the collar (baggy clothes are great for getting your ass beat) and drive his head into the concrete driveway wall. Better do it again, just to make sure it took.

The third guy is long gone at this point. He might have even dropped his weapon, as if that proves he's harmless or not a bad guy if the cops show up. Shocking as this revelation might be, people that try to rob other people are generally cowards. Surprising, I know.

Sure enough, the first guy had dropped his knife. Bumpi would pick it up later, but for now he just needed the tree branch to fly end over end and very fast into the back of the head of the first guy who thought he was safe, since he was swimming faster from the shark than his buddy. Not fast enough.

So, all told, the pay-off the three hood rats got from demanding Bumpi's money was: one had shit himself and run, one was blacked out with a concussion

in the driveway, and the instigator had just broke his tooth on the crumbling sidewalk. Their night was about to get worse.

“IS THIS WHAT YOU WANT?” Bumpi yelled in his throaty voice straight into the bleeding face of the first fool to step up to the plate, as he lifted him inches off the ground by his collar.

“Naw, man. I wuz jus’ axin’ for direc-“

PUNCH.

“AWW, SHIT,” came the muffled response to Bumpi’s hard, bony fist.

“DO YOU THINK I AM THE STUPID? You threaten to cut me for money, and you think I am the bitch?” Bumpi screamed at his miserable prey. The street light flickered, as the leaf-heavy trees rustled in the breeze.

“Let me go, man,” begged the bloody thug.

Bumpi shoved him back onto the concrete, watching his victim writhe from the protruding sidewalk biting into his back. Looking him up and down, Bumpi let his visceral rage lead his foot into the thug’s head a few times, before Bumpi decided it was time to fix this.

Picking up the knife that was formerly pointed at him, he pulled the thug up, planting the blade at his throat.

“Now we go. You go to the police now. You will pay for what you do, evil man,” he said, as he forced the crying thug towards the nearest house. The lights were on two doors down, and as they climbed the porch stoop, Bumpi threw him to the floor, keeping the knife pointed at him.

Bumpi knocked on the door, and the innards of the house went still. He knocked again.

“Who is it?” came the muffled Memphis drawl, hesitantly from inside.

“I need the police.”

“They ain’t hur.”

“No, I need to call the police. I have two criminals out here to give to them.”

The door opened up, and a tall, chunky black woman in dirty sweats looked at Bumpi and his charge. “Oh, Hell, naw! You need to take this someplace else, I don’t need no cops comin’ hur,” she finished, an edge of indignation in her voice.

“Miss, this man and his friend tried to rob me. I need help to send them to the police.” Bumpi was a little confused at having to explain this.

“Listen, young buck, whatever problem you got, you needs to be taking it somewhere else. I got enough troubles, so get on.” She slammed the door.

Bumpi stared incredulously at the door, his attention only shifting when he heard chuckling from the floor of the porch. Looking down, he saw the grinning face of the thug at his feet.

“Du’, po-po don’t roll in this neighborhood! You best let my ass go.”

PUNCH.

Bumpi was furious. He could see that the thug was right, and how many houses did he want to drag a bloodied robber to, hoping somebody would call the cops? Things were supposed to be different in America. People were supposed to follow laws, and the police were supposed to do more than take bribes to turn a blind eye to crimes.

“Y’all need to get off my porch,” came a muffled holler from inside the dilapidated, white house.

Okay, Bumpi could take care of this. He had heard of 201 Poplar, the prison. He would drag him to the law, if the law would not come here.

At knife point, Bumpi forced the criminal to begin walking. He left the other one with his head in the wall. Two miles into their rather strained walk, Bumpi's heart soared when he saw a police car driving down the street towards them. He waved furiously with his free hand and was pleased to see the blue lights on the top of the car start rolling.

The thug made one last attempt to escape when he turned to run, but Bumpi was wise to his tricks. A swift stomp on the back of his calf was all it took to put an end to that. Bumpi knew how to smell stupidity.

The smell got stronger as the car pulled up. The windows rolled down, revealing two sleepy, overweight officers, one high-yellow and one mocha colored, glancing out the window. The thought of getting out of the car was clearly off the table.

“What's going on here?” asked the speckled, high-yellow driver through his thick mustache. In the

passenger seat, his droopy-jawed, mocha companion was only too happy to leave his attention out of this.

“Officer,” Bumpi began, “this man and two of his friends attacked me with a knife to try to rob me. I have brought this one to you, and the other is lying on the street a short distance away. Arrest this one, and I will take you to the other.”

The driver stared blankly at the two young men standing in the street next to his car. The wrinkles around his glassy-eyes didn’t even budge when he asked, “What for?”

“These men tried to rob me, and they will do it again!” Bumpi was getting fed up with having to explain to people why it was a good idea for violent criminals to be dealt with by the law. Especially, he saw, to officers of the law.

“Listen, I didn’t see anything happen, and now I just see you holding a knife to a chewed-up dude. You should have called the police when it happened. I got nothing on this guy, but I could find something on you for holding a knife to him,” the driver finished, his power window beginning to whirr back upwards.

Bumpi charged the car, pushing his palms down on the tinted window before it closed. “YOU ARE MEN OF THE LAW! WHY DO YOU NOT DO YOUR JOB?!”

The window stopped momentarily.

The officer in the passenger seat had a twinkle in his eye that might have meant he was going to get involved. It passed. He sipped what was in his coffee cup instead.

The driver looked up at Bumpi’s face, not looking with enough intent to actually look him in the eyes. “Get your hands off the car, boy. And get off the crack.”

Bumpi’s long face twisted in incredulity and then surprise as the car drove away, the window finishing its journey by the end of the block. He stared after it, mouth agape in disbelief.

Then he heard the snickering again.

Then he heard the blood-curdling shriek that came with an angrily hurled knife finding its mark.

(end excerpt)

The Authors of Memphis Dirty



Stephen Clements is the publisher at LCG, author of To Save A Life, and editor of Call Me Tennessee. In his free time, he likes to drink and pet kittens.



Jeff Klitzner was the author of his epic autobiography Call Me Tennessee, but he won't be writing the sequel. He really liked cheap beer and weed.

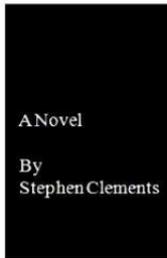
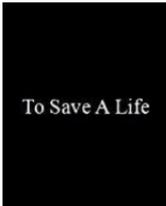


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