



GEOFF
LOFTUS

**FRACTURE OF THE
SOUL**

A JACK TYRRELL NOVEL

Fracture of the Soul

By

Geoff Loftus



Books by Geoff Loftus

Double Blind (2012)

Engaged to Kill (2012)

The Dark Saint (2013)

and the Jack Tyrrell novels:

Murderous Spirit (2016)

Dark Mirage (2016)

The Last Thing (2017)

Dangerous Purpose (2018)

No Traveler Returns (2020)

Fracture of the Soul (2020)

Published by Saugatuck Books

Fracture of the Soul

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ISBN:

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Fracture of the Soul is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to actual people is unintentional and coincidental. A serious attempt has been made to portray the details and geography of the New York metropolitan area accurately, but the needs of the story may have driven me to exercise poetic license, even with some actual places, buildings and even organizations. I want to emphasize this with regard to the NYPD's 24th Precinct. I hope the reader will excuse this.

Cover design by Tom Galligan, Green Thumb Graphics.

Published by Saugatuck Books.

Mary Debenham: To a man with a hammer, every problem is a nail. You live crime. You see evil every day.

Hercule Poirot: Not so. I see enough crime to know that the criminal act is the anomaly. I believe it takes a fracture of the soul to murder another human being.

Murder on the Orient Express (2017)

Screenplay by Michael Green

Based on the novel by Agatha Christie

You can be excused for wondering just how I ended up standing in the rain on a mid-November evening in New York City, preparing to charge into an Upper West Side townhouse. My mission: To beat the hell out of a gang of neo-Nazis and rescue a number of young, Jewish women who were being held against their wills and abused as sex slaves.

So . . . how did I end up standing in the rain about to launch an attack on some very unsavory types? What's my story?

Once upon a time, I came home from serving my country in Afghanistan as a member of the U.S. Army's Special Forces, popularly known as the Green Berets. Like many combat veterans, I suffered from PTSD but managed to hold it together enough to become a deputy in the U.S. Marshals Service. I was lucky enough to meet and marry a wonderful woman named Maggie. All was well. Except . . .

I was still struggling with PTSD and self-medicating with alcohol. I got angrier and angrier with almost everything. I loved my Maggie, but instead of trusting her with my feelings, I suppressed the ever-loving hell out of them.

Much as I'd like to tell you that I emerged from this dark night of the soul with my spirit and dignity intact, I can't. The anger and depression raged inside me, and

eventually, I convinced myself that it was all right if I took a bribe from some members of the Mafia who wanted information on some mope in witness protection. It was a terrible idea, but one of the many reasons I was able to convince myself that it was okay was that there was no way I could actually deliver the information the Mafia was asking for. I didn't work in the Marshals Service Witness Security Program, and there was no way for me to get the info I had been bribed to get.

You might not be aware of this, but it was a very bad idea to take a bribe from the Mafia and not deliver. Really bad. Horribly bad.

My mob acquaintances shot me. They also shot Maggie. I survived. Maggie didn't. My wife, my love, was dead. And it was my fault.

Did the shock of these events and my culpability snap me out of my alcohol-fueled PTSD funk? Of course not. I dove deeper into depression and booze. I resigned from the Marshals Service and became a low-level “enforcer” for some very ugly people. Mostly I drank.

And then . . .

On the fifth anniversary of her death, Maggie appeared to me. Yes, Maggie. My late wife. Now a ghost. Exactly the way Marley's spirit appeared to Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.

She visited me in our old apartment. She told me she still loved me and wanted me to become the man she had married. And she had interceded with the Highest

Authority to get me a second chance.

That chance would come to me in the form of a guy named Harry.

As you might imagine, I thought I was going crazy. Suffering from alcoholic hallucinations. Overwhelmed by PTSD, depression and paranoia. Absolutely and completely out of my mind.

There was no possible way that my dead wife had come to me and told me I was going to get a second chance and that a guy named Harry was going to guide me.

But Harry appeared to me and explained that Maggie had interceded with the Chairman, who was granting me a second chance to live a better life.

“The Chairman?” I asked. I was informed that the Chairman was exactly who I thought He was. The Higher Power. God. The Big Guy in the Sky.

