

Gabriel's Wing

FREE PREVIEW

Chapter 1

A hotel room on the outskirts of Somerville, New Jersey. Early April 1969.

Dreams die without prejudice. They leave behind the most beautiful, the most determined, and the most resilient. Becky Sue had dreams. That he knew for certain. He didn't care how they died. Not now when everything she loved and suffered had to end. Circumstances left her options wasted and her possibilities squandered. Nobody protected her.

His punch landed squarely on her jaw.

She staggered. Stared directly into his eyes. Her face turned the color of white silk, but she didn't scream.

How beautiful.

Quickly, he pushed her nude body back, one step, then two, until she landed spread eagle across the bed. Her feet dangled inches from the floor.

He straddled her. Clenched his strong hands around her throat.

She convulsed. The life faded from her dark brown eyes. Her face and lips turned blue. Poisonous fluid rattled in her lungs. Her tormented flesh sent a euphoric rush throughout his naked body.

Finally, her limbs went flaccid. The last breath came out in a torrent of stale, pungent odor. Her dead eyes remained incredulous. He gave them one quick look before ignoring them. Gently, he pulled her to the floor.

She sat on the carpet leaning against the side of the bed away from the door and facing the room's only window. Even in death, she commanded tremendous sexuality. Her dark hair cascaded down across her shoulders and her firm legs parted in a tantalizing tease. He propped her up so she wouldn't fall, fixed her hair, and tilted her head just the way he wanted.

She never lost control, suffered no shameful accidents, nothing spoiled the last moments of her life. Death came without humiliation, without screaming, or begging. It happened very quickly and with dignity.

"Forgive me," he said, "but it wasn't my fault."

He straightened the blankets on the bed, turned the light on in the small bathroom and closed the door. He turned off the lamp on the night table. The only light in the room was what squeezed out the large gap at the base of the bathroom door. Confident and secure no one could see in the window, he opened the heavy drapes and watched the parking lot two stories below. With the first part done the only thing left to do was wait for Becky Sue's friend, Virginia.

Becky Sue and Virginia grew up as friends. According to rumor, Virginia had talked Becky Sue into leaving their unremarkable homes in New Orleans to chase their dreams in New York City.

He heard it all before. The dreams were just as unremarkable as the homes they left behind. Like so many others, they wanted to sing in some Greenwich Village coffee house, maybe get a part in an Off Broadway play, or even find work as an extra in one of the many movies shot on the streets of Manhattan. Mostly, though, the attraction had little to do with wealth or success. They were flower children running away from the old morality to the promise of self-expression and awareness.

Yes, he did know how dreams died. At first it was survival, soon it became existence, then it turned into revulsion with no way out. Virginia and Becky Sue understood the odds, but the odds be damned. He imagined their resolution to be one more night and one more time selling their bodies for bus fare, food, and some decent clothes. They'd be gone without a word. Neither of them would ever talk about it nor think about it again. They'd be free from slavery.

What a joke, just another tragedy.

Tragedy or not, they had to go. He made arrangements, through the right channels, to get both of them the same night. Working together was not uncommon. Virginia and Becky Sue worked together all the time. They made more money as a team and God knows working as a team meant protection. Getting them together was the easy part. The hard part was getting them to show up at different times. He needed help. He got help. Someone else betrayed them. It didn't matter how and he didn't care. The only thing that concerned him right now was when to expect Virginia. The note told him Becky Sue would be there by eight. Virginia would show up an hour later. He had plenty of time.

So he waited by the window and watched the rain. The wall-mounted heater blew warm air against his naked body. Windswept droplets sprayed against the windowpane sending web-like shadows across the room. Contrasting sensations of heat, anxiety, cold and expectation aroused him, pleasantly.

A familiar car pulled into the lot. He instinctively stepped back into the drapes.

Virginia was older, tougher, more street-wise than Becky Sue, but she too had an incomparable beauty. As part of the elite, these girls were the best moneymakers in the stable. He didn't want to destroy them. In fact, he considered it shameful, but he also knew there would be hell to pay if he permitted them to leave. He knew that whatever they told each other now, eventually they'd have no choice but to tell their tale. No, they had to be eliminated and their destruction would send the proper message to those who remained.

Forget about escape.

