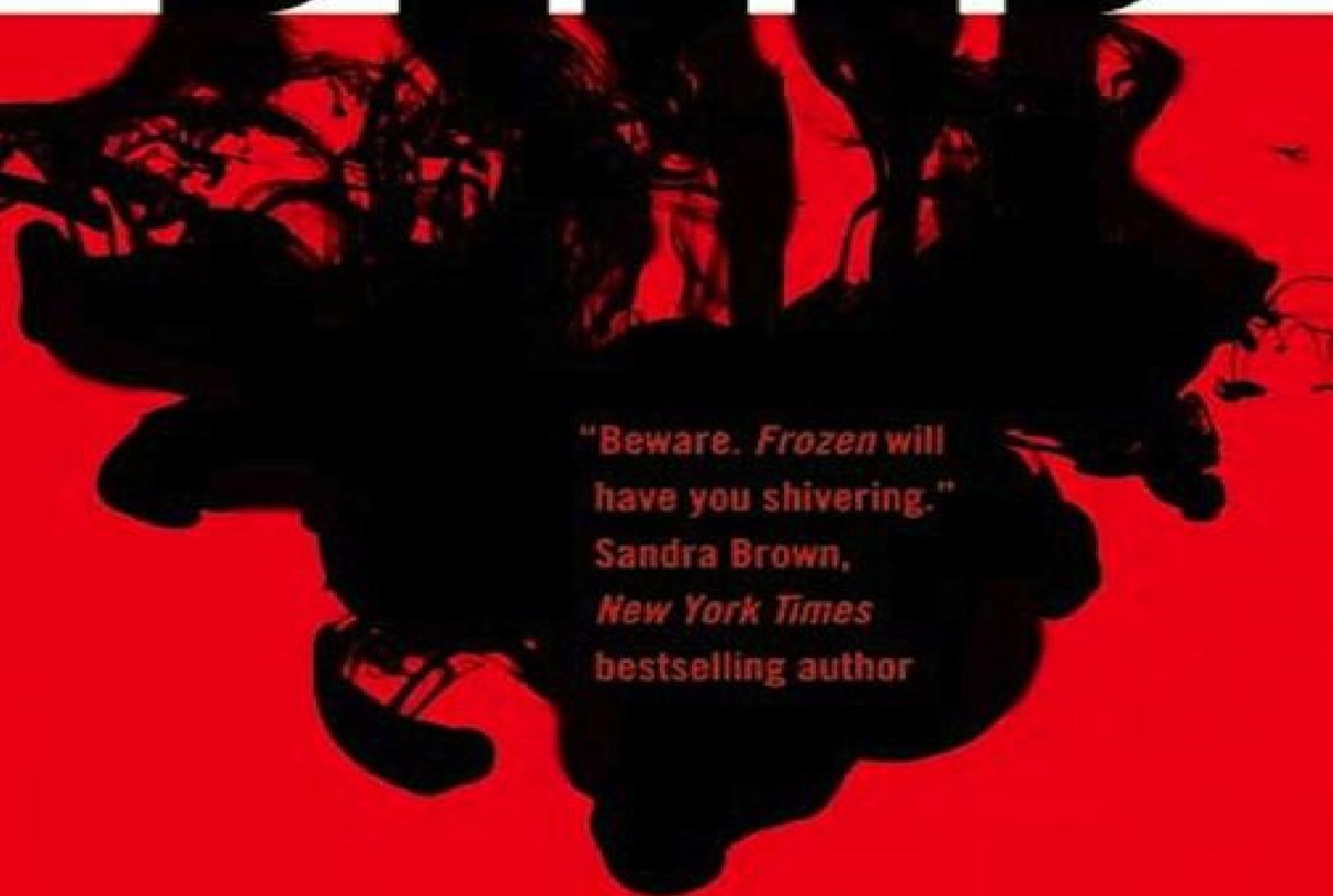


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*"Beware. Frozen will
have you shivering."
Sandra Brown,
New York Times
bestselling author*

**KATE
WATTERSON**

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KATE WATTERSON



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Chapter One

Also by Kate Watterson

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August 12

They came in through the window.

Two of them, one dropping down and getting out of the way so the other could jump. The gleam of steel reflected the light from the one small lamp.

The story could have had a different outcome, she thought as she stood in the shadows, the .38 in her hand, her heart admittedly beating much faster than she anticipated.

Cool. Steady. Both hands.

The first shot went home, or so she thought, because the tall one jerked and stumbled. The second one didn't seem to know what to do, and when he turned, trying to find the source, his face was set like soapstone, shiny with sweat.

Maybe he said something, but it was hard to hear since the first shot made her ears ring.

Finger on trigger ... it was easier the second time, more confident, the die cast already.

Right at the heart.

Pull.

August 13, 10:10 A.M.

“This just came in. Double homicide.”

Metzger slapped down a file on her desk and Detective Ellie MacIntosh looked up from her paperwork, pen in hand. The chief had his perpetually serious expression in place.

“What? When?”

“Looks like last night.” The chief was a burly ex-marine with a receding hairline and hefty shoulders. “I’m going to say right now I have no idea what is going on, but you and Grasso had better get your asses over there.”

“Where?”

He leaned on his hand and said emphatically, “Pricey address near the lake ... it’s going to be a political nightmare for me if you don’t handle this right, and I have enough headaches, thank you very much. So go and do what you do, okay? Figure out what happened. Fast, clean, and as quiet as possible.”

What did that mean? She nodded and picked up the report, registered the name of the person involved, and instantly understood. “Absolutely, sir.”

“I’ll let you fill Grasso in, and you and Carl keep me up to speed. This going to be volatile and I am uninterested in some sort of media event. Milwaukee was just all over the news with The Burner deal. Can we keep this low profile as possible?”

“Point taken.”

Her current partner in homicide was at his desk on his day off, but that was not her problem. Carl Grasso was nice-enough-looking, early forties or so, nondescript in a way,

except he had the most striking gray eyes. They were full of intelligence and maybe even a hint of ruthlessness she wasn’t sure would ever get used to. Grasso was a born hunter, pure and simple. It wasn’t just reflected in his history with the department, but she’d known it the moment they first met.

Ellie walked over and said without preamble, “We have a double shooting down by the lake and Greta Garrison is involved, apparently. It’s ours.”

“Greta Garrison ... wait.” He frowned as he signed out of his computer. “I know the name, but you’ll have to help me here. Who is she?”

“Actress. Picture long curly red hair, a striking figure, and two Emmy Awards. She’s the new darling of entertainment shows and tabloids.”

“Okay ... yeah, I know who she is now. I don’t watch too much television. What the hell is she doing in Milwaukee?”

“Actually, she’s from here. When she’s not filming, she’s in town pretty often.”

“Huh.” He opened a drawer. “Learn something new every day.”

True enough. A multiple homicide in the home of a celebrity was going to make the news, hands down. Ellie inclined her head toward the front of the building. “Want to drive, or should I?”

“You drive. I’ll read the report on the way.” He got to his feet with alacrity, taking a set of keys from his pocket and tossing them. “Let’s take my car.”

She wasn’t positive she wanted to drive his expensive sports car, but on the other hand, she hadn’t cleaned out her four-wheel-drive in a couple of weeks, so she nodded. “Fine.”

The sleek BMW was not representative of a cop’s salary, so she guessed the gossip about his parents leaving him pretty well-off when he was just twenty years old might be true. He’d never discussed it, but then again, they had just been assigned together.

She slid into the car, started it experimentally, adjusted the seat, and was about to back up when her phone beeped. She pulled it out, pushed a button and read the text, said dryly, “That’s from Metzger. Seems like we already have media there, blocking the street. Welcome back to homicide, Lieutenant.”

There *were* television trucks when they arrived, completely in the way, like that was okay ... sometimes Ellie wondered what these people were thinking. “We should have them arrested.”

Grasso got out and asked neutrally, “I’ve handled this situation before. Want me to take care of it?”

She did. Completely. Ellie unclipped her seat belt. “Help yourself. It won’t hurt my feelings at all.”

* * *

The scene wasn’t pretty.

Good.

Carl Grasso was itching to get his hands on a real case again. Not the bullshit dead-addict-in-an-alley-with-a-needle-still-in-his-arm—that did not particularly require much detective work—but something like this that was different.

There was blood splatter and lots of it on the walls, the window still open. Two bodies were sprawled in the mockery of death, one victim on the floor on his back, eyes still open, his dark shirt soaked in blood. The other one sat against the wall, as if he’d been thrown back by the impact of the bullet and slid down, which from the dark vertical stain must have been the case, like a snail leaving a slimy trail. This was obviously the dining room, with tall windows that overlooked a terrace, a long table with ten chairs, a crystal chandelier that illuminated the whole mess, and an obviously expensive oriental carpet that would never be the same.

The new medical examiner was busy taking notes. Grasso hadn’t met her yet, and he had to admit she handled the scene in a capable fashion, her voice clipped as she gave instructions, her dark hair drawn back in a slick ponytail. Dr. Hammet glanced up as they approached and acknowledged their

brief greeting and the flash of their badges. “Hello, Detectives. Word of warning, this is an interesting one. As usual, I’ll be able to tell you more once I’ve got them back at the morgue and do a thorough autopsy, but on the face of it, we have both of them shot with the same weapon, from a fairly close range. Your perpetrator has excellent aim. They both went down with one shot to the heart. From their position, I am going to say it happened in rapid succession, for it doesn’t look like either one of them had a chance to try to run.”

First clue. A marksman. Not easy to do.

MacIntosh crouched down and stared at the first victim. “I’ve never seen him before, but I’m almost as new to the department as you are, Doctor. Were they carrying identification?”

“I think so.” The ME snapped off a glove. “This one’s front pocket is partially pulled inside out. “Whoever shot him probably took it, or that would be my interpretation. If you want ID, it isn’t here.”

“Well ... that’s a disappointment.” Carl meant it, looking at the victims. They were both maybe average height—was hard to tell on the one who was sitting up—white males, in their twenties, probably. One had slightly darker hair than the other, but was otherwise not very distinguishable from about a million other men in the state of Wisconsin.

