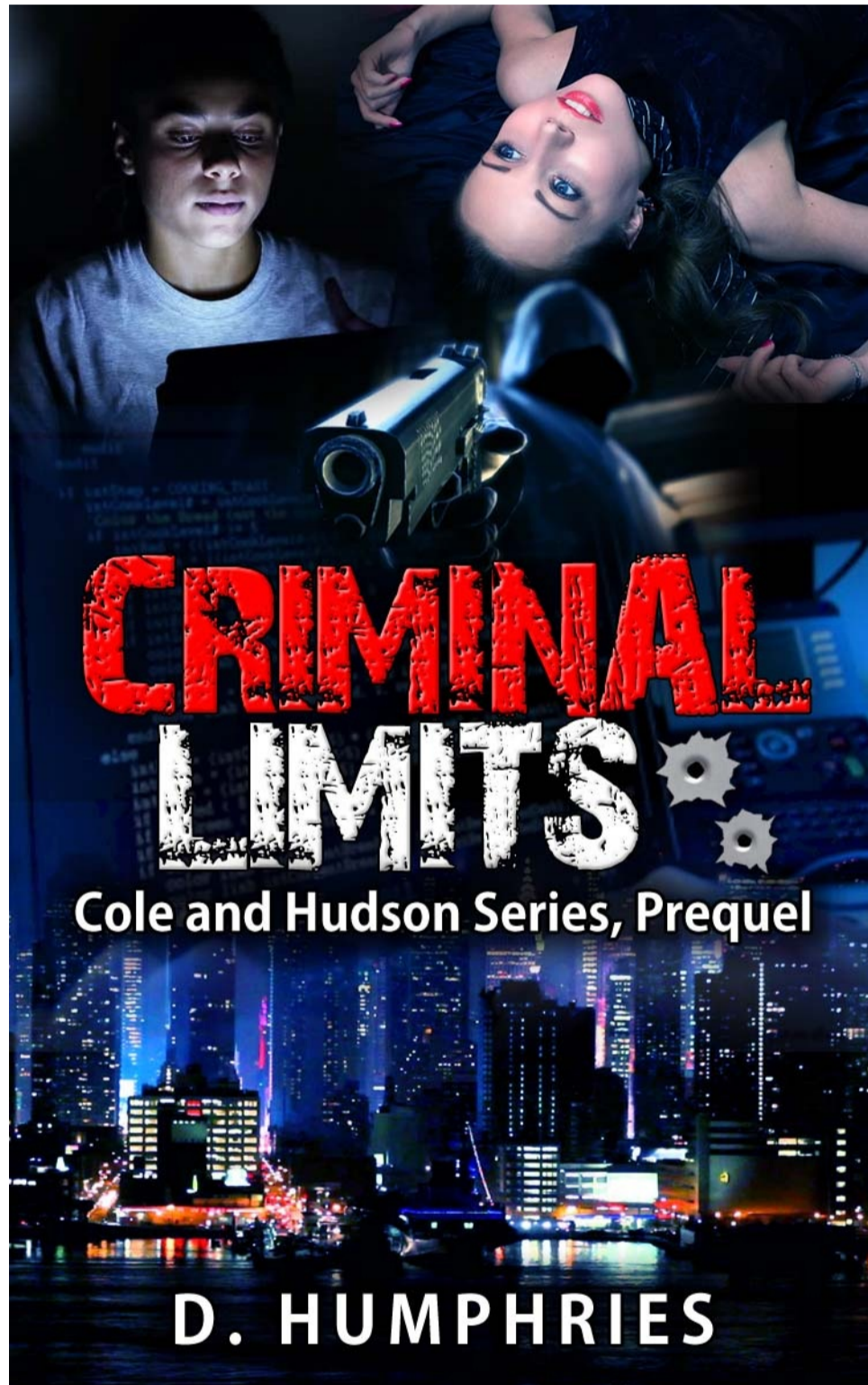


# CRIMINAL LIMITS

Cole and Hudson Series, Prequel

D. HUMPHRIES



# Criminal Limits

## **We hope you enjoy reading this Imaginix, Inc. Book**

Sign up for our newsletter and receive special offers,  
Access to bonus content, and info on the  
Latest new releases and other great Books from  
Imaginix, Inc.

Visit us online to sign up at:

[D. Humphries](#)

- Chapter Excerpts from selected new releases
- Original Author and Editor Articles
- Audio Excerpts
- Bestseller News
- Electronic Newsletters
- Contests, Quizzes, and Polls
- Fun, Quirky Recommendation Center

# Criminal Limits

D. Humphries

Imaginix, Inc.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real person, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

If you purchase this book without a cover you should be aware that this book may have been stolen property and reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher. In such case neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

Copyright © 2016 by D. Humphries

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

*Cover design by Manish Joshi*

Imaginix, Inc.  
2220 Meridian Blvd  
Suite #HE179  
Minden, NV 89423

Visit our website at [DianneHumphries.com](http://DianneHumphries.com)

Free book/Never to Be Sold

# Acknowledgments

My thanks to all of my friends and family who have been there to encourage and support me.

I would especially like to thank Ann for *always* being there...

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter Six</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter Nine</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter Ten</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Chapter Eleven</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter Twelve</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Prologue</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>54</b>





# Chapter One

The new moon illuminated the city streets as if it were daylight. The high-rise buildings looked like iron trees in a blacktop jungle. They were each beautiful in their own right and made the city stunning and extremely picturesque.

Millions of people worked in the city. Every day people shuffled from the subways, ferry's and cars to their office buildings, to one of the hundreds of restaurants for a quick lunch, back to work and then home again.

Emily Barrett was an exceptional young woman who happened to be in the right place at the right time to land an awesome job. She was one of the millions who made their way into the city each day. It didn't hurt that her father knew the owner of the firm, Alantix, where she just happened to land that prestigious job.

The days were long, filled with intense work analyzing data and in particular, numbers. It was a good thing that she was exceptional at her job because a lot of her co-workers knew the circumstances surrounding her hire. Most of them had to work their way up the ladder to achieve Emily's position.

After a long day, Emily walked out of her office building as she said goodbye to several of her favorite colleagues. She was going to the place she always went after work: the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Gym. Her office just happened to be located one block away from New York City's famous 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Since Emily was a regular at the gym, she would always tease and joke with the men who frequented the gym whether they were married or not. It didn't really matter to her. Several men were enamored with her and it wasn't unusual for her to leave with several business cards and/or phone numbers each time she visited.

It also didn't help that Emily possessed the perfect body. She was 5'10" and slim. She was blessed with beautiful blue eyes and long, lush black hair. It was no wonder men would slip her their phone number hoping that they

would be one of the lucky ones to receive a phone call from this beauty.

After her normal workout circuit, she showered and made her way to the parking garage where she parked her prized BMW in the same space every day.

She was only a few steps from her car when someone approached her. Since she was not expecting to see anyone in the parking garage, it took her completely by surprise and caught her off guard.

“Hand over the information...NOW!”

The lone perpetrator demanded that Emily give up the information she had been gathering. At the same time, Emily saw a rifle being pulled from underneath the long black raincoat.

Emily was in shock when she managed to get a few words out, “I don’t have it yet.”

“You have had more than enough time and I am not going to wait any longer! We paid good money for this data and now you are telling me you have nothing! This is totally unacceptable!”

“I no longer have access to that particular server where the data resides. I have run out of time to handle your request. It looks like the data will be unattainable right now.”

This made the perpetrator angrier even more. Emily had been given a substantial advance when the request was made and this was making the perp extremely upset upon hearing this news.

“What do you mean you no longer have access? Do you know what you are? You are an epic failure! You are no longer of any use to me! Hand over the cash down payment I paid you a few weeks ago!”

“I can’t,” said Emily. Tears were now streaming down her face. She wanted to scream but she knew no one would hear her.

“What do you mean you *can’t?!?*”

“Do you see this beautiful BMW? That is where the cash went. I bought this car right after you gave me the money.”

“Not the right answer, honey!”

