

**MIAMI '79: DOM PERIGNON, COKE AND ROLLS ROYCES**

A CELEBRATION OF UNDERGROUND MUSIC, CLUBBING AND CLOTHES

# the ISSUE 004 move

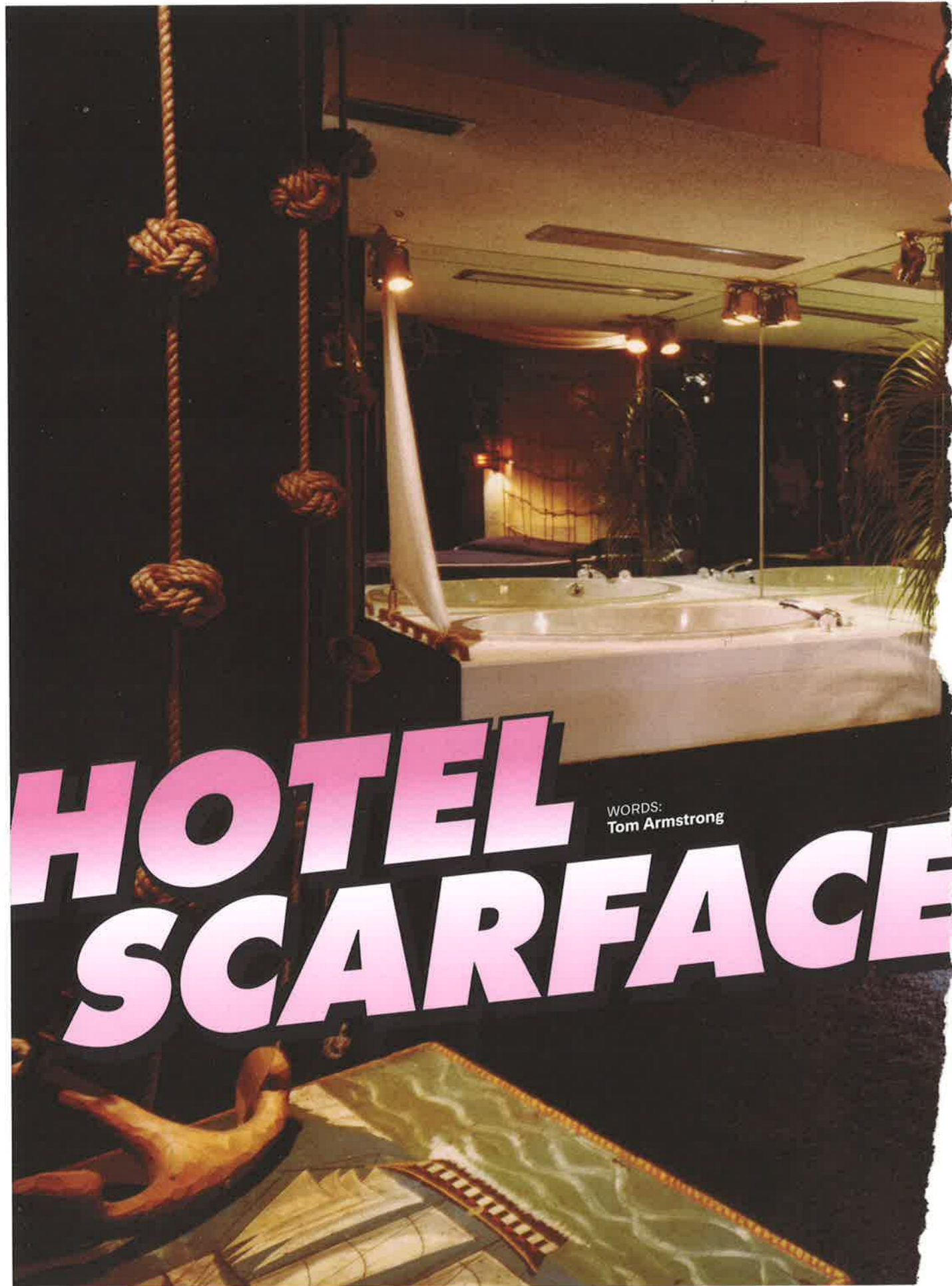
**THE TRUE  
STORY OF THE  
NIGHTCLUB  
AT THE HEART  
OF MIAMI'S  
BRUTAL  
COCAINE BOOM**

