

SIDNEY SHELDON

TELL ME YOUR
DREAMS



WARNER BOOKS



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**PRAISE FOR *TELL ME YOUR DREAMS*
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BESTSELLING AUTHOR
SIDNEY SHELDON**

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Book One



Chapter One

SOMEONE was following her. She had read about stalkers, but they belonged in a different, violent world. She had no idea who it could be, who would want to harm her. She was trying desperately hard not to panic, but lately her sleep had been filled with unbearable nightmares, and she had awakened each morning with a feeling of impending doom. *Perhaps it's all in my imagination*, Ashley Patterson thought. *I'm working too hard. I need a vacation.*

She turned to study herself in her bedroom mirror. She was looking at the image of a woman in her late twenties, neatly dressed, with patrician features, a slim figure and intelligent, anxious brown eyes. There was a quiet elegance about her, a subtle attractiveness. Her dark hair fell softly to her shoulders. *I hate my looks*, Ashley thought. *I'm too thin. I must start eating more.* She

walked into the kitchen and began to fix breakfast, forcing her mind to forget about the frightening thing that was happening, and concentrating on preparing a fluffy omelette. She turned on the coffeemaker and put a slice of bread in the toaster. Ten minutes later, everything was ready. Ashley placed the dishes on the table and sat down. She picked up a fork, stared at the food for a moment, then shook her head in despair. Fear had taken away her appetite.

This can't go on, she thought angrily. Whoever he is, I won't let him do this to me. I won't.

Ashley glanced at her watch. It was time to leave for work. She looked around the familiar apartment, as though seeking some kind of reassurance from it. It was an attractively furnished third-floor apartment on Via Camino Court, with a living room, bedroom and den, bathroom, kitchen and guest powder room. She had lived here in Cupertino, California, for three years. Until two weeks ago, Ashley had thought of it as a comfortable nest, a haven. Now it had turned into a fortress, a place where no one could get in to harm her. Ashley walked to the front door and examined the lock. *I'll have a dead bolt put in, she thought. Tomorrow.* She turned off all the lights, checked to make sure the door was firmly locked behind her and took the elevator to the basement garage.

The garage was deserted. Her car was twenty feet from the elevator. She looked around carefully, then ran to the car, slid inside and locked the doors, her heart pounding. She headed downtown, under a sky the color of malice, dark and foreboding. The weather report had

said rain. *But it's not going to rain*, Ashley thought. *The sun is going to come out. I'll make a deal with you, God. If it doesn't rain, it means that everything is all right, that I've been imagining things.*

Ten minutes later, Ashley Patterson was driving through downtown Cupertino. She was still awed by the miracle of what this once sleepy little corner of Santa Clara Valley had become. Located fifty miles south of San Francisco, it was where the computer revolution had started, and it had been appropriately nicknamed Silicon Valley.

Ashley was employed at Global Computer Graphics Corporation, a successful, fast-growing young company with two hundred employees.

As Ashley turned the car onto Silverado Street, she had the uneasy feeling that *he* was behind her, following her. *But who? And why?* She looked into her rearview mirror. Everything seemed normal.

Every instinct told her otherwise.

Ahead of Ashley was the sprawling, modern-looking building that housed Global Computer Graphics. She turned into the parking lot, showed the guard her identification and pulled into her parking space. She felt safe here.

As she got out of the car, it began to rain.

At nine o'clock in the morning, Global Computer Graphics was already humming with activity. There were eighty modular cubicles, occupied by computer whizzes, all young, busily building Web sites, creating logos for

new companies, doing artwork for record and book publishing companies and composing illustrations for magazines. The work floor was divided into several divisions: administration, sales, marketing and technical support. The atmosphere was casual. The employees walked around in jeans, tank tops and sweaters.

As Ashley headed toward her desk, her supervisor, Shane Miller, approached her. "Morning, Ashley."

