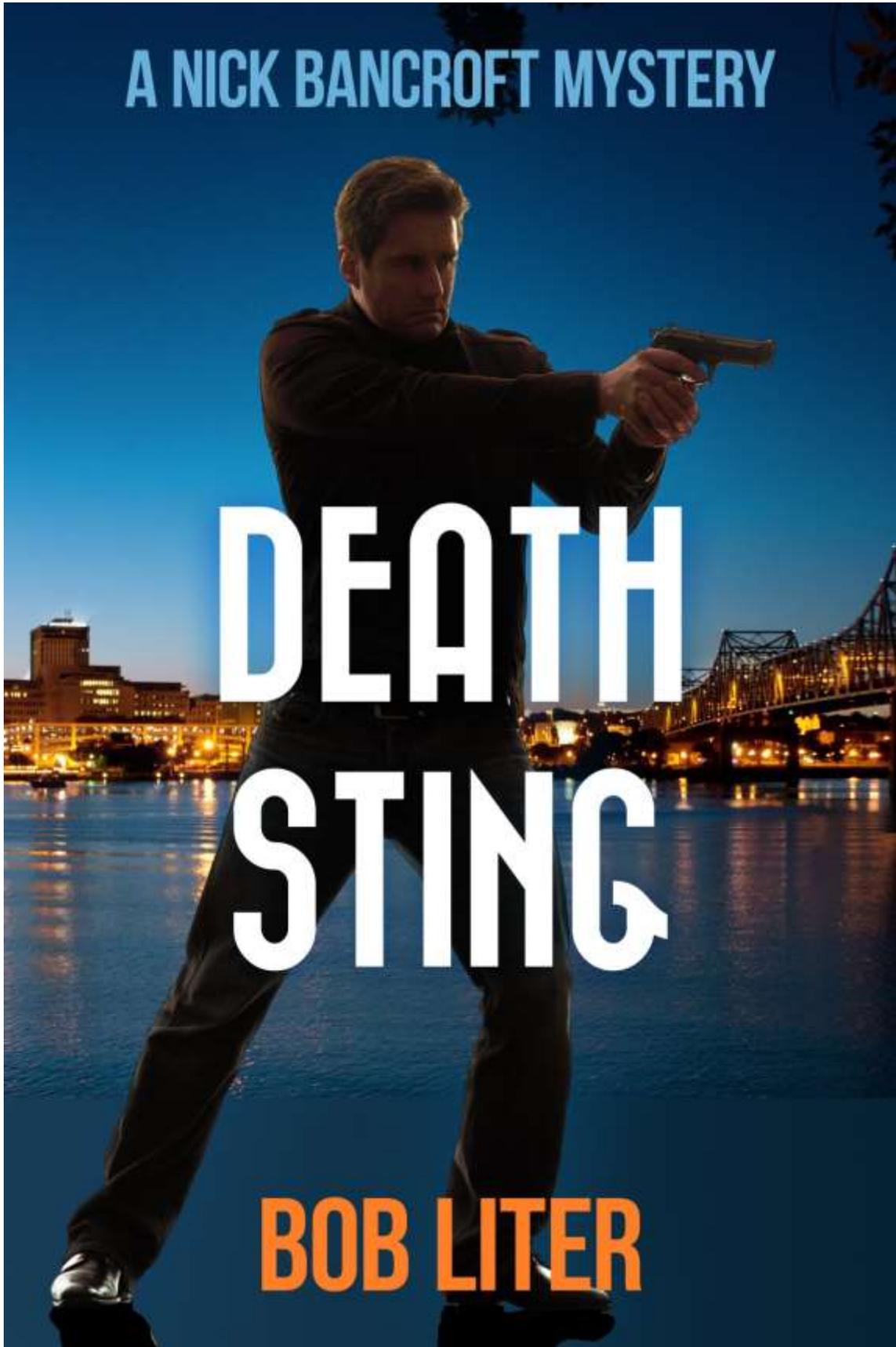


A NICK BANCROFT MYSTERY

DEATH  
STING

BOB LITER



# **Death Sting**

A Nick Bancroft Mystery

**By**

**Bob Liter**

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## Introduction by Martie Liter Ogborn

*Death Sting*, the third book in the Bancroft Mysteries, is full of mayhem, mystery and moments of cynical humor. The semi-smoldering romance between Nick Bancroft and Maggie Atley, his on-again off-again lady, may break out into roaring flames before the case and unanswered questions are resolved. Even if you haven't read the first two books, you won't miss a beat beginning the fun and adventures with this novel.

The body of Vicki Fowler was found in County Sheriff Dudley Hudson's jurisdiction and he claims, "It was just an accident." The Centrel City Press reports, "However, according to the coroner, it wasn't the bee stings that killed her. It was a heart attack brought on by physiological stress."

Nick Bancroft, investigative reporter, PI and an occasional hero, meets with his friend and resource, Andrew Brown. Andy, now Captain of Centrel City's police detectives, tells Nick, "It doesn't leave us anywhere, Bancroft. It leaves me with a case that isn't mine and you with NO story."