Within minutes, it was all over before it even began. The perpetrator gave Emily one blow to the chest with the butt of the gun. She fell to the ground with such a force that it cracked her head against the cement floor. Emily’s blood began to run down the parking garage slab and through the drainage grate.

The perpetrator turned and walked as quickly as possible to the staircase and headed out onto the open street.

Emily was left on the cold cement to die a slow, painful death with no help in sight...



## Chapter Two

For Olivia Hudson, it was another typical day. Up at dawn, a run through the park, shower and off to Starbucks to pick up two cups of coffee—a Grande Salted Caramel Mocha Frappuccino for her and a Grande Café Latte for her partner, Daniel J. “DJ” McPherson—before heading to her assigned precinct office in mid-town Manhattan.

As soon as she reached the office, and before she could hand DJ his coffee, he told her they were assigned a case.

“Morning Olivia. We have already been given the task of heading to a crime scene. The vic was murdered in the parking garage near her office building and gym she frequented quite often,” DJ informed her.

“Well, off we go then. Do you realize this will be our 200<sup>th</sup> homicide?”

“Wow! Are you serious? That’s hard to believe. What’s even more hard to believe is the fact that you have kept track!”

“Well, we have worked together for five years so I guess we have solved more crimes than I thought. I don’t keep a running tab...I just happened to look on the computer the other day to see how many cases we have been assigned. This will make the 200<sup>th</sup>.”

Olivia is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation detective. Her grandfather and father were also NYC detectives. Both of these distinguished men became police commissioner with her father still on active duty.

As a child, she always wanted to become a cop. It only seemed natural after all. Her father was heralded everywhere he went because of his ethics, fairness and ability to solve crimes quickly and efficiently. You could say he had a nose for crime and the apple did not fall far from the tree in Olivia’s case.

Olivia was a straight “A” student at NYU and on the swim team. With her swimming ability, she assisted in taking the team to the championships

her senior year. Immediately after graduation, and after obtaining her degree in Criminal Justice-Crime Scene Investigation-she applied to the police academy and was admitted.

After graduating from the academy, she met an aspiring lawyer named Michael Hudson. Michael worked at a prestigious law firm representing defense cases for known criminals. Olivia happened to catch one of these criminals and was testifying in court when Michael caught her eye.

After dating for about a year and a half, they were married. The couple has one son, Nicholas (or Nick).

Olivia felt that even after 200 crime scenes, it never gets any easier. To walk up on a victim who has had their life taken is something she has never gotten used to. She becomes their advocate to find the truth. She is there to be their voice since they no longer have one.

DJ felt the same way. It has never failed to amaze him that one person can take another's life without any thought given to how many other people it affects. For DJ, that is the hardest part of the job—notifying the family.

Daniel J. "DJ" McPherson is an awesome sight to behold. His stature gives way to fear in the eyes of criminals. If you were to see the 6'3" man coming after you, it might make you think twice before you give him a hard time or try to run.

DJ has been Olivia's partner for going on 5 years. Their relationship was very professional and they never crossed the line to personal. In fact, at this point, they were more like brother and sister.

To find someone who thinks like you, reacts to evidence the same way you do and who literally can read your mind before you even speak the words, is a rare find. It's the reason Olivia and DJ work so well together and have been partners for so long.

Olivia wonders why she has been paired with him all these years and figures that it probably for the previous reasons but also because she might be there to straighten him out. With others, he is elusive and brash but never with Olivia.

Olivia and DJ arrive on scene. The coroner, Amanda Smith, was examining the body which was sprawled out all over the concrete. Whoever did this to her really wanted her to never tell the tale.

The Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) were placing markers, taking pictures and video taping the crime scene.

DJ approached Amanda. “What have we got here?”

“From first impressions, it appears she was slammed with the butt of a rifle right in the middle of her chest. The force of the blow knocked her backwards and she hit and cracked her head on the cement. I won’t know for sure until I get her in the lab and perform an autopsy, but that’s my first impression.”

Olivia picked up the victim’s purse and started rifling through it. She pulled out the wallet and discovered it was Emily Barrett from her driver’s license. She surmised that this was not a robbery just because of the fact that the purse was left behind. Everything in the wallet appeared to also be intact.

Just then, Amanda, spoke up, “It appears the time of death was approximately 8pm yesterday evening. She was found by one of her co-workers who had left the office a little later than usual last night.”

Olivia spoke up next. “It appears the perpetrator was waiting behind the column over there and approached the victim from this direction (pointing to the column). And, from the angle of the impact on her chest, it appears that the perpetrator was slightly taller than Emily.”

DJ concurred with Olivia and added, “Poor kid. Never had a chance.”





# Chapter Three

On the drive back to the office with DJ, Olivia started reminiscing about a camping trip she went on with her father. She was about 10 years old and her older brother was 12.

Olivia always looked up to her father...always. She had immense respect for him because of the positions he held at the police department. When he said jump, she would ask how high?

Her dad was a man of stature. He was 6'4", tall, handsome, fit, and a devout Christian. He was devoted to his family, his religion and his job.

On this particular trip, Olivia remembers having a serious conversation with her dad. She wanted to know, in his particular field, how he deals with all the homicides, murder and mayhem.

Olivia has always had a soft heart. Even to this day she can't help but take it personally when she interacts with the family who has to be notified of their deceased loved one. The family, over time, eventually becomes family to her.

Ever since her father gave her the following advice, she has carried it forward with her throughout her career.

He told her, "be the voice for the deceased person in order to tell their story." And that is exactly what she has done on every single crime she has ever been assigned.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back to reality and Olivia is trying to figure out how to tell Emily's family. Her dad is a prominent person in the business community so this was going to be especially hard for him.

They pulled up to Emily's parents home to deliver the bad news. The

home was a sprawling estate on Long Island so she had plenty of time to think about what she was going to say.

As they walked up to the house, she became extremely upset. This young woman had her whole life in front of her. Such a senseless death. There was no good reason for her to have been killed in such a senseless way.

After they rang the doorbell, Mr. Barrett answered the door. By the look on his face, it was apparent he knew what was coming before either one of them ever opened their mouth.

Mr. Barrett said, "Please come in. Sarah, you need to come downstairs. Two police detectives are here and it doesn't look good."

Olivia spoke first, "Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, this is never easy. And, it is even worse when it is a young person. I hate to be the one to tell you this, but Emily has been involved in an accident."

From the look on Emily's parent's faces, they knew what was coming next.

DJ now spoke, "It appears Emily had come from the gym because she was still wearing her workout clothes. She was found close by her car in the parking garage which is near her office building. Unfortunately, it appears someone approached Emily and an argument might have ensued. Her chest was hit with what appears to be the butt of a rifle and the force of that blow sent her falling to the ground where she hit her head on the cement. The coroner will give us exact details but it appears it was the fall and concussion to her head which was the cause of death."

Both sat there in utter shock. They could not believe what they were hearing. Their baby girl, their only child, just gone. She was taken without a final word, a final goodbye...nothing!

Mrs. Barrett was beside herself. Even Mr. Barrett could not console her. She sat there crying for what seemed like an hour but in fact was only about 10 minutes.

After the initial shock wore off, the not-so-fun part of the interview began. Olivia and DJ started asking them questions to which the answers

might lead them to a suspect.

“Do you know of anyone who would want to harm Emily? Is she in a relationship? Does she have an abusive boyfriend? Friends? Anything you can remember will help us in catching the killer,” Olivia asked.

Mr. Barrett spoke first, “No. We don’t know of any enemies. Emily has never been in trouble. Everyone loved her because she was beautiful, smart and the life of the party. She had that ‘magnetic personality’ that everyone was naturally drawn to.”

DJ asked Mrs. Barrett to write down family member names and phone numbers. Every stone had to be turned even if it meant looking closely at the family. The Barrett’s understood and said, “We just want justice for Emily. Please do whatever you can to catch her killer.”

DJ asked hesitantly, “Standard procedure question. Sorry. Where were you both yesterday evening?”