Ellie laughed and when they both looked at her, she just smiled ruefully. She was a slender, pretty blonde that had come from a county sheriff’s department up north, and she’d been assigned to homicide thanks to a serial murder case where she’d tracked down a killer that had been terrorizing that area for over a year. “I worked with Detective Santiago on my last multiple homicide case. Let’s just say his language would have been much more colorful. I’m still adjusting back to working with normal human beings.”

There might have been a glimmer—just a hint—of a smile on Dr. Janis Hammet’s face. She rubbed her cheek with her ungloved hand. “I’m new and I’ve already been warned Santiago is somewhat of an acquired taste. Anyway, I’m sorry I can’t give you more, but it isn’t here. I am not going to say it is a professional hit necessarily, but I *am* going to say the shooter was prepared. It looks to me like they cleared the window, and he took them down one by one. Bang-bang and done.”

When Carl surveyed the sprawled bodies and crime scene tape, it looked like that to him too. “I agree. They are both armed and it wasn’t a firestorm, but an execution.”

“Whoever shot them knew they were coming.” MacIntosh knelt by the closest body without flinching. “Waited for them. A .38 maybe. It would have to be decently close range to be this accurate. The real question is: where was Ms. Garrison?”

“Sleeping in her bedroom upstairs.” A uniformed officer answered from the doorway. He offered a clipboard. “I have her statement. She heard the shots.”

Carl had to lift his brows. “Is there some reason we are just being called now?”

The young man shook his head. “She says she went back to sleep.”

“What?”

“Yeah, I know. But she takes some medications and swears she thought maybe it was a car

backfiring on the street.”

MacIntosh straightened abruptly. “That must be some medication. It would sound like an atomic bomb going off in here. Twice.”

“It’s a big house.” Carl should know. When his parents died, he’d inherited a virtual mausoleum of a place, and he could see if he was sound asleep and far enough away how he might not realize that a sound like that had come from inside. “Where is she?”

“Her manager took her to a hotel. She was really upset, and you can’t blame her.” The young officer was obviously upset on her behalf. A fan? Carl thought maybe so, or just maybe someone with an idealistic weakness for very pretty females in distress.

“Does he have that authority?”

“There was no residue on her hands, and she did call it in. Claims she does not own a gun nor has ever fired one. The crime scene unit hasn’t found one either.”

“Tell us where she is and we’ll go talk to her.” There was resignation in MacIntosh’s tone. She looked around the expensive elegant room. “Doesn’t this place have a state-of-the-art alarm system? How did these two get in?”

“It’s disabled. The light says it is set, but you can open a door or window and nothing happens.”

Second clue.

“That’s interesting.” MacIntosh exchanged a glance with Carl. “I suppose the real question is, who disabled it? The shooter? Or the victims?”

He raised a brow. “Let’s go ask Ms. Garrison if she knows.”

* * *

The young woman had obviously been crying, but her face was dry, white, and still. Ellie was sure no one could look beautiful after a serious jag of weeping, but Greta managed to pull it off pretty well. The hotel suite was impersonal, with white walls, a striped couch in tan and cream, and an armoire in the corner that hid the television. The actress sat with her hands loosely clasped and resting on her knees, and there was not one trace of makeup on her face. “I have no idea what happened.”

Carl Grasso stood near one wall, almost leaning on it. He asked, “Do you have any idea who those two men are?”

“No.” Greta shivered. “But I have to admit I didn’t look too closely. I was shocked. Like really *shocked*, you know? My hands were shaking so badly I could hardly dial 911.”

A quick search was easy enough using her phone, and Ellie knew Miss Greta Garrison was twenty-eight, had graduated from a local high school and gone for two years to Marquette before she headed off to Los Angeles, where she had landed some small parts in television movies until her latest role had pushed her into the limelight.

Ellie sat down on the edge of the coffee table and smiled with what she hoped was reassurance. “If you did not shoot those two men—”

“I didn’t.”

“...then someone did. That someone was already in your house. Who stayed with you last night?”

“No one.” Greta’s voice cracked. She wore a pair of form-fitting jeans and a loose T-shirt, and quite obviously, no bra. She put her hand in her pocket as if searching for something. Her manager, a thickly built man in his mid-fifties named Jeff Sharpe, with a shock of silver hair and an expensive suit, said something under his breath and got up to go get her a tissue.

When he returned, he handed it over and his voice was brisk. “I know where this is going and let me say that if she says she was alone, she was. Greta does not lie.”

Ellie gave him a level look. “Good to know, but we still have two dead men, Mr. Sharpe. In *her* home, and she waited hours after the shootings to call the police. I am sure you understand we have questions. That is our job.”

She turned back to Greta. “Let me ask again, was anyone there with you?”

“No.” The actress shook her head. “I went to bed fairly early. We just wrapped up shooting two days ago and I flew in, had dinner with my mother, and then came home. I just wanted to sleep.”

Grasso stirred. “Who knew you were coming back?”

She glanced at him, her eyes liquid with tears. “Obviously my mother. Jeff, the production staff for the show, whoever arranges my flights—I think her name is Stephanie ... a lot of people. I have a housekeeper who comes in to dust and keep the house up even when I’m gone. She knew too.”

In other words, if a pebble was tossed into the pool, there were a lot of ripples to hit the shore. Narrowing it down to who knew and who might have told someone else, and of those who might have yet told someone *else* ...

Ellie blew out a short breath. “Any hate mail lately?”

“She doesn’t read fan mail. Period.” Sharpe shrugged. “Who needs the angst, and she doesn’t have the time anyway. We have someone who goes through it and if she feels Greta should see it, she passes it to me. There are a lot of fans out there, and also some pretty sick people, trust me.”

“Actually, I don’t trust you at all, because I don’t know you, sir.” Ellie smiled with what she thought was reasonable civility. “Two men are dead, and I am going to assume, now that we have asked politely, you will get for us this ‘someone’ who reads Ms. Garrison’s mail and let us know right away if there were any serious threats. Okay?”

“She would—”

“Maybe not take everything seriously.” Carl sounded very reasonable as he interrupted, and in his thousand-dollar suit, looked like a very reasonable man. Unless a person knew his history. Ellie knew he’d taken out two suspects with deadly force in connection with an assault on a young woman who had a tie to his past, and he’d gotten clean away with it by claiming self-defense. If one of them hadn’t been unarmed, there might not even have been an internal affairs investigation.

Since they’d starting working together, she’d wondered more than once if those two killings hadn’t been calculated on a personal level. While she absolutely trusted his skills as a detective, she

wasn't all that sure she trusted him as an officer who had sworn to uphold the law without giving it his own particular slant.

Grasso added with a slight smile. "Here's my card. We need to talk to her."

August 14, 9:00 A.M.

“Thank you for getting back to us.” Ellie touched the pad on her phone to end the call and contemplated Grasso across the table. In the background, the coffee shop was busy, and silverware rattled. “Finally, news from L.A. She said most of the mail Ms. Garrison receives at the studio from male viewers involves sexual insinuations, but not all that many are threatening. Most of the mail from female viewers either gush over how much they enjoy her character on the show, or criticize her acting. There’s been nothing virulent lately.”

“Dead end?”

“Seems to be.” She contemplated her empty cup of coffee. “But I have to say, as a robbery it strikes me as off, especially since someone else knew they were going to break in.”

“That’s obviously our angle.” Grasso drank his coffee black, which somehow didn’t surprise her. He contemplated his cup, and flicked a glance upward. “Forensics doesn’t seem to pin Greta as the shooter. Shall we compare notes?”

“Oh, hell, I recognize that look. You’ve got something.” With a grimace she reached for her cup of coffee. “Fine. The assistant in L.A. is a dead end. What did you find?”

“Ex-husband.” He set a photo down next to an empty plate that had once contained a towering stack of pancakes but now just had crumbs and syrup. “He’s a producer. He gave her a leg up, and she gave him a kick in the ass out the door about two years ago. That sounds simple, but the problem is there is a refrain to this story. While they were married he shot an intruder. Not exactly the same scenario, but it’s definitely close. Guy came in the back door, and he says he heard it, went downstairs and ... pop, one shot to the chest. As it turns out, the alarm was disabled. Sound familiar?”

It did. Ellie thought that news brightened her day. “Alibi?”

“I don’t know yet.” Today Grasso wore a beautiful dark blue suit, and she could swear his tie was monogrammed. *She’d* chosen a somewhat rumpled shirt out of the dryer, and promptly spilled coffee on her knee when she sat down at her desk, so she felt less than perfect next to his always immaculate elegance.

“When will we?”

“LAPD is cooperating.”

“Which means?”

His gray eyes were level. “That they’ll send us his file and question him. The case was dismissed as self-defense.”

“Did you get a feel from the officer you talked to?”

“I got a feel that the case was three years old and resolved and he didn’t work it. Does that

answer your question?”

Unfortunately, it did. In short, *nothing*. She blew out a frustrated breath. “We need to find out if her ex-husband had that alarm code.”

“I couldn’t agree more.”

There was someone bussing a table close by, but Ellie hardly noticed the clang of the plates as the waitress stacked them in the tub. “They’re divorced. Would he protect her that way?”

“Well, to quote Santiago, hell yes, he would.” Grasso smiled thinly. “She’s his meal ticket. The last show he produced didn’t do well, and though while they were married he was the successful one, that is no longer the case. She makes more money, and that clause was part of their divorce. For a certain amount of years he gets a cut, since he’s the one that hired her in the first place. Sort of a reverse alimony thing going on. The judge bought it, and maybe it is fair.”

“He has motive then.”

“Yes, but he would have to fly back and forth if he did it himself. So unless he’s a complete moron, he has an alibi.”

“There are options. Trains, renting a car—”

“All traceable. Surely he’s at least that smart.”

Good point. Ellie glanced at the window overlooking the busy street. Cars were passing, people were laughing on the sidewalk as they walked along, but then again, they weren’t having *this* particular conversation. She sure as hell wasn’t laughing. “Yeah, proving that might be interesting ... but we’ll check, of course. Hired hit?”