# HOTEL SCARFACE

**WHERE HARE KRISHNAS PARTIED WITH  
CUBAN DRUG LORDS AND FBI AGENTS**

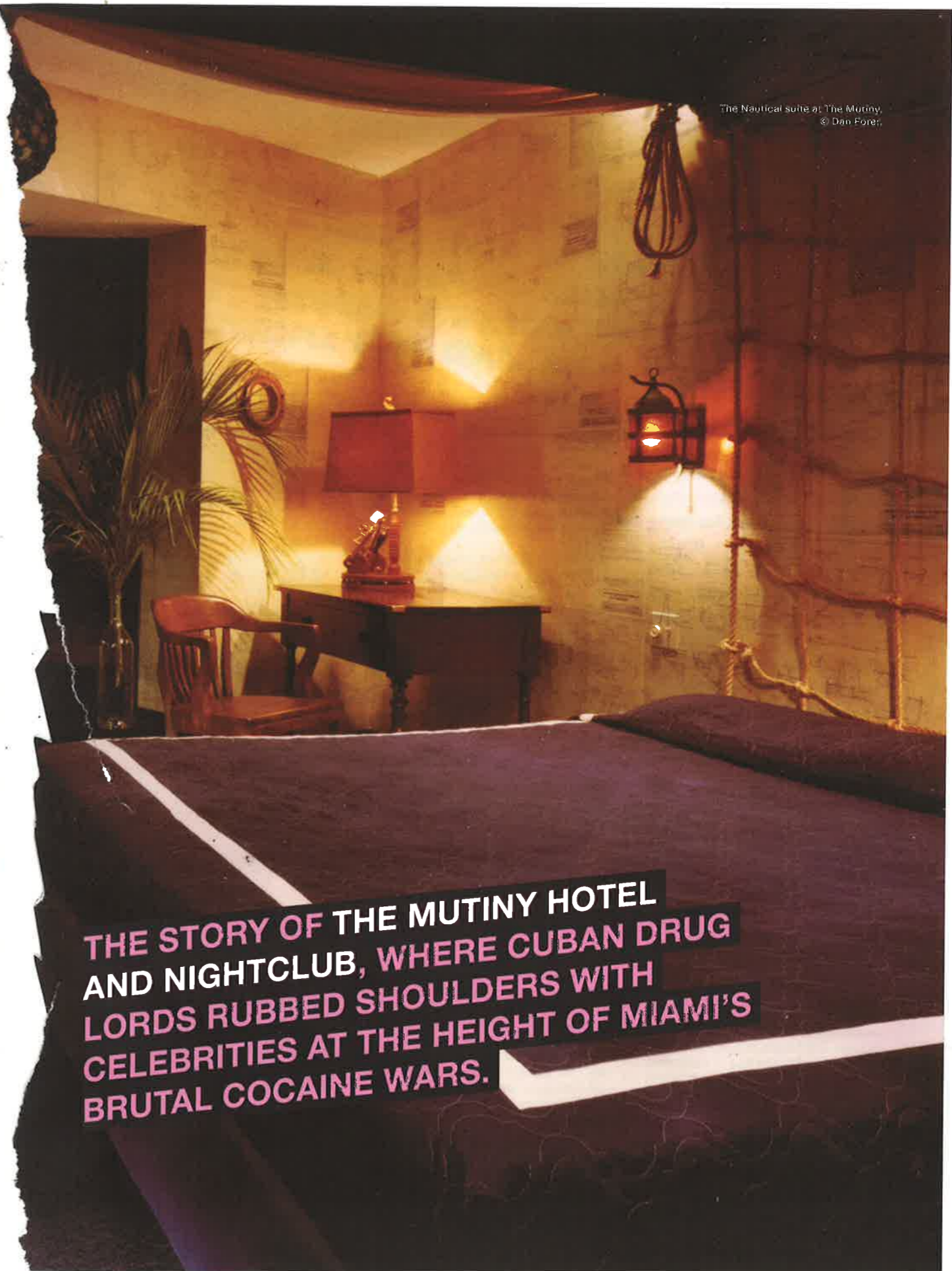
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**RECORD HUNTING IN SUDAN, WEED FACTS,  
ASHLEY BEEDLE, STEAK AND ALE PIES**



# HOTEL SCARFACE

WORDS: Tom Armstrong



The Nautical suite at The Mutiny.  
© Dan Foret

THE STORY OF THE MUTINY HOTEL AND NIGHTCLUB, WHERE CUBAN DRUG LORDS RUBBED SHOULDERS WITH CELEBRITIES AT THE HEIGHT OF MIAMI'S BRUTAL COCAINE WARS.