Mr. Barrett spoke up, “We understand. We were both here watching a movie yesterday evening.”

“I’m sorry I had to ask. Thank you for your cooperation. We’ll be in touch.”

DJ and Olivia left the Barrett’s. Olivia couldn’t help but feel sorry for the family. It was always such a shock to the system to have to process all of the information being delivered. And, of course, it was the worst news possible.

Olivia and DJ were heading over to Emily’s apartment to see if they could find any clues. Who was the last person she interacted with? Did she have a boyfriend? Does she have a computer so the Digital Forensics division can check the hard drive for any clues?

Upon arriving at the apartment, the Superintendent opened the door so DJ and Olivia could have access. The building was not in the best neighborhood but not exactly in a crime-ridden area either.

After entering Emily’s apartment, they could see that she was not the best housekeeper but it appeared nothing was necessarily out of place. She did possess a laptop so they grabbed that in order to take it back to the office.

On their way out of the building, they stopped to talk to the Superintendent.

“Did you happen to see or hear anything unusual last night?” asked Olivia.

The superintendent said, “No. Nothing unusual. I did notice that Emily did not come home last night. Is she okay?”

“No. Actually she was the victim of a crime last night. Emily won’t be coming home again.”

“Oh no! She was such a nice young woman. Who would want to harm someone as beautiful and nice as Emily? She would have various men coming and going at various times of the day and night but it didn’t appear any of them were around on a long-term basis.”

“Well, that’s what we are trying to determine. If you can remember anything, please give us a call. In the meantime, can you please get us a copy of the footage from the camera facing the front door? Just give either one of us a call when it is ready for pickup. Thanks for all of your cooperation today.”

“No problem. I’ll get that footage to you and let you know if I think of anything else. Thanks for the business cards.”

DJ and Olivia head back to the station where they each get in their separate cars. Olivia heads home to Michael and Nicholas. DJ heads out to his favorite bar where he can forget the events of the day and hang out with his buddies.



## Chapter Four

The next day, Olivia and DJ meet at the office and decide it is probably a good idea to take a look at Emily's place of employment.

"Thanks for the Starbucks, Olivia. You're the best," said DJ smiling from ear to ear.

"How was your evening?" Olivia asked.

"The usual. Met up with the guys. Had a few beers. Talked and danced with a few women. Nothing special. Home around midnight. How about you?" replied DJ.

"Well, the hubby was in an exceptionally bad mood. Don't know what I did or for that matter what Nicholas did. Poor little guy. His father really seemed to be hell-bent on alienating him last night. It doesn't take much for me to dislike him but with Nicholas, well, I just don't get it."

"Things have gotten worse?"

"Yup. Every day. This 'until death do us part' thing is really overblown. If you don't end up killing them yourself by the time it's all over...well, let's just say the path we are heading down is not where I thought I would be at this point in my life."

"Sorry to hear that Olivia. I hope this evening brings a better one than last night. Say 'hi' to the little guy for me. Let's head out to Alantix, Emily's last known place of employment, and see what we can find there."

"Alright...and thanks for always being my sounding board. I feel my marriage is really getting to the point of no return."

Olivia and DJ arrive at Alantix around 9:00am that morning. Alantix is a large IT firm in the middle of Manhattan. Emily scored this job because of her father's connections and appeared to be doing very well on the ladder to success.

The building was an opulent piece of architecture and construction.

Beautiful blue glass encompassing 70 floors of the luxurious building. Alantix owned and operated its world headquarters from here and employed approximately 3,500 employees at this location alone.

The atrium was gorgeous. It looked like you were walking into the middle of the Amazon with its beautiful waterfall and lush landscaping. There were benches surrounding the atrium so someone could sit and relax and take in all the splendor.

As soon as they entered the building, they were greeted by Tom Prescott, Senior VP of Global Affairs. He escorted the pair to his office on the 69<sup>th</sup> floor. On the ride up in the elevator, Olivia and DJ were trying to get a sense of this man's character.

“Good morning detectives Hudson and McPherson,” Tom Prescott said cheerily.

“Good morning, sir,” was repeated at the same time by Olivia and DJ.

“You can call me Tom. No need for formalities here.”

“My name is Olivia and this is my partner DJ.”

“I understand you are two of NYC's finest detectives. I hope we can help clear up any questions you have regarding Ms. Barrett's time here with us. Such a shame what happened to her. Extremely nice and brilliant young lady.”

They stepped off the elevator and walked down the hall to Tom's corner office.

Have you ever heard the saying that nothing was spared in decorating the senior staff offices? Mr. Prescott's office was decorated in a wild sort of opulent jungle theme. He appeared to be a big game hunter and had no qualms about displaying his 'trophies' hanging from just about every wall.

“I hope these trophies don't intimidate or scare you. I love hunting big game in Africa and my wife has a real problem displaying these heads at the house!”

“No. No worries here,” as DJ and Olivia looked at each and shrugged

their shoulders.

“Now, Mr. Presc...I mean, Tom, can you tell us a little bit about Ms. Barrett or shall we say Emily?”

“Well, let’s see. Emily was hired by myself a few years back after her father approached me and asked if we could help out his only daughter. Emily graduated from the Wharton School of Business so I was more than happy to take a look at her resume to see what we could do. I hired her shortly thereafter and she has been here ever since.

Emily was well-liked here at the office. She was very good with numbers and data on the computer and in the dark recesses of the hidden files. Her personality made her a perfect fit for the division where she was assigned. She had access to a lot of top-secret information that only a privileged few were allowed to see.

She was bubbly and everyone got along with her, mostly the men, so there were no problems with co-workers. On the personal side, she was a flirt and I heard she was a man chaser who was in short-term relationships all the time. She was always getting men in trouble with their wives. One woman in particular, Sheryl McBride, the wife of one of our employees, almost punched her lights out one time at the 6<sup>th</sup> Street gym.”

“Can you elaborate on that a bit more, Tom?” asked Olivia.

“Sure. I heard she has pissed off a lot of the women but the men loved her and she would flatter anyone who would listen to her. So when I heard the rumor that Mrs. McBride almost clocked her I wasn’t surprised. But you can’t fire someone for being a flirt now can you?” laughing as he said this.

“How about someone she worked closely with? Anybody she was paired with to work on any special cases?” asked DJ.

“Well, now that you ask, she happened to be working with Mark DeSalvo on a special case for the F.B.I. gathering some information about offshore accounts. They wanted someone with a great nose for anything unusual and she definitely fits the bill.”

Olivia and DJ’s ears perked up. They readjusted their posture in their



respective chairs and were now sitting up straight.

“Can you tell us a little more about this situation?” asked Olivia.

“I really don’t know that much about it since it is an F.B.I. probe. You might want to speak with Mark DeSalvo.”

“Okay. Thanks. Where can we find this Mr. DeSalvo?”

“34<sup>th</sup> floor. I’ll call him and let him know you’re heading his way.”

“Thanks.” And with that, they took their leave and walked to the elevator to find Mark DeSalvo.

Tom proceeded to send out a company-wide email letting everyone know that a DJ McPherson and an Olivia Hudson, detectives with the NYPD, were here to gather information on the Emily Barrett case. It also said to please cooperate if they were asked to be interviewed and give them whatever they need.



# Chapter Five

After making their way through the maze of cubicles on the 34<sup>th</sup> floor, DJ and Olivia finally spotted Mark DeSalvo's office. Unlike Tom Prescott's office, DeSalvo's office was unassuming and quite the disaster. There were files piled up everywhere—the desk, the floor, and the bookcase.

Mr. DeSalvo was a tall, olive-skinned gentleman with killer green eyes and blonde hair. He reminded Olivia of some of her swim team members at college.

Olivia knocked on the door and Mr. DeSalvo looked up.

“Come in. Come in. Tom Prescott told me you would be looking for me. I want to help in any way I can. This is such a tragedy.”

“Olivia Hudson and DJ McPherson,” as they shook each other's hands. “Please call us Olivia and DJ. No need for formalities here.”

“Same here...call me Mark.”

