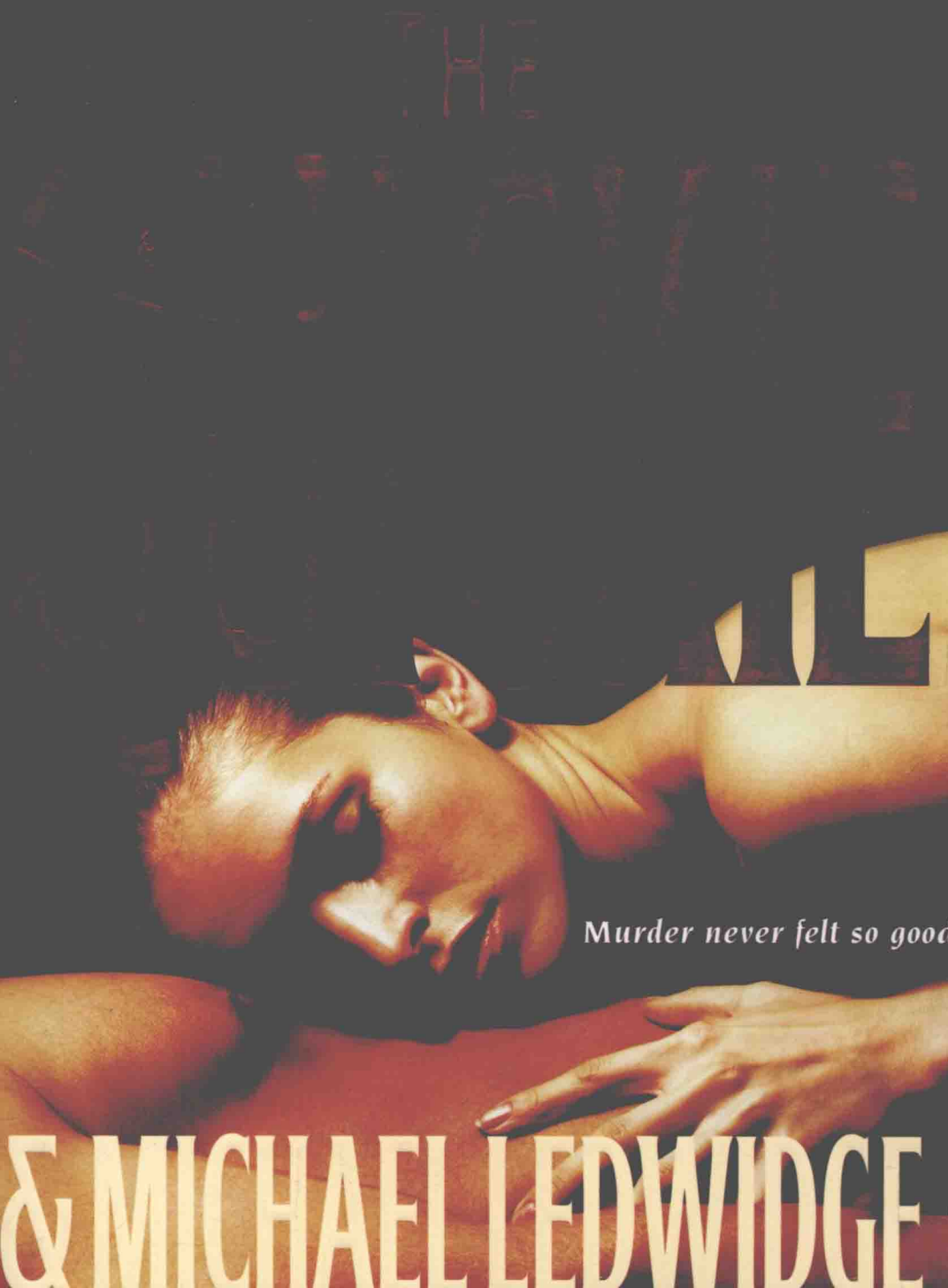


# JAMES PATTERSON



THE

GIRL ON THE TRAIN

*Murder never felt so good*

# & MICHAEL LEDWIDGE

# The Quickie

A NOVEL BY

James Patterson

AND

Michael Ledwidge



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK BOSTON LONDON

Copyright © 2007 by James Patterson

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Little, Brown and Company  
Hachette Book Group USA  
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10169  
Visit our Web site at [www.HachetteBookGroupUSA.com](http://www.HachetteBookGroupUSA.com)

First Edition: July 2007

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Patterson, James.

