



Don't be afraid. . . .
Be terrified.

Allison
BRENNAN

Bestselling author of *See No Evil*

FEAR NO
EVIL

A Novel

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For the 151 sworn officers killed in the line
of duty in 2006 and their families, especially
Sacramento County Deputy Sheriff Jeffrey Mitchell
(1968–2006).

The generosity of professionals, friends, and fellow authors continues to amaze me, in particular Pia Bergqvist of the Cessna Aircraft Company, Rae Monet, Karen Rose, Candy Calvert, Rex Moen, Cheryl Zoe Thomas, and Gordon Hinkle. While I tried to keep the facts of computer technology and small plane craft accurate, if I got anything wrong it was due to my own error and certainly not because of these helpful people.

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PROLOGUE

Five Years Ago

THE SICK AND DEPRAVED HAD VOTED: death by stabbing.

"No."

Kate Donovan's whisper became a cry as she pocketed her cell phone, unable to respond to the text message her only remaining friend in the FBI had sent.

Unable and unwilling. She was so close, dammit! She knew it, sensed it, but no one believed her. Why should they? Less than two days ago, she'd led her people into a trap, and an agent—her lover Evan—ended up dead. Another agent—her partner Paige—kidnapped.

She had been tracking the webcam of Paige for twenty-four hours. The sick reality of what had already happened to her partner live on the Internet propelled her forward. She'd called in every favor, stolen expensive equipment from FBI headquarters, and hacked into private companies all in what she feared was a futile effort to save Paige's life. Saving

Paige had become her sole goal, so she wouldn't think about Evan's death.

She breathed heavily through her mouth as she ran even faster through the woods. An internal clock audibly ticked in her ear, pushing her forward. Fear crawled up her spine and slithered into her heart, constricting her chest until every breath hurt. She wasn't going to make it.

An all-too-human scream echoed through the wooded canyon, then was abruptly cut short.

Kate tripped, caught herself, and was surprised to feel moisture on her face. She couldn't be crying. She wiped her forehead and came away with blood. The gash on her head from the failed sting operation had needed stitches, but she'd had no time. No wonder it had started bleeding again.

Wiping her bloody hands on her jeans, Kate tied the bandanna tighter around her forehead and continued running, gun drawn.

The grand, two-story cabin stood in a clearing. She stared at the satellite dish on the roof and knew this was it. Her training and instincts had paid off: she had been right about where Trask had taken Paige. The dish opened onto the clear blue sky, enabling Paige Henshaw's rape and murder to be bounced from satellite to server to satellite, broadcast live for all to see. Kate almost ran across the open field to storm the cabin, but that could possibly have gotten her killed.

Don't be stupid, Donovan!

She circled the property, staying behind the tree line, ignoring her vibrating cell phone. The FBI knew

where she was. If they had really been determined to save Paige, they would have listened to her, come with her instead of trying to arrest her for disobeying orders.

A black Suburban was parked next to the cabin. No other vehicles were in sight. Trask wasn't stupid enough to be out here alone, without security. Even though he lost men the night before last when he'd ambushed her and Paige in the warehouse, he still had at least two other men in his employ.

Her skin tingled. Someone was watching. Swallowing, she looked around, keeping low. She thought she had bypassed all his security traps. Had she unknowingly triggered something? A camera, a microphone? What kind of technology did this monster have?

She crouched in the bushes, still as a hunter with prey in sight—yet she felt more like a deer in a rifle sight than a tough FBI agent.

Nothing. No sound from the cabin. No sound from the woods except the soft *whish-whish* of the breeze rustling the pine needles. Frogs. A bird.

Where was he?

Dammit, Trask! Where are you?

Sixty yards away, the cabin door slowly opened. He stood, framed in the doorway.

She didn't know his real name, only knew him as "Trask," the founder of Trask Enterprises, an online pornography company. Kate hadn't known his race, his nationality, or his age. Now she studied him. He was Caucasian or light-skinned Hispanic, perhaps European from his high-chiseled cheekbones and strong chin, darker than Scandinavian, lighter than Mediterranean. Thirty? Older?

She might not know anything personal about him, but she'd never forget his face. She had stared into his icy blue eyes thirty-six hours ago as he aimed a gun at her head.

He stared at her hiding place, as frozen in time as she. Her mouth went dry, her hand itched to fire her gun. She swallowed and training won out. There was no way, even with her excellent marksmanship skills, that she could assuredly take him down with her service pistol at this distance.