“Can you give us any information about Emily Barrett? We received some pretty good intel from Tom but, as you know, being detectives we need to exhaust all leads in order to find the suspect and who committed this heinous crime.”

“No problem. I have been working with Emily on an F.B.I. top-secret project. We both had to go through a top-secret background check before we could even be considered for this special assignment. We both passed with flying colors and were handed the assignment by Tom about 8 months ago.

The project involves accessing a lot of sensitive data from various company servers whom Alantix services. We were asked to match up the data with any offshore transactions. We were making real progress on the files when Emily was...

On a different note, Emily, as anyone in the office will testify to, is a flirt. She was a good worker but always on her cell phone at the office setting up

her next rendezvous with this man or that man, or I assumed it was that...  
hhhmmmm...

You might want to talk to George Matthews of this firm. He is married to a woman name Debbie Matthews who was pretty pissed at Emily. Her husband slept with Emily and there have been hard feelings between the three of them ever since.

Another woman's boyfriend also slept with Emily. Her name is Lisa Scott. As you can see, she was not a very well-liked person by a couple of the women here at the office. Everyone else seemed to get along with her pretty well."

"Jeez. This young woman seemed to burn at least a couple of bridges here at the firm. Olivia, we might want to check into these stories and speak with Mr. Matthews and Ms. Scott," DJ said.

Olivia and DJ thanked Mark and told him, "We'll be in touch if we need any more questions answered." Mark nodded in agreement.

They headed into a large conference room which had been set up by Tom as a make-shift interview room. The pair started interviewing various employees who knew or worked with Emily in order to rule out or narrow their list of suspects.

At the end of a very long day, Olivia and DJ discussed all the important facts they gleaned from the employees. Some had nice things to say about Emily and a few had some not-so-nice comments.

One gentleman in particular, John Thompson, had an affair with Emily but it was really just sex and not really a relationship. They were going to take a closer look at his wife but he told them she wouldn't be a good lead. John had kicked her out a couple of weeks ago because he had caught her sleeping with his younger brother and she was most likely with him that evening.

Because it was late, they decided to shut down their investigation for the day and head out to their respective residences.

Olivia headed home to the same scene as the previous evening and DJ headed to the bar. Olivia wondered how much longer she could put up with

this strange behavior from her husband. He just didn't seem himself lately.



# Chapter Six

Up and out the door with Nicholas the next morning, Olivia did not want to have a run-in with Michael and start what would most likely turn into a heated argument in front of Nick.

She dropped Nicholas at school and headed to Starbucks to pick up the usual coffees for her and DJ. Sometimes she wondered why DJ never picked up the coffee and that it was always her duty? Oh well, DJ was a great partner so she didn't mind.

After arriving at the office and handing over DJ's coffee, they discussed where they were on the case.

“Why don't we head over to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to see what we can pull up on Thompson and Matthews?” said DJ.

“Sounds good. Let's head out,” Olivia agreeing with DJ.

At the DPS office, they first looked up Thompson's records. Nothing there. That leaves the Matthews.

In the middle of checking on the Matthews, Olivia received a call from the Coroner, Amanda Smith.

“Olivia, my assessment of Emily Barrett was correct. The wound on her chest was made by the butt of a hunting rifle. It person who did this, according to the wound impression, was made by someone slightly taller as you suggested. That means they would have to be at least 5'11” or 6'0.” The crack on the back of the skull was actually the cause of her death. And, she did not die right away so she was awake for about half an hour or so dying a slow, painful death as she bled out.”

“Oh my gosh. That's awful. No one deserves to die that way. I'll let DJ know the results. Thanks Amanda.”

“No problem. Take care and please solve this one Olivia. This girl and her parents deserve that much.”

“Don’t worry. This one will be solved. I guarantee it.”

When Olivia finished her conversation with Amanda, DJ had a look on his face that was indescribable. He looked like the cat that had swallowed the canary.

“What’s up DJ?”

“You’re not going to believe this. We need to go find Debbie Matthews at her condo.”

“Let’s go. I’m more determined than ever to catch this son-of-a-bitch.”

Mr. and Mrs. Matthews live in a beautiful condo in Manhattan. By the looks of it, they have done very well for themselves.

Upon pulling up to the place, Olivia wondered how they could afford such an expensive home. She thought she remembered something about her position being a teacher and he was a data analyst...very odd...oh well, there’s time to figure that out later after we catch her she thought.

DJ and Olivia walked up to the door and pounded on it saying, “Police! Open up the door Ms. Matthews.”

No one answered the door so they did a forced entry into the home. It appeared that no one was home but the staircase door to the garage was open. They carefully made their way down the stairs checking every angle as they went.

DJ said it but they were both thinking it, “Damnit! Her Lexus is still here so I bet she slipped out the back door while we came down here. She alluded us and pooled the wool over our eyes when we weren’t looking!”

They called for backup and a search warrant to search the premise. Upon entering the upstairs master bedroom, they found George Matthews taking a shower.

DJ scared the piss out of him and he screamed when he saw them enter the bathroom. DJ’s face all of a sudden became puzzled. The next moment he saw Mr. Matthews trying to climb out the window.

“No you don’t! What the hell do you think you are doing? And where do



you think you are going? It's a three-story drop. You'll either kill or maim yourself." DJ grabbed him and pulled him back in.

The first question out of DJ's mouth was, "Where did your wife go? What the hell is going on here?"

Mr. Matthews said, "I don't know what you are talking about. She was downstairs a few minutes ago when I came up here."

"Well, she sprinted out of here when she saw us. So where do you think she went?"

"I have no idea. I'm not her babysitter. She comes and goes as she pleases.

Now he was just being a smartass. DJ didn't appreciate his sarcasm or humor right at that particular moment.

"You do realize that only someone with a guilty conscience would try to bolt, right?"

"I may be a lot of things but I am NOT a killer. I admitted I had an affair with Emily but I would never kill her. After my wife found out, we never slept with each other again. In fact, I made a point of trying to avoid Emily at the office."

About that time Olivia showed up. "She is nowhere to be found. Mr. Matthews, do you have any idea as to why your wife bolted and where she might be headed?"

"No idea, as I told the detective. I really can't stand that bitch."

DJ and Olivia left feeling defeated. They let the suspect slip right through their fingers and now they had no idea where she went.

Olivia felt obligated to let the Barrett's know where they were on the case. She called them and updated the status. The call was hard for them to hear and Olivia felt extremely bad having to share such information about their beloved daughter.





# Chapter Seven

From the moment Olivia laid eyes on Michael, he had been her whole world. Yes, she loves her detective job but family means everything to her.

The first few years of the marriage had been great. After Nick was born, and she had put on a couple of extra pounds during the pregnancy and kept them, Michael seemed a little less interested.

He always told her that it didn't matter how she looked. He would "always love the Olivia he fell in love with and *nothing* would ever change that."

Over the years, Michael had become extremely successful defending criminals and it seemed like he was spending a lot of time at the office. There were frequent late night meetings, and out-of-state weekend conferences.

The detective in Olivia couldn't let it go. She was too good at sniffing out lies told by all the perpetrators she arrested to leave this situation alone. Something just didn't smell right.

In order to ease her mind, she decided she would hire a Private Investigator (PI) to check things out. If it turned out to be nothing, so be it. She could relax knowing it was just stupid, unfounded fears that were making her lose sleep at night.

Olivia called Sam Thompson, a friend she has sent work to over her career at the PD. They met later that day for lunch.

"I don't want this to ever get out. It is probably just my detective background that has me all upset and suspicious. I can't help it."

"Olivia, I have known you since before you were a detective. You are very good at what you do."

"Thank you. This could turn out really bad, though, if Michael ever found out. If he is not guilty of having an affair, I want this to all be swept under the carpet and never see the light of day again."

“No worries kiddo. You know you can trust old Sam to keep your secret. Mums the word.”

They finished their lunch and Sam told Olivia to give him a few days and he would get back with her.

Olivia knew this would be the longest days of her life waiting to hear back from Sam.

