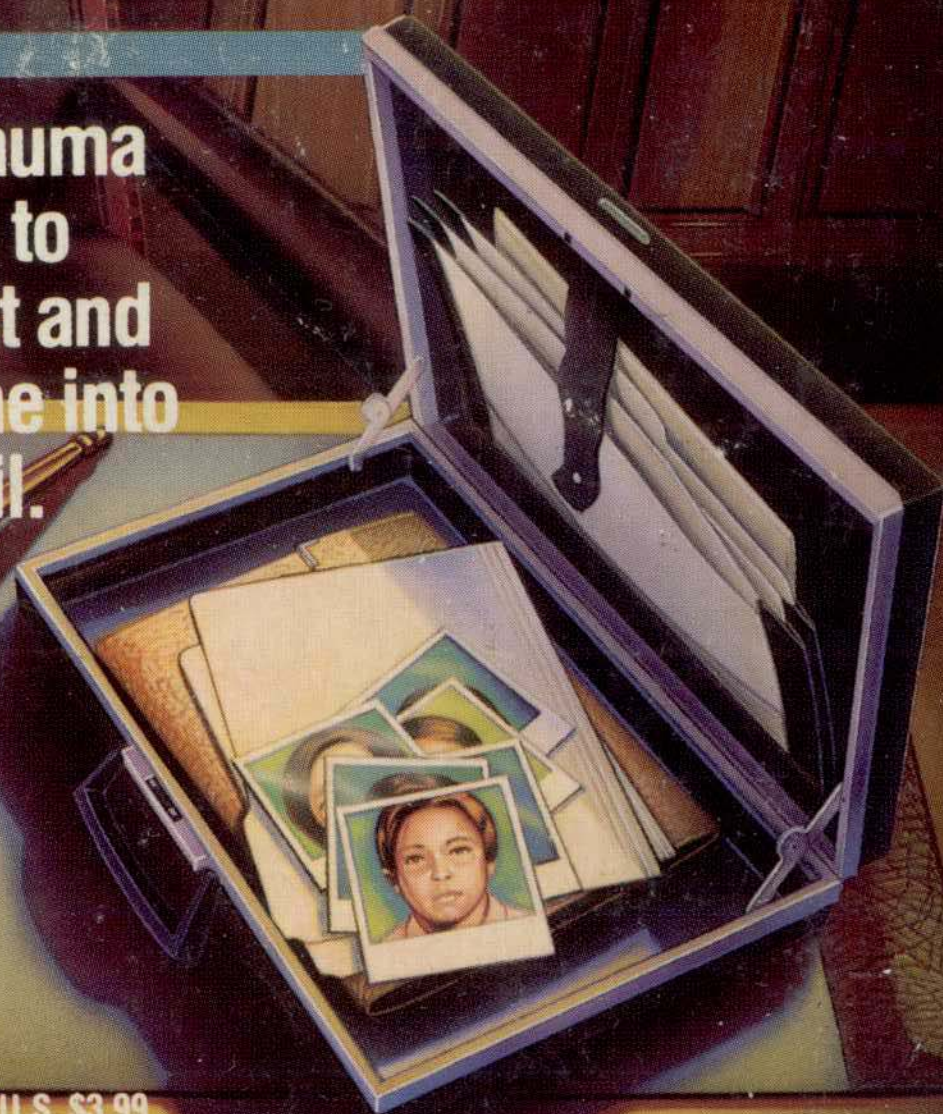


A CATHERINE SAYLER MYSTERY  
**LINDA GRANT**  
Author of BLIND TRUST

# LOVE NOR MONEY

"A tense, powerful, sensitive  
and even hopeful novel with  
complex characters."  
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

A childhood trauma  
inspires a man to  
avenge his past and  
sends Catherine into  
the heart of evil.



