

INTRODUCTION

(NICOLE BROWN SIMPSON)

[Securing an exclusive interview one week after the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman.]

My editor's instructions this morning were clear, as if my job depended upon it. I was to put on some nice clothes, get in my car and immediately head south to Dana Point, the seaside town where Nicole's parents lived in a private, gated community called Monarch Beach. Once there, I was to employ any means necessary to gain entry into the community in order to secure an exclusive, on-the-record interview with the Brown family.

O.J., come kill me now!

Not surprisingly, the security guards were already on high alert for pesky journalists like me who were willing to make up any conceivable (or inconceivable) story necessary to get past their gates. So, when I tried to make a "grocery delivery," I was immediately turned away.

"Brian, it's not going to work," I called in to report.

"Will, you're a smart guy and you can do this," Brian encouraged me. "Find a way. Be creative."

I thought about just throwing in the towel and telling Brian to screw off, but this cunning fox had a way of getting inside your head—almost like an Italian Godfather or cult leader, so that you wanted to make "daddy" proud. He'd pump up your ego to the point where there was no doubt you were capable of pulling off the most heinous acts.

So I decided to drive just a little further down the coast to the beachfront Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel luxury hotel. I valeted my car and marched through the lobby with my shoulders back, projecting my own fabricated Kardashian confidence so as not to arouse the suspicions of security. Once outside, I quickly descended the hotel's stone staircase leading down to Monarch Beach, which was shared by the hotel and the Browns' residential compound.

Now I'm the type of guy who can sweat like a pig in a snowstorm, so you can imagine how miserable it was traipsing through a sandy beach in the middle of a blistering June afternoon dressed in a suit and tie. But as I slipped off my dress shoes and rolled up my pants, my initial fears began to give way to a massive adrenaline rush. This insane plan might actually work! All

of a sudden, I felt like Lucy Ricardo coming up with a screwball scheme to infiltrate the home of her favorite matinee idol Robert Wagner—just days after he'd buried Natalie Wood!

With little effort, I easily scaled the gate surrounding the Monarch Beach residences. Before I knew it, I was inside, rolling my socks back up my ankles and praying I wouldn't pass out before making my way up a steep hill to the address Brian had provided: 222 Monarch Bay Drive.

I hadn't even considered what I might do in the unlikely event that I actually made it to the Brown family home. So, when I found myself standing outside the luxurious house, all I could think to do was snap a photo. But I knew Williams would want more before allowing me to flee the scene. My anxiety was surging. Though O.J. had been arrested and charged with the double homicide the day after Nicole's burial (after hiding out in Robert Kardashian's home and leading police on his infamous Ford Bronco chase), what if he'd escaped and was on his way to visit his children at Grandma and Grandpa's?! The photo in my camera would at least exist as evidence of me having made it this far after police discovered my gutted and lifeless body in the bushes.

Brian was naturally elated when I called to tell him how far I'd come since our previous call. "I knew you could do it!" he said. "Now just go up and knock on the door."

"But what do I tell them?"

"Tell them the truth, Will. You're a journalist. You know what to do."

Sigh. He was right. I did know what to do, I just *really* didn't want to do it!

Outside the Browns' door, I took in one deep breath and just ... knocked. Moments later the door opened and I was greeted by a housekeeper. I smiled warmly, trying to control my quivering lip (and bladder) and cheerfully chirped, "Good morning. I'm here to pay my respects to Mrs. Brown." And just like that I was ushered inside the house and escorted to a small sitting room where Nicole's mother, Juditha, and her surviving daughters, Denise, Dominique and Tanya, were seated around a framed portrait of their slain Nicole with tears in their eyes.

Mrs. Brown immediately stood up and took my clammy hand in hers. My blood was racing. I'm lucky I didn't drop dead of a coronary right there on the spot. I suddenly had to pee really badly, but was pretty sure this wouldn't be the best time to ask to use the bathroom. Or maybe it would have, so I could have climbed out a window and escaped back down to the beach.

"Thank you for coming," said the surprisingly composed Brown matriarch. "How did you know my daughter?"