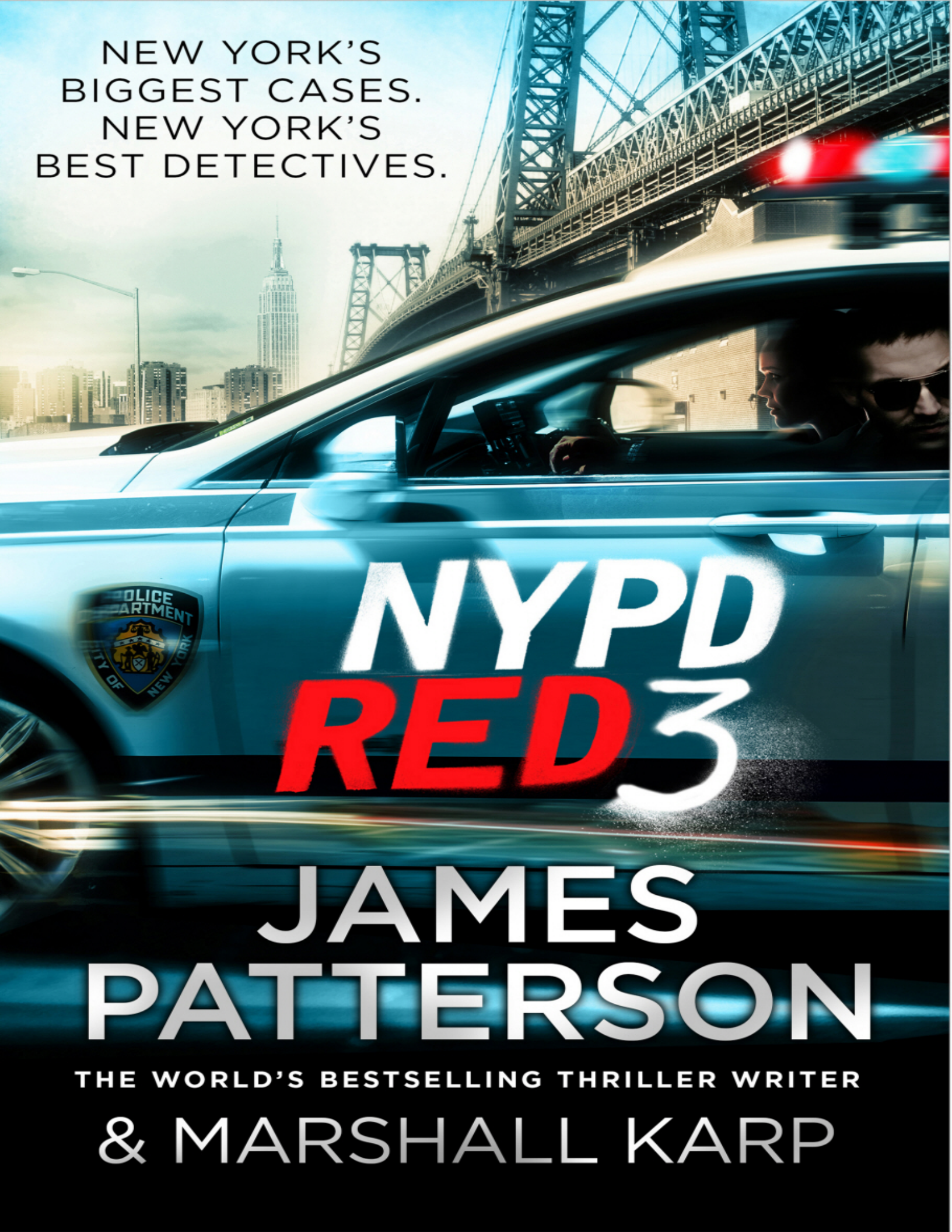


NEW YORK'S
BIGGEST CASES.
NEW YORK'S
BEST DETECTIVES.



NYPD **RED**3

JAMES PATTERSON

THE WORLD'S BESTSELLING THRILLER WRITER
& MARSHALL KARP

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ABOUT THE BOOK

A chilling conspiracy leads NYPD Red into extreme danger.

Hunter Alden, Jr has it all: a beautiful wife, a brilliant son and billions in the bank. But when his son goes missing and he discovers the severed head of his chauffeur, it's clear he's in danger of losing it all.

The kidnapper knows a horrific secret that could change the world as we know it. A secret worth killing for. A secret worth dying for.