“Here is the real sticking point; how would he know they were going to break in?”

She picked up a spoon and idly stirred the congealing cream in her coffee. “Good question. What if he’s organized crime? I’m less familiar with it than you, but—”

“Do you think?” he interrupted sardonically. “I’m not saying drugs aren’t run through the northern counties where you worked before MPD, but corruption down here is a whole different game. That said, I don’t think we have any idea here in Milwaukee what it can be like in a city about ten times this size like Los Angeles. If this is organized crime, we need the FBI. But I don’t see it that way.”

That was interesting. She studied him thoughtfully. “How *do* you see it?”

The waitress came and took away his plate, and Grasso smiled at her absently, but his eyes were distant.

“I think she knows who did this.”

* * *

The trail led in mini-circles, like a wolf circling in the snowy woods, coming around but never getting anywhere. Yes, there were a few tracks, but none seemed to lead anywhere but right back to the same place.

The hunt.

That was their province.

“We have an ID. At least for one of the victims.” Dr. Hammet was as businesslike as usual, but maybe a little tired. It was there in a hint of shadow under her eyes. “The crime scene team found a vehicle parked down the street that someone reported when they heard about the murders, and ran the tags. I took fingerprints from every available surface on the body or clothing, your forensics guy put them in the database, and wouldn’t you know, we got a match.”

“Good teamwork,” Carl said neutrally. “Who is he?”

The morgue didn’t bother him. He wasn’t sure why, but the sterile walls and cold floors were as impersonal as the body on the steel table. No ghosts for him; his ghosts were in his head, not in this environment of scalpels, and scales for weighing organs, and drawers for keeping the uncaring dead. It was over. They didn’t mind, and really, neither did he. These were not the gray faces that haunted his dreams.

He’d been way too young when his parents were killed. Alone afterward. Adrift. Bereft. He was perfectly aware the closure had never happened. He just had no idea what to do about it. That big empty house didn’t help matters, but he hadn’t been able to come to the place where he could put it up for sale. It had been over twenty years. He wasn’t a psychotherapist, but he guessed it might never happen.

The medical examiner picked up a clipboard. “Name is Hugh Cranz. Thirty-two years old and has a Bayview address, or at least he did when he last served time for aggravated assault in Illinois. I’ll leave the rest of it to you, because last I checked, you are the detective. Prison dental records confirm his identity.”

“It’s a lead.” Carl took the piece of paper and nodded. “That’s great. What about the other guy?”

“Not her ex-husband. We haven’t made him so far.” She crossed the room and slid open one of the drawers, her face contemplative as she surveyed the corpse, as if the victim could give her answers. “I’m going to say this though. Nice manicure. I found that strange. Fingers and toes. And he was dressed in black, like our friend Hugh, but his clothing was a lot nicer, from a good men’s store I’d guess. No tattoos, no sign of substance abuse, though he had an interesting mix of drugs in his system, but they were all legal. Mood levelers, anti-psychotics, that sort of thing. It will be in the report. Neither one got a shot off if they were armed. No residue on their hands.”

“Like Ms. Garrison, sleeping in her bower upstairs.” Carl crossed his arms over his chest and stared at the dead man. “This feels like a comic book, with a superhero stealing in to do away with the bad guys and disappearing into the night before the maiden ever even wakes up.”

The drawer slid back into place. “Look at it however you want, but this isn’t a comic book and she isn’t sleeping beauty either. Two men are dead. I know it to be fact since I was the one who sliced them open and tried to find anything that might help you catch your vigilante. Other than that one name, I can’t do a lot more.”

“You’ve done pretty well anyway. A name is like gold, Doc.”

She made a face. “I’m not fond of the nickname, but everyone seems to use it. Call me Janis. I’m fine with that.”

Janis suited her. Elegant, like she was, under those professional scrubs.

“Will do.” Carl took the stairs up—he hated elevators, always had. Maybe it was the idea of being trapped in a steel box, but if he could avoid them, he did.

The minute he was at his desk, he punched up Cranz on his computer. Yes, he’d done time. Several stints, in fact, in Illinois, but none maximum security. He wasn’t a *good* guy, Carl decided after perusing the records, but not a true bad guy. Some violence, but nothing deadly, or at least nothing he’d been caught for before he was popped by their player.

Who was his just-as-dead friend?

If asked, he would guess it was someone Greta Garrison knew. The nice clothing, the disabling of the alarm, the whole way it went down, showed someone was in the know. Her?

That would be his guess.

Whoever orchestrated the break-in disabled the alarm.

That was irrefutable fact.

Whoever killed them knew they were coming.

Those two things were part of the same equation.

But they didn’t add up in a cohesive way, and therein was the problem. He picked up the phone and punched a button.

“Yes?” MacIntosh sounded professional as usual.

“You with her?”

“Greta? No, not yet. I made an appointment and I am waiting.”

The vague hint of annoyance did not go unnoticed. Homicide detectives were not used to having to make appointments, but Greta was hardly the usual suspect. For that matter, she really *wasn’t* a suspect. He said, “Dr. Hammet didn’t have a lot to offer, but I think we need to go with what she didn’t have.”

“Didn’t have?”

“I find it often means more than what the ME *does* have.”

“I get it, no disagreement here. Fine. Like what?”

“One ID. He’s not a first-timer, but murder would be a step up. Assault. Some minor crimes. Hammet couldn’t make the second guy, but he was different. No prints in the system. Dressed better than the other one, and neither was armed.”

Silence on the other end. Finally she said, “They were robbing her? Is that what you’re thinking?”

“Not necessarily.” That was true. He’d thought about it sitting by the pool last night, feet up on a chair, a glass of scotch in his hand. The lights had shimmered, the clouds had moved overhead like spectral shadows, and he had come to a couple of conclusions. “Two of them, through the window ... that’s robbery, right? But it took some planning, and the system needed to be disabled, but it was done

in way she wouldn't notice. So either she has something really valuable we don't know about, or they were there for her."

"It just sounds like the husband." MacIntosh spoke in brisk words.

He planted his elbows on the desk. "That worries me too. Deflection is the mark of an excellent criminal."

"Who said that?"

"I think I did just now."

She laughed. It was spontaneous and lovely and for a moment he experienced a pang for the lost relationships in his past. There had been a few women ... possibilities, but he'd never been in love quite *enough*.

"Let me know what Garrison has to say." He gently pressed the button and ended the call.

3:00 P.M.

It was the waiting that scraped along her mind like a knife on a raw bone. They would come sooner or later, she knew it.

The window showed a peaceful afternoon, with blue skies and high clouds that moved in slow horsetail formations, and there was just a hint of red and orange in the leaves on the maple tree right outside.

The killings had to be done.

That really wasn't the question.

The introspection centered around what exactly she would say when—if—they figured it out. Self-defense would not work.

Maybe not work. There might be a 40-percent chance if there was a prolonged trial and every single bit of evidence dragged out and plastered across the news, but it wouldn't matter. Premeditation was a deal-breaker.

Rules were rules. It was simple enough in the judicial system. You can do this in self-defense, but not that.

She'd definitely done that.

And it had worked.

Only if she didn't get caught.

* * *

The house was very quiet, and Ellie could swear the metallic smell of blood still hung in the air, though it was doubtful that was the actual odor.

It was more, she decided as she stepped through the doorway, an aura of disuse. This was a house, not really much of a home. Spacious, well-decorated, modern, and ... sterile.

She thought about Bryce's house, which was in an affluent suburb. Shady trees. Green lawn. Older and comfortable.

Not quite the same.

Bryce Grantham, her lover, and though she wasn't used to it working this way, a friend as well.... Their relationship was evolving slowly but surely into something more and more serious and she could never decide if it just plain scared her a little.

"Come in, Detective ... MacCray, is it?" Greta waved a hand airily and walked back down a tiled hallway toward a huge kitchen done in dark granite counters and pale gray cabinets. Outside a set of French doors, a pool shimmered in the middle of a slate patio. She looked better than she had the day before, but it was artificial, like maybe there were drugs involved. Her eyes were a shade dilated,

and though she wore fitted jeans and a soft blue shirt of some material that draped her breasts and clung to her torso, the latter wasn't quite properly tucked in.

A little high. Definitely.

"MacIntosh." Ellie followed, "I just have a few more questions. I won't stay long."

"Drink?"

She eyed the bottle of wine that the actress pulled out of a shining refrigerator. "No, thank you."

Greta already had a glass on the counter. She shook back her long red curls. "Yeah, I forget. On duty and all that. Have a seat."

"More that it is a little early in the day." Ellie chose a barstool and rested her elbows on the counter. "Can you tell me if you have ever heard of anyone named Hugh Cranz?"

Chardonnay splashed against crystal. "I don't think so."

"He was killed in your dining room night before last. Think on it and tell me if for *sure* you don't recognize the name. I'll wait a minute. Take a drink and mull it over."

The admonishment seemed to sink in and Greta leaned a hip against the polished counter, her beautiful face in an introspective frown. Then she shook her head. "No."

"Do you think we can connect him with your ex-husband?"

"Sam?" There was a short laugh and the actress took a small abrupt sip. "I have no idea. Ask him, but good luck. He isn't the most cooperative man in the world and doesn't have a lot of respect for the police."

"Some particular reason for that?"

"If you are asking if he has a record, no, not that I know of anyway. My ex is definitely a self-made man. He's from Milwaukee too, you know. He grew up in a kind of rough neighborhood. It was funny at first, since we actually met each other out in L.A., to realize we were both from the same hometown. The difference is, he hates it here and I hate it there. I go when we film, and then I come back home. It didn't help our marriage, but that was hardly the whole problem."

The information was useful. Cranz was also a Milwaukee native and roughly the same age as Sam Garrison.

"Considering what happened here in this house, may I ask what *was* the problem?"

"Because he has absolutely no subtlety in his soul." Greta eyed Ellie above the rim of the glass. "I don't know if you'll get this, but he's ... larger than life in some ways. What you see is what you get, Detective. I found it fascinating for a while, but then it gets tiresome. Have you ever met a man like that? It can be like being run over by a freight train. If he didn't like what I was wearing or, for instance, a meal in a restaurant, he was blunt to the point of rudeness, and I got tired of having my feelings hurt or being embarrassed in his company."

