

**THE No. 1
BESTSELLER**

Jeffery

DEAVER



**THE
COLD
MOON**

**Lincoln Rhyme is back
and the clock is ticking . . .**

The
COLD MOON

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江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章



HODDER

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A Hodder Book

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*You can't see me, but I'm always around you.
Run as fast as you can, but you'll never escape me.
Fight me with all your strength, but you'll never defeat
me.
I kill when I wish, but can never be brought to justice.
Who am I?*

Old Man Time

I

12:02 A.M. TUESDAY

Time is dead as long as it is being clicked off
by little wheels; only when the clock stops does
time come to life.

— WILLIAM FAULKNER

Chapter ONE



'How long did it take them to die?'

The man this question was posed to didn't seem to hear it. He looked in the rearview mirror again and concentrated on his driving. The hour was just past midnight and the streets in lower Manhattan were icy. A cold front had swept the sky clear and turned an earlier snow to slick glaze on the asphalt and concrete. The two men were in the rattling Band-Aid-mobile, as Clever Vincent had dubbed the tan SUV. It was a few years old; the brakes needed servicing and the tires replacing. But taking a stolen vehicle in for work would not be a wise idea, especially since two of its recent passengers were now murder victims.

The driver – a lean man in his fifties, with trim black hair – made a careful turn down a side street and continued his journey, never speeding, making precise turns, perfectly centered in his lane. He'd drive the same whether the streets were slippery or dry, whether the vehicle had just been involved in murder or not.

Careful, meticulous.

How long did it take?

Big Vincent – Vincent with long, sausage fingers, always

damp, and a taut brown belt stretching the first hole – shivered hard. He'd been waiting on the street corner after his night shift as a word-processing temp. It was bitterly cold but Vincent didn't like the lobby of his building. The light was greenish and the walls were covered with big mirrors in which he could see his oval body from all angles. So he'd stepped into the clear, cold December air and paced and ate a candy bar. Okay, two

As Vincent was glancing up at the full moon, a shockingly white disk visible for a moment through a canyon of buildings, the Watchmaker reflected aloud, 'How long did it take them to die? Interesting.'

Vincent had known the Watchmaker – whose real name was Gerald Duncan – for only a short time but he'd learned that you asked the man questions at your own risk. Even a simple query could open the door to a monologue. Man, could he talk. And his answers were always organized, like a college professor's. Vincent knew that the silence for the last few minutes was because Duncan was considering his answer.

Vincent opened a can of Pepsi. He was cold but he needed something sweet. He chugged it and put the empty can in his pocket. He ate a packet of peanut butter crackers. Duncan looked over to make sure Vincent was wearing gloves. They always wore gloves in the Band-Aid-mobile.

Meticulous . .

'I'd say there are several answers to that,' Duncan said in his soft, detached voice. 'For instance, the first one I killed was twenty-four, so you could say it took him twenty-four years to die.'

Like, *yeah . . .* thought Clever Vincent with the sarcasm of a teenager, though he had to admit that this obvious answer hadn't occurred to him

'The other was thirty-two, I think.'

A police car drove by, the opposite way. The blood in

Vincent's temples began pounding but Duncan didn't react. The cops showed no interest in the stolen Explorer.

'Another way to answer the question,' Duncan said, 'is to consider the elapsed time from the moment I started until their hearts stopped beating. That's probably what you meant. See, people want to put time into easy-to-digest frames of reference. That's valid, as long as it's helpful. Knowing the contractions come every twenty seconds is helpful. So is knowing that the athlete ran a mile in three minutes, fifty-eight seconds, so he wins the race. Specifically how long it took them tonight to die . . . well, that isn't important, as long as it wasn't fast.' A glance at Vincent. 'I'm not being critical of your question.'

'No,' Vincent said, not caring if he was critical. Vincent Reynolds didn't have many friends and could put up with a lot from Gerald Duncan. 'I was just curious.'

'I understand. I just didn't pay any attention. But the next one, I'll time it.'

'The girl? Tomorrow?' Vincent's heart beat just a bit faster. He nodded. 'Later today, you mean.'

It was after midnight. With Gerald Duncan you had to be precise, especially when it came to time.

'Right.'

Hungry Vincent had nosed out Clever Vincent now that he was thinking of Joanne, the girl who'd die next.

Later today . . .

The killer drove in a complicated pattern back to their temporary home in the Chelsea district of Manhattan, south of Midtown, near the river. The streets were deserted; the temperature was in the teens and the wind flowed steadily through the narrow streets.

Duncan parked at a curb and shut the engine off, set the parking brake. The men stepped out. They walked for a half block through the icy wind. Duncan glanced down at his

shadow on the sidewalk, cast by the moon. 'I've thought of another answer. About how long it took them to die.'

Vincent shivered again – mostly, but not only, from the cold.

'When you look at it from their point of view,' the killer said, 'you could say that it took forever.'

Chapter TWO



What is that?

