



A Mac Faraday Mystery

LAUREN
CARR



CRIMES
PAST

EXCERPT

CRIMES PAST (EXCERPT)

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EXCERPT

After instructing the police chief on how best to cover up the homicide, Mac Faraday turned his sports car off the road on Spencer Mountain. The scenic overlook provided a panoramic view of Deep Creek Lake down below. They were only a few minutes from the Spencer Inn, which rested at the top of the mountain.

Mac glanced over at the hundred-pound German shepherd in the passenger seat of his convertible sports car. Whining, Gnarly pawed at his snout. Drops of blood seeped from the deep cat scratches. Tufts of fur had been torn from his forehead.

Mac removed a wad of paper napkins from the glove compartment and doused them with water from his drinking bottle. "Come here, old boy. We'll get you fixed up."

His face filled with misery, Gnarly draped his upper body across the console and lay his head in Mac's lap. More concerned about Gnarly than his tailored slacks and sports coat, Mac dabbed at the wounds on the dog's big head.

"Neither of us saw that coming, did we?" He wet the napkins and continued to clean the dog up. "It's okay. It was self-defense. Granted, that cat was five times smaller than you, but what did he expect you to do when he attached himself to your face?" He examined a couple of puncture wounds on Gnarly's scalp. It looked like a serious bite.

“What is Ms. Kleinfeld thinking bringing feral cats to Spencer Point to live outside next to a house with a German shepherd?” Mac examined Gnarly’s head. The bleeding had finally stopped. “Then, she blames the dog for chasing her cats—as if dogs haven’t been chasing cats for thousands of years.” He adjusted Gnarly’s rhinestone collar. “It’s probably your fault, too, for forcing her cat to hide in the bushes next to our front steps to launch his attack.”

After securing the water bottle and tossing the used napkins on the floor in the passenger seat, Mac put the car back in gear. “As mayor, Gnarly, I think you need to propose a law against feral cats running loose in Spencer.”

Gnarly’s ears perked up at that suggestion.

“But first, we have to get you to Spencer Inn for your book launch party.”

The tires of Mac’s red Viper spit gravel as it sped back onto the road.

Mac was still trying to wrap his head around owning a resort that he couldn’t have afforded to visit back when he had been a homicide detective.

Six years earlier, Mac had inherited a vast fortune from Robin Spencer. The world-famous mystery writer’s sudden death from a brain aneurism had revealed a family secret. As a teenager, she had given birth to a baby who had been put up for adoption. Her baby boy grew up to become a homicide detective named Mac Faraday.

After giving birth to her son, Mac’s teenaged mother had been sent off to college. By the time she had returned to Spencer, his birth father, Patrick O’Callaghan had married and had a son.

Upon learning the news about his inheritance, Mac Faraday moved into the stone and cedar mansion that had been home to his late birth mother. He also became fast friends with his half-brother David O’Callaghan. It was due

to their close relationship that Mac trusted David to cover up Mayor Gnarly’s fatal attack on the feral feline after it had attached itself to his head.

The hundred-year-old Spencer Inn rested on a mountain-top. The front of the stone and cedar main lodge offered a view of the lake below and the mountains off in the distance. While resting between boating, golf, skiing, mountain biking, hiking, or any of the other host of activities, guests could enjoy the view in cane rocking chairs on the wrap-around porch. An outdoor café offered refreshments on a multi-level deck overlooking a floral garden and elaborate living maze. For more formal eating, guests could dine at the Inn’s five-star restaurant, which had been featured in numerous gourmet magazines around the world.

“I don’t believe it,” Mac Faraday said as he slowed the Viper down to drive past a mob of people crowded around an eight-foot-high statue of a German shepherd. Actually, he was six-foot-high on top of a two-foot pedestal. The statue gave new meaning to “larger than life.”

In the passenger seat, Gnarly uttered a low bark as if to warn the six foot tall German shepherd that the Spencer Inn was his domain.

“How many times do I have to remind you, Gnarly? That’s you. You’re barking at yourself.” Mac spun the steering wheel to turn the sports car into his reserved parking space.

Since the German shepherd had been elected mayor of Spencer, Maryland, the Inn’s management had changed the sign from “Reserved for Inn’s Owner” to “Reserved for Mayor Gnarly.”