She had met someone exactly like that, hands down. Jason Santiago, her injured partner, was about as subtle as a swarm of flesh-eating ants. "I believe I have. Is there any chance your husband knew the victims?"

“I take some exception to them being called the victims. After all, they were illegally in my house.”

“Until it can be established that they harbored ill-intent, they were technically only breaking and entering. They weren’t armed.”

“Still.”

Ellie went on deliberately. “Your alarm was disabled. There is nothing to prove you didn’t do it yourself. I could see, if we had a viable suspect who could possibly be arraigned, that the defense attorneys involved might point out there was nothing to prevent you from setting these two men up. After all, the moment they entered your home, they were essentially gunned down. *Someone* waited for them. That part no one is going to argue unless you can come up with a more plausible explanation.”

“That’s backward, isn’t it?” Those signature green eyes stared at her across the counter. “I didn’t think it was my job to come up with an explanation, but yours to prove there was any sort of intent. My doctor can tell you that my medication makes me sleepy and I was in bed when it happened. That’s really all I know. Sam doesn’t have keys, by the way, or the code to the alarm.”

“Someone did.”

“So catch them.”

This was a different Greta than the shell-shocked woman they had interviewed the day before. Flying a little high, but also with a defiance that was unexpected.

Ellie smiled in a conciliatory way, all the time assessing the change. “We want to. Are you protecting him?”

Greta’s chin went up another notch. “Why would I do that?”

“Well, whoever shot those men protected you, didn’t he?”

She didn’t fall for it, but it had been worth a try. The actress shook her head and fingered her wineglass. “I don’t know.”

But there was a sheen of perspiration on her forehead.

The first faint crack. Ellie put her elbows firmly on the island and clasped her hands. “You know, we could use some help here. I should hope that if there was a homicide involved, much less two, you would volunteer any information you might have. Loyalty is a difficult dilemma when someone might have saved your life, even if they broke the law. I am not really asking you to give up your ex-husband if he is involved. All I really want from you is a nudge in the right direction. The ironic thing is this: If you are afraid to talk to us because you might have information that could lead to an arrest, I promise you the guilty party is very afraid of that too. He will be sitting there, wondering just what you said, and at some point—here is the kicker—feel the need to find out.”

She’d thought of that already. It was in her eyes.

Oh shit. Grasso was right. She knew something.

“He might come after you.” Ellie was pragmatic and getting tired of the dance, and as a double

murder was no picnic a little cooperation would be nice. “At least that is my guess, because that is what I would do if I thought you could link me to a crime that would put me behind bars for the rest of my life. You know how the media is going to handle this. There will be no mercy for you or for us. I’ve been through it before myself. Neither of us want any part of it.”

The bravado faded then, like the air going out of a punctured life raft adrift above a coral reef.

Greta said quietly, “I have nothing to tell you.”

As an actress, Ms. Garrison failed miserably. The lie was obvious.

* * *

Metzger rubbed his broad forehead. “We could charge her with obstruction of justice. We have no proof of collusion. We can’t even get her on conspiracy to commit. There’s no evidence she knew anything, except you and Ellie think she does.”

Carl took a sip of tepid coffee and tried not to wince. The chief liked it strong and pedestrian, and out of a grocery store can was his style. He set it aside. “The initial interview told me she knew something. Can we get a warrant to search the house?”

The chief rested his beefy arms on his desk. “The house was processed once already. Maybe you remember the two dead men? I need something more concrete for a warrant than you wanting to look through her underwear drawer.” Metzger sent Carl a direct look. “I appreciate how you handled the media attention, but no one will like that idea. Not me, not a judge, and every reporter from Madison to Duluth might love to watch you going into that house and come up with nothing, so you are going to have to give me more to convince me to go to bat for it.”

“We could search her financial records. I don’t know how we can prove it, but I’m convinced Ms. Garrison has a fair idea of who pulled that trigger. So is Ellie.”

MacIntosh wore some sort of silky dark blue shirt tucked into jeans, and she shook back her blond hair in a signature movement he was coming to recognize. Not conscious, but habitual when she was thinking hard. “If her ex has an alibi, and if we can’t break it, he’s out. Plain and simple. I’m a lot more inclined to look at Jeff Sharpe. Greta is like a cottage industry in some ways. If something happened to her, he’d be out a lot of money. There is a whole list of people who rely on her celebrity and income. Besides her ex-husband, there’s her manager, she has a publicist, two assistants, several financial advisors, the producer of her current show, a therapist she sees three times a week, a lawyer ... for all we know the housekeeper would kill to protect her. If something happened to her, they would all lose.”

Metzger wasn’t impressed with the argument. “That’s all fine in theory, and I don’t disagree with any of it, but you need to give me something I can take to a judge if you want to do another search.”

Ellie’s jaw hardened. “Sir, she refused to answer questions, and had obviously looked into burden of proof.”

“She’s entitled to do that, Detective.” Metzger leaned back. “She can claim harassment if we push

too hard, and it will be splattered on every news station across the entire country if we aren't absolutely sure of what we're doing and where it is headed. Every department makes mistakes, but we can't afford one right now, or at least I can't. I don't like the political part of this job, but it exists."

Carl said with conviction, "She's lying."

"Okay, prove it." Metzger stood. "Look, there has to be some sort of physical evidence for a warrant, you both know that. You're currently wasting my time. Detain her if you think it will get you anywhere, but I believe all three of us know it won't. She'll bring in counsel, walk out of here without saying a word, and we will be right back in this same room, having this same discussion. You're both good investigators. If you weren't, you would not be working for the Milwaukee police department. Switch tactics."

Some things never changed, Carl thought as Metzger stalked away. The chief didn't ever deal in subtlety, not even with the press, even though he was a pretty good politician. Former military, he usually saw everything in black and white.

MacIntosh rubbed her forehead and gave a muffled sound that might have been a sigh. "You know, I haven't worked here a long time and I already so wish he wasn't right sometimes. Okay, let's adjust. Thoughts?"

Before he could answer, his cell phone beeped. At the same time, so did MacIntosh's. They exchanged a glance even as they both answered within a moment of each other.

"Grasso."

"You might want to take a look at this, Lieutenant."

"I might like to take a look at what?"

MacIntosh was taking down notes across the desk, a pen her hand, her posture tense.

"We have another call at the Garrison residence."

"What the hell is it now?"

"Another body, sir."

6:00 P.M.

It wasn't like this was an easy story to understand. It was made up of bits and pieces. There was the beginning. And a soggy middle. And of course, as with anything, the end.

She didn't yet know what it would be.

As with the course of life, things went wrong occasionally.

Maybe she'd made some bad choices.

But maybe she'd made the only choice.

It didn't matter, it was done.

* * *

It was becoming a recurring theme. This time the body was in the kitchen with the familiar expanse of polished marble, elegant cabinetry, stainless steel appliances and a tiled floor currently splattered with various unattractive bits of human remains.

The victim was probably attractive without the hole in his head and blood everywhere, but it was very hard to tell with crimson rivulets obscuring his features.

“I killed him.”

Ellie eyed the pale, set face of the young woman before her and took a moment. “Okay ... tell us what happened.”

“I can't talk right here.” She indicated the body with a slightly unsteady hand. “Can we do this alone somewhere else?”

Considering there were crime scene techs all around them, not to mention that Dr. Hammet had just arrived, Ellie gave a nod.

Grasso indicated the nearby family room. “Fine. By all means, Ms. Garrison. Let's sit down and discuss this.”

The actress was much calmer than the other morning, or even than when Ellie had talked to her last. She wore a camisole under a gray cashmere sweater, and dark slacks that made her hair even more vibrant, and a slight smattering of freckles were visible across her nose that Ellie had never seen before, no doubt because she was so pale.

The couches were Italian leather, the fireplace black marble, and the French doors looked out over a courtyard with the same Olympic-sized pool visible from the dining room. They sat down, and it was interesting to see that Greta seemed more lucid than she had been the last time they talked, less anxious, her calm either drug-induced ... or maybe the plausible explanation was in a congealing pool of blood in the dining room.

Ellie said matter-of-factly, “I take it you were expecting your ex-husband.”

Grasso, sitting in his tailored slacks and pristine white shirt with a patterned silk tie, looked at Greta at the question, a small notebook in his hand. The actress nodded, her hands quietly folded.

“You told me yourself, Detective, he would come after me.”

“I said,” Ellie corrected carefully, “that if you knew who had shot Cranz and his friend, he might worry about what you could tell us. Are you saying he killed them?”

“I suspected Sam.” Greta wiped the corner of her eye. “I didn’t *know*.”

Ellie nodded. “Where did you get the gun? You told us just two days ago you don’t own one.”

Greta hesitated, but then shuddered. Her voice was a thin whisper. “It was his. He showed it to me. Said he was going to kill me. He set it down on the kitchen counter as he was ranting. I’ve always known he hasn’t accepted the divorce. I ... well ... I picked it up.”

It was a valid explanation for another corpse, but only to a certain extent. “If he killed two men to protect you, it makes no sense to us that he would then turn around and pose enough of a threat to give you cause to defend yourself with deadly force. That would negate the reason for the first two killings.”

“What reason?” Greta stared at them with limpid eyes, her body slightly slumped. “What are you talking about?”

“Money.” Grasso was matter-of-fact. “Wasn’t he protecting his investment? Obviously, the two of you don’t get along. The body in the kitchen kind of indicates that, Ms. Garrison. He gets a percentage of your earnings, and it isn’t chump change. I can tell you, people have killed for a lot less.”

The laugh she gave held an edge of hysteria. “You think this is about money? Any of it? That’s ... wrong, mistaken. Stupid even.”

Ellie fought a surge of frustration because she knew well enough that they were missing something in this case, but whatever the hell it might be, she had no idea, and this latest shooting just added more brain fog. She leaned forward. “Look, Ms. Garrison, neither Lieutenant Grasso nor myself are stupid. What we are is in the dark as to what the motivation could be if you don’t believe it was money. Mostly because you are not a very cooperative witness, for which we can detain you and, depending on the circumstances, maybe even arrest you. Now, if we are ‘mistaken,’ please explain.”