The quickie : a novel / by James Patterson and Michael Ledwidge. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-316-11736-4

1. Policewomen — New York (State) — New York — Fiction.
2. Adultery — Fiction. 3. Murder — Investigation — New York (State) — New York — Fiction. 4. New York (N.Y.) — Fiction.
- I. Ledwidge, Michael. II. Title.

PS3566.A822Q53 2007

813'.54 — dc22

2006039732

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

RRD-C

Printed in the United States of America

*To John and Joan Downey—Thanks for everything.*

## About the Authors

---

**JAMES PATTERSON** is one of the best-known and best-selling writers of all time. He is the author of the two top-selling new detective series of the past decade: the Alex Cross novels, including *Cross*, *Mary, Mary*, *London Bridges*, *Kiss the Girls*, and *Along Came a Spider*; and the Women's Murder Club series, including *1st to Die*, *2nd Chance*, *3rd Degree*, *4th of July*, *The 5th Horseman*, and *The 6th Target*. He has written many other #1 bestsellers, including *Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas*, *Lifeguard*, *Honeymoon*, *Beach Road*, and *Judge & Jury*. He lives in Florida.

**MICHAEL LEDWIDGE** is the author of *The Narrowback*, *Bad Connection*, and *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*.

## Prologue

NOBODY REALLY LIKES  
SURPRISES



# One

I KNEW THIS WAS a really terrific idea, if I didn't say so myself, surprising Paul for lunch at his office down on Pearl Street.

I'd made a special trip into Manhattan and had put on my favorite "little black dress." I looked moderately ravishing. Nothing that would be out of place at the Mark Joseph Steakhouse, and one of Paul's favorite outfits, too, the one he usually chose if I asked him, "What should I wear to this thing, Paul?"

Anyway, I was excited, and I'd already spoken to his assistant, Jean, to make sure that he was there—though I hadn't alerted her about the surprise. Jean was Paul's assistant after all, not mine.

And then, there was Paul.

As I rounded the corner in my Mini Cooper, I saw



him leaving his office building, walking with a twenty-something blonde woman.

Paul was leaning in very close to her, chatting, laughing in a way that instantly made me feel very ill.

She was one of those bright, shiny beauties you're more likely to see in Chicago or Iowa City. Tall, hair like platinum silk. Cream-colored skin that looked just about perfect from this distance. Not a wrinkle or blemish.

She wasn't completely perfect, though. She tripped a Manolo on a street plate as she and Paul were getting into a taxi, and as I watched Paul gallantly catch hold of the pink cashmere on her anorexic elbow, I felt like someone had hammered a cold chisel right into the center of my chest.

I followed them. Well, I guess *followed* is too polite. I stalked them.

All the way up to Midtown, I stayed on that taxi's bumper like we were connected by a tow hook. When the cab suddenly pulled up in front of the entrance to the St. Regis Hotel, on East 55th Street, and Paul and the woman stepped out smiling, I felt an impulse rush from the lizard part of my brain to my right foot, which was hovering over the accelerator. Then Paul took her arm. A picture of both of them sandwiched between the storied hotel's front steps and the hood of my baby-blue Mini flashed through my mind.

Then it was gone, and so were they, and I was left sitting there crying to the sound of the honking taxis lined up behind me.

## Two

---

THAT NIGHT, instead of shooting Paul as he came through the front door, I allowed him one chance. I even waited until we were eating dinner to talk about what he'd been up to at lunchtime at the St. Regis Hotel in Midtown.

Maybe there was some logical explanation. I couldn't imagine what it would be, but in the words of a bumper sticker I once saw, *Miracles Happen, Too*.

"So, Paul," I said as casually as the liquid nitrogen pumping through my veins allowed me. "What did you do for lunch today?"

That got his attention. Even though I had my head down as I nearly sawed through the plate under my food, I felt his head bob up, his eyes lift, as he looked at me.

Then, after an extended guilty pause, he looked back down at his plate.

“Had a sandwich at my desk,” he mumbled. “The usual. You know me, Lauren.”

*Paul lied — right to my face.*

My dropped knife banged off my plate like a gong. The darkest paranoid possibilities flooded through me. Crazy stuff that wasn't really like me.

Maybe his job wasn't even real, I thought. Maybe he'd had letterhead made up, and from day one he'd been betraying me when he went downtown every day. How well did I really know his co-workers? Maybe they were actors hired to show up whenever I was planning to come by.