**MIAMI** CARRIES A HISTORY OF HEDONISM TO RIVAL ANY OTHER WORLD CITY. THE VERY WORD SEEMS TO GLOW OUT OF THE PAGE IN PINK NEON, CONJURING IMAGES OF PASTEL SUNSHINE DAYS AND BALMY COCAINE NIGHTS, SPEEDBOATS, CRIME, AND FAST LIVING.

The kind of scenes immortalised on screen by Scarface and Miami Vice were everyday life for many Cuban immigrants during the '70s and '80s, who capitalised on America's burgeoning taste for cocaine and quickly made more money than could have been dreamed of under Castro's reign. During those years the previously sleepy beach town of Miami exploded in a hurricane of euphoric highs and murderous lows, and The Mutiny hotel and nightclub on Coconut Grove was at the heart of it all.

Drug traffickers, Hollywood celebrities and CIA agents rubbed shoulders in The Mutiny's lavish, nautically themed surroundings, with a bevy of Mutiny girls, the in-house troop of waitresses, on hand to attend to their every need. Journalist and Miami native Roben Farzad spent the last 20 years researching The Mutiny and its unique role in his city's cocaine boom and has written a book, Hotel Scarface, which is headed for screens after film and TV rights were picked up last year. We had a chat with Farzad about the project, and got an extract from his book detailing the lavish carry ons of two famed Cuban dealers in Willie Falcon and Sal Maguta, circa 1979.

*The Move: What made you choose The*

*Mutiny as the focal point for the story?*

Roben: Without giving away a part of my book, it found me. A quarter-century ago as I was about to leave for college up north. When I realised this all went down at one address, I had to have the story.

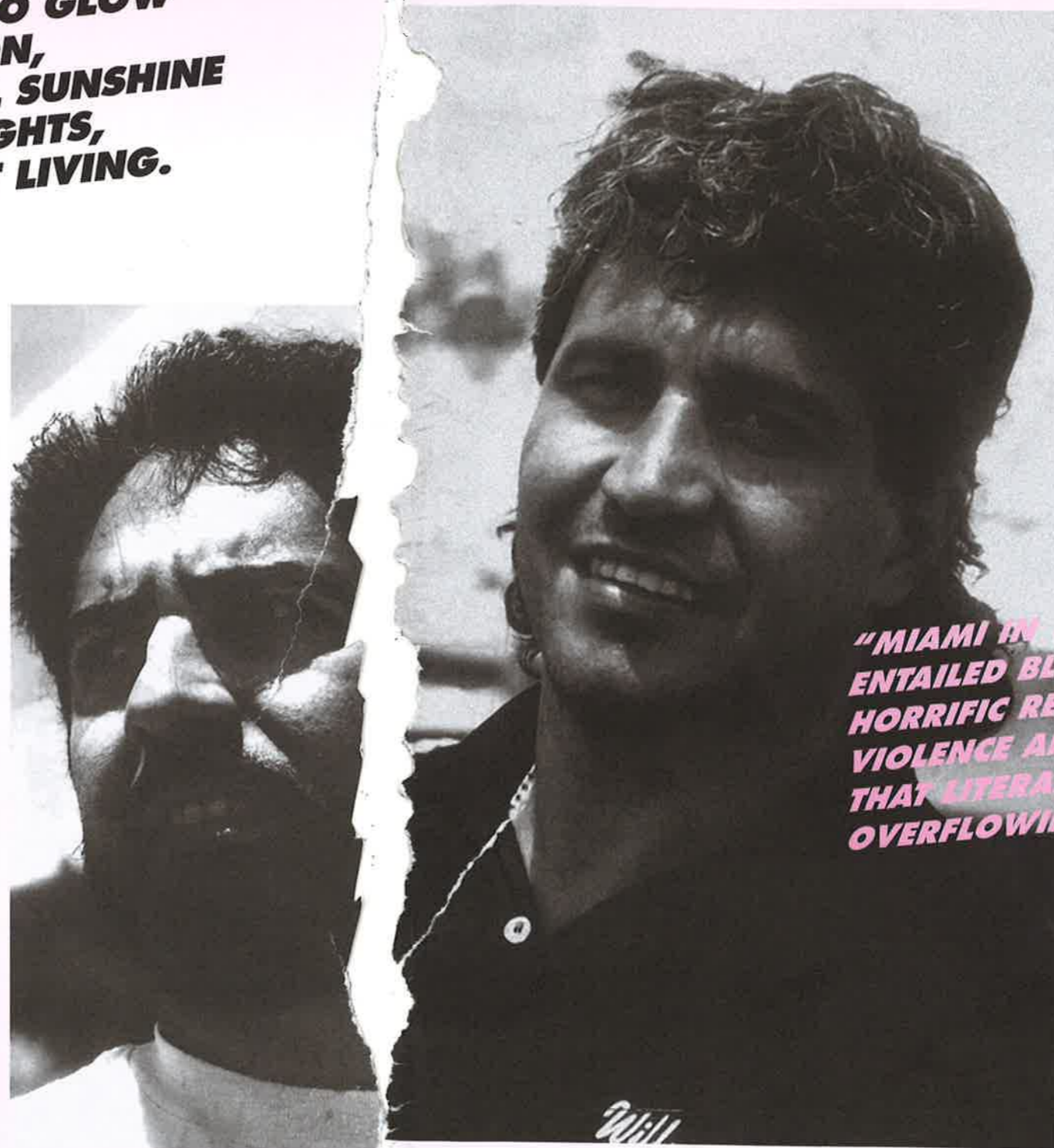
*How difficult was it to find the right people to tell the story, and then get them to talk?*