New York's best detectives, Zach Jordan and Kylie MacDonald, are on the case. But by getting closer to the truth, Zach and Kylie are edging ever closer to the firing line ...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JAMES PATTERSON is one of the best-known and biggest-selling writers of all time. He is the author of some of the most popular series of the past decade – the Alex Cross, Women’s Murder Club, Detective Michael Bennett and Private novels – and he has written many other number one bestsellers including romance novels and stand-alone thrillers. He lives in Florida with his wife and son.

James is passionate about encouraging children to read. Inspired by his own son who was a reluctant reader, he also writes a range of books specifically for young readers. James is a founding partner of Booktrust’s Children’s Reading Fund in the UK. His books have sold in excess of 300 million copies worldwide and he has been the most borrowed author in UK libraries for the past seven years in a row.

Also by James Patterson

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NYPD Red 2 (*with Marshall Karp*)

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NYPD RED 3

**JAMES PATTERSON
AND MARSHALL KARP**



*For Gerri and Victor Gomperts, who helped me find what I
was looking for.*

PROLOGUE

“THERE’S MONEY TO BE MADE”

ONE

EVERY DECEMBER 31, Hunter Hutchinson Alden Jr. made the same two New Year's resolutions.

1. Be worth X dollars by the end of next year.
2. Quit drinking.

This year's goal was five billion, and considering the fact that his current net worth was 4.86 billion, getting there was a slam dunk. But forty-five minutes and three glasses of Pellegrino into his father's New Year's Day party, he knew that number two was doomed to failure. Again.

He crammed himself into the corner of a blue calfskin Himmel settee at the east end of the Great Room so he could avoid eye contact with the swarm of well-heeled narcissists who were strutting around Hutch Alden's Fifth Avenue triplex, flaunting their glorious Christmas-in-Saint-Barts tans.

It was the same crowd every year—the A-list of the Rich and Shallow—and Hunter was there for only one reason. He was duty-bound to charm the hell out of his old man's guests.

But not yet. Right now he was too pissed to be charming.

He glared at his iPhone, willing it to vibrate, beep, chirp, or in any way show some sign of life. One of them would call eventually, and he was willing to bet it wouldn't be his son. The kid wouldn't have the balls to man up, so he'd pass the buck to Peter, who would apologize profusely and blame himself for Tripp's bad behavior.

The first note of his ringtone erupted from the phone, and he hit the green Accept button the instant it blossomed

onto the screen. "Where the hell are you?" he growled, not even knowing if he was dealing with Tripp or Peter.

"Is that any way to talk to a lady?" a sexy female voice drawled.

"Sorry. I was expecting a call from the most irresponsible eighteen-year-old on the planet. Or at least from the driver I sent hours ago to bail him out of trouble."

"I'm none of those, but I'm blonde, I'm hot, and you seem to be extremely agitated. Perhaps I can do something to calm you down."

"I'm sure you could."

"Are you available?"

"Technically I'm married, but I'm not a fanatic about it."

"Good," the blonde said. "Ditch her. You're exactly the kind of man I've been looking for."

"What kind is that?"

"A lifelong challenge."

"But worth the effort," he said. "Where can I find you?"

"The same place Romeo found Juliet."

Hunter looked up at the sweeping balcony on the west side of the room. There was his wife, Janelle, waving. "Stay where you are, Romeo."

Hunter hung up and watched as the former Miss Alabama sashayed down the marble staircase and breezed across the room, a natural-born ambassador, greeting guests on the fly, a flurry of blonde hair and pink silk.

Pink was Janelle's color. She wore it often in honor of her sister Chelsea, who survived breast cancer at the age of twenty-six, only to die at thirty when the Twin Towers fell.

Hunter met Janelle a year later—September 11, 2002. He was one of the thousands of mourners who filed into the gaping hole at Ground Zero to remember the dead. And there, in the middle of the sea of somber gray and funereal black, was this golden-haired, angel-faced vision in pink.

She was the polar opposite of his late wife. Marjorie had been Yankee-bred, Harvard Business School-trained, and

Wall Street ruthless. Janelle was heart of Dixie to the core and had never taken a business course in her life, yet she had raised millions for charity simply by using her abundant charm.

She sat down on the settee and rested a hand on Hunter's knee. "I'm going home. Early day tomorrow."

"I'll go with you. We haven't had sex all year."

"Not so fast, cowboy. You're wanted up top," she said, pointing toward the balcony. "Hutch has someone he wants you to shake hands with."

"He's got a house full of people he wants me to shake hands with."