Olivia and DJ continued to work on the Emily Barrett case. She was glad that she had been assigned such an intricate case in order to keep her mind off of the outcome—good or bad—she knew was coming in a few days when Sam would contact her again.

True to his word, Sam got back with her in about four days. He asked if they could meet at the same restaurant for lunch. Olivia hesitantly agreed.

“Hey Olivia, nice to see you again.” Sam spoke first to break the silence knowing that the following conversation was not going to be pleasant.

“Hi Sam. I will tell you whether it was nice seeing you *after* I find out the information you are about to tell me,” she said rather hesitantly.

Sam knew what she meant and smiled.

“Unfortunately, Olivia, I don’t have good news for you...”

Olivia’s heart sank. She had a feeling this was going to be the outcome but had been denying letting the truth slip into her thoughts.

“Just give it to me straight, Sam. Don’t leave anything out.”

“Well, it appears Michael is having an affair with a Samantha Frederick. She is a partner at the law firm where they both work. She is 37, married and fairly attractive. I am not exactly sure how long the affair has been taking place but by their actions, they appear to be more like a couple who has been married a few years.

The ‘late-night’ meeting he attended two nights ago was not at the office but at the downtown Marriott. I also spotted them going to lunch every day together. One lunch hour turned out to be more of a two-hour lunch.

I am so sorry Olivia to have to report all this back to you. I’ve got

pictures and evidence for you as backup. I always used to think so highly of Michael but now, he's just another scumbag cheater to me."

"It's alright Sam. I knew something wasn't right for a while but just didn't want to admit it to myself. This is going to crush Nick. I am going to have to think about how to approach Michael with all of this so I have the element of surprise on my side. I can't let him know I'm on to him."

"Again, I am so sorry I am the bearer of bad news, Olivia."

"Don't worry about it Sam. I asked you to do this knowing full well as to what the most likely outcome would be. It's not your fault. I'm just glad it's all out in the open now, or at least it will be when I confront him. He'll probably try to deny it but pictures are pretty hard to refute."

"Exactly. Don't worry about the fee. This one's on me."

Olivia thanked Sam, finished as much of her lunch as she could, grabbed the envelope and made her way back to the office. Her stomach was churning and in knots the rest of the day.

DJ could tell something was wrong but didn't want to pry. They both finished out the day as Olivia gathered her thoughts for her strategy and terms of the divorce which would now be taking place. There was no way, she thought, I will be staying with this cheater.

She slept on the sofa that evening using the excuse that her current case had her staying up and awake. She had told Michael she didn't want to disturb his sleep. She was awake all right but not because of the case.

The next morning she was up at her usual time and off on her run. She had to clear her head and decide on the next move.

Instead of getting the usual Starbucks, she thought she would just make a cup of coffee while her thoughts turned to the house she and Michael had purchased all those years ago.

She remembers how excited they were about finally being able to own a home of their own. They were so happy to be moving away from the city. The decision was made to raise a family in the suburbs.

Shortly after their move, Olivia became pregnant and they were both elated. They had it all. The great jobs, family and home in the suburbs. Could anyone on the planet be as happy as they were? She doubted it.

But, then, over the years, it became noticeable that there were definite changes in Michael. It made her sad when she thought about the lies and how long this had been going on. She didn't want to hire Sam but she needed her suspicions confirmed. He didn't disappoint and now it was all coming to a head.

She was also thinking about the Emily Barrett crime as she continued sipping her coffee. The clues, the crime scene, the interviews...what was she missing here?

About that time, Nick came bounding down the stairs followed by Michael. She couldn't help but look at the two of them and reminisce about everything they had done at the house and their lives together. Michael and Nick looked like twins for God's sake.

Just as Michael was about to leave, Olivia spoke up, "Hey Michael. We haven't had dinner together in a while and I was wondering if you would like to get together tonight after we both get off work?"

She could see the wheels were turning in Michael's brain.

"Sorry Olivia. I can't tonight because I need to work late on a case coming up for trial but how about tomorrow night?"

"That's fine. We need to talk about something but it can wait until tomorrow evening."

As happened so many nights before, Olivia knew what "work late" meant to Michael and it had nothing to do with working late at the office. Now that she knew the truth, she couldn't even stand to look at him. He had gone down in status to her. He was now someone that she no longer knew.

She gathered her thoughts and Nicholas and headed out to the office. There was a murder to solve...







# Chapter Eight

As soon as Olivia arrived at the office, she spotted DJ looking over the files on the Emily Barrett murder investigation. He seemed extremely intent on spotting one piece of information that might have been missed in trying to solve this crime.

Olivia apologized immediately after DJ looked up and did not spot his usual Starbucks in her hand.

“I’m so sorry DJ but something has come up on the home front and I didn’t have a chance to stop by Starbucks this morning.”

“Anything you want to talk about?”

“No. Not yet. Let’s just say it’s not very good. Definitely going to be some changes coming my way.”

“That doesn’t sound very good.”

“It’s not. It will be a conclusion to some long-time suspicions. In one way it’s good and in another way it is not going to be easy.”

“I understand. Let me know if you need a shoulder to lean on or an ear to listen. You know I’m always here for you.”

“I know. Thank you. So what do we have here? Anything new?”

“In looking over all of the information and evidence we have gathered, I think we need to head back over to the IT firm. I have a feeling there is more going on there than meets the eye.”

“Ok partner. Let’s go. You can fill me in on the way.”

DJ and Olivia headed back over to Alantix and on the way they had discussed the fact that it was probably a good idea to interview everyone again. After Olivia heard the information and facts DJ presented, she agreed that there was more here than they first thought.

This time, they called in backup to assist with all the interviews so they

both wouldn't be tied up for hours late into the evening. Olivia knew in the back of her mind that Michael had told her he wasn't going to be home until later so that meant she needed to be there for Nicholas.

About mid-day, after conducting several interviews, the team met in the conference room that had been set up for their use. Olivia wanted to find out if anyone had come up with any new intel.

The entire team agreed that Emily's murder was most likely a "hit." Upon hearing this, DJ said, "someone had to be so pissed at Ms. Barrett that murder was the only answer."

Olivia decided that one of their assistant detectives would look at all the video cameras around the area to see if they could find a lead.

Olivia and DJ decided that DJ would take the task of heading over to the gym and the bar to scope out the regulars and evening clientele. They wanted to leave no stone unturned.

The interviews had been concluded swiftly with all the extra help so DJ and Olivia decided to head back to the office.

When they got there, they took over the conference room and whiteboard to start mapping out what they knew and find any gaps in the crime scene information, the interviews and evidence.

Olivia wrote on the whiteboard as they both discussed the crime:

Who *really* knew Thorpe?

The cell phone records turned up a few numbers that she called frequently.

Was there something in the coroner's report that was missed?

Need to go back to Emily's apartment again?

There was nothing on the footage from the camera at the front door of her apartment building.

The digital forensic team found nothing on the laptop.

Where was Debbie Matthews?

They decided, after assessing all of the gathered intel, that it was someone at Alantix that had committed the crime. Time to take a close look at who that person could be.

It was late and Olivia needed to be home for Nicholas. She left DJ to work on any clues that might come from the interviews conducted at Alantix.

Before she left, she told DJ, “If you find anything unusual don’t hesitate to give me a call. I’m always available for you and our case.”



# Chapter Nine

The next morning, Olivia was up and out of the house before Michael could come downstairs and interrogate her as to why they needed to “talk” tonight. She wasn’t going to get caught up in that argument right now.

DJ had sent her a text earlier that morning and told her to meet him at Emily’s apartment again. He felt something might have been overlooked there.

After the superintendent let them in again, they started searching the apartment with an even sharper eye than before.

DJ looked at Olivia and said, “I feel we overlooked some important clue here. We need to *really* look deep.”

Olivia agreed and started off on her quest.

DJ started in the bedroom and searched the dresser drawers, pulled them out, looked under the bed, checked the vanity, and looked in the closet.

He couldn’t believe how many shoes and clothes one woman could possibly need. And on top of that, there was no rhyme or reason to the organization or lack thereof.

