


*NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF NO WAY OUT*

ANDREA
KANE

A close-up photograph of a woman's legs from the knees down, wearing black high-heeled pumps. She is stepping onto a ground covered with dry, brown autumn leaves. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on her skin and the tips of her shoes, and deep shadows in the foliage.

SCENT
OF
DANGER

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KANE

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POCKET STAR BOOKS

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DEDICATION



To organ donors everywhere, who offer a future to those who need it. And to the dedicated medical professionals whose skill and commitment make that future a reality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



With deep gratitude, I acknowledge those who were an integral part of my writing *Scent of Danger*.

I was fortunate to have outstanding consultants who helped me create the authenticity I strove for. Any divergence from that authenticity is my responsibility—a literary license I sparingly availed myself of only when necessary to tell the story.

In that vein, I specifically want to thank:

Hillel Ben-Asher, M.D., whose medical knowledge and diversity of expertise never fail to impress me. Almost as impressive are his patience in sharing that knowledge, and his prompt and thorough responses to my countless detailed questions.

Desiree Laz, RN, Clinical Transplant Coordinator, Department of Surgery, Albany Medical Center Hospital, who educated me in the kidney transplant process, taking me through the procedure from evaluation to completion, addressing all my questions. Her personal commitment to her career, her patients, and the future of transplant surgery is humbling.

Randy Slaughter, who generously shared his experience as a kidney donor with me, providing me with technical information, literature, and his own perspectives so that I could gain the necessary insights to integrate the medical aspects of this procedure with the personal and emotional ones.

Alex Senchak, EMT, who brought the world of an emergency medical technician to life, explaining his

training and experience, and helping me convey a realistic portrayal of a gunshot victim. Emergency medical teams save lives every day. The maturity, wisdom, and levelheadedness of its members, some of whom are so young, is inspiring.

I want to thank the following people for their contributions, every one of which made *Scent of Danger* a stronger book:

Scott Mayer, for his meteorological insights, which helped me explain the atmospheric conditions that aggravated Sabrina's heightened olfactory sense.

The Cornell "hotelies" who shared curriculum details and the vast range of career opportunities available to Sabrina, and to them, after graduation.

Peggy Gordijn, for her bird's-eye view of Mt. Sinai Hospital, particularly 11 West. My only request is that, next time, she's just a visitor.

Andrea Cirillo, for championing me through a year filled with emotional and professional challenges, for knowing when to step in and when to give me space, and for providing a potpourri of story-enhancing tidbits—from the security bars on brownstone windows to designer toilets.

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Wendi Kane, for going but still staying, for cheering and critiquing, and for having the heart, the wisdom, and

the maturity to understand that reshaping is inevitable, but retaining is the ultimate prize.

I want to close by highlighting the fact that there is a serious shortage of organ donors at this time. Some eighty thousand people are on waiting lists, and that list grows longer every day. March is Kidney Month. I urge you to visit the National Kidney Foundation's website at: <http://www.kidney.org> and learn more about kidney disease, what's being done to educate the public, what the Kidney Foundation does to assist those in need, and what you can do to help.

SCENT OF DANGER

1



*Monday, September 5th, Labor Day, 5:45 P.M.
New York City*

He'd been shot.

He never saw his assailant. Never heard him. Only the pop from behind. An instant later came the burning heat in his back. He pitched forward at the panorama of windows he'd been facing when the attack occurred. He broke his fall by planting a palm on the wall, bracing his weight long enough to twist around and scan his office doorway.

Empty. Whoever had done this was gone.

Pain lanced through him and weakness invaded, spreading through him in widening bands. His legs gave out. He crumpled to the carpet, trying to grab onto his desk for support. His fist clutched nothing but air.

He landed on his belly, his arms doing little to cushion the fall. Automatically, he turned his head to one side to protect his face and make breathing possible. It didn't do much good. He couldn't seem to bring in enough air. And when he did—Christ, the smell of the oriental rug made his stomach lurch. Sickeningly sweet, like a suffocating air freshener. It was that cleaning stuff the maintenance staff used. One more whiff and he'd puke.

He shifted a bit, resorted to breathing entirely through his mouth. The rug was wet, he noted, and getting wetter, saturating through with something sticky. *My blood*, he thought vaguely, feeling oddly detached as the fluid continued to seep from his body.

Cobwebs of dizziness blanketed his brain. He was losing consciousness, and he knew it. But there was no way to help himself. He couldn't move. Couldn't crawl to the door. His phone . . . the cord was dangling from his desk . . . no, he couldn't reach it. He'd try to yell . . . what good would that do? It was Labor Day. No one was in except him and Dylan. And Dylan's office was at the opposite end of the building. Making a racket would be futile. All he could do was hope that Dylan hauled his butt back here before it was too late.

Footsteps sounded, slowing as they reached the office.

"Okay, Carson, I've got those files you wanted. We can go over them later. Right now, it's time we got into that personal matter I . . . *Jesus Christ!*" Dylan's words ended on a strangled shout. He flung aside his papers and was next to Carson Brooks in a flash, squatting down beside him. "Can you hear me?" he demanded, groping for a pulse.

