

BIG CITY

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from
“ALUMNAE”
by Millie Collins

Synopsis: A rookie cop is dead, shot on the job. His twin sister fears for her life. The only person she can turn to is an old college friend, Laura Medrano. As Stack works to uncover an insidious ring of corruption, Laura tries to protect her friend from the danger that is too close for comfort.

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It wasn't hard finding Brad Murphy at the 23rd. He was one of those guys that, even if they were whispering, you'd swear he had a bullhorn. He was booking a prostitute at his desk when Stack entered. Stack waited until he was done, and walked over.

“Murphy, right? Detective Furray.” Stack held out his hand.

“Furray? Sure, I know the name. How are ya, man?” Murphy took his hand. He seemed genuine enough, pretty friendly. Stack nodded. “I was wondering if I could ask you a couple of things about your partner?”

“Harlan? Yeah, I was wondering when you guys would get around to that.” Stack had been wrong; Murphy's voice had dropped to a whisper. “Let's go into my Cap's office, we can talk in there.” He led Stack to the empty office in the back.

“Cap's out of the office today, so we won't be bothered,” said Murphy, closing the door and the blinds as they entered the office. “What do you want to know?”

Stack looked at him. “It seems you already know why I'm here. I'm told he was acting pretty strange the last month or so.”

Murphy nodded emphatically. “Oh, yeah, he was a mess. Paranoid, not sleeping, I don't think, just a mess. I think he got in over his head with something, but he never told me what it was. I think he might have told me, fairly soon actually, but he never got the chance.” He shook his head. “The whole thing just seems fishy to me.”

“Can you tell me the circumstances surrounding his death? Were you there?” Stack asked.

“Yeah, I was there. We got a call about a burglary in progress, at a convenience store. When we pulled up, one of the guys took off, so I went after him, but I lost him. When I came back, the kid was dead, the shooter had taken off, and everyone around said that the kid never saw it coming. He was shot in the back.” Murphy paused, trying to form his words. “It just felt wrong to me.”

“In what way?” Stack was interested. He was pretty sure that Murphy wasn't involved; he was a nice guy, but didn't seem bright enough to pull off being full of that much shit.

Murphy shrugged. “I don't know. The perp was across the street. He was getting away. Why would he stop just to shoot the kid in the back? Or, if the kid was chasing him, how could he shoot him in the back?” He looked genuinely confused. Then he shrugged. “I don't know, stranger things have happened, I guess, but it just seemed weird, you know, along with the way he'd been acting lately, like something was on his mind, something he wanted to tell me, but couldn't. You know?” He looked expectantly at Stack.

Stack nodded. “Yeah, I know.” It seemed Murphy was really convinced something was going on, but was downplaying it for Stack. He gave Murphy his card. “You've been a great help. If you think of anything else, let me know, okay?” He turned to leave, and stopped. “One more thing. Had he started hanging with anyone new lately, anyone on the force he hadn't had much contact with before?”

Murphy was thinking. “Not really, I don't think. Well, I don't know if this helps, 'cuz you couldn't really call it hanging, but he'd had quite a few meetings with Lieutenant Ortiz lately.”

Stack felt a little light-headed all of a sudden, but tried not to let it show. “Huh. It might. Thanks.” He turned and walked out of the office. Lieutenant Brandon Ortiz was the secretary on the board that had control of the BCPD Widows and Orphans Fund.