"But only one is the new mayor of New York, which is why she's having a drink with Hutch in his private sanctuary while the rest of them are forced to wander aimlessly around the castle. I'll see you at home."

"How are you getting there? Peter is still off the grid."

"I'm sure he's busy fixing Tripp's car."

"He's not a damn mechanic, Janelle. He's our driver. I specifically told him to leave Tripp's car where it is and just bring the kid home. Not keeping in touch is Tripp's MO. Now he's got Peter doing it."

"Sweetie, Tripp *did* keep in touch," Janelle said. "He texted to say he needed help; you sent help, end of story. Now stop micromanaging and don't worry about me. Hutch already arranged for Findley to drive me home. Now why don't you practice what you preach?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Be a good boy and don't disappoint *your* father. He expects you to go upstairs and make nice to our new mayor. Do it." She gave him a quick kiss and headed for the door.

Hunter stood up and took a deep breath. The room smelled of money: *publishing* money, *cosmetics* money, and, of course, *money* money—the kind that comes from making canny investments when the rest of the world is betting the other way. He downed his fourth glass of imported water,

turned on his handcrafted smile, and glided into the clowder of fat cats.

“Hunter!” It was Damon Parker, the despicable TV journalist who once described Hutch Alden as a folksy Warren Buffett who had tragically spawned a son as ruthless as Rupert Murdoch.

Parker advanced on him, all smiles, hand outstretched, but Hunter bounded up the stairs to hallowed ground—Hutch’s five-million-dollar command center, where none could go unless summoned.

“There you are,” his father said, striding toward him next to Muriel Sykes, the tall, athletic-looking woman whose face had been on page one of every newspaper in New York that morning. “Say hello to our guest of honor.”

“Madam Mayor,” Hunter said. “I’d shake your hand, but you don’t have a free one.”

It was Hutch’s standing tradition at his New Year’s parties to provide his guests with a taste of old New York, and the mayor had a half-eaten hot dog in one hand and a chocolate egg cream in the other.

She turned one cheek, and Hunter planted a kiss. “Happy New Year, and happy new administration,” he said. “How’s it going so far?”

“Crazy day, but I’ll give you the highlights. This morning the president called to wish me well, and tonight your father treated me to the single best New York hot dog I’ve ever had in my life.”

“That’s my dad,” Hunter said. “True to his roots.”

“I hate to eat and run,” Sykes said, “but they’ve spent the entire day moving me into Gracie Mansion, and I’m dying to kick off my shoes and stretch out in my new digs. Happy New Year.”

“You’ve been checking your phone all night,” Hutch said as soon as Sykes was out of earshot. “What’s so important?”

"It's Tripp. He had car trouble—up in Harlem, of all places. Peter went to rescue him, and I haven't heard from either of them in hours."

"Relax. Harlem is Peter's stomping grounds. He's probably showing Tripp a good time. Those Haitian boys sure know how to party ... if you catch my drift."

"*Haitian boys?* Yes, Dad, I catch your extremely politically incorrect drift."

"What are you talking about? I'm as politically correct as they come. Hell, I just spent a small fortune helping that goddamn broad get elected mayor."

Hunter laughed. "That's fiscally correct. I'm sure she'll come in handy if you ever need her."

The strapping white-haired man put one arm around his son's shoulder. "If *we* ever need her," he corrected. "As they say in *español*, '*Mi mayor, su mayor.*' Now are you ready to go downstairs and show these rich old farts how charming you can be?"

"Dad, there's nothing I'd rather do than go downstairs, rub a couple of elbows, and shake a couple of hands," Hunter said, putting on his game face. "Except maybe track down Tripp and Peter and wring a couple of necks."

TWO

HUNTER HAD HATED his father's New Year's Day soirees ever since he was a kid, but if this bullshit made the old man happy, what the hell? It was part of his birthright.

He spent the next two hours working his way through the crowd, clasping hands, bussing cheeks, and tossing off honey-voiced banalities. They were nothing more than empty platitudes, but personalized just enough to give people on the receiving end the impression that he actually gave a shit. What they didn't know was how much he actually knew about them.

Hunter Alden's entire financial engine was fueled by information. He spent millions putting eyes and ears in place around the globe. His intelligence network had infiltrated governments, businesses, and regulatory bodies. And because the rich have more dirty little secrets than most, he made it his business to dig deep into the personal lives of almost everyone in the room. He was willing to use whatever dirt he dug up against them, and he had.

By 10:00 p.m., his glad-handing done, he slipped quietly out the door and took Hutch's private elevator to the lobby.