0947-8 (Canada \$4.99) U.S. \$3.99



LOVE



A Catherine Sayler Mystery

Linda Grant

IVY BOOKS • NEW YORK

# 1

---

**T**HE SUN BURNED ON the wooden floor like a sheet of white fire. Its brightness stabbed all the way to the middle of my head. I squeezed my eyes shut. I tried to sit up. My head pounded and my stomach lurched. Standing up didn't seem like a good idea.

I waited for the nausea to pass. It didn't. I felt as if I'd been poisoned, which wasn't so very far from the truth. The fact that I'd done it to myself only made matters worse. The night before was a bit hazy in my memory. The reason for it was all too clear.

Orrin Merrick. White male, twenty-seven years of age, blond hair, blue eyes. Deceased. Dead by his own hand in the jail cell that I put him in.

Orrin Merrick had had a wife and two young kids. He'd also had a father with Alzheimer's, and a profound desire to protect the old man from the indignities of institutionalization. The first time he'd helped himself to company funds, he'd thought of it as a loan, but as the need for money grew, his chances of repaying it shrank.

His employer had noticed that something was wrong and hired me to find the culprit. Orrin wasn't a skillful criminal, but he was bright enough to figure out that I was on his trail and to create a computer "accident" that wiped out the proof of his wrongdoing.

He'd have been home free if the company president hadn't decided that confession was good for the soul. He'd asked me to offer Merrick continued employment and the promise of no prosecution in exchange for a signed confession.

I'm good at what I do, sometimes too good. Good enough to convince Merrick I had proof of his crime. Good enough to use his fear of prison to get his confession. But not good enough to protect him when the boss double-crossed us both and went to the police.

I'd acted in good faith, and I'd been betrayed just as Merrick had, but that didn't change the fact that I went home to a comfortable apartment not far from Pacific Heights and Merrick went to a cell.

I was still dressed in the jeans and sweater I'd been wearing the night before. The scotch bottle still sat on the coffee table. I don't even like scotch. Drinking a good part of the bottle had been an act of shameless masochism.

My mouth tasted like old mothballs. My teeth were fuzzy. My face felt stiff and hot, and I had the definite impression that my skin had shrunk. Closing my eyes just made the nausea worse, so I stared at the ceiling. I figured that if I stayed that way long enough I'd either go to sleep or die. At the moment I didn't care which.

I turned my head. Two golden eyes stared back at me. They were not happy eyes. They were full of reproach and that smug superiority that cats manage so well. The eyes said very clearly, "Responsible adults do not get drunk and fail to feed their faithful cats."

I was pondering whether I could make it to the kitchen and find the cat food when I was nearly deafened by the slamming of a door. A tall, broad-shouldered figure appeared in the doorway. My fuzzy brain struggled to fit the image with the fact that I knew that Peter was in Santa Cruz for the week.

"Jesus," he said much too loudly. "What happened?"

"You're supposed to be in Santa Cruz."

He crossed the room and knelt in front of me. "What's wrong?"

"I'm hung over," I said, "very hung over."

"Why?"

I swallowed around the lump that was growing in my throat and told him about Orrin Merrick. He moved up onto the

couch and held me against him, and I started crying all over again.

I didn't cry long. It made my head hurt even worse, and I was beginning to tire of exploring the boundaries of self-abuse. It felt good to be folded against Peter's chest. Maureen Merrick had probably felt the same when Orrin held her. I tried not to think about it.

"It's not your fault," he said. "They promised you they wouldn't prosecute. You couldn't know they'd double-cross you. You did all you could for him."

I had testified at the sentencing hearing that Orrin posed no threat to society and would be of far greater use to everyone doing community service than sitting in a jail cell. But the current climate of law and order leaves little room for compassion or common sense.

By all the standards that govern private investigators, my actions had been correct. So why did I feel so crummy? My first boss, Keith Stone, had made a big point of professional ethics. I could remember him holding up three fingers and repeating the words "legal, ethical, and moral." I'd thought at the time that they were pretty much the same thing, but I was beginning to understand the difference. In Orrin Merrick's case I had acted legally and ethically; morally was another question.

