

Shades of Murder

A Mac Faraday Mystery

By

Lauren Carr

Shades of Murder

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For information call: 304-285-8205
or Email: writerlaurencarr@comcast.net

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To My Beloved Family

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Cast of Characters *(in order of appearance)*

David O’Callaghan: Spencer police officer, promoted to chief of police after death of his father, Police Chief Patrick O’Callaghan. Mac Faraday’s half-brother.

Police Chief Patrick O’Callaghan: Spencer’s legendary police chief. The love of Robin Spencer’s life.

Archie Monday: Personal assistant to world-famous mystery author Robin Spencer. Lives in the guest cottage at Spencer Manor.

Robin Spencer: Queen of Mystery. World famous mystery author. Upon her death, it is revealed that as a teenager she had a son out of wedlock, to whom she has left her vast fortune. She is the love of Police Chief Patrick O’Callaghan’s life.

Arthur Bogart: Spencer’s Deputy Police Chief. Best friend of Patrick O’Callaghan. David’s godfather.

Neal Hathaway: Multi-millionaire and CEO of Hathaway Industries, which builds and launches satellites.

Greta: Neal Hathaway’s housekeeper.

Susan Dulin: Neal Hathaway’s executive assistant.

Rachel Hathaway: Neal Hathaway’s daughter-in-law. Married to Scott Hathaway.

Ilysa Ramsay: Artist. Neal Hathaway’s wife.

Reggie: Package Delivery Service Trainee.

Kevin: Package Delivery Service Driver.

Gnarly: Mac Faraday's German Shepherd. Only dog to be dishonorably discharged from the United States Army. Don't ask them why. They refuse to talk about it.

Mac Faraday: Underpaid homicide detective. His wife leaves him and takes everything. On the day his divorce became final, he inherited \$270 million and an estate on Deep Creek Lake from his birth mother, Robin Spencer.

Archibald Poole: Millionaire Art Collector.

Peyton Kaplan: Vice-President in charge of security at Hathaway Industries.

Nancy Kaplan: Peyton Kaplan's wife.

Victor Gruskonov: Ilysa's business manager.

George Scales: Neal Hathaway's lawyer.

Joshua Thornton: Hancock County, West Virginia, prosecuting attorney, former JAG lawyer. Retired after the sudden death of his wife Valerie left him to raise five children on his own. He is looking forward to a relaxing two-week vacation as an empty-nester—until he agrees to do a favor for the last person he expected to do a favor for.

Reverend Brody: Prison pastor. Friend of Joshua Thornton.

Oliver Cartwright: Serial Rapist and Murderer. Serving life in prison.

Lieutenant Sherry Bixby: Head of Homicide Division with Pennsylvania State Police stationed in Pittsburgh barracks.

Detective Cameron Gates: Pennsylvania State Police's top homicide detective. She had investigated the Oliver Cartwright murders.

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Irving: Cameron Gates's cat. You'd have issues too if you looked like a skunk.

Priscilla Garrett: Senior Forensics Technician.

Admiral: Joshua Thornton's dog. The Irish Wolfhound-Great Dane mix has the heart of a chicken.

Special Investigator Harry Bush: FBI agent. He has one more case he wants to close before he retires.

Investigator Kenny Hill: FBI agent, training to replace Harry Bush, if he can survive this last case.

Jeff Ingles: Spencer Inn's nervous manager.

The one charm about marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties.

Oscar Wilde

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Chapter One

Deep Creek Lake - Present Day

“Okay, Reggie, our next delivery is One Spencer Court. That’s the stone and cedar place at the end of the point. ” Kevin chuckled when he read the address off the clipboard.

First day on the job and he’s got a delivery on Spencer Court. Hey, you gotta learn sometime.

“What’s so funny?” The pimply-faced trainee glanced over at his supervisor, who was in the van’s passenger seat.

With a smile, Kevin pointed up ahead. “Take the next right and cross the toll bridge over the cove. That’ll take you onto Spencer Point”

“Toll bridge?”

“You’ll see.”

Reggie eased the van onto the narrow bridge to cross over the cove. The shoreline in this corner of Deep Creek Lake was the residence of some of the most luxurious homes in the area. The houses along the peninsula increased in grandeur up to the cedar and stone mansion that occupied the tip of Spencer Point. "Wow," he breathed.

"Stop!" Kevin shouted.

Reggie hit the brakes. The van stopped so fast that the packages in the back spilled off their shelves. The only one that stayed put was the six-by-five foot flat box out for delivery to Spencer Manor.

"Watch where you're going, kid."

Motionless, like a sentry on duty, a German Shepherd blocked the center of the road on the bridge. His gaze was directed at them.

"What's he doing?" Reggie whispered.