Nils, the short, squat night doorman, was on duty. "Pretty nippy out there, Mr. Alden," he said. "Nineteen degrees. Twelve with the windchill factor. You sure you don't need a coat?"

Why the hell would I need a coat? Hunter thought. His world was climate controlled. Even the canopy outside the building had been outfitted with heat lamps to warm the wealthy as they walked the twenty feet from the lobby door to their waiting limos.

“Don’t worry, Nils. I’ll be fine,” he said.

His father’s black Cadillac was idling at the curb. Findley St. John, Hutch’s longtime driver, saw him and spread both arms wide.

Findley was one of the few people to penetrate the wall that Hunter had built around himself. He had sung songs with Hunter when he drove the boy to his first day of kindergarten; he had pummeled three young thugs who mugged Hunter in middle school; and he’d almost gotten himself fired when he swore that the vodka bottle in the back of the Caddy belonged to him and not Hutch’s fourteen-year-old son.

“Happy New Year, sport,” he boomed, wrapping his arms around Hunter.

“Same to you, old man. I see you’re still driving this piece of shit American car.”

Findley put a gloved hand on the rear door handle, swung open the door, and shut it as soon as Hunter was in, leaving almost no time for the preheated air to escape into the cold night.

“Piece of shit car?” Findley said, getting behind the wheel. “You know what your daddy says. ‘If it’s good enough for the president of the United States, it’s good enough for me.’”

“My father is too old and too rich to settle for ‘good enough.’ Nothing is more reliable than German engineering.”

The mano a mano verbal sparring between the two men had been going on for decades, and Findley was thrilled to have another go at it. “And yet,” he said, looking over his shoulder at Hunter, “that reliable German car of yours had to be bailed out by this piece of shit from Detroit.”

“It wasn’t the car that caused the problem,” Hunter said. “It was my unreliable Haitian driver.”

Findley let out a throaty laugh. He was from the same village as Peter. “I just drove Ms. Janelle home, and she

didn't say nothing about no unreliable Haitians. Sounded more like the problem was that footloose teenager of yours. The apple sure don't fall far from the tree."

The ride up Madison gave them less than five minutes to catch up before Findley turned left on 81st Street. "Good news," he said as he pulled the Cadillac up to Hunter's four-story Beaux Arts limestone town house. "Light's on in the garage, so it looks like Peter is home."

"Son of a bitch," Hunter said, jumping out of the car before Findley could get to the door. "Why the hell didn't he call me?"

"I'm not hanging around to find out," Findley said, putting the limo in gear. "Don't be too hard on him, sport. It's New Year's."

Hunter headed straight for the garage. He flipped the keypad cover and tapped in the code, more excited to see his dream car than to confront Peter.

His Maybach 62 S had been built at the Center of Excellence in Sindelfingen, Germany. It was, in the words of the personal adviser who had worked with Hunter during the entire fourteen-month period from commission to delivery, "a one-of-a-kind automotive masterpiece, thoughtfully designed and flawlessly handcrafted to mirror the style and personality of its owner." And to Hunter, it was worth every penny of the 1.1 million it had cost to build it.

The garage door opened, and the room lit up even brighter. The space was wide and deep and empty. Hunter sucked in a lungful of the crisp January air. His car wasn't there. The only thing on the silver-pearl and slate-gray Swisstrax floor was the bright yellow molded polyethylene box that sat in the middle—Tripp's camera case. For Hunter, it was a bit of a relief. At least his son was home.

And then he saw it. At first it looked like random red markings on the yellow case. He got closer. The brownish-red lines were not from a marker. It was dried blood. And

the haphazard strokes were actually letters: **HHA III**—Hunter Hutchinson Alden III. Tripp's initials.

Hunter dropped to his knees, snapped the stainless steel butterfly latches, and opened the case. Nestled on top was a Ziploc bag with a cell phone inside. He removed the bag and jerked back in horror at what was underneath: a severed head, cushioned by the case's thick foam lining, blood-soaked viscera hanging from the stump of its neck, the whites of its eyes staring up at Hunter.

It was Peter.

A single piece of paper was wedged between his lips. Hunter unfolded it and stared at the message. Five words, neatly typed.

There's money to be made.

Hunter's chest clenched, and he could barely fill his lungs with air. It was impossible, inconceivable, but there it was. Somebody somewhere had found out about Project Gutenberg.

Shaking, Hunter Alden closed the garage door and headed upstairs to pour his first drink of the new year.

