

EVIL LIKE ME

STEVE BRADSHAW

No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review. For information regarding permission, please write to: steve@stevebradshawauthor.com

Copyright © 2016 STEVE BRADSHAW
All rights reserved.

1st Edition 2016



ISBN: 978-1-937996-97-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-
Publication Data
EVIL LIKE ME
STEVE BRADSHAW

Printed in USA

EVIL LIKE ME © is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, institutions, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or use is fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental and fictitious.

EVIL LIKE ME

STEVE BRADSHAW

*“All we know is still infinitely less than all that remains
unknown.”*

William Harvey

PREFACE

A story inspired by true events

In 1972 the U.S. Government began research into psychic-phenomena for potential domestic and military applications. After testing thousands of self-proclaimed psychics, few were contracted—remote viewers. Within six months the project was reclassified top secret.

In 1995 the CIA abruptly terminated the ‘Stargate Project’ claiming the research produced no actionable information utilized by intelligence operations. Independent reviewers disagreed. Declassified documents later released to the public were incomplete. Remote viewers vanished.

Many parapsychology experts claim the twenty-five year government research had been successful, and that a secret international effort to develop and control psychic-weapons of mass destruction was underway.

ONE

Memphis, Tennessee

Two days after Donald Deckle died with a knife in his back and six pints of blood pooled on the floor at the Benton Bank & Trust, there were unexpected developments. Test results linking unsolved homicides in the Midsouth could be made available to Dr. Victoria Petty under certain conditions.

That day she had two suicides, two accidents, and three naturals—six required full autopsies and one an inspection. Since Deckle had died on South Main there were no other homicides in the county. The lull in activity had given her precious needed time. Completion of her transition from Dallas to Memphis meant no loose ends and no turning back. Dr. Petty now carried the full weight of the office on her shoulders—the new Chief Medical Examiner for Shelby County.

Setting ground rules for staff proved more difficult than anticipated. She would not allow the scheduling of day meetings without prior consent. Her days were dedicated to inquests starting at seven o'clock sharp and continuing unabated until completion. Her nights were for reading

histology slides and assessing toxicology results, reviewing police and CSI reports, and tying it all back to the autopsy findings. An expeditious release of bodies to families was Petty's second priority, her first, determining cause and manner of death.

When her assistant poked a head in her office after hours announcing unexpected visitors from Washington DC, Petty made yet another exception.

"I'm astonished Bethesda Research sent three representatives to Memphis to hand-deliver test results," she said tongue-in-cheek pointing to the long, leather sofa across from her desk. The advanced testing she wanted was only available at Bethesda—Deckle her fourth brain tissue submission.

Her cramped, dank office was a floor plan afterthought. It sat at the east end of the basement under the two-story brick building converted to a county morgue. Squeezed between the autopsy room and walk-in refrigerator—with accommodations for twenty-five—Petty grappled with the shortcomings of her new forensic home, nothing like the pristine facilities in Dallas. Regardless of the number of light fixtures or thermostat setting, her office remained a small cold medieval dungeon minus the bats and torture apparatus.

"Welcome to Memphis," she said as they filed in. The three blue suits, narrow ties, and starched shirts sat down in unison. Each had the same lapel pin, short haircut, and wire-rimmed glasses pushed up the nose.

"To what do I owe this visit?" Petty asked. Their soft, pale faces and dainty hands were giveaways. She scrutinized the three lab rats like bodies on her autopsy table—absorbing clues to solve her next mystery. The oldest sat in the middle on the edge of the sofa with his small, round mouth poised to speak. The other two melted into the cushions with odd, catatonic stares.

Why come to see me? Is it because I'm the new ME?

No. It's something about my tissue submissions? Four cases, amygdala tissue sections could be a bit unusual.

"Thank you for seeing us without a scheduled appointment, Dr. Petty." His lips barely moved until the awkward smile at the end.

"Seems impromptus are the norm around here," she replied with a hint of sarcasm as she glanced at the stack of pending cases on her desk.

Agent Brimley shuffled into the office with his nose in a file. Before speaking, he looked up and put on the brakes. Brimley flashed a surprised look at his boss, spun around, and left the room. The closing door behind him wafted in the sweet smell of human flesh and fresh blood. Petty noted two of her visitors squirmed.

"An endangered species," she said to her guests. "Mr. Brimley is one of my most valued field agents. I do not know what I would do without him."