Greta straightened her spine in a manner that Ellie had seen before. Her mouth tightened. “Sam had an obsession with me. It was why he cast me in the first place, and it was why he never accepted the divorce. I loved him, but I had to get away from it. It wasn’t healthy for either of us. When I found those bodies, my first thought was that he’d done it, and it gave me a sick feeling because I knew why.”

“It would be really nice if we knew why as well.” Grasso was polite, but Ellie sensed the same edginess he felt. There was something a bit off.

“He knew they were here because *he’d* hired them to kill me.” Greta looked away, hands clasped, her expression poignant. “He told me at the last minute he couldn’t go through with it, but it was too late. The money had been paid and the phones ditched so there was only one way to stop it. He knew

about the disabled alarm because he'd arranged it all, and he got in and ... waited."

"You said he didn't have the code."

"I lied. I never believed for a minute he would do anything like this."

Her partner glanced over and Ellie slightly lifted her shoulders. It was entirely possible. "So he killed the two men he'd hired. What else did he say?"

"That he'd decided to do it himself. That is when I grabbed the gun and shot him."

"He said he was going to kill you?"

"He did."

"There is no thirty-eight-caliber pistol registered to your ex-husband, Ms. Garrison."

"If you are asking me where he got it, I have no idea. If you think a Hollywood producer doesn't have contacts, Detective MacIntosh, then you would be mistaken yet again."

"She's done." Two men came into the living room, one of them Greta's all-too-familiar manager, the other younger, polished, briefcase in hand ... attorney. Ellie recognized that faint sardonic smile. They all seemed to have it. The young man said smoothly, "Ms. Garrison will give you a statement tomorrow. I think she's been through enough this evening unless you wish to charge her with a crime."

"At this time, no." Ellie got to her feet. "But the district attorney might have a different take on it. The claim of self-defense is duly noted, but until we hear back from the processing of the scene and the ME, not to mention we've been trying to trace the victim's movements for the past three days, Ms. Garrison needs to be available for further questioning. Understood?"

Greta's lawyer inclined his head. "Keep in touch, Detective MacIntosh."

11:00 A.M., next day

The receptionist, thin, mid-fifties, and obviously efficient, looked at Ellie's credentials carefully and then nodded. "Dr. Lukens is with her last patient before lunch, Detectives. I don't interrupt her sessions unless there is an emergency, so if you'll have a seat, as soon as this light"—she pointed to a device on her desk—"blinks to tell me the patient has left, I'll let her know you want a word. We have a separate waiting area from the exit door for privacy purposes."

Carl wasn't sure the discipline of psychiatry really helped anyone, his skepticism based on the fact that paying someone to nod and listen to your ramblings seemed like a waste of money to him. The department had tried to force him to get therapy to make sure he wasn't suffering from any kind of PTSS from having shot and killed two criminals who thoroughly deserved it, but he'd refused. If asked what he took away from the experience, he'd have said probably that he believed remorse was overrated.

He'd shot them, and he doubted anyone mourned them.

Ellie picked up a magazine and began to thumb through it while he checked his messages on his phone. One of them was interesting as hell.

He listened to it twice and then pushed a button as he turned to his partner. "I just got a message from forensics. The ballistics on the bullets that killed the two intruders match the one from the gun that killed Sam Garrison last night."

Holding a copy of *National Geographic*, Ellie took a moment to digest that, her brow slightly furrowed, her eyes a vivid hazel and full of interest. More and more Carl thought her boyfriend was a pretty lucky guy, except for the fact she was absolutely born to be a cop and that was never easy to live with. Maybe that was why he was relentlessly single. Casual relationships, yes. Permanence, no.

"So Greta was telling us the truth." Ellie set the magazine down on a small polished wooden table. "And here I would have sworn something didn't fit quite right."

He would have sworn exactly the same thing. "If you were the one who had gunned down two men after you supposedly admitted hiring them to kill your ex-wife, would you arrive on her doorstep and not only tell her all about it, but set your gun on the counter where she could reach it?"

"No." Ellie's smooth fall of hair moved in a symmetrical swing at her shoulders as she shook her head. "But you know, Lieutenant, people do extremely stupid things all the time I am proud to say I would never do."

"The other possibility is that she is responsible for all three murders. Hollywood producers aren't the only ones with connections. Just because she said she didn't have a gun, doesn't mean it is the God's truth."

"Yes, but unfortunately, her version of what happened makes the most sense, and there is the

argument of no residue on her hands. I'm not sure anyone would buy the premise she tampered with her own alarm and enticed two men we can't prove she even knew into climbing through a window just so she could gun them down. Opportunity aside, there's no motive."

"Can't argue that."

"Detectives, through there." The receptionist pointed at a door.

Dr. Lukens proved to contradict Carl's perception of the professionals in the mental health care field. Tall and dark-haired, with slightly angular features, there was clear intelligence in her eyes, and as she rose and smiled, he sensed a wariness that was not at all the usual almost-condescending aura he so despised.

"Please, have a seat." Dr. Lukens motioned to two chairs in front of her desk and sat back down. "I assume you are here about Greta Garrison."

Ellie sat down. "Why would you assume that?"

"It is all over the news. Greta killed her husband and you are homicide detectives, and she is my celebrity patient." Dr. Lukens folded her hands on the top of her desk. "For that matter, Detective MacIntosh is working on becoming a celebrity in her own right."

It was true. The case had broken on the news like a crashing wave, partly because of Greta, and partly because Ellie had been in the news so often in the past year. Metzger had done his usual terse on-camera brush-off for the local stations, but no one in the state of Wisconsin was going to forget either of those cases anytime soon.

Carl had experienced his own share of publicity and had no desire to repeat the process. He said, "Ms. Garrison killed her ex-husband after he allegedly hired two men to kill her. Any insights you could give us would be appreciated."

Lukens wasn't going to budge. "You do realize that doctor/patient confidentiality means I cannot discuss any specifics with you. If my patients thought I would, my practice would sink like the *Titanic*. In fact, the whole profession would slam into an iceberg."

"We could get a court order." Carl spoke in a neutral voice.

"You'd have to provide a very reluctant judge with a reason her therapy was pertinent to your case, Detective."

"She did kill a man last night."

"In self-defense, as I understand it."

Ellie cut in. "We are here to ask what kind of medications you prescribe for Ms. Garrison. The night those two men broke in, she claims to have heard the disturbance but to have dropped back off to sleep because she had taken a drug that helps her do just that. She showed us the bottle, and you are the prescribing physician. The pharmacy where it was dispensed only shows that one medication was filled there. Are there others?"

Dr. Lukens compressed her lips. "I think that is a question that, if I answer, I could be in violation of rules I have no intention of breaking. If she showed you the bottle, then yes, of course, I

acknowledge I wrote that prescription. It isn't a breach of confidence to tell you that she lives a lifestyle that involves a great deal of stress. The media can be very invasive if a person has a high public profile. Detective MacIntosh, how do you like it?"

Ellie predictably ignored the confrontational reply. "You do acknowledge she is your patient?"

"Do you acknowledge she is a suspect?"

"I don't think anyone would argue that." The interview had taken an interesting turn. Carl asked in his best placating tone, "Is it an ethical violation to answer this question: Do you believe Greta Garrison is capable of premeditated murder?"

The doctor leaned back in her chair. "Capable? How can I answer that? First of all, Detective Grasso, keep in mind that duty to warn exists, which means that even in the confidentiality of psychotherapy, if I feel a patient is a direct threat to someone, the rules are suspended. Secondly, and maybe neither one of you want to hear this, but I think every single person on this planet is capable of premeditated murder. Everything is measured in degrees and we are all capable of violence on some level. As police officers, surely you know that. I watch the news. I read the paper. Tell me, since both of you have shot suspects, at what moment do you decide that it is a morally right decision to go ahead and pull that trigger? When does it happen?"

As an argument, it had a certain validity.

"As police officers," Ellie said in a neutral tone, "we are paid to enforce the law. If Greta Garrison acted in self-defense last night and shot her ex-husband, then the law usually excuses that, though I don't get to make those decisions. My job is to inform the court, with as much depth as possible, about the facts surrounding the death of a human being. So, can we repeat the request in that interest? Can you tell us if you have written other prescriptions for Ms. Garrison?"

"No."

"No, you haven't, or no you can't tell us?"

"The latter, Detective." Dr. Lukens didn't smile, but there was a small lift to the corner of her mouth. "I am sorry."

As they walked out the exit into a carpeted hallway that led discreetly to the parking lot, Carl heard Ellie mutter, "Is there anyone involved in this damn case that *will* cooperate with us?"

* * *

"Guns don't lie. People lie, but guns don't." Metzger tapped his finger on the report. "Greta Garrison does not deny shooting her ex-husband, there was a restraining order and yet he traveled to Wisconsin from California with what seems to be the sole purpose of paying a not-so-friendly visit, and it appears he is the one who shot the two men who broke into her home. I am certainly not going to tell you it is cut-and-dried, but I am going to tell you that the deductions, which by the way, the two of *you* have made, come across the table in a cohesive manner that is going to make a very good argument of self-defense for Ms. Garrison."

Ellie contemplated the top of the conference room table for a second. "Sir, I agree."

"Well, hell, Detective, we haven't worked together all that long, but I already know that tone means you don't agree at all." His sigh was pure exasperation. "What is it?"

Grasso said nothing, but she knew he held the same opinion. It was hardly like they were kindred souls, but there was still a basic level of understanding, and he'd already pointed out it didn't feel ... right.

Looking for the correct words, she said slowly, "The facts align. Sam Garrison would know they were going to break in if he hired Cranz and his friend to kill Greta, so he could certainly be waiting. He doesn't have an alibi for the shooting either, though we can't prove he was in Milwaukee; he did make threats and his staff and mutual friends have confirmed it. The same gun was used, and three men died. If she shot the first two, she did an excellent job of covering it up, and she freely admits to killing her ex-husband."