What was I going to have to do to live a better life? Harry was going to help me right wrongs for people. *Other* people. I couldn't work to benefit myself. In other words, I had to be selfless. The Chairman wouldn't guarantee that I would survive my attempts to right wrongs, however, the Chairman did guarantee that He would give me whatever I *needed* for my missions. Harry and I had many conversations on the subject of *need* but had never found a precise definition of it.

Helping others was how I came to be outside a neo-Nazi house of prostitution on a rainy Wednesday night at the corner of Riverside Drive and West 91st Street in Manhattan, just eight days before Thanksgiving,

Okay, Tyrrell, time to ride to the rescue. Or to be more precise, time to bust up the neo-Nazis goons who ran the place and rescue the Jewish women who were being raped and abused.

I cannot tell you how much I hate neo-Nazis. And men who victimize women. There just aren't enough words to cover my loathing for these animals who think they are the Übermenschen. Please excuse me, I shouldn't have said "animals." That was an insult to animals everywhere.

Harry and I were standing with our backs to Riverside Park, scouting out the front of 341 West 91st Street, a four-story building about a hundred feet east of Riverside on the uptown side of the block.

Its facade had none of the brownstone charm that its immediate neighbors did. It was a simple, weathered red brick structure, built much later than the other buildings on the street. But given its location, whatever it lacked in elegance was made up for in purchase price.

"How the hell does a neo-Nazi thug have the scratch to own that building?" I asked.

"His family's real-estate business has owned it for decades," Harry replied.

"Oh, I see, he got it the old-fashioned way. He inherited it. Just like the new President-elect."

"Exactly."

"I'm guessing Adolf's family is loaded."

"Yes, they are. And you know that his name is not Adolf."

“Franz? Fritz? Heinrich?”

Harry gave me his icy, “you are not amusing” look.

“Sorry. But if I don't amuse myself somehow, I'm going to puke in disgust.”

“Don't you think you should pay attention to the job at hand?”

“I guess so.” I yanked the hood of my navy-blue rain jacket farther forward, trying to keep the water off my face. It was an improvement, but not much. Now only my chin was getting wet. Underneath the rain jacket I was wearing a gray, long-sleeved T-shirt, a charcoal-gray wool sweater, and black cargo pants. I was damp, but I was ready for special ops. “How much security?”

“Cameras over the front and back entrances. Cameras inside in the first floor living room and the upstairs hallways. The back yard is surrounded by a high metal fence that I would recommend you not attempt to climb in these wet conditions. That's assuming you could get to the fence from one of the next-door buildings.”

“Okay, I get it. A frontal assault. Once I'm through the front door, then what?”

“The door opens onto a hallway. The foot of the stairway is about 10 feet straight ahead. To your left is a large living room, opening off the hallway. The hall runs to a small bedroom, a bathroom, and the kitchen.”

“The johns wait their turns in the living room?”

“Yes.”

“How many neo-Nazi goons are guarding the front door?”

“One at a small desk that sits in the living room arch, facing the front door. Another in the living room.”

“Out of sight when someone, like me, enters?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm. They're not complete idiots. Too bad. Are they armed?”

“Both carry 9mm pistols.”

“What's the layout upstairs?”

“All the apartments on the top three floors were gutted and converted into small bedrooms. Fifteen young women in all. None of them is eighteen-years old. The women live in a barracks-style set-up in the basement. The basement is accessed by a door under the stairs in the front hall. The young women eat all their meals in the kitchen.”

“They're really just girls. Are there more of them than bedrooms?”

“Not at the moment.”

“All Jewish? All kidnapped by the neo-Nazis?”

“Yes.”

“All shot full of drugs so they can't resist?”

“Yes.”

“How old are they?”

“Seventeen or younger.”

I felt a hot coil of anger in my gut. Stay focused on the job, Tyrrell, or you won't be able to help these girls who so desperately need help. “Aren't there missing persons reports out on all these girls?”

“You probably have a better idea than I do of how

many young women go missing in the New York metro area each year.”

“The metro area?”

“Yes, they were kidnapped from different parts of New York City, Westchester, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Even from Massachusetts and the Philadelphia area. Different law-enforcement jurisdictions.”

“Which means that no one has noticed a pattern.”

“No.”

“How did these Nazi jerks find all these girls? It’s not like Jewish teenagers wander the streets with religious labels on their clothing.”