True to Bancroft's bodacious style, nothing will keep him from finding out the truth. Nick is drawn to this case like a bee to honey. If Miss Fowler was scared to death, was there foul play? Was it murder?

Dear Reader, sit back and enjoy this first chapter of *Death Sting*. There is much more to discover. I would love to hear from you. Email me [Martie@BancroftMysteries.com](mailto:Martie@BancroftMysteries.com) or follow the wild and crazy adventures on the website <http://www.BancroftMysteries.com>

Social media:     MARTIE LITER OGBORN

# Death Sting

## CHAPTER ONE

"However, according to the coroner, it wasn't the bee stings that killed her. She apparently died from a heart attack brought on by stress."

Maggie Atley, who sat across from me at the fold-down kitchen table in my apartment, lowered the latest copy of Better Homes and Gardens.

"What?"

"The body was found in a field southwest of town, according to the Central City Press. In other words, this woman was scared to death."

"What a horrible way to die," Maggie said. "Who was she?"

She marked her place in the magazine with one of my latest past due bills, put the magazine down, lifted her coffee cup and sipped. She frowned, said, "Yuk," got up, went to the counter, poured the coffee from her cup into the coffee maker, refilled her cup and returned.

"Her name, if you must know, was Vicki Fowler. Twenty-three years old from Springfield. She lived here at the Good Shepherd Home."

"Springfield, Illinois?"

"Yes. Don't you find it intriguing that a woman was found dead practically outside our door with bee stings all over her body?"

Maggie pushed light brown hair from her forehead and sighed.

"Intriguing, yes, and I know what you're thinking," she said.

"You always think you know what I'm thinking."

She put her elbows on the table, held the cup in both hands and smiled that knowing smile I loved.

"You're thinking there's a story in this you can sell to the Chicago Times. You're planning right now to start an investigation into this bee-sting thing and

neglect the work that brings in steady money, work that pays the bills. Right, Nick? It's your business, of course, but you need money."

When we first met I was thinking I would like to get in her pants – to coin a phrase – and her heavenly blue eyes, sparkling with amusement, told me she read my thoughts. Instead of pretending to be offended, she smiled.

Now I admired her freshly scrubbed face. She was a knockout when her hair was teased into a semblance of obedience, and she wore that eye shadow stuff and the rest of it. But at breakfast, with tousled hair and freckles on her cheeks unhidden by makeup, she was woman.

She was right about my plans to pursue the story. "Well, why not?" I said. "There surely is more to the story than what they've printed here."

As it turned out there was a hell of a lot more. If I'd known the players and their eventual desire to kill me, well, I would have thought about it.

Maggie was my part-time secretary, lover and would-be slave driver. She lived with me at the moment but insisted it was not a permanent arrangement, which was fine with me, I thought.

My name is Nick Bancroft. I'm an ex-reporter who inherited a run-down one-man detective agency in Centrel City, Illinois, and am a couple of years older than Maggie's "nearly forty."

"What about those pictures you promised that attorney?" Maggie asked, "the ones of the broken sidewalk. And you have two traffic-accident photo jobs."

I finished my coffee and squeezed out from under the table. I kissed her forehead on my way to the office in the front of the apartment, taking the newspaper with me.

She was right. I had to get to work, and I would in a minute or two, but first I had to consider the possibilities of the bee-sting story. How would a woman get bee stings all over her body and wind up dead in a nearby farm field? Where did the bees come from?"

My nameless cat jumped onto the desk, sat and waited. I petted it automatically, a cat-trained provider. It was an independent thing, mostly white with a black ear and an attitude. Maggie had foisted it on me back at my old office. It wouldn't let me touch it for weeks even though it showed up regularly to be fed. I refused to name the ungrateful beggar much to Maggie's annoyance. She called it Ruffles until I convinced her it was male.

Maggie appeared in the office doorway, leaned against the jamb, and sighed. "You pay more attention to that cat than to me. I want more than a peck on the forehead when you head out to slay dragons."

She glided into the room, petted the cat, and sat on my lap. Her one-hundred-and-twenty or so pounds settled in as we kissed. I tasted coffee and smelled Dial soap, the soap we had used to shower together before breakfast. I enjoyed washing away the sweat her body created when she ran her usual two miles before I got out of bed.

We sat, as we often had since she came to live with me, and watched through the large front window as a variety of shoes and ankles marched past on the sidewalk above. Stairs from the walk led down and by the window and its black, block lettering advertising my business: "AAA Investigations."

My office consisted of an old wooden desk, a couple of file cabinets, an outdated Dell computer, a Canon printer and a Motorola radio in a cracked plastic case.

"Okay boss, I'll get the mundane stuff done, and then see what I can find out about how and why a woman winds up scared to death by bees."

Maggie placed her warm, moist lips on mine. I caressed a well-formed breast before she pulled away, stood, and said, "Oh no, you don't. We've both got other things to do."

She placed one hand atop her head and sashayed out of the room. I downed the rest of the coffee and left the cup on my desk. She'd see it later, take it to the

kitchen, and insist she wasn't going to chase all over the apartment picking up dirty cups I left behind. Life was good ... then.

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