“Where have you been?” Mac’s wife, Archie Monday trotted down the steps to yank open the passenger door and extract Gnarly. She was clad in a magenta dress with matching high heels and jewelry. “We have close to a hundred people in line waiting for Gnarly’s book launch party.”

“You mean *your* book launch party.” Mac detached his seat belt. “Surely these people don’t believe Gnarly wrote a self-help book about life.”

A child screamed.

“Honey, look! It’s Gnarly!” Her cell phone poised, a woman rushed forward to record the canine next to Archie for prosperity. “Isn’t he beautiful?”

The mob surrounding the statue migrated to where Archie and Gnarly were trying to climb the steps to the main entrance. It always took Gnarly a while to shake paws and pose for pictures with his adoring fans.

Watching his lovely wife, Mac groaned at the sea of change that he had experienced in a short time. Fresh from a bruising divorce, in which his wife of twenty years had left him for another man, he’d lost everything. Six years later, he was married to his birth mother’s stunning assistant and her German shepherd was mayor.

At that moment, the kleptomaniac canine was stealing a cell phone from the purse of a woman who was spelling out her name for Archie to sign Gnarly’s debut self-help book entitled *The World According to Gnarly*. Spotting the theft in process, the victim’s son tapped his mother on the arm. She turned around and shouted at her husband. “Doug!”

“I’m getting it.” The husband was recording the whole theft with his camera.

A group gathered around to watch as the German shepherd trotted toward the gift shop exit with the cell phone in his jaws. At the door, the store manager stepped in front of Gnarly and held out his hand.

Gnarly stopped, sat, and dropped the cell phone into the manager’s hand. The manager handed the phone to the victim and Gnarly returned to take his seat next to Archie, who continued to sign books with her signature and stamp the front with a paw print.

“Did you get that, Doug?” the victim asked while wiping the dog drool off her phone. “Did you get it all?”

“I’m uploading it to social media now.”

“Wait until Grandma sees that your cell phone actually got stolen by *Gnarly!*” The little boy was jumping up and down with excitement.

Imagine that. You could go to Scotland and hope to see the Loch Ness monster or Spencer to have your pocket picked by its mayor.

“Uncle Mac!” A young woman with her auburn hair cut into a short crop bound from the reception desk with her arms spread wide.

A wide grin crossed Mac’s face. “Gina! I wasn’t expecting you until later!” He took her into a warm hug.

“I couldn’t wait,” she breathed into his ear. She gestured at the elegance around her. “This is sooo lovely. More beautiful than I ever imagined.” She let out a squeal. “And I’m getting married here. Whoever would have imagined.”

“It’s my wedding present to you and Seth. If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask. I’ve left orders for you two to be treated like royalty.” Cassandra Johansson and a teenaged girl, who Mac recognized as Gina’s cousin, approached them from the reception desk.

Florence, the Inn’s event coordinator, had already greeted the bride, her maid of honor, and her aunt. On Mac’s orders, Florence was personally checking them in to ensure that everything would be perfect for the special guests.

“Where is Seth by the way?” Mac asked.

“He worked the evening shift last night,” Gina said. “He’s catching up on some sleep. The groomsmen will be bringing him out later.”

“He needs to rest up for his bachelor party,” the teenager said with a salacious grin.

"I don't know how wicked the bachelor party can be with the bride and bridesmaids attending," Cassandra said.

"It isn't like they're planning any strippers," Gina said.

"I was hoping," the girl said.

"No," Gina said in a firm tone. "Mac, do you remember Morgan?"

Mac shook her hand. "The last time I saw you, you were dancing on top of a table at Candace's Gina's police academy graduation."

"She's grown up some since then," Cassandra said. "Just finished a summer semester of cosmetology school."

"Guess who's doing the bride's hair and make-up for the wedding." Morgan gave Gina a hug.

"I keep hoping that eventually she'll change her mind and join me in the forensics lab," Cassandra said. "I've been keeping an eye on the weather." She looked out the windows at the clear blue sky. "They couldn't have asked for a better weekend for an outdoor wedding."

