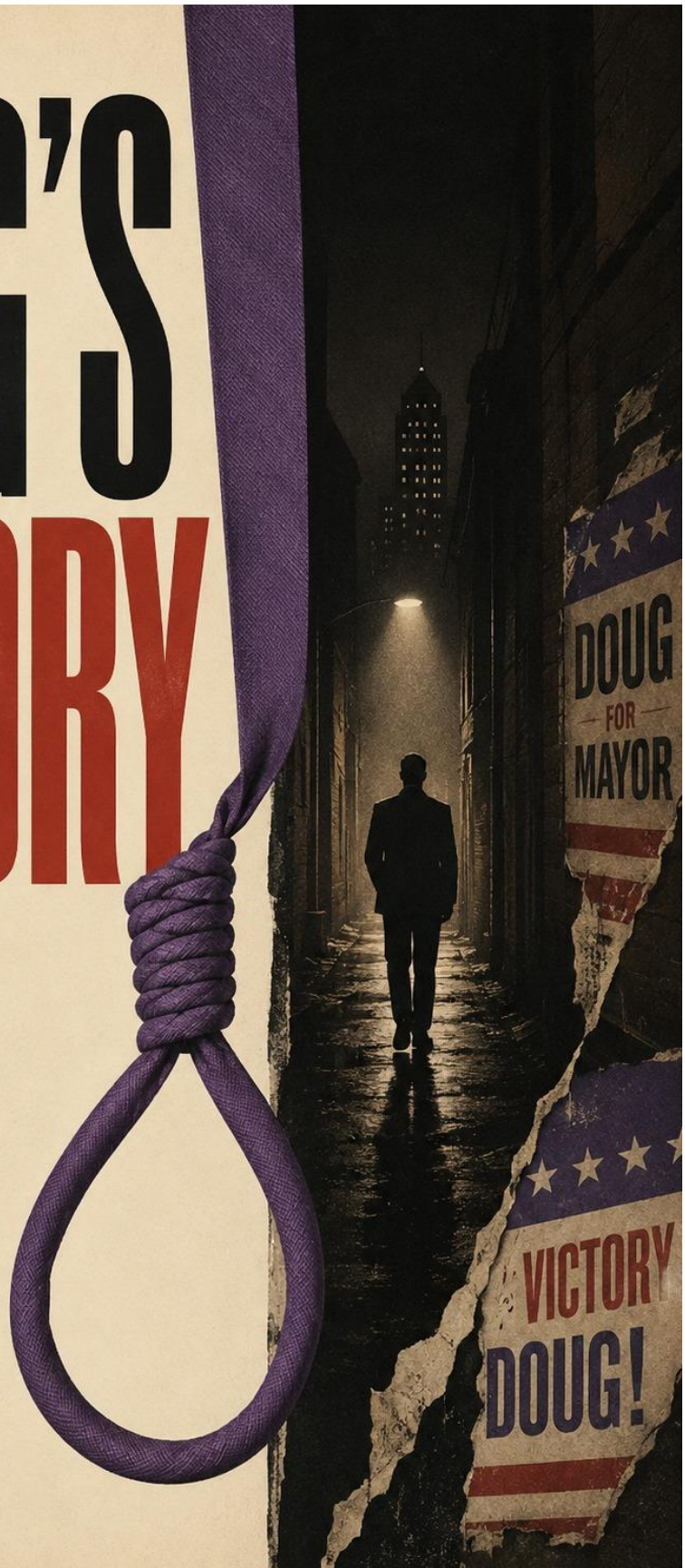


DOUG'S VICTORY

MICHAEL
PINKUS



“We won,” Doug Leonard screamed into the night. He trudged drunkenly down the street, a grin on his face. It was three in the morning; the victory party had long ended. He'd trounced his opponent by 27 points. The polls were way off, had him down five going into today.

Doug had not felt like dressing up that morning. Knowing you're going to lose makes you want to stay in bed. But his campaign manager insisted.

“Dress like you're gonna win,” Barbara Morris said, barging into Doug's room, using her spare key. She opened the drapes and rummaged through his closet. Throwing a white dress shirt, blue blazer, wool pants, and silk tie on the bed beside him.

Doug was peeking through his fingers. Looking at her in her short black skirt and white blouse, not fully buttoned to the neck. A breast partially exposed.

“I need a sympathy fuck,” Doug bemoaned.

“Maybe tonight, after you lose.”

“I need cheering up, now.”

“No,” she snapped. “We'll circle back to that later. You're late.”

“For my funeral,” Doug said, sitting up and throwing his legs over the side of the bed. He hated waking up in a hotel on bad days. He wished he were in his own bed.

“You are going to give a talk before the strike vote ...”

That was really the last detail Doug remembered. He remembered going to the podium with his prepared remarks. Pulling them from his inner jacket. Looking down at them, then pushing the cards off the lectern. He talked off-the-cuff for 20 minutes. When he finished, the crowd was silent; then roiled themselves into a cheering frenzy.

The vote started at noon. Concluded at seven. Victory was his by nine. When the people cleared, Barbara made good on her promise; right on the desk - holding the ends of his tie, as if she were riding a horse. “Lucky man, lucky tie,” she'd said upon dismounting.

A smile crossed Doug's face once more, his tie still hung undone around his neck.

“You the guy?”

“Pardon?” Doug stopped walking. A shadowy figure stepped in front of him. He was two blocks from the hotel. Barbara had left to go home to her family. Doug would do the same in the morning. One more night in Chicago.

“You da guy?” The shadowy figure said again, stepping closer.

“I don't know ...”

“Who gave the speech.”

“I'm a guy ...”

“You dat guy.”

Doug thought the accent sounded more Boston than Chicago. Before he could say another word, Boston-by-way-of-Chicago, grabbed the ends of his tie and crossed them so they pinched Doug's neck, then pushed Doug into an alley.

“I's bin waitin' fah ya.” The guy pulled the tie ends tight. Although Doug tried to fight him off, he was still too drunk; Boston was too strong.

The next morning, police found Senator Doug Leonard just off Circle Street. Cause of death: strangulation with a purple silk tie. Two days later, they arrested an angry strikebreaker from Boston.