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SILVER



RALEVIN

ROSEMARY'S BABY and THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL

SLIVER

A NOVEL

IRA LEVIN



BANTAM BOOKS / NEW YORK / TORONTO / LONDON / SYDNEY / AUCKLAND

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SLIVER

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Acclaim for Ira Levin's new bestseller

SLIVER

"Ira Levin is the Swiss watchmaker of the suspense novel; in terms of plot, he makes what the rest of us do look like those five-dollar watches you can buy at discount drugstores. . . . Mr. Levin, who wove his jittery, compelling magic in such novels as *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Stepford Wives*, and *The Boys from Brazil*, has in *Sliver* created the apartment dweller's worst nightmare. As always, his characters have a texture and a reality that's almost eerie, and the narrative is as stripped-down and efficient as an automatic weapon."

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"I enjoyed *Sliver* to the limit. Ira Levin is the daddy of all contemporary horror writers and I think it's important to remember that it was *Rosemary's Baby* that began the whole late-20th-century cycle (was, indeed, the book that kicked me into becoming a writer myself). . . . Ira is the real master of horror."

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Ira Levin's
NOVELS and *Plays*

SLIVER

Cantorial

Deathtrap

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL

Veronica's Room

THE STEPFORD WIVES

Break a Leg

THIS PERFECT DAY

Dr. Cook's Garden

ROSEMARY'S BABY

Drat! The Cat!

Critic's Choice

General Seeger

Interlock

No Time for Sergeants

A KISS BEFORE DYING

TO
Dorothy Olding

ONE

It was a good Monday morning to begin with—the Hoffmans slugging it out again, Dr. Palme on the phone with a suicidal ex-patient, the Coles' maid getting it off with one of their vibrators, Lesley and

Phil meeting in the laundry room—and then it got even better. MacEvoy came into the lobby with a woman who looked like Thea Marshall, the same oval face, the same dark hair. Obviously she was there to look at 20B, repainted the week before.

He watched them ride up in the number-two elevator. She was beautifully built, tall and bosomy, in a good-looking medium-dark suit. Threw a glance his way then stood with a hand on her shoulder bag watching MacEvoy speling about the central air-conditioning and the Poggenpohl kitchen. Thirty-five or -six. A strong resemblance.

He put the 20B living room and bedroom on the masters and watched her come into the foyer and across the bare living room, her heels twanging on the parquet. She looked good from behind too as she went to the window and stood facing out over the lower buildings across Madison. “It is a glorious view,” she said, and her voice, melodic and throaty, echoed Thea Marshall’s.

He couldn’t spot a wedding ring but she was probably married or living with someone. He was going to approve her no matter what, of course, assuming she decided she wanted the apartment. He crossed his fingers.

She turned from the window, looked around, smiled. Raised her face. Coming closer, she looked right at him—Thea Marshall looked right at him—knocking him breathless.

■ ■ ■

“WHAT A LOVELY light,” she said. The shallow glass ceiling dish was sculpted in Art Deco curves. In its chrome center her small raspberry-clad reflection hung face down looking at her.

“Isn’t it?” Mrs. MacEvoy said, coming up beside her. “They’re all through the building. Truly, no expense was spared. It was planned as a condo originally. The rent is a bargain, considering.”

The rent was high but not impossible. She walked back toward the foyer, turned, surveyed the room—freshly white-painted, twenty by twenty-two, the window wide and large, the floor parquet, a pass-through to the kitchen. . . . If the rest of the apartment was on a par, she would have to make a decision then and there, first shot out of the classifieds. Did she *really* want to leave Bank Street? Go through all the hassle of moving?

She went on to the foyer.

The kitchen was handsome—tan laminate, stainless steel. Fluorescent lighting under the cabinets, appliances trim and foursquare. Good counter space.

The bathroom beyond it was glitzy but fun. Black glass walls, black fixtures, chrome hardware; a large tub, a stall shower. Tube lights by the over-

the-sink cabinet; another chrome-centered Art Deco dish in the black glass ceiling, smaller than the one in the living room.

The bedroom, at the end of the foyer, was almost as large as the living room, freshly white too, the left-hand wall all accordion-doored closets. Another wide window at the back, another great view—a slice of the yellowing park and part of the reservoir, the roof of a Gothic mansion on Fifth. More than enough space for the desk against the right-hand wall by the window, with the bed, of course, across from the window and facing it. She sighed at her upside-down self in the ceiling light, at Mrs. MacEvoy waiting in the corner by the door. “This is the first apartment I’ve looked at,” she said.