He stepped outside, and two larger men followed. One carried two suitcases. The other carried a semi-automatic rifle and eyed the horizon. He didn't see her, but his eyes swept back and forth as the three men walked purposefully toward the Suburban.

There was no hope. She couldn't take down all of them by herself. And while she might get a shot at one of the guards, she wouldn't get to the leader, the man who had come up with the plan, who had executed it, and who took perverse pleasure in killing.

If she could kill the bastard who called himself Trask, Kate would be willing to die—already the pain of losing Evan was eating at her. But if she couldn't get Trask, her sacrifice would be for nothing. And Kate refused to die in vain.

She watched the Suburban drive away, deep anger and remorse clutching her heart. She'd lost Evan, lost everything because she had moved too quickly, too soon, at the warehouse. She hadn't verified crucial information. If only she hadn't been so eager to capture Trask and prove to everyone that she was right, she wouldn't have lost her career, her best friend, and her freedom.

Being right meant nothing when everything you cared about was destroyed.

The Suburban disappeared around the bend. Kate left her hiding place and ran to the main door of the cabin. Instinct told her everyone was gone, but she had to do a perimeter check anyway.

Through the back window, she saw her best friend.

Paige lay on a blood-soaked mattress, a knife protruding from her chest. Her body was in shreds, her eyes open, staring at Kate, accusing her.

You promised you'd find me.

Paige had saved her life at the warehouse. Trask had Kate first and brought his gun to her head.

"You're coming with me," he'd said.

Paige had attacked him from behind, stunning Trask just long enough for Kate to dive behind crates and retrieve the gun she'd lost in the struggle. Sirens had then cut through the night and Kate had looked up just as Trask hit Paige over the head and his partner, Roger Morton, carried her from the warehouse.

Kate didn't shoot out of fear of hitting Paige.

Paige had given her life to save Kate's. A cry escaped from her and she swallowed her pain and failure. Kate almost ran into the room, just to shut Paige's eyes. To call their boss and blame him for not backing her up. To turn off the damn video camera in the corner, broadcasting Paige's mutilated body to the thousands of sick bastards who had paid to see her raped and murdered.

A blink of something green caught her eye. Next to the door a digital clock. All at once Kate took in the entire room, not just Paige's dead body.

The wires.

The plastique.

The time.

The clock was counting backward: 1:11, 1:10, 1:09.

Looking quickly around the window for any booby traps, she broke it with the grip of her gun, cleared the glass as best she could, and jumped through.

The countdown turned from one minute to fifty-nine seconds. Fifty-eight. Fifty-seven.

She fired a round into the video camera lens, then took off her windbreaker and approached Paige's body. She wanted to get her out, but she didn't have time.

So much blood.

I'm sorry, Paige.

Forty-one seconds.

Using her windbreaker as a glove, she reached over and pulled the knife from Paige's body. It was stuck in bone. She grimaced as she used all her strength to remove it, then wrapped it in her jacket and leaped out the window.

All the evidence was about to be destroyed and this knife might be the one thing that could implicate the murderer.

"I'll find him, Paige," she promised then glanced at the clock.

Nineteen seconds.

Kate ran as fast and far as she could. The explosion shook the earth, knocking her off her feet. Her jacket fell from her grasp and the wind was knocked out of her.

She didn't care about contaminating evidence. She just wanted a print. A print that could lead to the real identity of Paige's killer.

You didn't need evidence if you never went to court.

O N E

LUCY'S GRADUATION CEREMONY was being held outside on the high school's football field. On the cusp of adulthood, nine hundred eighteen-year-olds sat surprisingly still on the risers framing each side of the temporary stage. Dillon Kincaid shielded his eyes against San Diego's morning sun, scanning the crowd for his family. He was late because of a last-minute psychiatric assessment of a prisoner who was being arraigned that afternoon.

The principal called the next graduate. "Monica Julian." A tall, lithe blonde walked up the steps to the platform and accepted her certificate.

Good. He hadn't missed Lucy receiving her diploma. He'd keep an eye on the audience for the largest burst of applause, and that would be where the Kincaid clan had saved him a seat.

The principal went through fifteen more names before announcing, "Lucia Kincaid."

Dillon smiled, anticipating his beautiful dark-haired baby sister walking up the stairs. She'd worked hard for her grades, and her acceptance to their father's alma mater of Georgetown was icing on the cake. He heard a loud raucous cheer in the middle of the right

seating section, saw the tallest Kincaid, Connor, standing and hooting.

Circling the field and making his way to where his family cheered, Dillon watched the stage for his sister.