Shane Miller was in his early thirties, a burly, earnest man with a pleasant personality. In the beginning, he had tried to persuade Ashley to go to bed with him, but he had finally given up, and they had become good friends.

He handed Ashley a copy of the latest *Time* magazine. "Seen this?"

Ashley looked at the cover. It featured a picture of a distinguished-looking man in his fifties, with silver hair. The caption read "Dr. Steven Patterson, Father of Mini Heart Surgery."

"I've seen it."

"How does it feel to have a famous father?"

Ashley smiled. "Wonderful."

"He's a great man."

"I'll tell him you said so. We're having lunch."

"Good. By the way . . ." Shane Miller showed Ashley a photograph of a movie star who was going to be used in an ad for a client. "We have a little problem here. Desiree has gained about ten pounds, and it shows. Look at those dark circles under her eyes. And even with makeup, her skin is splotchy. Do you think you can help this?"

Ashley studied the picture. "I can fix her eyes by applying the blur filter. I could try to thin her face by using the distort tool, but—No. That would probably end up making her look odd." She studied the picture again. "I'll have to airbrush or use the clone tool in some areas."

"Thanks. Are we on for Saturday night?"

"Yes."

Shane Miller nodded toward the photograph. "There's no hurry on this. They want it last month."

Ashley smiled. "What else is new?"

She went to work. Ashley was an expert in advertising and graphic design, creating layouts with text and images.

Half an hour later, as Ashley was working on the photograph, she sensed someone watching her. She looked up. It was Dennis Tibble.

"Morning, honey."

His voice grated on her nerves. Tibble was the company's computer genius. He was known around the plant as "The Fixer." Whenever a computer crashed, Tibble was sent for. He was in his early thirties, thin and bald with an unpleasant, arrogant attitude. He had an obsessive personality, and the word around the plant was that he was fixated on Ashley.

"Need any help?"

"No, thank you."

"Hey, what about us having a little dinner Saturday night?"

"Thank you. I'm busy."

“Going out with the boss again?”

Ashley turned to look at him, angry. “Look, it’s none of your—”

“I don’t know what you see in him, anyway. He’s a nerd, cubed. I can give you a better time.” He winked. “You know what I mean?”

Ashley was trying to control her temper. “I have work to do, Dennis.”

Tibble leaned close to her and whispered, “There’s something you’re going to learn about me, honey. I don’t give up. Ever.”

She watched him walk away, and wondered: *Could he be the one?*

At 12:30, Ashley put her computer in suspend mode and headed for Margherita di Roma, where she was joining her father for lunch.

She sat at a corner table in the crowded restaurant, watching her father come toward her. She had to admit that he was handsome. People were turning to stare at him as he walked to Ashley’s table. “*How does it feel to have a famous father?*”

Years earlier, Dr. Steven Patterson had pioneered a breakthrough in minimally invasive heart surgery. He was constantly invited to lecture at major hospitals around the world. Ashley’s mother had died when Ashley was twelve, and she had no one but her father.

“Sorry I’m late, Ashley.” He leaned over and kissed her on the cheek.

“That’s all right. I just got here.”

He sat down. “Have you seen *Time* magazine?”

“Yes. Shane showed it to me.”

He frowned. “Shane? Your boss?”

“He’s not my boss. He’s—he’s one of the supervisors.”

“It’s never good to mix business with pleasure, Ashley. You’re seeing him socially, aren’t you? That’s a mistake.”

“Father, we’re just good—”

A waiter came up to the table. “Would you like to see a menu?”

Dr. Patterson turned to him and snapped, “Can’t you see we’re in the middle of a conversation? Go away until you’re sent for.”

“I—I’m sorry.” The waiter turned and hurried off.

Ashley cringed with embarrassment. She had forgotten how savage her father’s temper was. He had once punched an intern during an operation for making an error in judgment. Ashley remembered the screaming arguments between her mother and father when she was a little girl. They had terrified her. Her parents had always fought about the same thing, but try as she might, Ashley could not remember what it was. She had blocked it from her mind.