"You need fluids," Peter said, gently pulling away from me. "I'll get you a glass of water."

"I'd probably throw up," I said.

He ignored me and came back with a tall glass of water and two aspirin. I didn't feel like drinking anything, but I knew Peter wouldn't give up, so I took a sip.

"All of it," he said.

I groaned and drank some more. I didn't throw up, somewhat to my surprise. "Enough," I said. "Let me just sit here quietly till I feel better."

"That could be quite a while," Peter said, "especially if you keep feeling sorry for yourself."

"I'm dying and all you can think to do is beat up on me. Thanks a lot."

“If you could die from a bad hangover, I’d be long gone,” Peter said.

By afternoon, I felt merely wretched instead of terminal, but my mood hadn’t improved in the slightest. Peter convinced me not to go to the office, more out of kindness to my staff than concern for me. I half expected him to pack his stuff and move out on me. Instead, he cleaned the kitchen.

I watched him put away the dishes and thought what an unlikely pair we were. We might both be investigators but we were poles apart in the work we did. I operated in the corporate world, where crime was better mannered and less likely to turn violent. Peter worked criminal defense, missing persons, and just about any case where someone could convince him that they were in trouble. I’d always preferred my corporate clients with their relatively neat, nonviolent problems to the assortment of desperate and needy people who sought Peter’s help. Today I was no longer so sure.

## 2

I’M NEVER ONE of those people who leap out of bed full of enthusiasm for the new day. Under the best of circumstances, I rise grudgingly and hope I can get through some yoga stretches and several sets of sun salutations before I wake up.

The next morning I had even less desire to get out of bed than usual. Peter tried sympathy, then teasing, sarcasm, and finally brute force. He pulled the comforter off the bed and tickled me. I’d have killed him if I’d had the energy.

I went to the office because I always go to the office. I

walked because I didn't trust myself behind the wheel of a car. Fortunately, my office is only four blocks from my apartment. One of the reasons I chose the graceful Victorian on Divisadero was that I could walk to it. The other was that I liked the funky neighborhood with its ethnic groceries and restaurants.

The weather fit my mood perfectly—gray and dismal. I've given up trying to figure out the difference between high fog and low clouds. Both mean gray skies, no sun, no rain. Typical San Francisco weather.

For the last five years, the weather has been even screwier than usual. We'd just spent another winter that looked like summer, and the water department was simultaneously dunning us to cut back on water use and raising the rates as a reward for the great job we'd done.

At the office I discovered that word of my condition had preceded me. Everyone treated me like a recently released mental patient. I knew I'd have to put up with sympathy from my secretary, Amy. She's the only one in the office who doesn't think she's a stand-up comedian, and she takes it upon herself to make up for everyone else's lack of social grace. On occasion my assistant, Chris, has been known to curb her tendency to go for the jugular, so her good behavior wasn't a complete surprise. However, when my partner, Jesse, started acting like Mr. Rogers, it was too much.

He looked a good deal more respectable this morning than I did. Since I'd offered him a partnership three months ago, he'd taken to wearing a suit to the office, and he was looking increasingly like an ad from *Black Enterprise*.

We were scheduled to spend a good part of the morning reviewing our latest case. A firm in Santa Clara that made parts for computer manufacturers had found too many of those parts disappearing. Their security people had identified some of the culprits, but they suspected that the gang was much bigger and that they might be working directly for a competitor. They wanted us to nail the link to the competitor and prove the other company's involvement.

When they got the proof, they might not ask for the rival CEO's underwear; they'd certainly go for everything else.

Jesse was excited. He'd been over the reports and he had a plan. "There's this guy Harold in the warehouse. Security has tagged him as in the gang. We have the company fire him and hire me for his job. The gang needs someone on the inside. They see this smartass black kid with a taste for coke and fast women, how can they resist?"