"MacIntosh, you are making a very good case. I believe that was my point. What do you not get about a job well done?"

"There's a sticking point for me."

"Like what?" Metzger lifted his hands in exasperation. "He hired out a hit, thought about it and changed his mind, and then, after all was said and done, tried to kill her himself. I don't get this love/hate bullshit, but we all know it exists, and I think we can close the books on this one."

"Except for a few loose ends." Grasso was the one who responded. Elegant in a pressed shirt, pleated slacks, and a tan tie, he simply looked reflective. "Garrison didn't break in. She had to have let him in the house. Why would she do that? If the restraining order is part of the argument, it makes me wonder why she'd let him waltz right in."

"Part of the pattern. I know you worked domestic violence cases in your career, Carl. Women do that. They believe the 'I'm so sorry, it will never happen again' routine."

It was true. Absolutely. But Ellie said stubbornly, "We also have a call from a purchased burner phone to Sam Garrison's cell the day before yesterday. Who called him? His two boys were already dead."

Metzger inclined his head. "And he's been ostensibly on vacation since the production of his last show was suspended several weeks ago. If he used cash, we may never know where he was staying. Obviously somewhere near Wisconsin since he made it to Greta's house fairly quickly after the murders. Look, the guy's career was tanking, he was jealous of his ex-wife, decided to kill her, chickened out, and then changed his mind again and went after her himself. If he was still alive, he'd need one hell of a defense team. If we can trace that gun back to him somehow, he'd be dead in the water even if he wasn't dead already."

It does make sense.

"No serial numbers," Ellie said quietly. "Filed off. Bought illegally is my guess. I doubt we can trace it back to anyone."

“The press is starting to rock on this case. Ms. Garrison looked particularly beautiful in court on the last segment I saw on the news.” Metzger rubbed the heel of his hand across his chest as if massaging away a possible heart attack.

“Sir...” Ellie stopped, hesitated, and then blew out a breath.

“Sir what?” Metzger gazed at her without giving a quarter. “Where are we? Do we agree it is solved? That’s the difference between a sensation, and a siege. If you two aren’t comfortable, fine, keep the investigation open, but I think all the pieces fall neatly into place.”

They did. There was no arguing it.

Ellie glanced at Grasso. He had the same resigned expression on his face.

“Yeah,” she said. “I think we’re good.”

“You know”—Metzger rubbed his face—“why is it when you tell me that I think we *aren’t* good?”

MacIntosh asked, “Are you looking for justice, or closure, sir?”

One week later

The light blinked and, since she already knew what that meant, Ellie rose and tucked her phone away before she pointed at the innocuous door. “Like last time?”

The receptionist nodded, incurious. “Yes.”

“Thanks.”

Dr. Lukens looked up at her entrance, her gaze unreadable, a finger clicking off the laptop screen in front of her. “Detective MacIntosh. It is a surprise to see you, I admit. I’ve been following the story, of course, and as Greta is still my patient, it is only natural she and I should discuss it, though it doesn’t change what I can discuss with you. Have a seat.”

It was difficult to decide what she thought about the woman, Ellie mused as she accepted the offer. Smart ... yes, she got that. Georgia Lukens was a physician, but that didn’t necessarily mean she was compassionate—plenty really weren’t, which was surprising. Understanding physiology, and even psychology, did not make you an empathetic person. Graduating from medical school did not necessarily give a person any skills to practice, despite the diploma on the wall. It gave you permission, but the effective skill of compassion ... not necessarily.

It was, in short, kind of like becoming a detective. Good ones, bad ones, they all started the same way.

The psychiatrist took in her casual skirt and short-sleeved sweater with no more than a speculative glance, but the informal attire was noted. Yes, she was off-duty.

This was definitely not the easiest conversation to start, and though she’d thought about it, Ellie was still winging it. In the end, she said simply, “Tell me why you killed them.”

Dr. Lukens barely moved a muscle. “I’m sorry?”

Ellie got up and walked over to examine a painting on the wall. It was original, if the artist’s signature in the corner was any indication of authenticity, and of a beautiful tree with a woman walking under it with a basket on her shoulder. “Let me rephrase. I think—and I have my reasons—that you were the one waiting for those two men in Greta’s dining room.” She reached out and touched the gilt of the frame with just a light brush of a fingertip. “Cranz was not your patient, but the other man we’ve identified as Paul Jayson. He has been seeing you for three years now. My guess is that he told you he had some fairly unpleasant fantasies about Greta Garrison and maybe even he gave you a timeline. Cranz was his friend ... and maybe this is not a technical term, but just as crazy. They decided to do it together.”

The tree in the painting was really remarkable. So lifelike Ellie could almost hear the leaves rustle. A sycamore, maybe.

“I think we’ve established I cannot break confidentiality.”

“Jayson was a troubled young man from a well-to-do family. His mother admitted that, which was

why she was paying for him to see you. Very into pornography and recreational drugs, which is probably how he met Cranz.”

“It is no secret that he’d been through rehab twice. We talked about it, but there needs to be a genuine desire to give up addictive behavior.”

Ellie turned. “He told you, didn’t he? What he was going to do. When he was going to do it. And you couldn’t dissuade him. So you took the next logical step. I keep trying to decide how much privacy laws annoy me. Would two men—no, let’s make it three—still be alive if you had decided to just pick up the phone and call the police?”

Dr. Lukens didn’t as much as flinch “I am not a politician, Detective. Maybe you should write to your congressman.”

That did wring a reluctant laugh. Ellie ran a hand through her hair. Damn, she was tired. “I think I can get a judge to look at the possibility that you are withholding evidence in a capital murder case, but I am going to guess those notes about Greta are long gone.”

The other woman just watched her with steady dark eyes.

“Did it occur to you to trust us to protect her?”

“The police? You do know your particular expertise is cleaning it up, not stopping it from happening?”

“Okay.” Ellie moved to stand in front of the desk, balancing a hand on the surface. “The system is imperfect, I don’t deny that. You were the one, however, who brought up duty to warn the other day. Once again, think of telling us?”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.” Georgia Lukens didn’t blink an eye. “But hypothetically, tell me, what would law enforcement have done? It isn’t feasible to protect a single citizen night and day for any length of time ... that’s ridiculous, Detective. If, as you are speculating, he did indeed have a rape fantasy.”

Not an admission, but close.

Very close.

“It is.” She had to concede that point and went on conversationally. “We enforce the law, but until it is broken there isn’t much we can do. It is not, by the way, dissimilar to what you do for a living. You pick up the pieces too, don’t you, Doctor?”

“I suppose.”

“How did she get ahold of the gun?”

“What?”

“I’m a pretty good investigator, so let me give this a shot.” Ellie smiled thinly. “You were the person waiting for Cranz and Paul Jayson. Greta would do anything you told her to do—I’ve seen her with her lawyer and her manager. She was asleep upstairs just as she told us. You killed the two of them, and then you left.”

“What an interesting theory. Prove it.”

Ellie ignored the challenge. “But, here’s a problem for us. She’s an actress. A fairly talented one, at that. What is real and what isn’t? Maybe you gave the weapon to her so she could kill her ex-husband ... but I don’t think that is exactly what happened. I can see it. You have a patient who has sick fantasies about what he wants to do to a famous star. Well, big conflict of interest, the star is also your patient. You like her. You want to protect her. And you do. Did you leave the carefully wiped clean gun behind ... maybe one you got from one of your suicidal patients? They gave it to you for safekeeping because with it in the house they were too tempted, so you thought it would never be traced. You were right. We haven’t managed that, by the way.”

Lukens just looked at her.

“But I’m unclear on how Greta got the gun. Her story about her ex-husband setting it down is implausible to me, but not impossible, I suppose.”

“He obviously was not rational if he wished to kill her.”

“Yeah, kind of a big ‘if’ in my mind.”

“What is it you think happened between Greta and her husband?” Lukens asked the question very evenly.

“Fair enough.” Ellie smiled humorlessly. “I think she called Sam and said she needed him, and she’d hid that weapon somewhere. He flew out to rush to her side because he’s wanted that all along. By her own admission, he was obsessed with her. So she let him in the house, and she killed him in the kitchen. There is no perfect crime but this is pretty close. *You* can’t turn her in without confessing what you did, and when it all comes down to it, Sam Garrison is not a great loss to this earth.”

The doctor leaned back and lifted her brows. A light flashed on the desk and Ellie assumed that meant a patient was waiting.

It took a moment, but then the other woman smiled with visible effort. “That is one incredible story, Detective MacIntosh.”

“How close is it to the truth?”

“It doesn’t matter, if you can’t prove it.”

“True. I was interested to discover with a little probing that your ex-husband was a sharpshooter in the military. I think it was your expression when we came to talk to you the first time. I can completely see how you would not expect the gun you so carefully wiped and left behind—good call, by the way, disposing of it involves all kinds of risks—was going to be used again by Greta in a third homicide. Did you underestimate her?”

Lukens turned her head, her dark hair glistening in the sunlight coming in the window. “Are you looking for a confession? If so, I am afraid you’ll be disappointed.”

“That remark seems like one to me.”

“Have you ever been in an abusive relationship, Detective?”

Ellie shook her head and answered quietly, “No. But I have answered domestic violence calls.”

Lukens rubbed her nose and dipped her head, laughing softly. “So when you arrived you had a

badge, and a gun, and were not that terrified woman cowering in the corner of the kitchen.”

“Tell me about that terrified woman.” Ellie studied her expression. “I want to know.”

“I assure you, you don’t.”

The glimmer of truth was enlightening. “*You* were a battered wife. The military husband? The one who taught you to shoot?”

“I never said that.”

“Is that why you feel such empathy toward Greta?”

“I’m not going to play your game.”

“As far as I can tell, it isn’t a game. Three men are dead. It is my job to find out why. Tell me, Dr. Lukens, do you have any knowledge of how those two victims ended up in Greta’s house, or how the third one was shot in her kitchen? Give me a decent answer, and I’ll be on my way.”

Dr. Lukens looked at her steadily. “I have never met Mr. Crazz and I cannot discuss my patients with you.”

