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THE TOP COP'S



EXCLUSIVE

For years, Bernard Kerik was haunted by a secret — the unsolved murder of his mother. Today — In The Post's first installment of an exclusive four-part excerpt from his new biography, "The Lost Son" — Police Commissioner Kerik reveals how he learned the truth about his hidden past, how he launched an investigation of the mystery-shrouded slaying — and how he came to terms, after more than 40 years, with the woman he dimly remembers.

"The Lost Son," by Bernard Kerik (Regan Books imprint of HarperCollins, $26.50) is available at booksellers nationwide.



A LIFE IN RUINS: Patricia Kerik, a prostitute with 10 aliases, was murdered in 1964. Her son believes Ohio cops had no desire to probe the death of a white woman who slept with black men.

Shocking truth behind murder of the mother I barely knew

When he was police commissioner at the turn of the 20th century, Theodore Roosevelt was famous for his "midnight rambles" — venturing out late at night to check on his officers and to feel the pulse of his city.

I find myself doing the same thing at least once or twice a week.

I drive through the worst neighborhoods in the city, the blocks where crime is up and where neighbors may be complaining.

On this night, I'm patrolling with three cops from my security detail — Hector Santiago, Bobby Picciano and Craig Taylor.

On this late spring night, we're driving east on 142nd near Amsterdam when I see two men running on the sidewalk. I've always had a knack for spotting such things, and my guys sometimes joke that I have X-ray vision.

Hector sees the guys I'm talking about. It looks like one guy is chasing the other. Perhaps a robbery.

They slow down as they approach a white van. Hector stops the car in the middle of the street in front of the two men, and we jump out, yelling, "Police! Don't move!"

"Commissioner!" Hector says. "Stay in the car."

But he knows I can't do that. I put one of the two men against the wall. The other one sees us and runs the other way, back toward the white van parked along the curb.

Behind the van, Craig and Bobby are getting out of their car.

"Get out of the car!" I yell, but the second suspect has already started his van, and he bangs into the cars in front of him and behind him as he tries to pull out.

"Shut the car off!" Hector and I yell again. "Police!"

The driver keeps backing in and out, trying to clear space to get away.

But when he turns to his left, he sees the barrel of Bobby Picciano's 9mm handgun staring at him through the window.

"Shut the f- - - in' car off!"

At first, the guys seem friendly, then confused. When we ask whose van it is, they point at each other.

We run the license plate on the van, and the plate turns out to have been stolen off a different vehicle, recently taken at gunpoint in a carjacking in Virginia. The guys are no longer friendly.

Then the description of the carjacker comes across and we start to get some information on the two skels we've pulled over, Lloyd Triplett and Lydell Williams.

It turns out that Triplett is a convicted murderer and armed robber who recently violated his parole. He fits perfectly the description of the shotgun-wielding man who stole this van.

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Late one afternoon, the private telephone line in my office rings. It is Lenny Lemer, a sergeant assigned to the Intelligence Division and a longtime friend.

"I got some information on that thing you wanted."

I grip the phone. "What've you got?"

"Looks like it's her," he says. "Maybe we shouldn't talk about it over the phone. Maybe I should come down there."

"It's OK. We're on a hard line. Just tell me." I can hear papers shuffling in the background. "She had a pretty substantial criminal record," he says and hesitates.

There is something he doesn't want to tell me. "It's all right, just read it."

He sighs. "She has 10 aliases: Joann Evaline Bailey. Patricia Joanne Curtis. Joann Evaline. Patricia Joann Fletcher. Patricia J. Bailey . . ."

He continues and as he finishes the 10th, he says, "And there are three arrests," and he hesitates once more.

Again, I've got to push him to continue.

"Three arrests," he says, "two for prostitution and one for escape . . . I really need to come down there for the rest."

"OK, hurry up and get down here."

After about 10 minutes, there is a slight knock at the door and Lenny walks into the office. I can tell by the look on his face that it isn't good.

"I have the coroner's report," he says.

"Is it worse than I thought?"

Lenny shifts uncomfortably in his chair. "Yes." Then he reads the summary:

This is the case of a female . . . who apparently received multiple traumatic injuries, resulting in multiple bruises of the left eye, left buttocks, thighs and lower legs. The bruise to the eye resulted in a cerebral hemorrhage . . . resulting in her death.

"Anyone arrested?"

"No," he says. "That's the weird part. I don't even see any sign of a homicide investigation. There's definitely something wrong here."

"Why wasn't there an investigation?" I ask. Lenny, not knowing what to say, just sits there, staring at me.

I hear stories like this 10 times a day, 365 days a year. I hear about so many victims like this woman, it becomes hard to keep them straight.

But this one I've got to investigate myself. And I won't rest until I find out why this woman was killed and who killed her.

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