His eyes shone as he described it, but the light faded when he failed to get any kind of response from me.

"What's the matter? I miss something? We got a problem here?"

I shook my head. It still felt fuzzy from Sunday night.

"Catherine, I've gotten more reaction from mannequins in Macy's. For godssake, talk to me."

"I'm sorry, Jesse," I said. "I just can't seem to get into it. It's like my mind is in neutral. Maybe it's just a hangover from the hangover, but I can't seem to focus."

His expression had changed from mild annoyance to deep concern. I preferred the former.

"This Orrin Merrick thing really got to you, didn't it?"

I nodded.

"It wasn't your fault."

"It doesn't matter whose fault it was, he's still dead."

"You need to take some time off. Why don't you let me mind the store for a while?"

I considered it. I sure wasn't much use to anyone the way I was. On the other hand, I wouldn't be any better off sitting around by myself at home. The flood of exhaustion that washed over me when I tried to think about the new case convinced me. Jesse really could mind the store if necessary.

"Can you handle this case alone?" I asked.

He considered. "Sure. I'll use Chris for backup, and I can always call Harman if things get sticky."

The thought of Peter and Jesse operating *my* agency was enough to focus my attention. Peter had as little respect for the law as he could get away with, and Jesse found Peter's free-wheeling style much too attractive for my taste.



“No, if things get sticky, you can call *me*,” I said.

“You don’t trust us?” Jesse asked with a twinkle in his eye.

“I trust you and I trust him. I do not trust the two of you together.”

The rest of the day was a lesson in how slowly time can pass when you’re trying to relax. It was also a humbling opportunity to discover how poorly I handle messy emotions. I didn’t enjoy my own company; I was fairly sure Peter wouldn’t have, either. I was glad he’d gone to Santa Cruz.

By five o’clock that night I could hardly wait to get to the dojo. I train in aikido, a Japanese martial art, two or three times a week and teach a beginners’ class on Saturday. When I screw up and allow other things to get in the way, my body lets me know it. Tonight it was fairly screaming for me to get moving.

I made a point of getting there early so I’d have time to do some stretches. All that scotch had had the usual bad effect on my muscles, and it took twenty minutes to get them stretched out enough so that I wasn’t courting injury.

There are always plenty of black and brown belts on Tuesday night, enough to guarantee a good workout. I paired off with the biggest, toughest guys so I didn’t have to worry about hurting anyone. It felt good to shut my mind off and let my body take over. By the end of class I was covered with a satisfying layer of sweat.

Lou Boone, one of my favorite partners, came over after we bowed off the mat and gave me a hug. “You work off whatever was bothering you?” he asked.

“Not completely,” I said, “but I’m getting there.”

I felt better Wednesday morning. Enough better so that when the second cup of coffee hit, my brain kicked in for the first time in days. I called the office and caught Jesse before he left for the peninsula.

“Can you give me twenty minutes?” I asked.

“Long as you want. I don’t start till tomorrow. Today I rent an apartment and get set up.”

“I’ll be right over,” I said.

Amy greeted me with a still-warm sticky bun from a bakery on Fillmore. She’s a firm believer in the tenet that there are few ills that can’t be healed by gustatory indulgence. I encourage her since I am a frequent beneficiary.

Jesse and I split the sticky bun. “You’re looking better this morning,” he said.

“I’m feeling better, and meaner,” I said. “I figured out that I don’t need a vacation, I need revenge.”

Jesse looked startled.

“Not a very admirable motivation, I know. But there it is. I want the bastard to pay for his treachery.” I paused. “And I want to be the one who makes him pay.”

“Anton Glosser?” Jesse said.

I nodded. Anton Glosser was the man who’d double-crossed me on the Merrick case. He was president of Consumer Electronics, a medium-sized firm that he’d built from scratch. Like so many self-made men, he remembered the hardships he’d overcome more clearly than the people who’d helped him along the way. Such selective vision led to an overinflated estimate of his own worth and an attitude of disdain for others who had accomplished less than he.