Her father went on, as though there had been no interruption. “Where were we? Oh, yes. Going out with Shane Miller is a mistake. A big mistake.”

And his words brought back another terrible memory.

She could hear her father’s voice saying, “Going out with Jim Cleary is a mistake. A big mistake . . .”

Ashley had just turned eighteen and was living in

Bedford, Pennsylvania, where she was born. Jim Cleary was the most popular boy in Bedford Area High School. He was on the football team, was handsome and amusing and had a killer smile. It seemed to Ashley that every girl in school wanted to sleep with him. *And most of them probably have*, she had thought, wryly. When Jim Cleary started asking Ashley out, she was determined not to go to bed with him. She was sure he was interested in her only for sex, but as time went on, she changed her mind. She liked being with him, and he seemed to genuinely enjoy her company.

That winter, the senior class went for a weekend skiing trip in the mountains. Jim Cleary loved to ski.

"We'll have a great time," he assured Ashley.

"I'm not going."

He looked at her in astonishment. "Why?"

"I hate cold weather. Even with gloves, my fingers get numb."

"But it will be fun to—"

"I'm not going."

And he had stayed in Bedford to be with her.

They shared the same interests and had the same ideals, and they always had a wonderful time together.

When Jim Cleary had said to Ashley, "Someone asked me this morning if you're my girlfriend. What shall I tell him?" Ashley had smiled and said, "Tell him yes."

Dr. Patterson was worried. "You're seeing too much of that Cleary boy."

"Father, he's very decent, and I love him."

“How can you love him? He’s a goddamned *football* player. I’m not going to let you marry a football player. He’s not good enough for you, Ashley.”

He had said that about every boy she had gone out with.

Her father kept making disparaging remarks about Jim Cleary, but the explosion occurred on the night of the high school graduation. Jim Cleary was taking Ashley to an evening graduation party. When he came to pick her up, she was sobbing.

“What’s the matter? What’s happened?”

“My—my father told me he’s taking me away to London. He’s registered me in—in a college there.”

Jim Cleary looked at her, stunned. “He’s doing this because of us, isn’t he?”

Ashley nodded, miserable.

“When do you leave?”

“Tomorrow.”

“No! Ashley, for God’s sake, don’t let him do this to us. Listen to me. I want to marry you. My uncle offered me a really good job in Chicago with his advertising agency. We’ll run away. Meet me tomorrow morning at the railroad station. There’s a train leaving for Chicago at seven A.M. Will you come with me?”

She looked at him a long moment and said softly, “Yes.”

Thinking about it later, Ashley could not remember what the graduation party was like. She and Jim had spent the entire evening excitedly discussing their plans.

“Why don’t we fly to Chicago?” Ashley asked.

“Because we would have to give our names to the airline. If we go by train, nobody will know where we’ve gone.”

As they were leaving the party, Jim Cleary asked softly, “Would you like to stop off at my place? My folks are out of town for the weekend.”

Ashley hesitated, torn. “Jim . . . we’ve waited this long. A few more days won’t matter.”

“You’re right.” He grinned. “I may be the only man on this continent marrying a virgin.”

When Jim Cleary brought Ashley home from the party, Dr. Patterson was waiting, in a rage. “Do you have any idea how late it is?”

“I’m sorry, sir. The party—”

“Don’t give me any of your goddamn excuses, Cleary. Who the hell do you think you’re fooling?”

“I’m not—”

“From now on, you keep your goddamned hands off my daughter, do you understand?”

“Father—”

“You keep out of this.” He was screaming now. “Cleary, I want you to get the hell out of here and stay out.”

“Sir, your daughter and I—”

“Jim—”

“Get up to your room.”

“Sir—”

“If I ever see you around here again, I’ll break every bone in your body.”

Ashley had never seen him so furious. It had ended