The one seated in the middle seemed unaffected by the interruption, her words, or the smell. His eyelids flickered like a moth as his mouth transformed into a short straight line, and a tiny hole opened in the center. "I am Dr. John Swenson. This is Dr. Green and Dr. Blanchard." Both nodded with empty eyes staring at the closed door.

"And why are you here?" Petty asked.

"We are here to discuss five deaths in Shelby County."

Not my tests? "Since when did Bethesda Research take an interest in regional deaths?"

"Bethesda's primary interests will always be the provision of specialized testing services and the pooling of morbidity data. However, this meeting is different."

Petty glanced down at the three lights dancing on her phone. "One minute." She hit intercom. "Mary, take numbers. I will return calls when I can."

"Detective Wilcox called three times," squeaked from the dusty box. "He is on the line."

She saw the three visitors blink at the name. “Tell Detective Wilcox I will call him the moment I conclude my meeting. Tell him I hope to have the test results he is looking for.” She hung up. “Please, continue Dr. Swenson.”

“We are medical doctors and research scientists—histology and toxicology specialists by profession. Because of our credentials and government clearances, we were recruited. We are one of four teams on special assignment with the FBI.”

“The FBI?”

“Yes doctor. We’ve been on assignment three years now. Time is running out.”

“Sounds ominous. What’s that got to do with me?”

“The matter of interest appears to have emerged in Shelby County. Five recent deaths. Four unsolved homicides and one ruled natural, all occurring over the last eighty-three days.”

“Does this have something to do with Donald Deckle?”

“Yes. But the Thomas Derby homicide triggered our interest.”

“Mr. Derby’s death has been less than eighty-three days ago, Dr. Swenson.”

“Mr. Derby’s tissue specimens were the first received by Bethesda. It got our attention. Called for a closer look. Now our interests go back to Mr. Frank Pella.”

“I remember the Pella case, one of my first during my transition to Shelby County. He is a natural death. I ruled on the case the first week in August.”

“August 2 to be precise, Dr. Petty. We are quite confident after exhumation and a closer examination you will want to change your ruling.”

Petty leaned elbows on her desk. Her eyes sharpened. “Frank Pella died from congestive heart failure.” She fingered a stack of files and pulled out one. They watched her flip the pages. “His cardio history confirms my

findings. Mr. Pella had been diagnosed with *Graves Disease* three years ago. He has a history of rheumatoid arthritis and type-two diabetes. There was no trauma or questionable circumstances surrounding his death.” She flipped pages. “No toxicology flags. This is a natural death, gentlemen. I see no reason to dig him up. Exhumations are expensive propositions, complicated, time-consuming, and disturbing to the families.”

“The Pella inquest, was it an inspection or full autopsy, Dr. Petty?”

“I’m sure you know the answer, Dr. Swenson. The death certificate has been filed.”

“Quite true. External inspection—collection of body fluids, routine toxicology screen, and standard chemistries. You had added a thyroid profile.”

“That’s more information than appears on Mr. Pella’s death certificate, but yes.” Petty leaned back and stared at the three. *Where is this going?*

Swenson ignored the implication. “Exophthalmos, did it trigger the thyroid profile?”

“Yes it did.” Bethesda or the FBI had an interest in deaths under her purview. Petty heard the stories. The feds had ways of getting information they wanted.

“Bulging eyeballs and medical history did not raise flags,” she said. A deeper investigation was not justified or appropriate. You do know that if Mr. Pella had an attending physician his body would have never been brought here. He would have gone straight to a funeral home.”

Swenson’s face stayed Botox-blank. “Three years is a very long time for a man with his condition to go it alone, don’t you think Dr. Petty?” Swenson buttoned his coat with his white stick fingers and buffed nails. “It’s as if Mr. Pella was avoiding someone or something.”

Avoiding someone or something? What a peculiar comment. She stared with growing suspicion and disguised emotion as Swenson crossed his skinny legs like a girl.

“If I didn’t know better, I would think you read my case file,” Petty baited. “But it has been in this stack on my desk since Mr. Pella’s death.”

Swenson flashed a tight smile. “Did you inspect Mr. Pella’s ears?”

“Yes. Of course. A cursory look.”

“Cursory as in superficial and hurried, Dr. Petty?”

“No. Cursory as in perfunctory and standard protocol, doctor—a medical history, no trauma, and an unremarkable death scene.”

“Granted, but . . .”