"Yeah." Carson's voice sounded hoarse, faint. "Shot," he pronounced, licking his lips so he could speak. "But not . . . dead. Not . . . yet . . . anyway . . ."

"And you're not going to be." Dylan bolted to his feet. "Don't try to talk. I'll get an ambulance." He snatched the telephone, punching in 911. "This is Dylan Newport," he reported tersely. "I'm calling from Ruisseau Fragrance Corporation, 11 West 57th Street. A man's been shot." A pause. "No names, no press. Just send an ambulance, and fast. Yes, he's breathing. But it's labored. He's conscious, yeah, but barely. And he's lost a lot of blood. Looks like his lower back." Another pause. "Right. Fine. Just get that ambulance here *now*. Twelfth floor, back southeast corner office." He slammed down the receiver. "Lie still," he ordered Carson, squatting down again. "Don't try to move or talk. The paramedics are on their way."

“Pushy bastard . . .” Carson taunted lightly, his speech slurred. “I’m not . . . even dead . . . and you’re . . . already giving . . . orders. . . .”

Dylan said something in reply, but Carson couldn’t make out his words. He felt as if he were floating outside himself. Was this how it felt to die? If so, it wasn’t so bad. What sucked was all he was leaving undone, not to mention the big question mark in his life that would now die a mystery.

Twenty-eight years. Funny, it hadn’t mattered until recently. And ironic that when he was finally about to act, the chance to do so was being snatched away.

“Dammit, Carson, stay with me!”

He would have answered Dylan. But his mind was drifting back to another time, twenty-eight years and a lifetime ago. That pivotal twist of fate had changed everything. A seed that had grown into an empire.

A seed. What an ironic metaphor.

One sperm specimen . . . twenty grand. No risk, no strings, nothing to lose. What a deal.

Stan had been right. It *had* been a deal, one that had changed his life.

And maybe created another.

Carson, you’ve got it all. The IQ. The looks. The youth. The charm. Go for it. If she bites, you’ll make a bundle.

She had. And he had.

He’d plowed forward from that day on. Never looked back. Not till a few weeks ago. Funny, how a fiftieth birthday made a man take stock . . .

“Where’s the victim?”

Strange voices. Pounding footsteps. The Clorox smell of institutional clothes.

Paramedics.

"In here." Dylan's urgent reply as he led them in. "It's Carson Brooks."

His eyelids fluttered. Through a blurred haze, he made out two pair of uniformed legs hovering over him.

The paramedics squatted and began working on him.

"Heart rate a hundred fifty."

"Blood pressure a hundred over sixty."

"That's very low for Carson." Dylan's lawyer-voice. Hard-hitting. Authoritative. Daunting even to his most formidable opponents. "His pressure's usually somewhere around one-fifty over a hundred. He suffers from hypertension. He takes Dyaxide to control it."

"Any other preexisting medical conditions you know of?"

"No."

"Okay." Pressure on his back. His lids were lifted and pinpoint of light pierced his eyes. "Pupils dilated. Can you hear me, Mr. Brooks?"

"Y-yes."

"Good. Hang in there. We're just trying to slow down the bleeding."

"Respiration shallow. No obstructions."

"Start the oxygen. Set it at fifteen lpm. Let's get him on the backboard."

"Right." Two more paramedics had materialized in the room and were now rustling around with some equipment.

Idly, Carson noted the intricate pattern of the oriental carpet. The floral configurations had more red in them than before. And the color was spreading.

An oxygen mask was fitted over his nose and mouth, its elastic strap secured behind his head. "Breathe normally, Mr. Brooks. This will help."

It did—a little. He rasped in the oxygen. The air fresher smell grew faint.

"His pulse rate's dropping. And his heart rate's up. We've got to move him—now." Another flurry of activity, and a long board was propped against his side. "Okay, on the count of three. One, two . . . three."

He heard his own groan as they maneuvered him onto the board and secured his head and body. The sound reminded him he was still alive. He had to stay that way. He had to find out who'd shot him. He had to protect his legacy.

And he had to know if Ruisseau was his only legacy, or if he had another one out there—one that was a living, breathing human being.

Determination was suffocated by the fog enveloping his brain.

"Stay with us, Mr. Brooks." The paramedics were talking again. They'd lifted him onto a stretcher and were moving. They were racing him through the lobby toward the front door. Strange, he didn't remember the elevator ride down.

"Is he conscious?" Dylan grilled.

"In and out." The glass doors blew open. Thick summer air enveloped them. Manhattan pollution. A hint of it seeped around the oxygen mask and invaded his nostrils. There were flashing lights—police cars flanking the ambulance. One cop rushed up to the paramedics. More ran into the building.

He was transported to the ambulance. "Mount Sinai?" Dylan was asking the paramedic who'd climbed in beside him.

"Yup. We'll get over to Madison and fly straight uptown. With the siren on, we'll be there in minutes."

"I'm riding with you." Dylan was getting in even as he spoke.

"Uh, Mr. Newport . . ." The ambulance driver turned

and cleared his throat uneasily. "The police want to talk to you about—"

"Fine." Dylan cut him off at the knees. "Then they can meet us at Mount Sinai. I'm riding there with Mr. Brooks. That's not up for debate. And like I said, you're bringing in a 'John Doe.' No names, no press. Let's go."

