

THE

DAY

THE

MIRROR

CRACKED

## CHAPTER ONE

October 5th, 1998

The Radisson Hotel, Orlando, Florida

Walking off the plane and entering the Orlando International Airport, you are immediately impressed. The airport is brightly lit, spacious, colorful and clean. After all, Orlando is the home of Walt Disney World, as well as Universal Studios, Sea World and many other family attractions. Driving out of the airport, the cleanliness of the road, the meticulous landscaping and the scenic palm trees so identifiable with the state of Florida, the bright sunshine along with the sign, which states “Welcome to Orlando, The City Beautiful” surely heartens the first-time visitor, creating a false belief that you are about to enter a city that is different from any other city in the world.

If you are fortunate enough, as are many visitors, you go straight to the World of Disney or the confines of Universal Studios. You never see that Orlando and its

surrounding little cities and towns encounter the same problems, have the same deficiencies and cannot escape the same everyday horrors of reality as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago or any other big city.

Sitting on the toilet, completely dressed, with the seat down, in a typical Radisson Hotel room in downtown Orlando, the society woman of stature and poise was nervous. Her stomach was churning, her hands were clasped and wringing and there was perspiration on her upper lip. She never realized how small the bathrooms were. With the shower curtain closed, the room

was even smaller. She had never experienced such claustrophobia before. She had heard the short scuffle and the muffled scream and knew it was over, yet she wanted to give him time to leave the room so she didn't have to face him. Her breathing became difficult. The air became heavy.

Finally hearing the door close, she couldn't wait a moment longer to get out of there. Yet, controlling her emotions, she exited the bathroom tentatively, checking herself in the mirror of the vanity station just outside the bathroom and straightening the jacket of her Blue pillbox hat with the half veil was tilted just right, now she was ready. Or so she thought.

Everything seemingly in order, she turned the corner, passed the closet and ventured into the room. As much as she knew what had happened, she was not prepared for what she would encounter.

The air out here was even thicker. There was a macabre stillness to the room as death announced its presence.

Linda was lying on her stomach on the near side of the king-sized bed, her legs hanging off the side. Her face was turned to the left, and her eyes were open. Her blood had soaked the sheets and spread well beyond her naked body. Her bruised and welted buttocks and legs gave little evidence to what had really occurred.

The chills going up her spine caused her to sweat even more. In her 42 years of living, she had never seen a dead body before. Never mind being alone in a room with one that had just been murdered. The body voided its waste, and even the blood had an odor to it glistening and sparkling as the light from the lamp by the bedside cast its glare upon it giving the illusion it was still creeping through the sheets. She had all she could do to keep from running back into the bathroom and vomiting. She took several deep breaths and once more turned to the mirror above the dresser to make sure everything about her person was aligned and in order. She could still see the body in the reflection of the mirror.

It almost seemed as if Linda was staring at her asking, “Why?”

Tears came to her eyes, and she gulped for a breath of air. Shaking her head, her hands covered her eyes as if that would make the sight go away. It didn't. She knew it wouldn't. Regaining her composure, she once more checked to make sure she had left nothing behind. She looked under the bed and chair.

She fumbled through the sheets, careful not to disturb the body or get blood on her hands, wanting to make sure none of her toys were hidden. She rechecked her attaché case, turned around and took a last look at Linda Mintor. Tilting her head, smiling warmly again a tear crept into the corner of her eye; she took another deep breath and sighed, “Aaahh Linda! What a shame! What a waste! I'll miss you dear; I truly will.”

Obsessively checking one final time, assuring herself that she had left no clue behind, she opened the door and carefully scanned the hallway before exiting the room. Seeing no one, she took another deep breath

and proceeded to the exit stairs and walked up two floors to the sixth floor. On the way up she removed the plastic surgical gloves from her hands and put them in her attaché case along with the other sex paraphernalia.

On the sixth floor she pushed the down button for the elevator. The elevator arrived and was empty. Emitting a sigh of relief, she entered. Not that she was worried—just that she really didn't want to face anyone at this moment. Arriving at the lobby she as nonchalantly as she could, she strode out the front door of the hotel, handed the valet attendant her ticket and waited for her car.

Moderately tipping the attendant so as not to bring any unwanted recognition, she immediately picked up her cell phone as she slipped behind the steering wheel of her white Mercedes sedan.