"And the leaves are at their height," Florence said. "The gardens are glorious right now. Our florists are working overtime to ensure that everything will be perfect." She held up her hand with her fingertips held together in a motion of precision.

"As long as Seth and I are together, celebrating our vows to spend the rest of our lives together, that is all the perfection that will be necessary." Gina reached up to give Mac a kiss on the cheek. "Thank you so much for this glorious wedding gift. It's going to make our special day even more memorable than ever."

With an offer to show them the gardens where the ceremony would take place, Florence led the women through the glass doors to the outdoor café.

"You shouldn't feel guilty, Mac."

Recognizing the voice, spoken with a thick Australian accent, Mac didn't need to turn around. Instead, he focused on the server, carrying a silver tray containing a crystal bowl and saucer, passing by on his way into the gift shop. "Guilty for what?"

"For not solving her mother's murder. That's why you're doing this." Hector Langford, the Inn's security manager, gestured at the glamorous hotel around them. "You promised to catch her mother and stepfather's killer and you failed. So, you're attempting to make up for it by giving her a huge wedding in your five-star hotel that other women can only dream of."

"You're wrong, Hector." Mac watched as the server stepped over to where Gnarly was seated in the chair at the signing table. With a bow, he presented the saucer containing a dog biscuit to Gnarly who inhaled it in one gulp. Next to him, Archie continued signing books and stamping them with the dog paw stamp while smiling brightly at the customers. The server then held the bowl for Gnarly who took a long sloppy drink.

"I don't believe it," Mac groaned.

Even as he flicked his eyes around at different points in the hotel, always in search of any potential threat, Hector managed to arch an eyebrow in Mac's direction. "Guilt is a useless emotion. It's nothing more than a crutch called rationalization."

"That's a good point, Hector, but—"

"That's why dogs don't feel guilty."

Mac blinked. "Dogs?"

"Because guilt is a wasted emotion," Hector said. "Gnarly talks all about it in the fifth chapter of his book."

Upon seeing the server dab Gnarly's lips with a white linen napkin, Mac uttered a groan. "The world has gone mad."

“You *did* read Gnarly’s book, didn’t you, Mac?” Hector asked.

“Have you looked over the background checks I’ve given you on each of the guests?”

Hector held up the electronic tablet for Mac to see. “Complete with pictures of our suspects. I’ve got alerts tied in with their reservations. I’ll get an alert on my phone when the front desk checks each one in. Someone from my team will have eyes on everyone this entire weekend. I’ve got one question for you, Chief.”

“What if our killer decides not to come to the wedding?”

“That’s the question.”

“Four days, all expenses paid at a five-star hotel with all of your friends,” Mac said with a smirk. “Plus, the opportunity to rub my nose in getting away with a murder you’d committed?”

“Not all killers have big egos.”

“He or she killed two detectives on their wedding night, in a hotel filled with cops,” Mac said. “Don’t tell me the killer didn’t plan that simply for the challenge of getting away with it. He or she has a huge ego and won’t be able to resist facing me.”

Gnarly and Archie were posing for a picture with a family. The children were holding up a signed copy of Gnarly’s book – *The World According to Gnarly*.

“I don’t believe it.” Mac spun around to come face to face with Gwen, the no-nonsense head of the town council.

“Mr. Faraday, I’ve been looking everywhere for you. Your two o’clock is waiting and we’ve got sixty-eight pic-

tures of that ditch to examine. After that, you have a four o’clock meeting with a parents’ committee wanting Gnarly to outlaw hide-and-seek within town limits.”

“Hide-and-seek?”

Hector leaned in to whisper. “That’s the game where you hide, and your opponent seeks you.”

“I know what hide-and-seek is,” Mac said. “I like that game. Gwen and I play it all the time, don’t we, Gwen?”

She shoved her glasses up on her nose. “I don’t play games.”

Hector covered his mouth to suppress a chuckle.

“Why would anyone want to outlaw hide-and-seek?”

Mac asked.

“It teaches stalking,” Gwen said.

“Who says it teaches stalking?”

“They say.”

“Who are *they*?”

“Experts,” Gwen said with a sigh, filled with annoyance. “Hide-and-seek teaches children how to hunt their prey and then they grow up to become stalkers.”

“Or they grow up to become detectives stalking killers.”