Ellie knew a brick wall when she came up against one. “I will make a note of that. And I doubt Greta can be charged; she was surprisingly thorough.”

“It was self-preservation.”

“I am more inclined to think it was premeditated murder.”

“Sooner or later, Sam would have killed her. Justice is served.”

“We don’t get to decide—”

“But sometimes we do. Like the serial killer you killed up north or The Burner your partner shot. Neither one of them stood trial. You’ve killed in self-defense.”

That stopped her. Ellie took in a deep breath. “I can’t argue that, but what we are talking about is different.”

“I don’t see it that way, but then I know things you don’t.”

“We could push for a court order for her file.”

Georgia Lukens smiled. “And all that would do is provide you with information showing that, indeed, she truly believed her life was in danger.”

The confidence in her voice meant she was probably telling the truth, at least about that.

The light blinked again and Ellie noted it. “Thank you for your time, Doctor. By the way, I like the painting. Lefort. I’ve never heard of him.”

“I like it too. The artist was a French doctor. He was married to an Englishwoman who was executed by the Nazis for her work with the Allies during World War Two. It reminds me of courageous women, rather like you, Detective, willing to take risks to help others.”

Point taken.

“Very subtle.” Ellie said the words ironically and glanced at the other door. “I assume you want me to use the separate exit. I know how much you value the privacy of your patients.”

“I would appreciate it,” Lukens answered serenely.

Three days later

The package leaned against her desk, brown paper against the plain metal. Ellie paused in the act of putting away her phone, hand arrested near her pocket, and then gave a soft exhale that was almost a laugh as she registered the size and shape.

Touché.

“There’s no return address.” Grasso held a file, his gray eyes as intense as ever. “Not snooping, I promise, just waiting for you to come in, and I am a detective, after all. Packages delivered in plain brown wrapping always interest me.”

“I know who sent it.” *Very clever, Dr. Lukens.*

“Oh?”

“It’s a painting.”

“I see. Do people often randomly send you artwork?” Her partner looked about as amused as he ever did, which was rare.

“It’s hardly random.” Ellie squared her shoulders. “Now then, you must be hovering by my desk for a reason on your day off again. What do we have?”

“Suspicious death on the south side.” Those silver eyes gleamed. He liked his job far too much.

With resignation, she murmured, “Let’s go.”

Read on for a preview of

Buried

Kate Watterson

Available in January 2014 from Tom Doherty Associates



A TOR BOOK

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Prologue

White jagged streaks split the sky and the deafening blast, only a few seconds later, meant the lightning had hit all too close.

These early fall storms could be really nasty.

Time to get off the water.

Roger Bridges nudged the canoe toward the bank, paddle dipping fast, his back hunched as the storm roared in.

He fought his way under an overhanging branch because he had no choice—by now the lake was wild, the wind coming from the north, waves hitting the sides of the craft, slapping water upward into his clothes and face. The roar of the wall of rain swept in like a force of enemy aircraft, low and hollow.

Dragging the canoe out wasn't the easiest maneuver, but he'd paid three hundred bucks for it and wasn't about to let it go just because he was going to get wet. He'd seen the piles of thunderheads but figured he'd have time—wrong on that score.

What the hell was he thinking? This was Wisconsin, and the weather was about as predictable as a cornered rabid badger, and the hail was coming sideways and hurt.

He banked the canoe, dragging it up, rain coming down hard now, his hair dripping into his eyes ...

And that was when he fell into the grave

Chapter One

September, 1957

She was cold. Shivering. Her body reacted to every sound in the creaky old house. The wind was rising, whistling through the eaves, and the old birches outside groaned and protested in a primal whine.

The one board in the parlor always complained when stepped on just right and she made that mistake, the protest loud and damning.

No.

The floor was chilly, but she was freezing already, so it didn't matter.

This wasn't perfect, but she didn't want perfect, she just wanted it over. Lies were tiresome, there was just no two ways about it. A burden, something to cart around with you all day and take to bed at night. Her mother had always said so, and she was beginning to agree.

Around the corner there was an oak sideboard, massive, with pretty dishes and an engraved silver coffee urn, looming in the filtered light. There was an old sofa, a carriage lamp, and the smell of roses lingered from a vase full of blooms from the garden, but the flowers were starting to wither, so the sweet odor was tinged with decay. Accidentally she bumped the table and a few of the petals fell, whispering against the polished wood.

The knife was in her hand. Not heavy—a lightweight steel made for fileting fish, curved, the blade Finnish, something she'd gotten actually from her father, inherited when he died. There was a hint of rust along the edge because she didn't oil it like he had, but it was still as sharp as death.

And death was part of this chill night.

September, present day, Oneida County

The day was cold and Detective Ellie MacIntosh winced and adjusted her collar in the mist. Raindrops were even gathering on her lashes. So much for Indian summer. The entire week before it had been in the seventies, but that party seemed to be over. The leaves were starting to take on just enough color to indicate summer was going to fade before long. It looked like it might be an early fall.

“What is it I need to see again?” The question was reasonable because it was hardly the right weather for a stroll through the woods. Damp, too cool, the pine needles underfoot slippery, the trees dripping.

“A hole.” Her grandfather stopped as if he wasn't entirely sure where he was going, and then veered off a little to the left. “Over here.”

That didn't really fill in the blanks. She carefully stepped over a fallen log with fungus the size

and shape of human ears on the side. “Excuse me, but, we are out in this to look at a hole? Can you be a shade more specific?”

He glanced back. His face was reddened by the crisp breeze and his pale eyes direct. The cold wind ruffled his white hair. As usual, he wore a plaid shirt, a tan coat over it, and his jeans were so worn they must have been three shades lighter than when he originally bought them. His boots were covered in mud, but it was wet out. “Just follow me, Eleanor.”

Fine.

She disliked her given name, but could hardly tell him that since she’d been named after his mother, so she instead glanced around the wooded hill. At the bottom of the slope there was the same lake she’d swam in as a child so many times, and right now it held a flotilla of fallen maple leaves, starting to gather in a circle thanks to the wind, the water swirling. The trees were turning early, not a good sign. It had been awhile since they’d had a truly frigid winter by Wisconsin standards.

Mystified, she watched her grandfather tramp between a ridge of white pines and slender birches and followed.

What is this?

Her first glimmer of what was really happening made her stumble over a small rock. She was no longer paying attention to the terrain, her foot sliding on the hill before she caught her balance with one hand behind her, skidding on the fragrant pine needles.

What was in front of her was not a hole. Well, it was, but it was roughly square and reminiscent of something grimmer than that generic label.

The partially revealed outline in the moist soil was of a human skull, and one fragile, broken hand didn’t help the situation. The grinning skull had a missing tooth, and a wash of horror swept through her despite a career in law enforcement and experience with more than a few gruesome sights.

Not a hole.

A grave.

“What the hell?” She hadn’t meant to blurt that out, especially in front of a man she revered, so the question was quickly amended. Her grandfather was more than a little old-fashioned. “I meant: What on earth? When did you find this?”

“This morning. And I didn’t find it.”

Her grandfather was breathing heavily enough that she felt a flicker of worry. “Are you all right?”

The nod he gave was curt. “The storm must have washed it out. That rain came through like a runaway locomotive.”

No doubt a correct conclusion. When the front swept in, it had arrived with a vengeance as the temperature plummeted a good forty degrees. It would warm up again, but not today.

She certainly felt cold through and through. A frigid droplet tricked down her neck.

“It looks old to me.” He stared at the skeleton, but stood a few feet away.

If he meant those brittle bones, it looked 100 percent, extremely dead to her. The age would

probably have to be determined by a forensic anthropologist, but impossible to gauge on a wet hillside half covered in dirt.

But definitely in the dead category.

“It obviously isn’t new, but old is a relative term. At a glance a buried skeleton is not in your provenance of expertise or mine either, for that matter.”

That was putting it mildly. He leaned on a walking stick he often carried but never used. “So, what now?”

The phone call that had summoned her up north hadn’t exactly prepared her for this, but he had never been a talkative man, which was why she had dropped everything and made the drive from Wausau where she’d been visiting her sister. Jody had agreed. If Robert MacIntosh called, it was urgent. That he’d specifically asked Ellie to come alone made sense now. If he wanted help, he needed it, and this seemed to bear out that conviction. She managed to ask calmly, “Have you called the police?”

“I called *you*.”

“Not quite the same.”

He looked at her, his face not precisely amused, but still the corner of his mouth lifted. “You are still a detective for the Milwaukee police, right? Big-city law enforcement. The only person I know who has shot more than one man. So who else should I call? You *are* the police. So technically, I have called them.”

The testiness in his voice was a surprise, but maybe he was more rattled than he cared to admit. The reference to two recent cases and the way they’d been handled made her experience a moment of chagrin, but it had been all over the television so she knew he’d heard about it. She didn’t really think he was being critical as much as asking for her help in a roundabout way.

It was a little interesting to her they had never discussed what happened. How was that conversation supposed to go anyway? *Hey, Grandpa, did you hear about me shooting a serial killer?*

Not her style, and actually, not really his style either. They were politely close, if such a thing were possible. She adored him, but the affection was implied since he didn’t wish to talk about it, so she didn’t bring it up.

It was hardly as if she’d never seen a dead body, but the outline of the half-turned skull got to her. It was maybe more the lonely spot and the bleak, gray day. “I am a detective, but this is not my jurisdiction either. How about 911? Lots of people use it, especially when they find the evidence of a crime.”

“Do I have evidence of a crime?” The shrug he gave was pragmatic, but she thought he looked a little pale except for his cheeks being reddened by the sharp breeze. “Make them all rush out here for what? There is no one to be saved and it seems to me time doesn’t really matter much to those old bones. Waste of tax dollars to have everyone come with screaming ambulances when it is obvious

whoever is buried here can't be helped."

There was validity to that logic—though she didn't agree completely. Her job as a homicide detective was to help, even if it was to only obtain justice for the victim. They both stood for a few moments staring at the half-exposed skeleton. "No, he or she can't be saved. I'll concede that."