Kevin cleared his throat. "Looks like he's sitting to me."

The young man looked on either side of the dog to judge if there was enough space to drive around him. There wasn't.

"What're you going to do?" the trainer asked.

"Honk my horn? That'll make him move." After Kevin shrugged his shoulders, the driver tapped the horn.

Without so much as a blink of his eyes, the dog didn't move in response to the blast. When the driver hit the horn repeatedly, the German Shepherd remained frozen in his spot in the road. Reggie pressed his palm to the horn and kept it there.

"Hey, cut it out!" an old man with a fishing pole yelled from a dock. "You're scaring the fish."

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Reggie turned back to the canine cocking his head at him. The delivery man could swear he saw the dog's lips curl in a smirk. "I'm driving through. He'll jump out of the way."

"What if he doesn't?" asked Kevin.

"His fault if he's too dumb to jump out of the way of a moving vehicle."

"That's Gnarly," the trainer warned him. "He's a lot of things, but dumb isn't one of them. He's Mac Faraday's dog."

"Who?"

"Mac Faraday owns Spencer Manor." Kevin pointed to the end of the Point. "Nice guy, but I guarantee you, you run over his dog, and Faraday complains to the home office; then you'll be delivering packages to Pakistan."

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Make him to move."

Reggie threw open the door and walked over to the dog blocking the road. "Move it." He waved his arms. "Get out of here. Go home."

The shepherd remained rooted in the spot.

The skinny delivery man called back to his trainer. "He didn't even blink."

Chuckling at the sight, Kevin climbed out of the van. "He doesn't."

Reggie asked, "Does he bite?"

"He'll kill you if he has to."

Reggie peered down at the dog that he guessed to be the largest German Shepherd he had ever seen up close. His brown face was trimmed in silver. The thick fur that made up his mane was sable. His tall ears stood erect. If he wasn't such a nuisance, Reggie would think he was a beautiful animal. "You wouldn't

bite me.” He reached out to grab his collar. With a growl, Gnarly bared his teeth. Reggie jumped back.

“Told you he’d kill you if he had to.” Kevin laughed.

“Then you make him move.”

The trainer slipped a hand into his breast pocket. Stepping up to the dog, he held out his open palm to display a dog biscuit. “There you go, Gnarl.”

After taking the biscuit, the German Shepherd trotted off the bridge and up a path leading into the woods.

With a laugh, Kevin turned to his trainee. “I told you it was a toll bridge.” He climbed back into the van. “Let’s go. We need to get this package to Mac Faraday.”



The late Robin Spencer loved her gardening as much as she loved murder mysteries. The grounds of her homestead, known as Spencer Manor, displayed her green thumb in multi-colored glory.

While Mac Faraday took after his mother in many ways, gardening wasn’t one of them. He didn’t know the difference between a petunia and a dandelion; nor would he notice the rhododendron bushes calling out for food and water after a couple of days without rain.

It wasn’t that Mac was a neglectful homeowner. He was diligent about giving Gnarly his six o’clock biscuit. He wasn’t quite so conscientious when it came to tending to his late mother’s gardens. He would be if the rhododendron bush jumped up and down on his chest at the morning’s first light.

For that reason, Archie Monday had made it her personal mission to keep Robin Spencer’s beloved gardens flourishing.

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It had been a busy spring for the editor and research assistant. When she wasn't cooped up inside her stone cottage working on an upcoming release from a hot new writer, she was up to her armpits in mulch and plant soil.

It seemed as if God sensed that she needed a break. The day after she had sent off the book, the sun had risen to shine on Spencer Manor's gardens in full bloom. The estate resembled a floral rainbow of blues and reds and yellows.

In the guest cottage, Archie checked her reflection in the mirror and applied one more layer of blush to her cheeks. After combing every hair in her blond pixie cut in place, she covered it with a new hat.

She had compared notes with her best friend, Catherine Fleming, about the proper attire for the garden club luncheon at the Spencer Inn. This would be Archie's first meeting as a bona fide member of the same exclusive garden club, founded by Robin's grandmother. Archie wanted to make a good impression.

Spencer's own honest to goodness social debutante, Catherine Fleming had suggested a Chanel suit. She also recommended a hat to match. This season, hats were very in. In the sunshine yellow suit with a matching hat, Archie felt like a bumble bee. *I'm a cute one at least.*

After grabbing her matching yellow clutch bag, she locked the door to the guest cottage where she made her home and trotted up the stone path through the rose garden. She was climbing the steps to the manor's back deck when she heard the delivery truck roll through the stone entrance. Expecting the arrival of her new smart phone, she clasped the hat down tight on her head with her hand to keep it from flying off, and broke into a run to meet the truck.