He checked her suits, the pockets, the boxes on the shelves (nothing but correspondence and legal stuff). He checked the bathroom and the hall closet. If there was one thing this girl was not lacking it was junk. Olivia had the same luck. Nothing!

DJ did not find anything in the living room and walked into the kitchen where he caught up with Olivia. She was sitting at the table and had spotted what appeared to be a scrapbook box underneath the table. She reached underneath and pulled it out and set it on the table.

Olivia opened it up and the top tray looked normal with scrapbook tools but underneath the tray was an envelope. Inside was a flash drive, an enormous amount of cash and a gun.







# Chapter Ten

When DJ and Olivia arrived back at the interrogation room, Mark DeSalvo had been picked up and brought to the precinct office.

DJ and Olivia walk in smugly knowing that they had caught the killer.

Olivia speaks to Mark first. “So why did you do it?”

“Do what?” Mark asks in total shock.

“Don’t play games with us! We have looked over the evidence and everything points to you!”

“There is no way! I didn’t kill Emily! Why would I do that? I thought she was a great kid.”

“You saw her advancing here at the firm, you planted evidence at her apartment and then killed her at the parking garage the other night.”

“No, no. I did not! I have no reason. I have a solid alibi. And besides, I myself have been suspicious of some of Emily’s activities lately.”

“What are you talking about?”

“First, I left the office at 6pm on the day of her murder. I got home around 6:30pm and had dinner with my family. My wife can verify all of this.”

“DJ,” Olivia said, “Have someone follow up on this new information right away.”

Mark continued, “If you want to accuse someone, interview Debbie Matthews. She is the scorned wife of George Matthews. Or even better, interview Tom Prescott again. I think you will find him very interesting if you ask the right questions.”

“Excuse us. We need to step out of the room for a minute.” Mark nodded his head in agreement.

DJ and Olivia left the room to discuss this new information and the

accusations that Mark made regarding Debbie and Tom.

On the way back to the office, the assistant detective called to let Olivia know he saw nothing on any of the video cameras. DJ had already confirmed that he turned up no new information at the gym or bar.

Olivia spoke up, “DJ, I have no reason to believe that George, Debbie’s husband, was in any way involved in this crime. I am pretty sure we can rule him out. There is nothing there to suggest he was involved. What do you think?”

“I agree. Let’s step into my office and clear our heads so we can think clearly. I want to make sure we agree that Mark is not our suspect either before we let him go.”

While in DJ’s office, they called Mrs. DeSalvo and verified that Mark was in fact at home doing as exactly as he had told them. Another suspect marked off the short list of killers.

Upon stepping into his office, they discovered a digital forensics report sitting on DJ’s desk. He swiftly opened the envelope and discovered a large cache of data that had been downloaded from the flash drive that Olivia had found in the box under Emily’s table.

DJ showed Olivia the information. “Take a look at the data and what the subject matter is. Also, look at who else’s name popped up...”

Olivia’s mouth dropped open. “I’ll be damned. We have the wrong person in custody. Let’s call in the cavalry. I don’t want her slipping through the cracks this time. I dare her to try and get away. We’ll deal with her when we get back. Let’s head over to Mr. Prescott’s office before he suspects anything or gets wind of what is happening.”



# Chapter Eleven

Tom Prescott was waiting for DJ and Olivia to arrive. They had called him under the guise of asking a few more questions because they were trying to wrap up the Emily Barrett investigation. He agreed to the meeting.

When they finally made their way up to the 69<sup>th</sup> floor once again, they were escorted into Mr. Prescott's office by his assistant, Danielle.

Olivia thought to herself, "I wish I had a camera right about now. Tom looks like he has that million dollar look as if to say 'you'll never get a conviction.'"

Tom was sitting in his office with his attorney, Robert Canfield.

"Mr. Canfield, we need to read Mr. Prescott his rights. This can go easy or hard. It's up to him," said Olivia.

"What are you charging him with?"

"Murder in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree."

"My client committed no such act. This is ridiculous. Do you not realize Mr. Prescott's standing in the community?"

"I don't care if he is the Vice President. If he has committed a crime he needs to stand trial for that crime."

"You, Ms. Hudson, are going to regret taking this action."

"We'll see in court Mr. Canfield. For now, we need your client to stand up so we can cuff him and read him his Miranda rights."

Mr. Prescott, at this point, looked like a deer in the headlights. He never thought this would happen to him. His attorney had assured him that he would never be arrested. They escorted him out and took him back to the precinct office. They set him in an interrogation room with two-way glass.

The Assistant NYC Attorney, Gina Strowskey, was standing on the other side of the mirrored room with DJ and Olivia.

Olivia went in first, then DJ.

“So, would you like to just go ahead and tell me why you killed Ms. Barrett?”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.” Mr. Canfield agreed and told him to keep his mouth shut.

Tom couldn't resist. He wanted to clear his name.

“I only had the deepest respect for Emily and her father. I hired Emily when she was fresh out of college. I hired her not because of her father but in spite of him. She was brilliant all on her own and didn't need anyone's help other than the right connection and an introduction. That girl was a true asset to our firm.”

He continued, “Emily's great work brought in a lot of revenue for our company. That is one of the reasons I allowed her to work on that special assignment with Mark. Poor Mark. You have to know he had nothing to do with this right?”

Mr. Canfield spoke up, “Keep your mouth shut Tom! You are incriminating yourself with every word!”

About that time both DJ and Olivia said in unison, “Enough! Let Mr. Prescott speak.”

As they looked over at Mr. Prescott again, Olivia said, “Yes, we know. Please continue.”

“Debbie Matthews approached me with a bribe about how she wanted to get revenge for Emily screwing her husband. She told me about how she had forgiven her and then befriended Emily. She bribed Emily into stealing data on the offshore accounts and in return she would get an insane amount of money for sharing the data. She told her they had online hackers standing by who could break into the accounts and transfer the money into Swiss accounts. All Emily had to do was download some account data onto a flash drive and hand it over. In a momentary lapse of sanity, I agreed to it. I guess I got greedy and couldn't resist the large sum of dough that we would get our hands on.”

“How is that working out for you now?” Olivia said, knowing she shouldn’t have said it but it just slipped out. “Continue.”

“Debbie came to me the other day and told me she was not going to wait for the data any longer. She had paid Emily a large deposit for the information and she still had not produced one bit of information. She got tired of waiting and decided that between Emily’s affair with her husband and the lack of cooperation on this deal, she had no other choice but to get rid of her before she choked.”

“Just like that? Get rid of her? How cruel and totally insane is that?”

“I know. I know! Oh my God how did I get into this mess?”

“Please continue.”

“Debbie said she wanted the data so she could get her hands on the money she was owed for all her suffering and humiliation. She wanted George to lose his job because of this whole deal. She was tired of waiting for her ‘payday.’ She came back to bribe me by telling me that in order to keep her mouth shut, she wanted me to put up or shut up. She was going to spill the beans to the board of directors.”

“Why didn’t you just go to the police? We could have handled Ms. Matthews.”

“I was already in up to my eyeballs with this and was trying to keep my distance from her and this whole sordid corrupt deal. Not only that, Debbie said she was going to ruin my reputation here at the firm. It was going to cost me. You see, we could lose several large government contracts if they ever got wind of this.”

DJ spoke this time. “We checked your cell phone records and found out that you had called someone several times the night of the murder. That someone was your old affair partner – Ms. Debbie Matthews. You are also responsible for giving the rifle to her. I noticed one was missing from your collection in your office the first day we interviewed you.”

Tom Prestcott took his hands and buried his face in them. “What have I done? I didn’t want any of this to happen. Emily did not deserve this. I

should have just handed over some money to Debbie to keep her quiet.”

