

## Part 2: A Mother's Worst Nightmare

**When Angela Guzman-Rogers first met Dick Dasen at Deana Dimler's hair salon, he started giving her money with no strings attached. But her mother Connie knew something was wrong. Very wrong.**

by Hal Herring

The house was built by Habitat for Humanity at the end of the 1990s, and it is warm and spacious enough, even given the many people who live, visit and shelter in it. Two boys, Dyan and Dillon, wrestle in front of a television in a side room that still needs some finish work, and Daysha, a blond-haired little girl three years old, flits in and out of the kitchen, wearing a pair of gauze angel wings that look almost too natural on her. Connie Guzman is in rapid motion as usual, busy at the kitchen counter, preparing yet another snack for the kids or for one of the many visitors that come and go in this house in south Kalispell.



*Angela and Connie on a cruise, before Angela fell back into the grip of meth.*

Connie came to town from California fourteen years ago, an alcoholic husband and babies in tow. She was looking for a fresh start, and she found one, building a business picking,

selling, and brokering rock for the wave of high-end construction that has come to the Flathead Valley over the past decade. Her big late-model Dodge flatbed parked outside has custom license plates that say "THE ROCK LADY," and she is known by that name throughout much of the valley. She is in her early forties now, divorced and a grandmother four times over. Her black hair is lined with a few strands of gray. Her body is sturdy from years of handling stone and has the kind of power that women who live different lives seek in the health clubs in other parts of town. When she talks about her daughter Angela, she cries, but her voice never wavers.

Angela Guzman-Rogers was one of Dick Dasen's girls, and the mother of Dyan, Dillon, and Daysha. On October 13th, 2003, she died in a car wreck on Reserve Street in Kalispell, at 5 a.m. Connie, who had raised three children already, is now raising three more. "Oh, I'm grateful for the load," Connie says, pouring cereal into bowls. "My three little survivors."

In the corner by the woodstove there is a small shrine to Angela, with candles burning beneath a photo of Angela and Connie taken on a once-in-a-lifetime cruise in the Carriibbean. Both women are smiling with undiluted happiness,

their teeth bright white in tanned faces. It is one of those mother-daughter photos you sometimes see where the direct lineage of energy and beauty is clear, shining and somewhat fragile in the younger but infused and durable in the elder. "She beat meth three times," Connie says, "and that picture was taken during one of those times. But it didn't last. Ange learned from her dad that when the going gets tough, you check out."

Angela's life was chaotic. She had been married just before her 16th birthday to Christian Rogers, who fathered her three children. They split for awhile in 2001, in part because of Angela's meth use, and when they got back together, Angela went straight and got pregnant with Daysha. Chris was working for Connie in the rock business, and things were smooth for once. But an early morning knock on the door shot it all down again.

Chris was arrested for a sexual assault that occurred while they had been split up, and he was sentenced to 20 years, with seventeen suspended. Daysha was born after he was sent to prison, and the burden proved too heavy for Angela to carry sober.

Before and during her pregnancy, Angela worked cutting hair at a shop in Kalispell owned by her friend Deana Dimler. Dimler was 33, slim and youthful with a finely wrought tattoo of a mandala on her neck, and tribal bands encircling her arms. She had a manic, fast-talking enthusiasm that matched Angela's personality. "Whenever they were together, the room was just lit up," Connie Guzman said. "They were born to be friends." And there was a bizarre connection that lay back in the past, in another place, another prison. Connie Guzman was born while her mother was incarcerated in California's Chino Penitentiary. One of Connie's mother's best friends in Chino was a Native American woman named Patty, who after her release would wander north to Kalispell, and work for years

waiting tables at a little restaurant called Fred's, where she would, after some initial butting-of heads, befriend a fellow waitress, a newcomer named Connie Guzman. Patty's daughter was Deana Dimler.