There was no need to hurry. The delivery men were taking their time admiring the twenty-three foot spectacle occupying the far side of the circular driveway. Blue and white, the Cobalt speed boat rested on its trailer, while waiting for its new owner to launch her for her maiden voyage.

“Sweet,” Kevin said while circling the boat. “Must be nice.”

“Boys and their toys.” Archie reached out to sign the tablet tucked under his elbow.

Kevin held the tablet out of her reach. “Sorry, Ms. Monday, but today we need the man’s signature himself.” He showed her an envelope that he had tucked underneath the tablet. “There’s a letter for him, too. He’s to sign for both of them.”

Archie’s face screwed up in puzzlement when she saw Reggie pulling the large package from the back of the truck. “I take it that’s not my new phone.” She hurried up the steps and went inside the mansion.

Kevin assisted his trainee in lifting the box from the back of the truck and carrying it up to the porch. “Do you remember Robin Spencer?”

“The writer? I remember us having to read some of her short stories in school. We saw a play that she wrote, too.”

“She’s the one that wrote all those books about the millionaire playboy named Mickey Forsythe—”

“I loved those Mickey Forsythe movies,” Reggie said. “I didn’t know they wrote books about him.”

Kevin explained, “Mickey Forsythe was a cop who inherited millions of dollars. So he leaves the police force and goes around solving murders for kicks.”

While they carried the box across the stone walk, the older man gestured with the toss of his head at the mansion. “After

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Robin Spencer died last year, they found out that when she was a teenager, she had a baby out of wedlock. She left everything to him. That baby had grown up to be a big time homicide detective. Get it? Mac Faraday is the same guy his birth mother wrote about.”

At the top step, the door opened. “I’m nothing like Mickey Forsythe.” In contrast to the dark-haired super detective in leather jackets and dark glasses from Reggie’s youth, the true life version of Mickey Forsythe wore jean cut offs, a faded blue shirt, and flip-flops on his feet.

“Yeah, right,” Kevin chuckled. “And Gnarly is nothing like Diablo, Mickey Forsythe’s German Shepherd.”

“Are you talking about the dog that held us up at the bridge?” Reggie asked on their way across the threshold.

“Is Gnarly doing that again?” Archie directed them to carry the package down the three stone steps into the drop-down dining room on the other side of the living room.

Enthralled with being so close to one of his movie heroes, Reggie ignored the question. “I love Diablo.” He handed the letter and tablet to Mac. “In that last movie, the bad guy tried to escape from Mickey by climbing up a ladder to the roof and Diablo actually climbed up the ladder and nailed the sucker.”

“That’s Gnarly all right.” The older delivery man was laughing on his way back to the van. “There’s nothing that dog can’t do.”

“What did you order?” Shaking her head, Archie stood in front of the package propped up against the backs of the dining room chairs. “Maybe it’s a mattress.”

Receiving no answer, she turned around to see that the front door was open. Perturbed that she would have to wait to find

out what was in the box, she went outside in time to see Mac tearing out of the garage in his red Dodge Viper to follow the delivery van.

As the brown delivery van turned onto the bridge at the end of Spencer Court, Reggie's foot hit the brake once more when he found a hundred pounds of fur and teeth blocking the road. "Again?"

Kevin held out a dog biscuit to him. "You can't cross without paying the toll."

Reggie took the treat. "Wait until I tell my wife that I got held up by Diablo. She's never going to believe it." He heard the squeal of brakes behind the truck. While stepping up to the dog, he turned around to see who was waiting behind them. *Whoever it is, he's got a sweet ride in a red convertible.*

"You're in big trouble, mister!"

Feeling like his insides had jumped out of his skin, Reggie dropped the biscuit to the ground. Whirling around, he threw up his arms and fists to defend himself against whoever it was that had rushed up behind him.

Gnarly scooped up the biscuit.

Mac Faraday was advancing. "Yes, I'm talking to you." He pointed at the German Shepherd attempting to swallow the spoils of his extortion in one gulp. "What have I told you about playing the troll on the bridge? Bad dog. Get in the car."

Instead of obeying, the dog barked in protest while standing his ground.

"Don't give me your lip." Mac pointed at the Viper. "Get in the car."

The dog replied with a snarling bark.

"Get in the car."

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Gnarly's barks rose in volume.

"In the car! Now!"

Hanging his head, Gnarly scampered to the car.

After uttering a heavy sigh, Mac turned to the two delivery men, who had been watching the argument with their mouths hanging open. "I'm sorry, gentlemen. This won't happen again." He turned to go back to the sports car. "What are you—Hey! That's my iPod! Bad dog! Drop it!"

"He's right," Reggie said after returning to his seat in the van. "They're nothing like Mickey Forsythe and Diablo."