I’d have preferred to think my desire for revenge came solely from a thirst for justice or outrage at Orrin Merrick’s fate, but there was also an element of pride. I hate to be played for a fool, and I hate it most of all when I suspect that I was chosen for the role because I’m a woman.

“Glosser works from a basic street-fighter mentality: Do unto others before they can do unto you,” I said. “He went after Orrin because he wanted it known that no one gets away with crossing Anton Glosser. He also strikes me as the kind of guy who believes that the rules apply to everyone else. I didn’t pick up any corporate misconduct from their books, but they cut every corner they could get away with and I’d bet that there’s dirt someplace. I plan to find it.”

“Hold it,” Jesse said. “Glosser was a client. We had access to privileged information. If you were to disclose or use that information, we could be in big trouble. *No one* wants to hire an investigator who reveals privileged information.”

“I don’t plan to use *that* information. I thought I’d just check on Glosser’s personal finances and dig around a bit. See where the bodies are buried. I don’t even know what I’ll do when I find something, but it sure would be sweet to find some way to get Glosser to take care of Orrin’s family.”

“You’re talking dangerously close to blackmail,” Jesse warned.

“And I’m making you nervous.”

Jesse shrugged. He likes to be the cool one; it made him uncomfortable to be the voice of reason. “I just think you should think about it a bit before you do anything. How about you wait a week before you start digging around? You could use a vacation.”

“I could go stir crazy with a vacation. I’m ready to start now.”

“A week, as a favor to your new partner.”

*Partner.* The magic word, subtly selected to remind me that we’d made a deal when we signed the partnership papers that neither of us would take any major steps affecting the agency without consulting the other. I’d suggested it to prevent Jesse from doing anything too wild, and now he was using it against me.

“A whole week?”

“Only a week. Seven days.”

I didn’t want to wait a week. And when I realized how much I didn’t want to wait, I knew Jesse was right. “Okay, a week.” I said.

Jesse smiled.

“But only because I like to let you win one occasionally.”

I tried to work on other things, but I wasn’t in the mood to do anything except go after Anton Glosser. I was so grouchy that even McGee, the office cat, abandoned his favorite spot on my couch in search of a more congenial environment. If



I stuck around much longer, the plants would start to wilt. Finally, I went home.

Home wasn't much better than the office. My cat, Touchstone, was so confused by my arrival in the middle of the morning that he decided it must be mealtime. He and Amy have a lot in common when it comes to strategies for dealing with stress. He fussed and whined and threw himself against my ankles. Other cats rub against your leg. Stone goes for a full body press. I think his real goal is to trip me.

I had started and abandoned at least four projects by noon. By the time the phone rang just after one, I'd have been grateful for anything that would occupy my mind. Later, I'd reflect that you've got to be careful what you wish for.

"Catherine, it's Joe . . . Joe Girard," a familiar voice said.

"Joe, how are you?" I said. "It's been too long."

"Yeah, I need to see you, I mean professionally. Is that possible?"

Same old Joe, no social chitchat, just cut to the point. I could see his intense dark eyes and imagine him drumming his fingers in nervous energy. I'd met Joe over ten years ago at a benefit for some good cause, and ended up recruiting him to help a young Guatemalan friend who was having trouble with immigration.

We had gotten to know each other during the many hours we spent sitting in the outer offices of bored bureaucrats. He was incredibly gentle and comforting with my friend and an absolute tiger with the opposition. At five feet six, lean and wiry, he was possessed of abundant energy, sharp wits, and a sharper tongue. That's what the bureaucrats saw; I got to see the huge heart beneath it all.

I'd helped him out with investigations a couple of times, and he'd helped me on several pro bono cases. The last time we'd met he was working for Greenpeace, but I hadn't heard from him for several years. I figured that whatever he wanted to see me about was bound to be interesting.