Petty flipped pages in the master log. “The day we brought Mr. Pella in for a look, we had three homicides, three suicides, two accidental deaths, and five naturals.” She closed the log with a resounding thud. “We’re very busy here. The cursory inspection was beyond appropriate. What is your point, Dr. Swenson?”

“I’m sorry,” he said. “I ask for informational purposes, not to challenge.”

“Why the interest in Mr. Pella’s ears?” Petty pushed.

“We suspect damage similar to Mr. Derby’s, three more homicides, and possibly others passing through your morgue.”

She leaned back and spoke with the authority of a chief medical examiner. “It is best you stop asking questions and start talking to me, Dr. Swenson. I do not have much time to give this.”

“Yes. I understand, of course. This is where it gets a bit more complicated.”

“You best uncomplicated it,” she said rapping fingers on her knee.

“At this juncture we are authorized to speak with only you. Your staff, associates and colleagues, and local law enforcement cannot be involved until certain medical anomalies are assessed, and all affected are identified. Even then we operate in a confidential and proprietary manner.”

“I am uncomfortable with your construct. I am part of a legal system. You need to do better.”

“As the chief medical examiner for Shelby County, on your quest to ascertain manner and cause of death, you have the power to authorize and conduct confidential collaborations with anyone you so choose. You need not share information with anyone until you are ready. The laws governing the medical examiner medicolegal jurisprudence are quite clear on this account.”

You think you can motivate me with legal recitations?
“I am satisfied with my rulings, gentlemen. Your unsubstantiated claim—a natural death in my county is a homicide—is weak. My responsibility ends after my ruling unless new and relevant information emerges. At this juncture, I have none. I see no reason to reopen the Pella case.”

“Rulings on five deaths under your purview are in error or held in abeyance,” Swenson said with growing authority. “This is not the way to start as the chief medical examiner. There are things you do not know, Dr. Petty.” His tone softened. “I’m sure you want to rectify any and all errors. It is—of course—now your duty to leave no rock unturned.”

Petty straightened the stack on the edge of her desk a second time as she searched for the perfect words. “Yes, I have the authority you describe. Dr. Swenson, you have no authority here. And, you have not given me reasons to reconsider my rulings or to open confidential files with outsiders. Quite frankly, I do not respond well to federal government interventions that violate laws of a sovereign municipality. You are free to pursue in the courts the information you seek. If you are successful there, I will certainly cooperate.”

Petty stood and opened her office door with cold eyes on her visitors. “I have people waiting. We’re done here, unless you have my test results.”

The three remained seated. “We have no intention of seeking a court order,” Swenson said.

Petty opened the door wider. “And that would be your decision. Goodbye gentlemen.”

“Our only chance for success is to collaborate with the presiding medical examiners and law enforcement in the locals of interest,” Swenson persisted as he passed her an envelope. She held it to the light like a cheap trick and flipped it over. The wax seal looked official, an eagle atop a shield with crossed sabers. She broke it and opened the flap as she sat down. Unfolding the stiff parchment, her eyes scanned the three odd scientists—any slight move would trigger a gunfight.

“This is addressed to me,” she said. “Signed by the U.S. Attorney General.” She read the four short paragraphs in the silent room. “You have regained my attention.”



STEVE BRADSHAW is a forensic field agent and biotech entrepreneur writing his unique brand of mystery/thrillers. Steve's training and experience investigating thousands of unexplained deaths for the medical examiner's office, and as the founder-President/CEO of an innovative biomedical device company enables him to put his readers on the front row in the fascinating worlds of fringe science, modern forensics, and the chilling pursuit of real monsters.

Steve enjoys sharing his experiences and perspectives as a forensic investigator, President/CEO, and mystery/thriller author. Visit his website and join MEMBER GUEST so you can interact with the author, get insider information and updates, arrange for an author visit, and to be the first in line for new releases.

Website stevebradshawauthor.com

Email steve@stevebradshawauthor.com

Facebook [com/steve.bradshaw.9400](https://www.facebook.com/steve.bradshaw.9400)

Twitter [com/sbauthor](https://twitter.com/sbauthor)

LinkedIn [com/pub/steve-bradshaw/18/246/660](https://www.linkedin.com/pub/steve-bradshaw/18/246/660)

Other Books by Steve Bradshaw

[THE BELL TRILOGY](#)

BLUFF CITY BUTCHER

THE SKIES ROARED

BLOOD LIONS