Olivia spoke again. “So this was the reason you two offed Emily? You were afraid that the black market data she had stolen would fall into the wrong hands since it appeared she was stalling in turning it over to Ms. Matthews. You thought maybe she would sell it to the highest bidder or rat you two out. You didn’t want anyone to find out about this deal so you had her killed. Ms. Matthews had a double reason for killing Emily—Emily had an affair with her husband and she never got over it. Plus, she thought she was double-crossing her. How ironic isn’t it that you in turn had an affair with Ms. Matthews. Where is the justice in all of this?”

Tom Prescott was sobbing at this point.

“Because of your greed and Ms. Matthews hatred for Emily, we have a young woman snuffed out in the prime of her life for no good reason at all. This is truly a shame.”

“No. No. No...” continued Tom Prescott.

“Did Debbie tell you how she did it? Here, look at these photos from the crime scene. Is this what you wanted for Ms. Barrett? Take a good look at her. How do you think her mother and father feel right now? Ms. Matthews took the butt of a rifle and thumped her so hard in the chest it knocked her backwards on the cement. She hit her head and it cracked her skull and bled out over a very long, slow painful amount of time. Instead of calling an ambulance, Ms. Matthews left her there. It was probably an excruciating and painful death. I hope you are happy with yourself.”

“No. No. No...” continued Tom Prescott.

“And by the way, Ms. Matthews is sitting in another interrogation room singing like a canary. So don’t worry about ever getting out of jail, you are just as guilty as she is. She definitely wants to take you down with her.”

“Now it all makes sense as to how George and Debbie Matthews could afford the beautiful condo. You were giving her money weren’t you? She had you wrapped around her finger so bad you couldn’t see the light of day. She is a teacher and he is a data analyst...if that math doesn’t add up nothing will.

We're done here.”

The last thing they could hear as they were leaving the room was Tom Prescott saying over and over, “I never meant for any of this to happen.”





# Chapter Twelve

It had been an extremely long day. Olivia knew that she had done right by Emily Barrett and after meeting with her parents to tell them they had caught the killers, she headed home to confront Michael.

She really didn't want to do this after the day she had but it was almost impossible not to get this situation resolved immediately. She couldn't stand looking at him any longer.

Michael walked in the door to see Olivia sitting at the table with delivery pizza and beer. He smiled and said, "Wow, Olivia, just like the first years of our marriage when things were so simple."

She smiled back at him and said, "Have a seat. There is no need beating around the bush. I am just going to come right out and say it. I know everything there is to know about you and Samantha."

It took Michael by surprise. He jumped straight out of his chair. It was the second deer in the headlights look she had seen that day.

"Here," Olivia said as she pushed a large manila envelope across the table. "In that envelope you will find photos, phone calls, rendezvous information, late night 'meeting' spots, etc."

"How dare you! What gives you the right to check up on me like this? I can't believe you have done this! You are one sneaky bitch!"

"Excuse me. You are the one who had the affair, not me. I have done nothing wrong here. You, on the other hand, have broken our marriage vows. I don't even know who you are any more."

"Bullshit. Our relationship and marriage were just fine until you became married to the police department. The late nights, the weekends, you and DJ ALWAYS together!"

"What the hell are you inferring here?"

"You tell me Olivia. What has been going on these last five years with

DJ? And don't say 'nothing' because you can't be someone's partner for that long and nothing happen."

"You are wrong on so many levels I can't even talk to you any more. There has never been a thing between me and DJ. NOTHING! And how do you think that I am going to let you get away from the reason we are having this argument in the first place? This is about YOU Michael! YOU are the one who had the affair. YOU are the one who is breaking up our family. YOU need to go take a long look in the mirror and try to figure out who YOU are any more. You certainly aren't the man I fell in love with all those years ago and you are definitely NOT the man I married. I want a divorce and NOW!"

"You ungrateful bitch. I never liked you being a cop and I have liked it even less since you were promoted to detective. We have plenty of money from my job and work at the law firm. There was no reason for you to have to spend all that time away from home and our son, Nicholas."

"Look who's talking? How many nights have you spent away from home to be with that bitch Samantha? You know what? Go be with her. Sooner or later one of you will cheat again and then you or she will get to see what it's like."

Olivia had it at this point and did not want to discuss it any further. She laid out the terms of the divorce and handed over another envelope that contained the divorce papers.

"Sign it in 24 hours or the word gets out about Frederick's affair with you." And by the way, after signing, please gather all of your belongings and leave MY house. I am going to sell this place and move to a nice, quiet area in another state with Nicholas. Don't try to fight it because you will be sorry."

"That's typical of you, Olivia. Fine! I'll sign it right now! I'm out of here. I should have divorced you a long time ago!"

Michael signed the papers and then stormed upstairs, grabbed a few things and was out the door. Olivia was glad that confrontation was over but it didn't make things any easier.

She was clearing off the table when the doorbell rang. It was DJ.

“Come on in but I don’t know how much good company I will be tonight.”

“Don’t worry, Olivia. I kind of already knew what was coming from just what you said earlier.”

That was all that was said. They didn’t say another word about it but just sat and watched TV, drank beer, laughed and ate pizza.

Finally, Olivia spoke up.

“DJ, you have been a great partner...”

“Uh oh, here it comes.”

“Please, let me finish. You have been a great partner and you are an exceptional detective. But, the time has come where I need to move on with my life especially after everything that has happened here. I need a fresh start without Michael in my life at all.”

“I understand. You need to make a fresh start, solve some murders make a difference in another city and eventually find someone who is worthy of Olivia Hudson.”

“By the way...I have been looking around since I found out about Michael and I have decided on a quaint town by the sea in South Carolina. It’s Summit Springs.”

“I will definitely miss you but completely understand.”

They clinked their beer bottles together saying in unison, “I’ll drink to that.”

**More  
D. Humphries!**

**Please turn this page  
for a  
Bonus excerpt  
from**

***LOST HONOR***

**a PermaFree  
Imaginix, Inc. Book  
Available on  
Amazon Kindle  
Barnes & Noble**

# Lost Honor



# Prologue



**IN A SMALL TOWN LIKE SUMMIT SPRINGS, SOUTH CAROLINA**, no one expected to witness the type of crime popularized in Chicago news outlets. The most anyone braced themselves for was unarmed robbery. In fact, the last serious case of armed robbery occurred years prior, and the weapon of choice had only been a switchblade.

Not that there weren't other petty crimes which occurred on a daily basis. But the more serious crimes were left for the larger cities dotting the coast.

This day marked a change in Summit Springs that not even the police could have anticipated.

Sirens blared down the road from the shopping plaza. Red and blue reflected off the windows of every store. Right on the edge of the strip, the shooter crouched below the shelter of a car, occasionally shooting blindly over the hood.

"We don't have time to wait. Too many possible civilian casualties." Connor tightened his grip around the service pistol.

His partner, Marcus, nodded agreement, craning his head over the cover of their own vehicle to better ascertain the situation. "Still sure we've only got one shooter?"

"Pretty damn sure. He's almost empty. Wait for the reload, then we take him."

Another police car veered into the plaza. From it, a third officer emerged and crouched his way towards Connor and Marcus. "He still shooting?"

"Yeah," Connor scowled. "He's almost out though. Soon as he moves to reload, we move on him."

"Got it."

The shooter refused to offer any remarks. No retorts, no taunts, nothing

at all to indicate his emotions could be played with. Connor didn't mind the silence as much as he did how long the altercation had stretched on for.

Hopefully, all the pedestrians had evacuated, but in the age of social media, he knew better than to assume anyone else knew better. He signaled for his officers to drop a little lower, and just then the shooter raised his arms above cover to let loose more fire from his semi-automatic.

Then it hit all of their ears, the green light they'd been waiting for: the weapon clicked.

"Go," Connor yelled as he vaulted over the hood of the police car. Five meters separated their car from the shooter's cover.

Connor burst halfway that distance before he realized that something was wrong. Something should have been happening that wasn't.

The shooter wasn't running.

"Down!" came his next command. Pistol still gripped tightly, he fell to the ground and let off four good shots beneath the car with the hope that at least one would catch the shooter's foot or leg.

No such luck.

And above him, the shooter re-emerged, letting off a volley from a different weapon—this one fully automatic.