The gravelly voice with a thick German accent answering the call asked, “Is it done?”

“Yes, it is done. He was very quick and efficient.”

“Did you enjoy yourself beforehand?”

“Immensely. It was the best session we’ve ever had together. It’s a shame it had to end this way.” She choked a bit and admitted, “I’ll miss her terribly.”

“One of the tragedies of war and ambition, my dear.”

“I understand, but I don’t have to like it.”

“You are correct.” Hearing the emotion in her voice, he changed the subject, “The meeting is set for two nights from now. We have chosen your place rather than a hotel. Will you have dinner for us?”

“Yes, it will be arranged. See you then.” As she disconnected the phone, a pang of guilt coursed through her body as she thought, “What despicable acts one commits in the quest of one’s all-consuming ambition.”

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A black Cadillac limousine pulled into the circular driveway of the Radisson Hotel set on the West Side of downtown Orlando. A man rather nondescript in appearance, dark hair, average height, average build, neatly dressed in a sport coat and slacks, anywhere from mid-forties to mid-fifties, exited the limo and went into the hotel as the limo waited. Keeping his head slightly bowed, making it impossible for anyone to describe his face, he went to a house phone and dialed 911. When Dispatch answered, he gave the following message in his thickly accented gravelly voice, “There is a dead body at the Radisson Hotel room 406.” He immediately hung up and went back outside to his waiting limousine.

## CHAPTER TWO

George Blasell entered the hotel room as the lab technicians were going over the room for clues and evidence. He cringed as he saw the body, and the odor of death permeated his sense of smell. There wasn't a whole lot he hadn't seen in his career, but somehow dead bodies, especially one as attractive as

the young girl lying on the bed with her throat cut, seemed to have an effect on him.

That and a hurt child really pissed him off. It made him want to retaliate. In this case it made him much more determined to find out who killed her and more importantly to him, why she was killed.

“What have we got Abbey?”

Abbey Sloan was a forensic pathologist, and according to Blasell, a damned good one. He liked having her work his cases because she was extremely thorough and smart. She was a short, heavysset woman with a great sense of humor and a sharp eye.

“She’s dead only about two hours, George. Her throat was cut, my guess, severing the larynx and the jugular vein. Her face was held down into the bed so she couldn’t scream, and she bled to death in a matter of minutes. As for the other marks, the bruises and welts on the buttocks and legs, that looks as if she had just been part of an S&M party. I haven’t turned her over yet, so I don’t know what the front looks like, but

someone had a good time with her. I'm not sure how much she enjoyed it."

"Any I.D.?" As they talked, Detective Blasell walked around the room looking for clues. He looked under the bed, in the closet, in the bathroom and could spy nothing; but he continued to look, pacing the room.

"We found a driver's license in her purse giving the name of Linda Mintor. Her address was on Amelia Street. She was a beautiful woman according to her picture on the license. She was 33 years old. We also found an envelope with \$10,000 in cash in her purse. She could have been a hooker. If she was, she was specialized and expensive."

"Anything else?"

"That's it for now. I'll have more for you when we get her back to the lab and I can do a full autopsy."

"What drives a person to do something like this?" George queried shaking his head in disbelief as he stared at the body of Linda Mintor.

“I stopped asking myself that question a long time ago, George.” Abbey replied bewildered.

“I mean, if she’s a hooker and the john killed her, why not take back your money? Especially Ten Grand! If the john didn’t kill her and somebody else did, again why leave the Ten Grand? It doesn’t make sense, Abbey.”

“That’s your department, George. I just tell you how they died and give you whatever else I can find.”

“Yeah, I know Abbey. I’m just thinking out loud. You do a great job, too, Abbey. There isn’t anyone else I’d rather have work my cases.”

“Thanks George. It’s nice to know somebody appreciates my work.”

“Unless it was a hit, Abbey. If it was a hit, then they wouldn’t care about the money. Do you suppose someone partied with her and then did a hit on her? She was definitely hit after the party.”

“That’s for sure, George.”

“But even so, who could afford to leave the Ten Grand?”

“I guess if you could afford the Ten Grand for a couple of hours of her time to begin with George, you could afford to leave it.”

“Good point, Abbey, good point.” George mused, finally giving up on finding anything. Besides, he knew if there was anything to find, Abbey would find it.