# 3

**J**OE GIRARD ARRIVED promptly at four-thirty, wearing the same expression I put on for the periodontist. He was thinner than I remembered. His features seemed sharper, the bones of his face more prominent. But the eyes were the same. Dark and intense, they dominated his face, drew people to him or pushed them away. Today those eyes were underlined by dark circles, and Joe Girard looked much older than the years since I'd seen him could account for.

"Thanks for seeing me," he said as he sank into a chair. I'd have liked to know what he'd been up to since I'd last seen him, but his mind was on more pressing matters. "Before I start, I don't want you to feel you owe me anything. I mean there's friendship and business, and this is business. Okay?"

Our friendship and business had always been so closely intertwined, that his declaration surprised me. Then I realized that he was about to ask something for himself. I could never remember him doing that before.

I nodded. "What do you need?"

He picked up a paperweight from the edge of my desk. It was a round glass globe with the puffy head of a dandelion inside. He turned it absently in his hands and began. "I have a cousin, Mitch. He's two years younger than I am." He paused, swallowed, and continued. "Or he *was* two years younger. A couple of weeks ago, he came to me. He wanted me to help him expose a man who had molested him when he was a child."

He paused, watching closely for my reaction, then contin-

ued. "I turned him down. Me, who helps every sad-eyed case with a good story, I told him I was too busy. Truth is, he was an alcoholic and a drifter, and I'd bailed him out enough times that I wasn't anxious to do it again." Joe stared down at the floor and retreated into some private place for a minute. When he looked up again, his eyes were moist. "God help me, I just didn't want to be bothered."

He paused and studied the paperweight as though it were a crystal ball, then continued. "He didn't even get mad at me, just said he'd take care of things himself. Five days later, he was killed in the parking lot of a sleazy bar."

His eyes locked on mine. "The police are calling it a robbery attempt gone bad. I don't buy it."

"You think someone killed him intentionally?"

"Yeah."

"What do you know about the killing?" I asked.

"They found him last Thursday morning behind a place called Jerry's in west Oakland. That's a tough section of town. Robberies and even shootings aren't so unusual there. He'd been shot, and his wallet and watch were gone. That's all the cops would tell me. I don't think they know any more than that, and I don't expect them to come up with more because they've already decided that it was a stranger shooting."

"What makes you think it wasn't just a robbery?" I asked.

Joe set the paperweight back on the desk and leaned forward. "It's going to sound stupid, but I just have this feeling. I can't explain it, but when I get a feeling for something, it's almost always right. Like, remember that Laotian refugee who the cops picked up for armed robbery? As soon as I met the roommate, I knew it was him."

I remembered the case because I'd done some checking on the roommate, and Joe's "feeling" had proved correct.

"You have anything beyond this feeling?" I asked.

"Okay," Joe said. "They haven't found his car. He had a bad leg, and he drove everywhere, but his car wasn't in the parking lot. And there was no reason for him to be there in the first place."

"You said he had an alcohol problem."



“Yes, but he was on Antabuse. That stuff makes you nauseous if you have any alcohol, so he wasn’t drinking. Besides, he was too streetwise to wander into that section of town accidentally, or to let some stranger come up on him.”

Plenty of drunks have taken Antabuse only to drop it when the craving for a drink gets too strong, and it didn’t sound as if Joe knew his cousin well enough to predict what he would and wouldn’t do. “He could have gone there with someone he knew.”

“He wouldn’t have gone to a bar when he was trying to stay sober,” he said impatiently. “And if he went with someone, why did they leave without him?” He stared at me intently, challenging me to refute his arguments.

“What did the police do when you told them this?”

“What do the cops always do? They pretended to listen, took some notes, and explained about the difficulties of catching this type of killer. ‘This type of killer’ being a stranger who has no connection to the victim. They’re not going to investigate the guy my cousin was watching. It’ll be a cover-up, nice and neat.”

“Why a cover-up?”