From his squeaky chair in the warm office, the big man sipped coffee and squinted through the bright morning light toward the far end of the pier. He was the morning supervisor of the tugboat repair operation, located on the Hudson River north of Greenwich Village. There was a Moran with a bum diesel due to dock in forty minutes but at the moment the pier was empty and the supervisor was enjoying the warmth of the shed, where he sat with his feet up on the desk, coffee cradled against his chest. He wiped some condensation off the window and looked again.

What is it?

A small black box sat by the edge of the pier, the side that faced Jersey. It hadn't been there when the facility had closed at six yesterday, and nobody would have docked after that. Had to come from the land side. There was a chain-link fence to prevent pedestrians and passers-by from getting into the facility, but, as the man knew from the missing tools and trash drums (go figure), if somebody wanted to break in, they would.

But why *leave* something?

He stared for a while, thinking, It's cold out, it's windy,

the coffee's just right. Then he decided, Oh, hell, better check. He pulled on his thick gray jacket, gloves and hat and, taking a last slug of coffee, stepped outside into the breathtaking air.

The supervisor made his way through the wind along the pier, his watering eyes focused on the black box.

The hell is it? The thing was rectangular, less than a foot high, and the low sunlight sharply reflected off something on the front. He squinted against the glare. The whitecapped water of the Hudson slushed against the pilings below.

Ten feet away from the box he paused, realizing what it was.

A clock. An old-fashioned one, with those funny numbers – Roman numerals – and a moon face on the front. Looked expensive. He glanced at his watch and saw the clock was working; the time was accurate. Who'd leave a nice thing like that here? Well, all right, I got myself a present.

As he stepped forward to pick it up, though, his legs went out from under him and he had a moment of pure panic thinking he'd tumble into the river. But he went straight down, landing on the patch of ice he hadn't seen, and slid no further.

Wincing in pain, gasping, he pulled himself to his feet. The man glanced down and saw that this wasn't normal ice. It was reddish brown.

'Oh, Christ,' he whispered as he stared at the large patch of blood, which had pooled near the clock and frozen slick. He leaned forward and his shock deepened when he realized how the blood had gotten there. He saw what looked like bloody fingernail marks on the wooden decking of the pier, as if someone with slashed fingers or wrists had been holding on to keep from falling into the churning waters of the river.

He crept to the edge and looked down. No one was floating in the choppy water. He wasn't surprised; if what he imagined was true, the frozen blood meant the poor bastard had

been here a while ago and, if he hadn't been saved, his body'd be halfway to Liberty Island by now.

Fumbling for his cell phone, he backed away and pulled his glove off with his teeth. A final glance at the clock, then he hurried back to the shed, calling the police with a stubby, quaking finger.

Before and After.

The city was different now, after that morning in September, after the explosions, the huge tails of smoke, the buildings that disappeared.

You couldn't deny it. You could talk about the resilience, the mettle, the get-back-to-work attitude of New Yorkers, and that was true. But people still paused when planes made that final approach to LaGuardia and seemed a bit lower than normal. You crossed the street, wide, around an abandoned shopping bag. You weren't surprised to see soldiers or police dressed in dark uniforms carrying black, military-style machine guns.

The Thanksgiving Day parade had come and gone without incident and now Christmas was in full swing, crowds everywhere. But floating atop the festivities, like a reflection in a department store's holiday window, was the persistent image of the towers that no longer were, the people no longer with us. And, of course, the big question: What would happen next?

Lincoln Rhyme had his own Before and After and he understood this concept very well. There was a time he could walk and function and then came the time when he could not. One moment he was as healthy as everyone else, searching a crime scene, and a minute later a beam had snapped his neck and left him a C-4 quadriplegic, almost completely paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Before and After . . .

There are moments that change you forever.

And yet, Lincoln Rhyme believed, if you make too grave an icon of them, then the events become more potent. And the bad guys win.

Now, early on a cold Tuesday morning, these were Rhyme's thoughts as he listened to a National Public Radio announcer, in her unshakable FM voice, report about a parade planned for the day after tomorrow, followed by some ceremonies and meetings of government officials, all of which logically should have been held in the nation's capital. But the up-with-New-York attitude had prevailed and spectators, as well as protesters, would be present in force and clogging the streets, making the life of security-sensitive police around Wall Street far more difficult. As with politics, so with sports: Play-offs that should occur in New Jersey were now scheduled for Madison Square Garden – as a display, for some reason, of patriotism. Rhyme wondered cynically if next year's Boston Marathon would be held in New York City.

Before and After . . .

Rhyme had come to believe that he himself really wasn't much different in the After. His physical condition, his skyline, you could say, had changed. But he was essentially the same person as in the Before: a cop and a scientist who was impatient, temperamental (okay, sometimes obnoxious), relentless and intolerant of incompetence and laziness. He didn't play the gimp card, didn't whine, didn't make an issue of his condition (though good luck to any building owners who didn't meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for door width and ramps when he was at a crime scene in their buildings).

