

# JAMES PATTERSON YOU'VE BEEN WARNED

Fear is just  
the beginning

& HOWARD ROUGHAN

# You've Been Warned

A NOVEL BY

James Patterson

AND

Howard Roughan



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For Christine and Trevor, forever my big picture  
—H. R.

For Suzie and Jack, my scary ones  
—J. P.

Character, like a photograph, develops in darkness.

—Yousuf Karsh

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# Chapter 1

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*IT'S WAY TOO EARLY in the morning for dead people.*

That's what I'd be thinking, were I actually thinking clearly right now. I'm not.

The second I turn the corner on my way to work and see the crowd, the commotion, the dingy gray body bags being wheeled out of that oh-so-chichi hotel, I reach for my camera. I can't help it. It's instinct on my part.

*Click, click, click.*

*Don't think about what's happened here. Just shoot, Kristin.*

My head whips left and right, the lens of my Leica R9 leading the way. I focus first on the faces around me—the gawkers, the lookie-loos. *That's what Annie Leibovitz would do.* A businessman in wide pinstripes, a bike messenger, a mother with her stroller, they all stand and stare at the



## James Patterson

terrible murder scene. Like it or not, this is the highlight of their day. And it's not yet eight a.m.

I move forward, even as something inside me is saying, "Look away, walk away." Even as something says, "You know where you are. This hotel. You know, Kristin."

I'm weaving my way toward the entrance to the hotel. Closer and closer, I'm being pulled—as if by an undertow that I can't resist. And I keep shooting pictures as though I'm on assignment for the *New York Times* or *Newsweek*.

*Click, click, click.*

Parked at jagged angles, police cars and ambulances fill the street. I look up from their sirens, tracing the twirling beams of blue-and-red light as they dance against the surrounding brownstones.

I spy more gawkers in the windows of nearby apartments. A woman wearing curlers takes a bite of a bagel. *Click.*

Something catches my eye. It's a reflection, the sun bouncing off the rail of the last gurney being wheeled out of the hotel. That makes four. *What happened in there? Murder? Mass murder?*

They sit, gathered on the sidewalk—four gurneys—each holding a body bag. It's horrifying. Just awful.

My wrist twists, and I go wide-angle to shoot them as a group—like a family. My wrist twists back, and I go tight, shooting them one by one. *Who were they? What happened to these poor people? How did they die?*

*Don't think, Kristin, just shoot.*

Two muscular paramedics walk out of the hotel and approach a couple of cops. Detectives, like on *Law & Order*.

## You've Been Warned

They all talk, they all shake their heads, and they all have that hardened New York look to them, as if they've seen it all before.

One of the detectives—older, rail thin—looks my way. I think he sees me.

*Click, click, click.*

Having burned through a roll of film, I furiously load another.

There's really nothing more to shoot, and yet I keep firing away. I'm late for work, but it doesn't matter. It's as if I can't leave.

*Wait!*

My head snaps back to the gurneys as something catches my eye. At first, I can't believe it. Maybe it's the wind, or just my mind playing tricks early in the morning.

Then it happens again, and I gasp. The last body bag . . . *it moved!*

*Did I just see what I think I saw?*

I'm terrified and want to run away. Instead, I edge even closer. Instinct? Undertow?

I'm staring at that zipped-up body bag, and all I know is that there's been a horrible mistake by the police or the EMS.

*The zipper!*

It's creeping backward. *That body bag is opening from the inside!*

My eyes bulge, and my knees buckle. Literally. I stagger through the crowd, staring through my lens in shock and disbelief.

## James Patterson

I see a finger emerge, then an entire hand. *Oh, God, and there's blood!*

"Help!" I scream, lowering my camera. "That person is alive!"

The crowd turns, the cops and paramedics too. They glance at me and scoff in disbelief or reproach, shaking their heads as if I just escaped from Bellevue. *They think I'm nuts!*

I stab the air, pointing at the body bag as the hand pushes through the plastic, desperately reaching out for help. I think it's a woman's hand.

*Do something, Kris! You have to save her!*

I raise my camera again, and —

## Chapter 2

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I JOLT UP SO FAST I nearly break my neck. I'm drenched with sweat, crying hysterically, and have no idea where I am. Everything is blurry, so I try to rub my eyes into focus, but it's hard because my hands are trembling out of control. Actually, my whole body is trembling.

I plead with myself, *C'mon, Kris.*

Finally, shapes begin to appear before me, followed by outlines . . . and, like a Polaroid, it all becomes clear.

*It was just a dream, you spaz! Just a dream.*

Collapsing back into my pillow, I let out the world's hugest sigh of relief. Never have I been so happy to be alone in my own bed.

*But it was so real.*

*The body bags . . . a woman's hand coming out of one of them.*

I turn to my alarm clock—a little before six a.m. Good, I

## James Patterson

can still get a few more minutes of sleep. But the moment I close my eyes, they pop right open again.