Amidst the sound of dozens of bullets emptying from the weapon, Connor made out a sound he prayed he'd never have to hear. It was the sound of a bullet tearing into an officer's tactical vest. There wasn't even a scream, only the grunt of pain that preceded the officer collapsing dead to the ground.

Connor rolled along the ground to better position himself. Then he found exactly what he needed to see. A small chunk of the shooter's leg was visible. Connor didn't need to think. He just pulled the trigger.

A squeal from behind the car. The clanking of metal. And then the sound of footsteps disappearing into the night.

Connor's blood boiled, but he couldn't be bothered to pursue. He leapt to his feet and froze where he stood. Marcus lay there unmoving, four holes in

his uniform and one bullet lodged in his skull.

Slumped over the police car was the third officer. Blood ran down the side of the vehicle and dripped from the tip of his fingers. Those fingers attached to a hand attached to a limp, swaying arm. And then the sound of sirens, still blaring in the background, seemed to fade until everything was silent.

Connor dropped to his knees and cursed himself. His trembling hands could hardly operate the radio, so he eventually gave up attempting any call for help. The way he saw it, it didn't matter anyway whether the ambulance came right then or later. He'd seen enough corpses in his line of work to know that both of the men were dead.



# Chapter 1

**OLIVIA COULDN'T EVEN GET A GOOD LOOK AROUND** before someone shouted “Hey, you!” from across the police station. She attached it to the face of a scruffy man lumbering towards her. Heavy bags hung beneath his eyes and his wispy brown hair scattered every which way. “You’re the new girl, aren’t you?”

Olivia nodded and stepped forward. She extended her hand for a shake but the man brushed it off.

“Sorry if it’s a bit hectic around here. You might have heard that we’re dealing with some tough shit.”

“The boy murderer.”

The scruffy man chuckled. “I’d hardly call him a boy. Childish maybe, but not a boy. When we catch this guy, he’s paying the price like any guy his age. I don’t give a damn *who* his parents are. Anyway, follow me. We don’t deal with this kind of thing often. Well, before I start, let’s get you settled in.”

Olivia followed the officer, yet to be formally introduced, through the maze of desks to a hallway in the back of the room.

“To your right, you’ve got the interrogation room. Doesn’t see much use, but it’s down the corridor on the right and on the left is administration. Our own little West Wing.”

Stepping through the heavy metal door into the administrative corridor was like stepping into a different world. All the noise died out. Finally, it was quiet.

“You’ve read the reports, right? So you know that there were casualties at the shooting and that Connor was the only officer on site who made it out of there.”

“Yes, I’ve heard, I was actually hoping I could learn a little more about it. There seems to be quite a bit that didn’t make the papers. And the shooter, I’d

like to learn about his past.”

The scraggly officer smiled for the first time since Olivia’s arrival. “Oh, don’t you worry about that. Your ‘boy murderer’ will be your first case.”

They stopped at the end of the hall where a door stood blocking their path. And in bold black letters painted onto the glass windows read CONNOR. “To be honest, I planned on keeping him off this case. After what he experienced, no way in hell he can be level-headed or impartial about all this. That’s where you come in. You’ve got the right skillset for a case like this and he’s got all the intel.”

Olivia pulled back, slightly. She expected the case to be a big deal, but for her to jump right into it on her first day was beyond her wildest expectations. The foundations of the town must have truly been jeopardized for them to resort to using her on such short notice. From a logistic perspective, it made sense. But it was certainly a wild move.

She didn’t even have time to form a proper response when the door swung open. Cold, steely eyes greeted her. Olivia thought about it briefly, the image in the papers, and how he’d appeared so stern.

It had only been a few days since the incident, but it was clear that the night still tore at him. His short, brown hair was just as unkempt as the scruffy man’s, though his beard was shaven. Tips of bristles barely poked through their pores. The effect was lovely, because it gave attention to his sharp jaw.

“Nice to meet you, Connor. I’m the new Detective. Olivia.”

Remembering how the scruffy man greeted her, she decided against offering her hand. Quite to her surprise, the expression of exhaustion wiped clean off Connor’s face. He smiled warmly and gestured for her to enter. Then he nodded away at the scruffy man and closed the door.

He got right to business, spreading documents across the desk. “Normally, I’d be the first to give you a proper welcome,” he explained, “but the way things are going around here, we can’t afford to fall back on the case. Need to keep morale high.”

He flashed a disarming, toothy smile; Olivia couldn't help but to smile back.

“What do we know about the killer?”

Connor pushed one particular document forward.

“His parents both held high positions at the local church, so we know quite a bit about his childhood, notably what life was like for him growing up. For reasons we can get into later, it wasn't easy.

As for the night of the shooting, eyewitnesses helped us piece together a pretty good description. Cheeky little bastard's running around in combat fatigues.

He's got at least one semi-automatic weapon and one fully automatic—I can personally vouch for that.”

His eyes narrowed as he robotically recalled those last few details. Olivia straightened up in her seat.

“How much ammunition he has, who the hell knows. It's not a concern either. We treat him like he's got a portable armory on him, got it?”

Olivia nodded.

“Now, next to that, he's also got a crossbow. All the high-tech weaponry available and he brings a crossbow with him. Imagine that. Then there's his knife. We're not sure about the specifics—multipurpose or whatever—but several witnesses put eyes on it, so we've also got to consider him dangerous in close quarters combat.”

“Man. Hard not to wonder where he gets all these weapons from though.”

“Same place as anywhere else,” Connor sighed.

“Okay, fair but *how*? It shouldn't be that easy to get all those guns. We're talking about automatic weapons here.”

Now Connor's lighthearted expression turned sour. He leaned back in his chair and narrowed his eyes. “Right to bear arms wouldn't be worth much if we couldn't even buy them.”

“It’s not about buying them, Connor. It’s about ease of access. It’s about needing permits, screenings. It’s about keeping guns out of the hands of people like this.”

Olivia pushed a headshot of the killer across the table towards Connor.

“People here knew he was in a bad place. Why would they sell him guns? They might as well be complicit in all this.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Connor rose from his seat, eyes on fire. “If anyone is shaken up about this, it’s me. I watched two good men die. I watched my *partner* die. The last thing I need is some new blood telling me how *my* city should be run.”

Olivia followed suit, coming to her feet.

“You just might want to consider that if there was more control, you wouldn’t have any funerals to attend.”

That said, she swung open the door and marched back outside where all the noise could drown out her frustration...



## About the Author



My Life in Words:

*“Make sure your beliefs are not self-limiting and make sure your limitations aren't self-imposed.”*

### **D. Humphries Official Site:**

[www.diannehumphries.com](http://www.diannehumphries.com)

### **Facebook**

[D. Humphries](#)

### **Twitter**

[D. Humphries](#)

**[Sign up](#) for D. Humphries' Newsletter**

## **D. Humphries**

Connor Cole and Olivia Hudson  
Are on the trail of the next killer  
To emerge in Summit Springs, SC

**GET SWEEPED UP IN D. HUMPHRIES'  
RIVETING COLE AND HUDSON SERIES**

*Lost Honor*  
*The Enforcer*  
*Mayoral Scandal*  
*Pursuit of Justice (October 2016)*

**Available from Imaginix, Inc.**

**ALSO BY D. HUMPHRIES  
WILKINS AND SILVER SERIES**

Ray Wilkins and Maddie Silver are detectives  
Catching criminals in the Dallas suburbs

*The Perfect Murder*  
**(Release Date - October 2016)**

# **We hope you enjoyed reading this Imaginix, Inc. Book**

Sign up for our newsletter and receive special offers,  
Access to bonus content, and info on the  
Latest new releases and other great Books from  
Imaginix, Inc.

Visit us online to sign up at:

[D. Humphries](#)

- Chapter Excerpts from selected new releases
- Original Author and Editor Articles
- Audio Excerpts
- Bestseller News
- Electronic Newsletters
- Contests, Quizzes, and Polls
- Fun, Quirky Recommendation Center
- Plus Much More!