There were no further arguments. Doors slammed. A siren screamed. The ambulance zoomed off.

"Heart rate's up to a hundred seventy. BP's down to ninety over fifty." The paramedic leaned closer. "Mr. Brooks, can you tell me how old you are?"

"To-o old. F-f-ifty."

His voice mingled with the scream of the siren. The traffic on Madison Avenue seemed to part like the waters of the Red Sea.

"Carson." Dylan's voice was low, very close to his ear.

"Still . . . alive . . ." he managed.

"I never doubted it. You're indestructible."

"Yeah . . . tell that to whoever . . . did this."

"Talking isn't what I have in mind for that bastard." A pause. "Did you see who it was?"

"Saw nothing . . . too fast . . . and from behind." Carson drew a slow, raspy breath. "Dylan . . ."

"We'll get him, Carson. Don't worry."

"Not that." A weak shake of his head. He was fading. For now or for good, he wasn't sure. But, just in case he'd be around to hear the answer, he had to try. "That situation . . . I was wrestling with . . . the confidential one . . ."

"I remember."

He swallowed, fighting the waves of darkness. "If I've got a kid . . . I want to know. Find out."

2

*Tuesday, September 6th, 9:30 A.M.
Center for Creative Thinking and Leadership
Auburn, New Hampshire*

“Good morning, everyone. Welcome to CCTL.”

Sabrina stepped into the conference room, strolling over to the head of the elegant teak table and simultaneously assessing the new management team of Office Perks, a Boston-based accessories-for-the-workplace company.

The composite of the group was pretty standard. Eight executives, five men, three women. Most in their mid-thirties, a few in the forty to forty-five range. That included Robert Stowbe, the company’s newly appointed chief executive officer, who was forty-four and at the helm following a large, heavily publicized merger. He’d handpicked his new department heads. And, as Sabrina’s research had confirmed, he’d done a pretty good job. Edward Rowen, the chief financial officer, had done a decent job of increasing profits at his previous position; Harold Case, the VP of sales, was a shrewd cookie who knew his clientele; Lauren Hollis, the VP of information technology, was a workhorse, if a bit lacking in creativity; Paul Jacobs, the VP of strategic planning, had vision and initiative; Lois Ames, the VP of marketing, was well connected and open to new ideas; Jerry Baines, the VP of research and development, had a good track record but was a bit of an autocrat when it came to running his de-

partment; and Meg Lakes, who promised to be a perky, energetic VP of human resources.

Now came the hard part. Taking a talented, aggressive bunch of people and transforming them from a collection of ambitious individuals into an integrated management team.

Making that happen was Sabrina's job.

Whether or not she was successful, only time would tell.

After spending four years as a management consultant—three in the big leagues and one right here at CCTL—Sabrina had learned that no team was standard, few transitions took place without a snag, and nothing should be taken for granted.

Still, her track record was pretty damned good. Which was why so many corporations that were either expanding or needed a jolt of adrenaline to get them back on track sought her out.

"I'm Sabrina Radcliffe," she began, intentionally staying on her feet even though everyone else was seated—a routine ploy aimed at retaining control of a meeting. "As you know, I'm the president of CCTL. I won't waste time spouting my background and credentials, since I'm sure you've done your homework and know all about my reputation, and CCTL's. So I'll just invite you to take full advantage of our facilities—for recreational and mental health, as well as for professional growth.

"Plan on being busy over the next four days. We'll be holding frequent team meetings. Workshop times are listed on the agendas you received with your registration packs. That having been said, you'll also notice we left chunks of unscheduled time. That's where your mental recharging comes in. We cover both ends of the spectrum: unwinding and pumping up. For starters, our staff

offers stress management and yoga classes. We also have a state-of-the-art health center—you'll have full use of that. And, last but not least, Lake Massabesic is right at our doorstep; it's great for sailing, canoeing, or hiking. Do whatever moves you."

Sabrina gauged the attention span of her audience. Time to talk food.

"On to meals."

Everyone sat up a little straighter. Not a surprise. Food did it every time.

"Our chefs are unbelievable," she continued. "They've been recruited from top restaurants worldwide. So don't expect to lose weight. You won't. Unless, of course, that's your goal. If you do have specific requests or dietary restrictions, be sure to let them know. They'll be happy to work with you."

Sabrina's fingers swept over her cranberry silk blazer and slacks. "Dress at team meetings is business casual. The last thing we need is constrictive ties and waistlines. I'm convinced that anything that inhibits breathing, also inhibits creativity."

A few smiles.

Time to allow for assimilation of information.

"I'll get into the specifics of our team meetings later, after you've had a chance to settle in," she concluded. "For now, let me assure you of this: My staff is exceptional. Put yourselves in our hands, give us your all, and we'll send you home ready to take on the world and win."

11:15 A.M.

Mt. Sinai Hospital

Dylan gulped down the last of his coffee, crumpled the Styrofoam cup, and tossed it in the garbage.

The past sixteen hours had been a surrealistic blur.