"Lucia Kincaid?" The principal repeated her name and Dillon stopped to scan the graduates. Where was Lucy? He reached the edge of his family's row of seats as Carina emerged.

"Robert P. Kinney." The principal went on to the next graduate.

"I'm going to look for Lucy," Carina told Dillon when she spotted him. Her fiancé, Nick Thomas, was right behind her.

Dillon fell into step next to Nick while Carina made a beeline for the nearest girls' restroom. She'd graduated from the same high school fourteen years before and knew the campus well. Wearing graduation robes, two girls came out, adjusting their hats. Carina asked, "Is Lucy Kincaid in there?"

"I don't think so," one responded.

Carina brushed past her and went into the girls' room, calling Lucy's name. "She's not there," she stated tersely when she came out.

"Is there another bathroom?" Nick asked.

"Way over on the other side of the field."

"Let's check it out."

They crossed the field behind all the proud families. "I can't believe she ditched her own graduation!" Carina sounded both worried and angry.

"You don't know that she did," Dillon said. "There's a logical explanation. Lucy could be sick."

"And she didn't come and tell us?" Carina frowned, picked up her pace. "No one's seen her since eight

o'clock this morning. She went to Becky's house to get ready, saying she'd meet us here."

"Carina," Dillon said, "stop being a cop for a minute. Don't assume the worst."

"I can't help it."

Dillon had the same fears as his sister. Both siblings worked with violent predators every day—Carina as a homicide detective catching killers, Dillon as a forensic psychiatrist trying to understand them. The two had been sent down their career paths by the murder of their nephew. Justin Stanton would also have been graduating today had he not been murdered eleven years ago.

Carina took a deep breath as she walked under the bleachers and toward the restrooms. A group of male graduates was smoking cigarettes around the corner. "They're at the 'N's now. You'd better get back," Carina told them.

"Whatever," one of the kids dismissed her.

Carina glared at him, and Dillon pulled her back, reminding her what was important. "Let's find Lucy."

The restroom was vacant except for a mother and daughter.

Standing outside the restroom, Carina said to no one, "Where is she?"

"You said she went to Becky Anderson's this morning, right? The petite blond girl who was at her birthday dinner?"

Carina nodded. "She's in the third row on the left."

"Let me go talk to her. You and Nick check the campus."

Carina looked like she was about to argue with him—Dillon knew she wanted a crack at interrogat-

ing Becky—but he held firm and Nick guided Carina toward the parking lot.

Dillon walked over to the graduates' seating. He spotted Becky halfway down the third row and waved to catch her attention.

A teacher approached. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave. You can speak to your daughter after the ceremony."

Dillon cringed. He might technically be old enough to be Lucy's father, but he knew Lucy was sensitive to being much younger than her six siblings.

"I just need to talk to Becky Anderson. It's important."

"I'm afraid that's not possible."

Dillon caught Becky's eye and motioned her to come over. She started down the aisle, her face revealing that she knew exactly why Dillon was asking to speak with her.

"Sir—" the teacher began.

"This is about a missing girl. I have to speak with Becky."

Without giving the teacher another word, Dillon took Becky by the arm and led her away from the crowd.

The petite eighteen-year-old had guilt written all over her face.

"Do you know why I want to talk to you?" Dillon asked, trying to maintain calm while his concern over Lucy continued to grow.

"I—" Becky bit her lip. "I don't know why Lucy's late."

"An hour late?" Dillon asked.

"Well, I . . . she'll be here," Becky said lamely.

"What happened after Lucy arrived at your house this morning?"

"Um, she didn't."

"What?" Dillon exclaimed. "Where was she going?"

"Please, you don't understand."

"I need the truth, Becky. Now."

"She went to meet someone."

"Who?"

"A friend."

"Name?"

"Trevor Conrad."

Dillon frowned. "That doesn't sound like one of her boyfriends." But he admitted to himself that he'd been too busy lately to keep up with Lucy's love life.

"He's in college."

Dillon tensed. He didn't like where this conversation was going. "Where did she meet him?"

"Starbucks. The one right around the corner," she added as if that made it safe. "We always go there."

"And you lied for her?"

"I didn't really lie," Becky said.

Dillon raised an eyebrow, but didn't have to say anything. "Lucy knew everyone would throw a fit if they found out she met someone on—" Becky shut her mouth.

"Online?" Dillon prodded.

Becky nodded.

Dillon pulled out his cell phone and dialed Lucy's number.

"*Hola!* It's Luce. I'm either talking or sleeping! Leave a message. *Adios.*"

"Lucy, it's Dillon. Call me as soon as you get this message. It's important."