“Thanks, Abbey. Get me the report as soon as you can. I’m sure the Radisson and Disney will want to clear this up as soon as possible. Bad for Mickey Mouse’s image, you know.”

“Will do, George. I’ll make it a priority, and I should have it for you by closing time this evening.”

“That’s great, Abbey. I’d really appreciate it.”

George took the plastic bag containing the purse with him as he left. The contents of the purse would give him a place to start in his investigation. He’d log the contents as evidence when he got back to his office.

George Blasell was a good detective. A pock-marked face from a bout with acne as a kid had marred his genuine good looks and left him with a ruddy complexion, but at 5' 11", with thick, wavy, sandy brown hair and telling brown eyes, he was still attractive. His nose was straight despite being broken twice, once in service and once while on the force. His 175 pounds were distributed evenly over a solidly built body, except for a slight paunch around the middle, which was difficult to discern because of his upright posture and almost military-like bearing. That was more from the lack of exercise than a very tough and busy schedule prohibited him from doing than from beer or overeating. The sport jacket he always wore easily covered it. Columbo had his raincoat. With Blasell it was the sport coat, but he changed his on a daily basis.

His thorough work ethic and 20 years of experience with the Orlando Police Department didn't allow him to miss much. It earned him the respect of his peers and afforded him the opportunity to be the only detective in the department to work without

a partner. George liked working alone. He wasn't into the politics of the department and didn't want to be a Captain. He just wanted to do his job, which was to get the scumbags off the streets and in jail and leave the bureaucratic bullshit to someone else.

The short drive back to his office from the hotel gave him time to think. His hand, resting on the pocket book of Linda Mintor as he drove--- began to--- kind of--- like--- tingle. He lifted his hand from the pocket book, and the tingling ceased. He put his hand back, and it started again. It was as if some kind of energy was emanating from her purse. Suddenly a strong feeling came over George. It was that feeling that starts out as a fist that tightens and twists in the stomach and creeps up to the chest as a fluttering sensation. The type of feeling that twenty plus years on the force tells you that this was going to turn out to be a whole lot more than just a hooker getting her throat cut in a hotel room. Not that a murder such as this wasn't a big deal in the hometown of Mickey Mouse. But this was the type of feeling that creates trepidation and an

adrenaline rush almost simultaneously. One that as an experienced detective, he knows that he not only has to watch his ass, but that he now gets to pit his wiles and cunning against that of the murderer.

Two things George always trusted: his intuition and the belief that “There is no such thing as coincidence.”

While the Orlando Police Department Building was recently built—it was only ten years old—and looked modern and clean from the outside, the inside was worn and tired beyond its years. Something happens within the confines of a police agency

structure that seems to cause it to deteriorate rapidly from the inside out. Maybe it’s all the death, pain, frustration and anger that enters its walls, some of which never seems to leave.

Arriving back at his office, a little cubicle type, maybe ten by ten, the walls were half-glazed glass and didn’t go all the way to the ceiling. His first order of business was to report to his captain.

Captain Paul Dennis, a man in his early 40's, had been on the force two years less than George had. Taller than George at 6'3", slightly balding, and politically ambitious, he was still what a cop considered a straight up guy. He would do anything for his people and back them to the hilt as long as they kept him on a "heads-up basis."

Captain Dennis was sitting in his office, a cubicle, which was half glass-covered with Venetian blinds, although his went from floor to ceiling, twirling his horn-rimmed glasses in his hand when George knocked on the open door.

"Come on in, George. Whaddya got?"

Taking a seat in one of the two brown vinyl covered armchairs fronting his medium-sized wooden desk, George spoke freely; he had worked for Dennis for three years now and the Captain respected him and even his sometimes—farflung—intuitions.

"I think we have a dead hooker, Captain. But I believe it's going to turn out to be more than that."

“Why is that?”

“I can’t put my finger on it yet, Captain; it’s just a feeling. He saw no reason at this point to elaborate any further. But I would like some help in doing the preliminary legwork. I need two men to question the people at the hotel and a forensics team to help me go over this girl’s home. The address is on Amelia Street, so I assume it’s a house. I figure to do that tomorrow. Right now I intend to do a background check on the girl and see what I can drum up. To see who I can connect her to.”

Dennis had no problem giving George leeway. He knew he had a nose for the big ones, and it only made him look good when they were solved. “You got it, George; just keep me abreast of what you’re doing and what turns up.”

“Will do captain.”