Virginia got out of a beat-up old Chevy, threw a yellow raincoat over her shoulders, and ran to the hotel's back entrance. She got the key and the room number that afternoon as part of the final preparations. The name of her client she didn't get. Normally, she'd never take this risk. None of them would. Who convinced her she'd be safe? Trust was rare. Betrayal was unforgivable. He'd deal with that later.

He pulled the curtains together, ran to the bathroom, turned on the shower, closed the bathroom door and ran back to the window. When he heard Virginia at the door he pulled the curtains over the window, hid in the shadows by the curtains, and held his breath.

"Good God, it's darker than hell in here," Virginia said. She slammed the door behind her. The dim light from the bathroom swirled around her feet like a foggy mist. She flipped the switch by the door. The small lamp added just enough light.

She sniffed, "It stinks in here." In the purple gloom, she took off her raincoat and dropped it to the floor.

"Where's Becky Sue?" She put her ear to the bathroom door and listened. "Is she taking a shower?" She pounded on the door. "Get done in there."

"You, hiding behind the curtains. Yeah, you, I see you. What're you doing over there?" She pulled off her shoes with her toes and unbuttoned her blouse. "I'm getting undressed."

She draped her blouse over the back of the desk chair, unsnapped the button at the waist of her tight bell-bottoms, wiggled them over her hips, and sat on the bed with her back to him.

"What?" she said, her voice bemused. "You're not talking? You think that's mysterious?"

He came out of the shadows. Stood behind her waiting for the right moment.

Virginia pulled her pants off, folded them at the creases. Now, dressed only in a pair of cotton panties, she stood and laid her bell-bottoms over her blouse.

He got closer.

Virginia turned around.

Like he did with Becky Sue, he saw the recognition in her eyes, then the shock. She audibly sucked in a deep breath. With her arms extended in front of her, she backed away, stumbled over the chair, fumbled in the dim light, her feet tangled in confusion.

"You?"

He raised a fist. Virginia blocked the punch. Twisted away from him. She stood with her back to the bed.

"Mistake," he said. "You should've run out the door, but I guess even a whore won't deliberately go out in just her skivvies."

"What do you want? Where's Becky Sue?"

He picked up a set of keys off the vanity and flung them into her face. The impact knocked her back. She landed on the bed with him on top of her. She swung and connected a punch.

The impact caused him to curse. The pain erupted in an explosion of white stars. Although his head throbbed, he didn't let go. The sensation of naked flesh on naked flesh gave him unnatural strength. After delivering one blow to Virginia's face, he followed up with another. He forced his strong hands around her throat.

"Fuck! Damn you. Let go," Virginia said, her voice gone, everything came out in a tight whisper. "I'll kill you. I'll send you straight to hell."

Using only fingertips, he crushed her larynx and blocked out the screams. Pressing harder, squeezing the air passage shut. Her whole body bent, contorted into a corkscrew.

"No, you won't," he said, now relaxed. "Tonight you'll die."

Virginia's face turned blue. A small stream of drool ran from her mouth and rolled across his hand. He increased the pressure. When she lay still he let go and a long reeking gasp of air came up from her lungs.

She was dead.

He leaned over and kissed her lips. "Good-bye. I should've loved you."

With artistic precision, he rested her head on the pillow, straightened her legs, and positioned her arms neatly at her side. Satisfied, he went into the bathroom and stepped under the shower. The water was hot, the shampoo smelled like flowers, and the soap reminded him of mountain air bathed in summer rain. While getting dressed he decided to tip the maid five dollars. Then he wiped his prints off the room key and placed it along with a five-dollar bill in one of the ashtrays. With all the lights on and the drapes drawn tight, he wiped down the entire room with a clean towel. He covered one hand with a handkerchief, lifted his jacket from the coat rack with the other, opened the door, and quietly left the hotel.

The rain stopped and left the night warm, but starless. The dark made him anxious. A quick prayer and the car started without a problem. Relieved, he turned onto the four-lane and headed toward town.

The band should still be playing at the River House. Or maybe the pub next to the old park would be better. No, go to the River House first, if nothing's happening, then go to the other place.

What a night. Both girls went out proudly. They pleased him. Touching each of the prostitute's naked flesh left him with an insatiable appetite.

Cars packed the nightclub's parking lot. The place had drawn a good crowd. Phillip Thoreau Hodges made the sign of the cross and prayed for continued good fortune.

Get your copy of Gabriel's Wing today!

[Amazon](#)
[Barnes & Noble](#)
[Kobo](#)