The hardest part of the entire project. Aside from maybe ego, what's the incentive for ex and current cons to talk to me? Forget about the statute of limitations for most crimes; much of this era resulted in witness executions and intimidation, why risk that kind of blowback decades later? In time, though, I learned how to deal with the reflexive "Get lost!" responses. I always kept the door open, always offered to be discrete. In one example, a critical source handed me a handwritten suicide note from the late '80s.

*How did the Cuban traffickers react when Scarface was released? Did it bring unwanted heat, or was it a source of pride?*

The release was rather 'meh' both in South Florida and across the country. It was the filming in 1982 and early 1983 that the Cuban exile community roundly detested. Miami in 1980 and 1981 entailed bloody race riots, horrific refugee-on-refugee violence and a murder rate that literally had the morgue overflowing with Juan Doe's. Cuban-Americans, especially the older money, those who had been in Miami for decades, were nauseous at the thought that Hollywood was coming to Miami to tell the story of a murderous Mariel refugee. Miami did most everything it could to intimidate the production out of town. Ultimately, it was mostly shot in Southern California. Curiously, the most violent scenes were shot in South Beach; recall the chainsaw and Tony Montana killing a guy right on Ocean Drive. I think that was the production flipping

Below: Sal Magluta & Willie Falcon. © T. Rafael Cimino



**"MIAMI IN 1980 AND 1981 ENTAILED BLOODY RACE RIOTS, HORRIFIC REFUGEE-ON-REFUGEE VIOLENCE AND A MURDER RATE THAT LITERALLY HAD THE MORGUE OVERFLOWING WITH JUAN DOE'S"**

a giant "F you" to the town that exiled it.

*The setting for the club shootout scene from Scarface is said to be based on The Mutiny. How accurate was that - was it a violent place?*

For much of its decade heyday, the Mutiny was decidedly chill and nonviolent. 1980 and 1981 brought in killers and hitmen. One waitress was savagely murdered by a deranged cocaine cowboy. Shots did go off in the club and the owner decided to sell it at the end of 1983. Once more upscale places went up nearby, the place glide-pathed to insolvency.