PART ONE

THE SINS OF THE FATHER

CHAPTER 1

I HAD JUST had the best New Year's Day of my life, and when I opened my eyes on the morning of January second, the euphoria continued.

In front of me was a captivating panoramic view of Central Park, still dotted with patches of last week's white Christmas. Above me, the ceiling was adorned with hand-painted cherubs and half-naked women frolicking in a wooded glade. And curled up next to me on our zillion-thread-count sheets was a totally naked woman who could put every one of those Roman goddesses in that bacchanalian fresco to shame.

"I could get used to this, Zach," Cheryl said. "You definitely should start taking more bribes."

Two nights ago, Cheryl and I had checked into the Steele Towers on Central Park South for a mini New Year's vacation. The room I booked was something I could afford on a cop's salary, but when we got there, the desk clerk apologized. There was a maintenance problem in our room.

He waited just long enough to register the look on our faces, and then he said, "But don't worry, Detective Jordan. We'll upgrade you to a slightly better accommodation."

His version of "slightly better" was an eighteen-hundred-square-foot penthouse suite, the top of the line in this world-class, five-star hotel.

"Oh my God," Cheryl said when the floor concierge escorted us to our new digs. She looked at the pricing chart on the back of the door. "And only sixty-five hundred dollars a night."

“Happy accidents happen to the nicest people,” the concierge said.

Not for a second did I think this was an accident. I knew exactly what it was: a silent gesture of gratitude from Jason Steele, the man who owned the hotel. His wife had been murdered a few months ago, and my partner, Kylie MacDonald, and I had cracked the case.

I stood in the doorway of the suite, called my boss, Captain Cates, and explained the problem.

“It’s not a problem,” she said. “You’re there as a private citizen, not a cop.”

“But the desk clerk called me Detective Jordan. He knew I was a cop.”

“Zach, you’re one of a handful of detectives assigned to NYPD Red. You’ve made two front-page arrests in the past six months. You better get used to the fact that people are going to recognize you. Now, you called me for a ruling. Here it is. Hotels upgrade all the time. Shut up, take it, and you and Cheryl have a happy New Year.”

Boy did we ever. But now it was time to go back to reality. I got out of bed. “I’m going to take a shower,” I said.

Cheryl stretched like a cat in the summer sun, and the sheets slipped below her breasts.

“On second thought,” I said, “I’m hopping back in bed.”

She smiled. “Just hop to the shower. I’ll be right behind you.”

“Behind me, in front of me ... I’m sure we can work out the best arrangement once we’re all wet and slippery,” I said.

Cheryl’s cell rang. “It’s probably my parents wishing me a happy New Year,” she said. “We played phone tag all day yesterday. I kept missing them. I’ll be right there.”

There were three bathrooms, and Cheryl and I had experimented with shower gymnastics in every one of them. I headed for our favorite.

I dimmed the lights, dialed up some slow jazz, stepped into the green granite-tiled double shower, and turned on the water. It was heaven.

Despite the fact that my job keeps me in daily contact with New York City's wealthiest citizens, rarely do I get to live like one. I lost myself in the pulsating rhythms of the six perfect-pressure showerheads, closed my eyes, and thought about the dark-haired, caramel-skinned, drop-dead beautiful, kick-ass smart Latina I was rapidly falling in love with.

I'd met Cheryl Robinson four years ago. She was an NYPD psychologist, and I was a candidate for the department's most elite unit. It took her three hours to evaluate me. I, on the other hand, needed only three seconds to evaluate her. I'd never seen a cop or a shrink this desirable, and if it weren't for that gold band on her left hand, and the fact that she stood between me and the best job in the department, I would have thrown myself at her feet.

I got the job, and six months ago, shortly after her wedding ring came off forever, I got Cheryl. I'd only been in love once before. Eleven years ago I had a torrid twenty-eight-day affair with a fellow recruit at the police academy: Kylie MacDonald. But she dumped me and went back to her old boyfriend. A year after that, she married him.

Ten years later, the Department of Let's-See-If-We-Can-Drive-Zach-Jordan-Crazy decided to test my emotional resilience and put Kylie back in my life. Not as my girlfriend, but as my partner in crime solving. And for the past six months, Kylie and I have been inseparable—except for the part where she goes home to her husband, Spence Harrington, every night.

Fifteen minutes into my bathroom reverie, Cheryl still hadn't made an appearance, and I was starting to shrivel up in more ways than one.

I towed off, put on a thick white terry robe, and went back to the master bedroom.