Mrs. MacEvoy smiled. “It’s a gem,” she said. “I wouldn’t let it slip through my fingers.”

They went back into the foyer. Mrs. MacEvoy opened the linen closet.

She took another look around, thinking about her beautiful apartment on Bank Street with its high ceilings and working fireplace. And its rock club on the corner, its roaches, its two years of Jeff and six years of Alex.

“I’ll take it,” she said.

Mrs. MacEvoy smiled. “Let’s go back to my office,” she said. “You can fill out the application and I’ll put it right in the works.”



HE GOT ANTSY waiting for Edgar's call. It didn't come till late Wednesday afternoon. "Hello, Edgar," he said, killing both masters, "how are you?"

"Getting on tolerably well. You?"

"Fine," he said.

"The September statement is on its way; considering how the market's been behaving, I think you'll be pleased. About the building: I had Mills speak to Dmitri again about the lobby."

"Tell him to try it in Russian," he said. "That piece of marble is still there. I mean those two pieces."

"I'm sure the new piece is on order, I'll check and get back to you. And Mrs. MacEvoy has an applicant for twenty B. Did I tell you it was going vacant?"

"Yes," he said, "you did."

"Kay Norris. Thirty-nine, divorced. She's a senior editor at Diadem, the publishing house, so she ought to be nice and quiet. Credit history and references first-rate. Mrs. MacEvoy says she's good-looking. She has one cat."

"Is Kay her name or her initial?" he asked.

"Her name."

"Kay Norris."

"Yes."

Printing it on the clipboard, he said, "She sounds ideal. Tell Mills to see that everyone takes extra good care of her."

"I will. There's nothing else at the moment. . . ."

"Then don't let me keep you," he said. Hung up. Underlined it: KAY NORRIS.

Older than he'd thought, thirty-nine.

Thea Marshall had been forty when she died; he drew a breath, sighed a long sigh.

He switched on the masters and put her living room on 1 and her bedroom on 2, the same as Monday morning. The bedroom glared, sunlight pouring through the bare window. He turned the brightness down. Up a little in the living room.

His hands on the console, he gazed at the two empty rooms on the twin masters. The monitors spread away in multitiered wings, blue-white, flicking with movement here and there.

SHE CALLED ALEX on Thursday night and told him to come get his books.

"Oh God, Kay, I know I keep saying it but this is *really* the worst possible time, the semester starting. You'll have to keep them just a few more months."

"Sorry, I can't," she said. "I'm moving a week

from tomorrow. Either pick them up or I'm putting them outside. I've lost my interest in medieval architecture. God knows why."

He hadn't heard about her breakup with Jeff. He sounded genuinely sorry. "It's *good* you're moving, it's a fine idea. Start fresh. What have you found?"

She told him about it. "And it's on the next-to-the-top floor," she said. "You can see some of the East River from the living room and a piece of Central Park from the bedroom. Daylight galore. It's a lovely neighborhood, lots of well-kept old buildings, low ones, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum is a block away."

"Thirteen . . . Hundred . . . Madison . . ."—in the musing tone he used before putting her down. "A sliver building? Narrow site?"

She drew breath and said, "Yes . . ."

"Kay, that's where the man was decapitated in the elevator machinery last winter. Remember? The super? There've been three or four deaths there and it's only a few years old. I remember thinking it's a pity the address is Thirteen Hundred because it reinforces superstition. That was the lead-in they used on TV, 'Thirteen hundred is an unlucky number on Madison Avenue' or some such. Of course you're—" "Alex," she said, "I knew about that. Do you think that *I'm* superstitious? Why did you expect me to mention it?"

"I was about to *say*, of course you're *not super-*

stitious, but I thought you would want to know anyway, if you didn't."

"The books, Alex," she said.

They agreed he would come pack them on Sunday afternoon and have them removed during the week. They said good-bye, she hung up.

Old Reliable. Negative, negative, negative.

It was awful about the super but the apartment was great nonetheless. She certainly wasn't going to let Alex and some tabloid-TV newscaster sour her on it. Three or four deaths over three years wasn't remarkable; two apartments on a floor meant forty altogether, with couples, probably, in most of them—sixty or seventy people. Without counting the turnover. And the staff.

Felice rubbed against her ankle. She picked her up, cradled her on her shoulder, nuzzled purring calico fur. Said, "Ooh Felice, are *you* in for a surprise! A whole new world. No more roaches to play with. Poor you. At least I hope not. You never know."

A man in a light blue sweater hurried ahead of her, straight-armed the thick glass door, and leaning, braced it open for her. She was carrying two flat cartons of precious breakables, one atop the other,