*The book is full of stories of such wealth and extravagance that it's difficult for an average citizen to even comprehend. Do you have a favourite example?*

The room service boy who recalled the heated jockeying among staff (housecleaners, etc) to turn around the rooms of the biggest dopers: you'd find briquettes of cocaine, joints, even flight attendants' bags stuffed with cash. At other times, his job description was like a Penthouse Forum letter, and if he needed any more excitement, businessmen would

flick him a wad of hundreds to grab them some decent weed and a box of munchies: "You decide, OK. Get me what the locals like. Keep the change." I wouldn't mind getting reincarnated as a staffer at the Mutiny circa 1979. At least for a weekend.

*Was there an incident that particularly shocked you, even by those standards?*

The big escort service had a 24-hour dispatch yacht in the marina facing the hotel. It had a cash counting machine on board. Fantasies on demand for Mutiny guests. One small-time dealer recalled ordering several prostitutes for a party. The dopers literally lined them up against a wall in their suite

# "YOU'D FIND BRIQUETTES OF COCAINE, JOINTS, EVEN FLIGHT ATTENDANTS' BAGS STUFFED WITH CASH."

and interviewed them. I asked if he thought this was unnecessarily exploitative, and he answered that these women wanted to party at the Mutiny anyway, they wanted blow, they wanted cash, and they were working for this escort service to codify the arrangement. AIDS hit Miami hard in the mid 1980s.

*How do the people you spoke to feel about that period in time, looking back?*

Invariably split between "Could you believe I lived that?" and "Thank God I'm alive."

*Have you found that growing up in Miami during that time has influenced you as a person?*

I am so nostalgic for the Miami of my childhood. The Miami Dolphins were hot. The whole world stopped to watch Miami Vice every Friday night. Your school principal would warn of pot or cocaine contraband floating in the water. To grow up into that...

*What's the most important thing you've learnt from writing the book?*

That I could pull off this book. The project was so full of self-doubt, dry spells followed by huge breakthroughs, then the agony of writing, editing and lawyering-down a 320 page book. I'm so grateful to the people who trusted me and allowed me into their lives. Very excited to bring it all to TV life. ■



Left: Mutiny girl Cindy Proletti. Courtesy of Cindy Proletti.

Bottom left: The famous gold-plated matchboxes and key chain. Courtesy of Rakontur.

Below: Murder victim in trunk, Miami, 1981. Courtesy of Tim Chapman.

Right: The Fourth Dimension suite at The Mutiny. © Dan Forer.



The Nautical suite at The Mutiny. © Dan Forer.

**THE STORY OF THE MUTINY HOTEL AND NIGHTCLUB, WHERE CUBAN DRUG LORDS RUBBED SHOULDERS WITH CELEBRITIES AT THE HEIGHT OF MIAMI'S BRUTAL COCAINE WARS.**

# AN EXCERPT FROM HOTEL SCARFACE

## CHAPTER TWELVE MUCHACHOS CORP.

IT WAS MAY 1979: Willie Falcon and Sal Magluta were now the biggest cocaine dealers in the biggest cocaine town in the world, having just inherited Jorge Valdes's direct supply line to Medellín. Not that this change of control had to be codified anywhere or reported to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Succession planning in the growing enterprise necessarily boiled down to this: by now, Falcon and Magluta knew enough about the workings of Valdes's budding cocaine empire to keep the cash flooding in while he was off-line. Who knew how long their benefactor would be tied up in the courts or jail after his Panama imbroglio?

But this much was for sure: there was just too much product to move, too much supply and demand, too much money to bank, to just put it all on hold.

"Willie and Sal were local golden boys," recalled state drug agent Bill Riley. "They had a peerless reputation: they moved product; they moved it safely; they never stole, no rip-offs."

Plus, he says, they did it with charisma: "All the women were all over Willie. Sal was the businessman, the brains. Everyone wanted to smuggle for them, party with them when they rented out a whole floor at the Mutiny—the Dom, the girls, the coke binges."

"By 1980," concurred smuggler Juan Cid, "Willie and Sal were rock stars at the Mutiny. They were not feared. They were loved. There was brotherhood, fraternity."

It helped that they were munificent.

Gary James, a Mutiny valet, was tipped as much as three hundred dollars a pop by the Muchachos to park their Ferraris and Rolls out front. "Willie," he recalled, "was sharp and articulate. He carried himself as a businessman. Smiles. Handshakes."