She was still on the phone.

"Be strong," she said. "I'll be there as soon as I can. Tell her to feel better and give her my love."

She hung up. "Zach, I'm sorry. Family emergency."

"Is your mother sick?" I asked.

"No. It's Fred's mother."

Fred? Fred was Cheryl's ex-husband. "That was Fred who called?"

She nodded. "He's devastated."

"I thought Fred was out of the picture."

"He is. But his mother is dying. I told you I was planning to drive up to Bedford next weekend for Mildred's birthday. It looks like she's not going to make it till then. I'm going to run into the office, wrap up a few things, and catch a train up to Northern Westchester Hospital as soon as I can."

She got out of bed and threw on a robe. "I'm sorry, sweetie, but I'm going to shower, and it's going to be short and solo." She headed for the bathroom. "Oh, I almost forgot. Your cell rang while I was on the phone with Fred. I saw it was Kylie, so I picked up and told her you'd call right back."

Kylie wanted me, which meant work. Fred wanted Cheryl, which meant I would have something to obsess about all day besides work.

I called Kylie. "Happy New Year," I said.

"Not for everybody," she said. "We have a headless body in Riverside Park."

Decapitations were standard fare for Mexican drug cartels, but rare in New York—even rarer for our unit. "Are you sure it's for Red?" I asked.

"The body is wearing a chauffeur's uniform," Kylie said, "and there's a big-ass black limo in the parking lot. License plate ALDEN 2. Which means this homicide is about as Red as you can get. Where are you?"

I told her, and she said she'd pick me up outside the hotel in ten minutes.

My New Year's euphoria was officially over.

CHAPTER 2

NOT TOO MANY New Yorkers know it, but Riverside Park was conceived by the same guy who designed Central Park. And while it's not Frederick Law Olmsted's most famous work, the four-mile strip that hugs the Hudson River from 72nd to 158th Streets is the most spectacular stretch of natural beauty and recreational possibilities in the city.

Kylie took the Henry Hudson Parkway north, swung around under the George Washington Bridge, and headed back south on the parkway until we spotted the 151st Street entrance to Riverside Park.

The parking lot was empty except for a dozen assorted police vehicles and one shiny black limo that looked as out of place as a debutante at a biker rally.

We spotted the one guy we were looking for: Chuck Dryden. Chuck is a brilliant criminalist with all the charisma of a wet bath mat. He'd been dubbed Cut And Dryden because he was all business, no small talk. His emotional content ranged from ho to hum, but I'd discovered that there was one defibrillator that could jump-start his dispassionate heart. Like a lot of men before him, he was totally smitten with Kylie. So as soon as we saw him, my partner took the reins.

"We're in luck, Zach. It's our favorite CSI. Happy New Year, Chuck," Kylie said, tantalizingly putting on a pair of latex gloves as if she had something in mind other than preventing the contamination of a crime scene.

He looked down, muttered a quiet "Same to you," and immediately went into his observations. "The victim appears to be Peter Chevalier, age fifty-five, from Cité

Soleil, Haiti. American citizen since 1988, resides on East 81st Street."

"*Appears* to be?" Kylie asked.

"There was a wallet in the victim's pocket," Dryden said. "Normally the head shot on his license would help me get a positive ID, but as you can see, this man's head is nowhere in sight."

He peeled back the tarp that covered the body, gave us ten seconds to take in the mutilation, and then discreetly covered it back up.

"As the vanity license plates would suggest, the vehicle is registered to Alden Investments, which is owned by Hunter Hutchinson Alden Jr. There's no evidence of a struggle inside the car. Judging by this pool of blood, Mr. Chevalier was standing outside when he was decapitated."

"Time of death?" I asked.

"Somewhere between 7:52 and 8:11 last night."

"How the hell did you come up with such a narrow window?" I said.

Dryden almost smiled. "It was well below freezing last night," he said. "Even colder here at the river's edge than in the rest of the city, so I can't give you a definitive time frame till I get him to the lab and run a thorough check on blood pooling, stomach contents, rigor—the usual indicators. However, we retrieved a cell phone from the ground under the driver's side door, and it appears that the victim was composing a text to Mr. Alden when the killer came up behind him."

He held it up so we could read it.

Cant find Tripp. Do you want me to

"The text is unfinished and unsent, so I can't tell exactly when he wrote it," Dryden said. "But then there's a flood of incoming texts, all from Alden, all basically saying 'Call me—where the hell are you?' Since all of Alden's previous