"Bad dog!" Mac chased Gnarly inside the house. "Up to your room and don't come out. I want you to think about what you did."

Instead of galloping up the stairs to the master suite, Gnarly jumped up onto the loveseat in the living room. Like a defiant child, the dog returned his master's glare.

"Do what I say." Mac pointed up the stairs. "You heard me."

Still, Gnarly refused to move.

"I'll teach you who's boss."

When Mac grabbed him by the collar, Gnarly pulled away. Keeping hold, he wrestled with the dog until he had him in a headlock. The two of them landed on the floor and rolled across the carpet toward the stone fireplace.

"Will you stop playing with Gnarly and open this box?" Archie called up to them from the dining room. "I'm dying to know what's in it."

Declaring himself the victor, Gnarly jumped up onto the loveseat and plopped down with an "Umph" noise.

Archie slipped the sealed envelope that had come with the package into Mac's hand.

"Who said dogs are man's best friends?" He frowned when he read the return address on the envelope. It was from a lawyer's office. He asked the dog on the loveseat, "Are we being sued by another one of your victims?"

Gnarly snorted and shook so hard that the tags on his collar rattled.

"Since when do lawyers send huge packages special delivery to people they're suing?" Archie waved an arm in the direction of the box. "You read the letter. I'll open it to see what's inside." Without waiting for permission, she kicked off her shoes and went into the kitchen to retrieve scissors for cutting the cord and tape sealing it shut.

Gnarly galloped down the steps to sniff at the box that had invaded his home.

Meanwhile, Mac tore at the envelope, which contained a letter and another envelope. The inside envelope was addressed in blue script to Robin Spencer with the word *PERSONAL* printed in capital letters underneath her name.

"What does the letter say?" Archie came back in from the kitchen. With the scissors, she broke through the plastic cord wrapped around the box.

Mac was still reading the first letter. "It's a bunch of legal mumbo jumbo. This guy, Archibald Poole, died. He had left this to Robin Spencer. In the event of her death preceding his, it was to be passed on to her next of kin. Since that's me, I get it."

Archie stopped snipping. "Archibald Poole?"

Gnarly stopped sniffing.

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“Did you know him?” He was breaking through the seal of the white envelope addressed to Robin.

“Creepy old man. One of those eccentric rich guys. He didn’t make it all on the up and up. I think Robin remained friends with him because he was good material for her books. He lived in a big mansion up on top of a mountain in southern West Virginia.”

Mac was only half paying attention. “He left Robin a painting.”

With one end unsealed, Archie peered inside the box to see that the contents were wrapped in brown paper and padding.

Sitting on the top step leading down into the dining room, Mac read the letter out loud:

Dearest Robin,

If you are reading this, then I’m dead and you are now observing my gift to you. So, what do you leave to the girl who has everything? When that girl is Robin Spencer, it’s a mystery.

You will find that I have left you an Ilysa Ramsay painting. That alone makes it worth a fortune. But, ah, my dear Robin, this is not just any Ilysa Ramsay painting. It is her lost painting.

You will recall that Ilysa Ramsay was brutally murdered on your own Deep Creek Lake in the early hours of Labor Day in 2004. At the same time, her last painting was stolen from her studio where her dead body was discovered. She had unveiled what she had declared to be her masterpiece to her family and friends the same evening that she was murdered.

Grasping the frame wrapped in packaging, Archie tugged at the painting to pull it out of the box while Mac continued reading:

Everyone in the art world has been searching for Ilysa Ramsay's last work of art. With only a handful of people having seen it; and no photographs taken of it before its theft; its value is priceless.

As my good luck would have it, a month after her murder, my guy called me. He had been contacted by a fence representing someone claiming to have the painting and wanting to unload it. Being familiar with Ilysa Ramsay's work, I was able to authenticate it. Also, I had seen reports from witnesses who had described it as a self-portrait of Ilysa.

As I write this letter, Ilysa's murder has yet to be solved. Nor do I know who had stolen the painting. It was sold to me by a third party.

And so, my dear lovely Robin, I leave this task to you. Here is the painting that the art world has been searching for, for years, and a mystery of who stole it, along with who killed its lovely artist. Enjoy, as I know you will!

*My Love,
Archibald Poole*

Her yellow suit droopy, Archie slapped her hat down on the dining room table, and ripped through the padding to reveal the painting of a red-haired woman lying across a lounge with a red and green clover pattern. She was dressed in an emerald gown with a ruby red choker stretched across her throat. Ruby red jewels spilled down her throat toward the bodice.

Gnarly sat on the floor at Mac's feet to gaze at the painting.

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They studied the image together.

“Just what I always wanted,” Mac said. “A stolen priceless painting with a dead body attached to it.”

Lauren Carr