Cindy Proietti, a blond fashion model and hostess at the Mutiny's Upper Deck, first learned of Willie and Sal in 1980. They liked to sit by her friend, the DJ Humberto Fleites, who would get big tips to play Willie's favorite song, disco chart-topper "Makin' It":

*Goodbye, poverty.*

*The top of the ladder is waiting for me; I'm makin' it.*

Proietti recalled the first time she walked up to the Boys' table to take a drink order. "One guy at their table stuck a spoon to my nose," she said, "like that was my tip. Then they tipped me a one dollar bill folded around cocaine. I didn't know what it was or what to do with it."

"Baby, please breeeng me a ron and Coke, please" was Willie's standard drink order. Falcon had a speedboat named *Rum & Coke*.

Singer Julio Iglesias, who also loved to hit on Proietti at the Mutiny, had a song called "Ron y Coca-Cola." But only Falcon would hand her a hundred-dollar bill for that four-dollar cocktail.

The boys called Cindy "Proietti the Prude" after she admitted to being freaked out the one and only time she'd smoked pot. They kept nudging her and fellow waitress Kim to try the white stuff, which they called *perico*—as in "parrot" (because it makes you yap all day).

One evening at the Mutiny, Proietti finally gave in and tried a bump. She remembers a freeze and a flash. Then an all-enveloping euphoria.

"I loved it," she said. Falcon looked giddy and aroused as the model opened her eyes.

She and Kim were now inducted into the boys' "never-ending party" at the Mutiny: night after night of unlimited Dom, fine wines, hard coffees—prepared tableside by two fire-juggling baristas (guest Jackie Onassis loved them)—anything on the menu, big bashes up in their rooms, lines, lines, lines of cocaine. Keys to sports cars. Trips to the Florida Keys for televised boat races.

Muchachos pilot Ralph "Cabeza" Linero remembered Willie's all-ight birthday party at the Mutiny. In addition to cordoning off the club's Upper Deck, his gang reserved an entire floor of suites. A drunken Falcon leaned over the balcony to invite up some Hare Krishnas selling flowers down on South Bayshore Drive. Wouldn't it be a blast for the Mutiny's biggest VIPs to wave these malodorous baldies past the big line outside? Upstairs, the boys egged on their robbed guests as they tried Dom Pérignon and stone crab claws for the very first time.

Even off-duty cops were at the bash, wowing girls by snorting lines off their badges. "Every smuggler, distributor and dealer worth a grain of salt was there," said Linero.

At sunrise, the only revelers left standing had to put several dozen empty bottles of Dom down along both sides of the entire length of the hallway so that the room service guy could tally their bill. The Muchachos tipped the kid lavishly—cash and coke—lauding him for hustling across Miami the whole night to mooch Dom from other clubs.

"We'd party upstairs, get into the Rolls, you'd take them home," said Proietti. For six or seven months, she was "Willie's girl."

Romance at the Mutiny entailed a protocol: Fridays were for mistresses. Saturdays were for wives. Never cross-contaminate by accosting a wife or even another girlfriend.

Proietti and Kim now worked cocaine into their shifts. "I'd tap Kim on the shoulder and ask, 'Check your petticoat, miss?' (That was code for: "Perico in the ladies' room?")

Humberto Fleites the DJ would mix cassette tapes for customers at fifteen dollars a pop to help pay his tuition at the University of Miami. After he spun his last track, somewhat past three in the morning on Fridays and Saturdays, the Boys would invite him to eat stone crab claws and to drink Dom and whatever else he wanted at their tables. "I was doing drugs at every one of their parties," he said.

He said he once witnessed the volatile Ray Corona put a gun to someone's head. The same banker invited Fleites over to his mansion to fix his stereo. Soon afterward at the Mutiny, Corona pulled the DJ aside and handed him a four-thousand-dollar "loan" to complete his architecture degree.

Everyone at the Mutiny loved Ray Corona's personal "loans": Mollie the hostess said she never made a single payment on a Trans Am that Corona had leased for her for two years. Another girl used "Corona Credit" for a boob job.

He could more than afford this largesse. Whatever his personal finance predilections, Corona's bank was processing and laundering ever larger amounts for the Boys.

*Hotel Scarface* by Roben Farzad is available now via Penguin Random House.