I hear something, a pounding, and it's not just my stressed-out heart. Someone's at the door.

Throwing on the same blue terry cloth robe I've had since my Boston College days, I trudge across my tiny apartment, which is decorated with the very finest furnishings from the Crate & Barrel factory-reject sale. So what if my couch has only three legs and belongs in a Farrelly brothers movie?

The pounding gets louder. More urgent and annoying.

*All right already, hold your horses!*

Approaching the door, I don't call out and ask who it is. That's what peepholes are for, especially in Manhattan.

Quietly, I lean forward and squint to look with a tired eye.

*Shit.*

*Her.*

I open the door. Glaring at me through a pair of drugstore bifocals is my nosy old neighbor from down the hall, Mrs. Rosencrantz. She's clearly ticked off about something, and that makes two of us.

"Do you realize what time it is?" I grumble.

"Do *you* realize what time it is?" she shoots back. "Once and for all, you've got to stop this psychotic screaming every morning."

I look at Mrs. Rosencrantz—all four feet ten of her—as if she's the one who's psychotic. I may have been crying, but I certainly wasn't *screaming*.

## You've Been Warned

"You know, if you really want to hassle someone about noise, Mrs. Rosencrantz, you should find out who's playing that music at six a.m."

She gives me a sideways look. "What music?"

"C'mon, you don't hear that? It's coming from..." I step into the hallway, turning my head left and right.

*Wait — where exactly is it coming from?*

Mrs. Rosencrantz shakes her head and huffs. "I don't hear any music, Ms. Burns. And if you're trying to be a little smart-ass with me, I'm telling you right now I don't appreciate it."

"Mrs. Rosencrantz, I'm not trying to —"

She cuts me off. "Don't think I can't get you evicted, because I can."

I frown at the old bat, who happens to look even more unpleasant and haggard than usual, if that's possible. *You want smart-ass, lady? I'll give you smart-ass!*

"Mrs. Rosencrantz, I'm going back to bed now... and if you don't mind my saying so, you could use a little more beauty sleep yourself."

With that, I promptly close the door on her stunned, sour-puss face.

I'm about to turn and make a beeline for my bed, when I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror by the coat closet. *Whoa!* I'm sporting some serious raccoon eyes and a pretty spectacular case of bedhead. *Omigod, I look almost as bad as Mrs. Rosencrantz!*

Supposedly, I have this killer wink that everybody loves. I wink at myself in the mirror. It doesn't help. I wink at myself again. Nope, nothing.

## James Patterson

I laugh out loud, and for a moment, I forget about the horrible dream and my neighbor from hell.

But only for a moment.

Because I still can't figure out the music and where it's coming from.

Walking around my apartment like Elmer Fudd hunting rabbits, I press my ear against the walls. Feeling totally ridiculous, I drop to my knees and try listening through the floorboards.

Only after grabbing a chair to climb closer to the ceiling do I realize what's going on. The music isn't *coming* from anywhere.

The music is inside my head.

## Chapter 3

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THIS IS NOT GOOD!

I stand perfectly still in my living room and try to listen . . . *between my ears*. The music is faint, but it's definitely there. *How bizarre is this? How scary? What a weird, weird morning this has been, and I've barely been out of bed five minutes.*

I close my eyes. It's a song, and it sounds familiar. I've definitely heard it before. For the life of me, though, I can't put my finger on it.

*Just keep quiet and keep listening*, I tell myself.

But in the next second, I can do neither, as the silence in my apartment is upended by the phone ringing. It's okay, though. *It's always okay when he calls.*

"Hello?"



## James Patterson

“Good morning, sweetheart,” Michael whispers, “this is your phone sex wake-up call.”

I’ve heard him say the line a hundred times and still I giggle. “Good morning,” I whisper back. And now I’m smiling.

“How did you sleep, Kris?”

“Don’t ask.”

“Why? What’s wrong?”

“I had this horrible, horrible dream, and to top it off, my crackpot neighbor just pounded on my door and flipped out on me.”

“Let me guess,” he says. “It’s that nasty old lady from down the hall. The one out of *Rosemary’s Baby*.”

“Bingo. The woman’s got one foot in the grave and the other in her mouth. I swear, the things she says, she’s going to drive me crazy.” *Maybe she has already.*

“Even more of a reason to move, Kris.”

“I knew you were going to say that.”

“The offer still stands. It’s only what you deserve.”

“I told you, Michael, I don’t want you getting me a new place. I need to do it myself. I will. My portfolio is at the Abbott Show. I’m gonna be a star. *Aren’t I?*”

“Of course you are. But you’re so stubborn sometimes.”

“That’s what you love about me.”

“You’re right,” he says. “The fact that you’re smart, talented, and gorgeous has nothing to do with it.”

*God, how I love him. He’s such a sweetheart!*

Mind you, it doesn’t hurt that he’s also handsome, athletic, and a managing partner at Baer Stevens Asset Management.