Deana was married, with two children, and she had a passion for the pit bull dogs that she bred and raised. She had a passion for methamphetamine, too, and like the pit dogs, the drug tended to catch hold and not let go. She had been in jail for meth before, and had a suspended sentence hanging over her head, but she was still using, because meth is a lifestyle, a swift antidote to the boredom of the ordinary. And there is nothing more ordinary than being broke in Kalispell, Montana, despite the looming snow capped mountains all around, the signs for Glacier National Park, or the shiny SUVs bombing by with the snowboards and skis and mountain bikes strapped to Thule racks that cost more than you can make in a month of working.

Coming home from work at Deana's hair salon, Angela would tell Connie about a kind and interesting businessman that came to the shop to talk and laugh with Deana. The man's name was Dick Dasen, and he had been friends with Deana for a long time. He had paid for her to go to treatment for meth addiction once when she was spun so far out that she had no other option. Dasen even supported Deana at times, in exchange for sex. He had a reputation for doing that with a lot of local girls who were down on their luck. To Angela, Dasen was unfathomably powerful, connected to the wheels and gears that whirled and spat and drove the world from an orderly plane somewhere high above the messy place that she and her friends inhabited. Occasionally, some thunderbolt would shoot out from on high and claim someone from her world -- the out-of-the-blue arrest of her husband Chris was a perfect example of that -- but Dasen seemed to travel between those worlds without effort, trailing a strong current of power and

leaving cash in his wake. He visited the hair salon a lot. And at some point, he started supporting Angela, not asking anything in return.



*Angela, Dyan, Dillon and the youngest Daysha, shortly after Daysha's birth*

"She would call here from the La Quinta, and say that she was staying there for a few days, and I'd say, 'Where'd you get the money for that? What are you doing?' and she'd say, 'Oh just chillin', hot tubbin' with my friends,'" recounts Connie. "After Daysha was born, Ange went down fast. She had all this money to spend on dope, and she spent it all." The only time Connie ever met Dick Dasen, it was in Angela's hospital room, right after Daysha's birth. Dasen was standing over Angela's bed, talking with her, when Connie arrived.

"He didn't look at me, didn't introduce himself or shake my hand. There was something wrong, I knew that." Angela told Connie that Dasen was just there to help her, because he was her friend and because he knew her man was locked up. A few months after Daysha was born, Connie says, Dasen told her daughter that he needed something from her in exchange for all the help. "And she started in with him, just like Deana, even though she had told me she'd never do that. But by then she was used to the money, and she was back shooting meth, just skin and bones." The scale

of the payments seemed impossible, too much money to be true. At one point Angela was driving a brand new Dodge Dakota, financed through one of Dasen's companies, Budget Finance. "The girls were getting \$1,000, just for introducing new girls," Connie said, "I know she refused to introduce her best friend, but she did bring others in."

During the summer of 2003, flush with cash, Angela fully fell into the grip of a murderous addiction. Her arms were covered with tracks, her skin yellow. In a photo taken late that summer she is skeletal, her hips sharp in her jeans, her smile like a grinning Halloween skull. She was, clearly, killing herself. And her friends were right behind her. "Connie and I used to sit at my house and try to figure out how to save her and the other kids," said Connie's friend Amy (her name has been changed for this story). "How are we going to get them out of this before one of them dies? And of course, then Connie got the call."

When Angela Guzman died, her friends coped in the way they knew how: they went on a meth binge that lasted almost a month, a binge so extreme that as it slowed, the voices of Amy and Connie, the pesky elders ("for a long time we were just the big bad awful bitches, ruining everybody's good time," Connie says) began to make a little sense. Amy and Connie had been calling themselves, humorously, "the MAMs" -- Mothers Against Meth -- for some time. But in the months after Angela's death, they changed the acronym to "MADAMs" for Mothers Against Dasen and Meth. They did so only half-joking, drawing on that giddy energy that surfaces when the worst has happened, when the grief and shell-shock are part of the fabric of every day.