“Why do you ask?” Paul finally said, ever so casually. That hurt. Almost as much as seeing him with the stunning blonde in Manhattan.

*Almost.*

I don't know how I managed to smile at him, with the cat-five hurricane roaring through me, but somehow I managed to pull the tight muscles of my cheeks upward.

“Just making conversation,” I said. “Just talking to my husband over dinner.”

Part One

---

THE QUICKIE



# Chapter 1

---

THERE WAS HEAVY TRAFFIC on the Major Deegan south and more on the approach to the Triborough that night, that crazy, crazy night.

I couldn't decide which was making my eye twitch more as we crawled across the span—the horns from the cars logjammed in both directions around us, or the ones honking from our driver's Spanish music station.

I was heading to Virginia for a job-sponsored seminar.

Paul was going to apply some face time to one of his firm's biggest clients in Boston.

The only trip we modern, professional, go-getting Stillwells were going to share this week was the ride to LaGuardia Airport.

At least I had one of the great views of Manhattan outside my window. The Big Apple seemed even more majestic than

usual with its glass-and-steel towers glowing against the approaching black thunderheads of a storm.

Gazing out, I remembered the cute apartment Paul and I once had on the Upper West Side. Saturdays at the Guggenheim or MOMA; the cheap hole-in-the-wall French bistro in NoHo; cold chardonnay in the “backyard,” our fourth-floor studio’s fire escape. All the romantic things we did before we got married, when our lives had been unpredictable and fun.

“Paul,” I said urgently, almost mournfully. “*Paul?*”

If Paul had been a “guy guy,” I might have been tempted to chalk up what was happening between us to the inevitable. You grow a little bit older, maybe more cynical, and the honeymoon finally ends. But Paul and me? We’d been different.

We’d been one of those sickening, best-friend married couples. The let’s-die-at-the-exact-same-moment Romeo-and-Juliet soul mates. Paul and I had been so much in love—and that’s not just selective memory talking. That was us.

We’d met in freshman year at Fordham Law. We were in the same study and social group but hadn’t really talked. I’d noticed Paul because he was very handsome. He was a few years older than most of us, a little more studious, more serious. I actually couldn’t believe it when he agreed to head down to Cancún for spring break with the gang.

On the night before our flight home, I got into a fight with my boyfriend at the time and accidentally fell through one of the hotel’s glass doors, cutting my arm. While my

## The Quickie

supposed boyfriend announced he “just couldn’t deal with it,” Paul arrived out of nowhere and took over.

He took me to the hospital and stayed at my bedside. This, while everyone else promptly hopped on the flight home to avoid missing any classes.

As Paul walked through the doorway of my Mexican hospital room with our breakfast of milkshakes and magazines, I was reminded of how cute he was, how deep blue his eyes were, and that he had fantastic dimples and a killer smile.

Dimples and milkshakes, and my heart.

What had happened since then? I wasn’t entirely sure. I guess we’d fallen into the rut of a lot of modern marriages. Neck-deep into our two demanding, separate careers, we’d become so adept at meeting our individual needs and wants that we’d forgotten the point: that we were supposed to be putting each other first.

I still hadn’t confronted Paul about the blonde woman I’d seen him with in Manhattan. Maybe that was because I wasn’t ready to have it out with Paul once and for all. And, of course, I didn’t know for sure if he was having an affair. Maybe I was afraid about the end of us. Paul had loved me; I know he had. And I had loved Paul with everything I had in me.

Maybe I still did. *Maybe.*

“Paul,” I called again.

Across the seat of the taxi, he turned at the sound of my voice. I felt like he was noticing me for the first time in



weeks. An apologetic, almost sad expression formed on his face. His mouth started to open.

Then his blasted cell phone trilled. I remembered setting his ring tone to “Tainted Love” as a prank. Ironically, a silly song we’d once danced to drunk and happy had turned out to aptly describe our marriage.

Glaring at the phone, I seriously considered snatching it from his hand and flinging it out the window through the bridge cables into the East River.

A familiar glaze came across Paul’s eyes after he glanced down at the number.

“I have to take this,” he said, thumbing open the phone.

I don’t, Paul, I thought as Manhattan slid away from us through the coiled steel.

This was it, I thought. The final straw. He’d wrecked everything between us, hadn’t he?

And sitting there in that cab, I figured out the exact point when you call it quits.

*When you can’t even share a sunset together.*