As he listened to the report now, the fact that certain people in the city seemed to be giving in to self-pity irritated him. 'I'm going to write a letter,' he announced to Thom.

The slim young aide, in dark slacks, white shirt and thick sweater (Rhyme's Central Park West town house suffered from a bad heating system and ancient insulation), glanced up from

where he was overdecorating for Christmas. Rhyme enjoyed the irony of his placing a miniature evergreen tree on a table below which a present, though an unwrapped one, already waited: a box of adult disposable diapers.

'Letter?'

He explained his theory that it was more patriotic to go about business as usual. 'I'm going to give 'em hell. The *Times*, I think.'

'Why don't you?' asked the aide, whose profession was known as 'care-giver' (though Thom said that, being in the employ of Lincoln Rhyme, his job description was really 'saint').

'I'm going to,' Rhyme said adamantly.

'Good for you . . . though, one thing?'

Rhyme lifted an eyebrow. The criminalist could – and did – get great expression out of his extant body parts: shoulders, face and head.

'Most of the people who *say* they're going to write a letter don't. People who *do* write letters just go ahead and write them. They don't announce it. Ever notice that?'

'Thank you for the brilliant insight into psychology, Thom. You know that nothing's going to stop me now.'

'Good,' repeated the aide.

Using the touchpad controller, the criminalist drove his red Storm Arrow wheelchair closer to one of the half dozen large, flat-screen monitors in the room.

'Command,' he said into the voice-recognition system, via a microphone attached to the chair. 'Word processor.'

WordPerfect dutifully opened on the screen.

'Command, type. "Dear sirs." Command, colon. Command, paragraph. Command, type, "It has come to my attention—"

The doorbell rang and Thom went to see who the visitor was.

Rhyme closed his eyes and was composing his rant to the world when a voice intruded. 'Hey, Linc. Merry Christmas.'

'Uhm, ditto,' Rhyme grumbled to paunchy, disheveled Lon Sellitto, walking through the doorway. The big detective had to maneuver carefully; the room had been a quaint parlor in the Victorian era but now was chockablock with forensic science gear: optical microscopes, an electron microscope, a gas chromatograph, laboratory beakers and racks, pipettes, petri dishes, centrifuges, chemicals, books and magazines, computers – and thick wires, which ran everywhere. (When Rhyme began doing forensic consulting out of his town house, the power-hungry equipment frequently would blow circuit breakers. The juice running into the place probably equaled the combined usage by everyone else on the block.)

'Command, volume, level three.' The environmental control unit obediently turned down NPR.

'Not in the spirit of the season, are we?' the detective asked.

Rhyme didn't answer. He looked back at the monitor.

'Hey, Jackson.' Sellitto bent down and petted a small, long-haired dog curled up in an NYPD evidence box. He was temporarily living here, his former owner, Thom's elderly aunt, had passed away recently in Westport, Connecticut, after a long illness. Among the young man's inheritances was Jackson, a Havanaes. The breed, related to the bichon frise, originated in Cuba. Jackson was staying here until Thom could find a good home for him.

'We got a bad one, Linc,' Sellitto said, standing up. He started to take off his overcoat but changed his mind. 'Jesus, it's cold. Is this a record?'

'Don't know. Don't spend much time on the Weather Channel.' He thought of a good opening paragraph of his letter to the editor.

'Bad,' Sellitto repeated.

Rhyme glanced at Sellitto with a cocked eyebrow.

'Two homicides, same M.O. More or less.'

'Lots of "bad ones" out there, Lon. Why're these any badder?'

As often happened in the tedious days between cases Rhyme was in a bad mood; of all the perps he'd come across, the worst was boredom.

But Sellitto had worked with Rhyme for years and was immune to the criminalist's attitudes. 'Got a call from the Big Building. Brass want you and Amelia on this one. They said they're insisting.'

'Oh, insisting?'

'I promised I wouldn't tell you they said that. You don't like to be insisted.'

'Can we get to the "bad" part, Lon? Or is that too much to ask?'

'Where's Amelia?'

'Westchester, on a case. Should be back soon.'

The detective held up a wait-a-minute finger as his cell phone rang. He had a conversation, nodding and jotting notes. He disconnected and glanced at Rhyme. 'Okay, here we have it. Sometime last night our perp, he grabs—'

'He?' Rhyme asked pointedly.

'Okay. We don't know the gender for sure.'

'Sex.'

'What?'

Rhyme said, 'Gender's a linguistic concept. It refers to designating words male or female in certain languages. Sex is a biological concept differentiating male and female organisms.'

'Thanks for the grammar lesson,' the detective muttered. 'Maybe it'll help if I'm ever on *Jeopardy*! Anyway, he grabs some poor schmuck and takes 'em to that boat repair pier on the Hudson. We're not exactly sure how he does it, but he forces the guy, or woman, to hang on over the river and then cuts their wrists. The vic holds on for a while, looks like – long enough to lose a shitload of blood – but then just lets go.'

'Body?'

'Not yet. Coast Guard and ESU're searching.'