The trees wept, her coat was soaked, and this situation was beyond the scope of her experience, even as a law-enforcement officer. She was far too used to blood and death, but this was not her usual kind of case.

Not her case at all, in fact.

Ellie let out a slow breath and reminded herself that he was eighty-plus years old and maybe he didn't realize that since she now worked in Milwaukee this was not going to be her investigation. She unclipped her phone from her pocket. "Let me get the sheriff's office and they will have someone here as soon as possible. It will probably be just a deputy at first and then the coroner as soon as he can respond. At that point, they can decide what to do next. I can't really do more than that."

It took two transfers but she finally got through to the correct department once she explained the situation, and the dispatcher promised to send out an officer. Since it wasn't exactly an emergency, Ellie just gently pushed the button on her phone when the call was done and moved a few steps closer. "Any ideas?"

"About what?"

"Who it is?"

Crouching down, her grandfather frowned at the skull as if he could possibly recognize the person, his face pallid in the late afternoon light. "Don't think so. This is land our family has owned for many, many years."

Ellie glanced around and immediately started processing the scene in her mind. It seemed like a strange place to bury a body. On a steep hillside? The slope was at least at a thirty-degree angle. Then again, it wasn't easy to walk on either, so discovery would be unlikely. "You said you didn't find it. Who did?"

"Kid fishing on the lake in a canoe stumbled across the skeleton trying to get off the water as the storm rolled through. Roger Bridges. You've met his parents. Stepped right on it, or so he says. Scared him half to death."

Human remains had a way of doing that to you. She winced inwardly. She believed the part about him taking refuge on the shore, but that Roger had contaminated the scene would not help forensics when the team came in. It looked like maybe he'd cleared away some of the dirt with his hands too, probably because he couldn't quite believe it. "Why didn't *he* call the sheriff's department?"

As if it made perfect sense, her grandfather explained, "Because it is on my property. His folks have a place across the lake. If it hadn't started to rain so hard so fast, he would have gone back to their dock. This is closer. Roger came to the house, and when he told me about it, I really didn't believe him at first either. Told him it must have been a dead deer or something. Once the weather

settled down, I came out to look. Then I called you. I knew you would have a handle on how to take care of it.”

Exasperated, she searched for something respectful to say. *Take care of it?* That answer was easy. Try calling for local law enforcement, which is what should have been done in the first place.

Her grandfather straightened. “Should we go back to the house? Kind of wet here and I could make a pot of coffee while we wait on them.”

“I...”

She stopped in the middle of her sentence. Something wasn’t quite right.

Just the two of them. The wind eerily rustling the leaves, the water silver and rippling, and a very dead silence.

Ellie thought uneasily: *You aren’t surprised enough.*

It wasn’t anything in particular, but she knew Robert Lawrence MacIntosh, and she felt it. Part of her job was reading people and it was just *there*.

Whoever lay in that grave, he just wasn’t surprised. Felt the need to report it because this kid knew, but really hadn’t wanted to call it in.

What the hell?

He stood there, this strong, kind man she’d known ever since the day she was born, his gaze averted as he turned, a lock of white hair blowing across his brow.

Were it anyone—*anyone*—else, she would start a rapid-fire litany of questions, but she found she didn’t want to ask them.

“You are a police officer,” he said it as if it gave him some sort of anchor. “A detective. When something like this turns up, what happens next?”

The breeze made her shiver almost as much as the sight of those bleached, deserted bones. “When the deputy arrives he’ll ask about the victim. Do you know who it could be, that sort of thing.”

“Thought that might be it. Then what?”

“They’ll exhume the body from the makeshift grave. I predict there will be crime scene techs all over as they look for clues, but it also looks to me, from an inexpert view because I am not a medical examiner, that this body has been there a long, long time, so I doubt they’ll find anything. Most of the evidence will have deteriorated.”

She stopped, took in a breath. Because she was a police officer, and because this was not just her job but a sudden immediate problem she had never seen popping up on her horizon but was still there, staring her in the face, she weighed her next words. She tended to try to meet problems head on. “As I said, they are going to ask you, so let me ask first. Do you know who this might be?”

“I can’t say that I do.”

But he didn’t look her directly in the eye as he spoke. Instead he gazed out over the rippling water of the gray lake.

Dear God, one of the people she respected most in the world was lying to her.

She remarked very quietly, "I would love a cup of coffee."

* * *

Detective Jason Santiago had been out of uniform for years now, but the rhythm of it came back naturally.

Officer Danni Crawford got the message from dispatch just as she was pulling out of the parking lot where she'd answered her last call, which proved to be simply a report on an unruly customer at a pharmacy. The man could not get his Schedule 2 meds filled for a few days and was starting to feel the pangs of withdrawal from a very strong narcotic if his erratic behavior was an indication. A few words with him and looking into those bloodshot eyes, Jason was reminded how little he liked the ramifications of addiction. The unruly customer was convinced finally that screaming at the pharmacist was not going to get him anywhere but into a jail cell and he'd left peacefully enough.

Job done. Problem solved, at least to the extent that Crawford did not have to haul anyone off in cuffs. Jason, just along for the ride because he was still officially on medical leave, was amused when she pleasantly asked the manager of the store—who was hovering uneasily and was the one who had called the police—who the hell thought twenty-four-hour places that could dispense narcotics were a good idea?

Corporate, he'd answered. Truthfully, he looked tired with his rumpled shirt and askew tie. Then he added, "And I couldn't agree more with you, Officer."

She wasn't enthusiastic about her reassignment to this late shift, but beggars really couldn't afford to be choosers she told Jason as they went out to get back into the squad car. Promotions required sacrifice.

"Don't I know it." Recently he'd taken two bullets in the line of duty.

Danni shot him a sidelong look as she started the vehicle. "Yeah, I guess you do."

She was pretty enough, brown hair, pulled back at the moment in a no-nonsense ponytail because she was on the job. Danni was a little overweight, but there was nothing wrong with something a man could hold on to was always his attitude. Besides, though he doubted many people would believe it, he valued personality above physical beauty and she was, in short, a nice girl and a good cop.

Her radio sputtered and she answered.

The dispatcher said urgently without a hint of the usual boredom, "We've got a shooting and we think there's possibly an officer down. The phones are lighting up. How close are you to KK?"

KK meant Kinnickinnic Avenue. Jason's heart rate shot up. *Officer down*. Close, but it was a fairly long street ... *officer down*?

"Minutes away," Crawford said, her voice catching. "What do we have?"

"Shots fired at what seems like a routine traffic stop. We aren't sure what happened, but we need as many officers to respond as quickly as possible."

It was a Saturday, and the street would be busy. "Give me the address. I'm close. I'm already

driving.”

Maybe it was just as well Jason had asked, out of sheer boredom, if he could ride along.

KK had recently become retro chic and there were nice but quirky restaurants and little shops where tourists and locals browsed. The sound of sirens shrieked everywhere as they sped along and it wasn't hard to figure out exactly where they needed to be.

The man sprawled in the street in a spreading pool of blood was definitely in uniform, his hat lying a few feet away, one arm out flung, the other limp at his side. His patrol car was parked, but the door was still open.

“Oh God.” Danni's voice echoed horror. “Jason, oh God. I think it's Chad.”

She didn't quite get the car in park before she was out and running. He did it for her, feeling the jerk as the transmission locked, a chill creeping over his skin.

She shouldered her way through the crowd, Jason following, and knelt by the side of the fallen officer. With shaking hands she sought a pulse as the sirens neared.

Jason also recognized him with a shock that froze his muscles.

No ambulance with even the most skilled emergency personnel was going to save him, he realized, looking down at his still face. The man was dead.

And Chad Brown and Danni had dated, for what? Four years now?

Jason reached down and touched her shoulder. “Hey.”

Danni started trembling uncontrollably. She crawled to the curb and vomited, her body reacting to her emotions so powerfully she couldn't help it.

This is not happening, Jason thought numbly.

Chad Brown. Jesus, it was Chad.

Danni and Chad had never said they were serious, but Jason had seen firsthand how comfortable they were with each other. Lovers, friends, colleagues ...

As she dropped her head, probably to keep from passing out, in the distance, someone said, “Ma'am—Officer—you okay?”

“I've got this.” Jason's voice was curt but he was hurting too, in shock, a little paralyzed by what had happened. “Hey, hold on. Come on, Danni, he'd want you to keep it together.”

“I know.” She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and sat up, but she was starkly pale and trembling.

Definitely not fit to be in charge. He said quietly, “Stay here. This is a homicide anyway. Let me handle it. Right?”

He did. Producing his badge—no one needed to know he wasn't officially on duty—firing off questions about witnesses, directing the other officers arriving on the scene to look for casings in the street, ostensibly taking over even though he really didn't have the authority at the moment, but someone needed to be besides the pale-faced officer who had just emptied her stomach into the gutter.

She crawled back to the body and touched Chad's face.

When she looked up, her face was streaked with tears. “I’ve been trying to drop the weight, you know? I kept telling him no engagement until I lose twenty pounds. He always said he loved me just the way I am. To stop worrying about it so much. Why did I worry?”

Man, if there was anything he was bad at, it was a moment like this. Jason crouched down next to her and said the most profound thing he could think of.

“Whoever did this is fucking going down.”

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About the Author

KATE WATTERSON grew up on a steady diet of mystery/suspense novels. If it involves murder and intrigue, she is bound to be hooked. Kate also writes award-winning historical novels as Emma Wildes. She lives in rural Indiana with her husband, three children, and a temperamental cat named Poot. Visit her at www.katewatterson.com.



Jon McMahel

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

BLEED

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Things are really heating up for homicide
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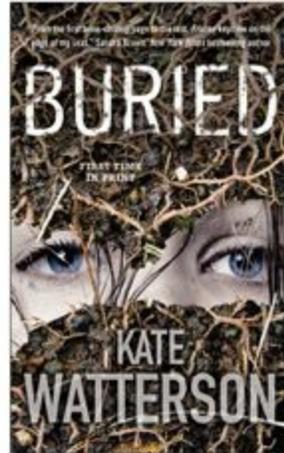


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