ATTENTION BOOK CLUB-BERS!

Want to add some excitement to your next book club meeting? Are you curious about this mystery author's theme regarding the dark side of perfection? Do you wonder where she picks up her inspiration for such interesting characters? What does she have planned next for J.J. and Poppy? Well, now is your chance to ask this international best-selling mystery writer, in person, you and your book club.

That's right. Lauren Carr is available to personally meet with your book club to discuss *Murder by Perfection* or any of her best-selling mystery novels. Discussion questions can be found and downloaded directly from the book pages on her website.

Don't worry if your club is meeting on the other side of the continent. Lauren can pop in to answer your questions via webcam. But, if your club is close enough, Lauren would love to personally meet with your group. Who know! She may even bring her muse Sterling along!

To invite Lauren Carr to your next book club meeting, visit www.mysterylady.net and fill out a request form with your club's details.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Carr

Lauren Carr is the international best-selling author of the Thorny Rose, Lovers in Crime, Mac Faraday, and Chris Matheson Cold Case Mysteries—over twenty titles across four fast-paced mystery series filled with twists and turns!

Book reviewers and readers alike rave about how Lauren Carr seamlessly crosses genres to include mystery, suspense, crime fiction, police procedurals, romance, and humor.

Lauren is a popular speaker who has made appearances at schools, youth groups, and on author panels at conventions. She lives with her husband and two German Shepherds, including the real Sterling, on a mountain in Harpers Ferry, WV.

Visit Lauren Carr's website at www.mysterylady.net to learn more about Lauren and her upcoming mysteries.

CHECK OUT LAUREN CARR'S MYSTERIES!

All of Lauren Carr's books are stand alone. However for those readers wanting to start at the beginning, here is the list of Lauren Carr's mysteries. The number next to the book title is the actual order in which the book was released.

Joshua Thornton Mysteries

Fans of the *Lovers in Crime Mysteries* may wish to read these two books which feature Joshua Thornton years before meeting Detective Cameron Gates. Also in these mysteries, readers will meet Joshua Thornton's five children before they had flown the nest.

- 1) *A Small Case of Murder*
- 2) *A Reunion to Die For*

Mac Faraday Mysteries

- 3) *It's Murder, My Son*
- 4) *Old Loves Die Hard*
- 5) *Shades of Murder*
(introduces the *Lovers in Crime*: Joshua Thornton & Cameron Gates)
- 7) *Blast from the Past*
- 8) *The Murders at Astaire Castle*
- 9) *The Lady Who Cried Murder*
(The *Lovers in Crime* make a guest appearance in this Mac Faraday Mystery)
- 10) *Twelve to Murder*
- 12) *A Wedding and a Killing*
- 13) *Three Days to Forever*

- 15) *Open Season for Murder*
- 16) *Cancelled Vows*
- 17) *Candidate for Murder*
(featuring Thorny Rose Mystery detectives
Murphy Thornton & Jessica Faraday)
- 23) *Crimes Past (Coming Fall 2018)*

Lovers in Crime Mysteries

- 6) *Dead on Ice*
- 11) *Real Murder*
- 18) *Killer in the Band*
- 23) *The Root of Murder*

Thorny Rose Mysteries

- 14) *Kill and Run*
(featuring the *Lovers in Crime* in
Lauren Carr's latest series)
- 19) *A Fine Year for Murder*
- 22) *Murder by Perfection*
- 24) *The Root of Murder*

Chris Matheson Cold Case Mysteries

- 21) *ICE*

A Lauren Carr Novel

- 20) *Twofer Murder*

THE ROOT OF MURDER

A Lovers in Crime Mystery

Homicide Detective Cameron Gates learned long ago that there is not such thing as a typical murder case. Each mystery is special in its own right—especially for the family of the victim.

The murder of a successful executive, husband, and father seems open and shut when the murder weapon is found in his estranged son-in-law's possession. When J.J. Thornton agrees to act as the defendant's public defender, he assumes his first murder case will be a loss.

Only the report of a missing husband proves that this open-and-cut case is not so simple. Strap on your seatbelts for a wild ride in this mystery that all started with a simple DNA test for a genealogy website.

Coming Early 2019!