“Because the man who killed him is Judge Samuel Reiter. He has plenty of friends in high places. The cops aren’t about to mess with him.”

A cover-up. If the cops covered up all the crimes that citizens think they do, they’d have no time to abuse all the guys who complain of police brutality.

“So you want me to prove that Reiter killed your cousin,” I said.

“I want you to look into it, tell me if it looks funny to you. I’m too close to this to trust my instincts very far. You tell me it’s robbery, I’ll go back to sleeping at night.”

“And if I find something?”

“We go to the police. I’m not taking things into my own hands. You got my word on it.”

I considered it. Joe’s eyes never left my face. The intensity of his scrutiny made me uncomfortable. “I don’t work murder cases,” I said. “I wouldn’t even know where to start.”

“It wouldn’t take you long to figure out,” Joe said. “I’ve worked with you. I know what you can do. Besides, there’s more than murder at stake here. Even if Reiter didn’t kill Mitch, he screwed up his life. He’s still a child molester, and he ought to be punished for that.”

“And you want me to help you do that.”

“Yes.”

“How do you know that Reiter molested Mitch?”

“Mitch told me.”

“When?”

“When he came to see me. Why?”

“Look, Joe,” I said. “This is serious stuff. Just the rumor of it can ruin a man’s career. You admit you weren’t close to your cousin. Yet you’re willing to take his word that he was molested. Do you know what kind of trouble we could both get into if you’re wrong about this?”

“I’m not wrong,” he said defiantly. “And of course I know. That’s one of the reasons I came to *you*. I know you won’t do anything indiscreet. I just want justice.”

No, I thought, you want to get even. I understood the thirst for vengeance far better than I liked, but I also knew that it is a dangerous ally and rarely an honorable one.

“Let’s back up a bit,” I suggested. “Tell me about the alleged abuse.”

Joe Girard sighed. His manner said that the whole subject was distasteful to him. “Mitch was nine. Reiter was the coach of the chess club. He was a lawyer with a big name firm, smart, rich, sophisticated. Had a big house, beautiful wife, sailboat, sports car. Mitch was really flattered that Reiter liked him. He took him to ball games, movies, fishing on the bay. Anything Mitch wanted to do, Reiter’d take him. Mitch started hanging out at his house a lot. His dad drank too much, and his parents fought a lot, so he needed a place he could get away from all that. Then one day his good friend wanted to be more than friends.”

“Do you know how it happened?”

“Not really. Mitch didn’t want to talk about it. I know

Reiter didn't hold him down or force him physically. It was closer to seduction. Mitch just felt he couldn't say no."

"And it happened more than once?"

"It went on for a couple of years."

"Do you have any proof of that?"

"Nothing you could take to court, but I know Mitch was telling the truth. I remember how he changed a couple of years before he became a teenager. He was incredibly talented as an artist when we were kids. When the rest of us were drawing stick figures, he was drawing people who looked real. He used to carry a little notebook, and he'd whip it out and scribble on it for a minute or so, and there'd be this sketch that was like a cartoon but really captured the person he was drawing.

"Then when he was around nine or ten, he stopped drawing. He became more and more withdrawn. His family wrote it off to acting like a teenager, but I can see now that there was more to it than that. I didn't help him when he was alive, the least I can do is see that he gets justice now. Will you help me?"

Say no, the little voice of reason said. You may know a lot about corporate crime, but you know next to nothing about homicide and even less about child abuse.

The little voice of reason was no match for Joe's eyes. They were so full of pain that it hurt to look at him. Another time, when I understood less intimately the burden of guilt, I might have missed it, but today it was like looking in a mirror.

"All right," I said, "I'll give it a try."

"This is business," Joe said again. "I expect to pay for your time."

"I'm on vacation anyway," I said. "I'll do it for expenses and the next favor I need from you. Now, what else do you know about this?"

He started to object, then read the look on my face and shrugged. "Thanks. This one's worth a slew of favors." He reached down for the battered briefcase he carried every-