Harry said nothing, waiting for what I had said to sink in. “Religious labels . . .” I muttered. “These bastards staked out synagogues, yeshivas, and Jewish community centers to find their prey.”

“Yes.”

Calm down, Tyrrell. You’re about to wreak havoc on Nazi scum. But first, focus on the task at hand. “What about other security? More guards all with guns?”

Harry glanced skyward, as he often did, then back at me. “Yes. There are two relaxing in the first-floor bedroom. Another one on each on the three floors above to make sure there's no trouble.”

“A total of seven guys. And one of them is Mrs. Schörner's nephew, little Willi Axmann.”

“Not so little.”

“I remember the description: 6 feet, light brown

hair, hazel eyes, slender. As long as he's not big and tough, I don't care."

"Do you mean as big and tough as you are?"

"Well, now that you mention it . . ."

"Remember, Mrs. Schörner is our client. You agreed to help her nephew."

"I agreed to do what I *could* for him. That may or may not include help."

"Mrs. Schörner is of the belief that you will help her nephew," Harry pointed out.

"Yeah, well, since he's a part of this neo-Nazi gang, he's involved with kidnapping, illegal drugs, and prostitution—not to mention what probably constitutes a hate crime—the only thing I can do for little Willi is turn him over to the law."

"If that is the result, I don't think Mrs. Schörner will feel that you helped him."

"He'll be alive. Best I can do."

I watched a man carrying an umbrella walk down the 91st Street block in our direction. He stopped in front of No. 341, pressed a buzzer, leaned over, and spoke into an intercom. I asked Harry, "Is this place by appointment only?"

"Yes."

"And the house has a policy that all of its customers have to walk so there's no procession of taxis to the front of this building?"

"Exactly."

“I’m guessing that just to be ultra-secure, our ugly little pimps probably have arranged protection at the local precinct. Right?”

“Yes.”

“They don’t miss a trick. No pun intended.”

“No, they don’t.”

I pulled off my backpack, selected a pair of smoke grenades from inside, tucked them into the jacket’s pockets, and smiled at Harry. “I’m going to come down on these animals like something biblical. Pillar of fire. Plagues. Wrath of God.”

“The term ‘wrath of God’ strongly suggests that acting that way does not fall to you but to the Chairman.”

“Okay, I’ll be His avenging angel.”

“As you may recall,” Harry said, “I *am* the angel in this scenario.”

I took a very deep breath. “Fine. Nothing biblical. No avenging. But I’m going to enjoy every moment of mayhem.”

“Stay focused on the mission.”

“I will. Someone’s gotta rescue those women.” I pulled a dozen plasticuffs out of the backpack, tucked them into a pants pocket, and handed the pack to Harry.

As I stepped off the curb into Riverside Drive, I asked, “Care to join me? *You* could be the avenging angel.”

He shook his head with a tiny, Mona Lisa smile that came and went faster than a thought through Einstein’s brain.

When I reached the opposite sidewalk, I unzipped

my jacket so I had easy access to a pair of shoulder-holstered 9mm Ruger SR9 pistols with 17-shot magazines. I strolled to the door of No. 341 and pushed the buzzer.

“Hello. Who is it?” the man's voice sounded fuzzy, thanks to the intercom system.

“Jones,” I mumbled into the speaker plate.

“What?”

“Jones,” I mumbled again. Maybe I should have said “Adolf.”

With exaggerated slowness, the man said, “What—is—your—name?”

“Jones.” A slightly less garbled mumble on my part.

There was a pause of a few seconds. I dug my right hand into my rain jacket pocket, grasped the smoke grenade, and prayed that the guard inside would open the door.

The door buzzed, and I pushed through with my shoulder. I had the grenade out of the pocket and stepped inside.

A short, stocky guy with a dark crew cut, bright blue eyes, and a bristly dark mustache was coming toward me as I entered. “Who are you?” he asked. “What's your name?”

“Jones,” I replied, yanking the pin and tossing the smoke-hissing grenade at him.

He dodged to the side into the hall. The grenade sailed past him and hit the living room floor as smoke

continued to billow. His head jerked around to look at it, then twisted back to me just in time to catch my foot in his chest. He slammed back into the little desk at the archway and toppled straight over it.

Another man, aiming a pistol at me, rushed through the smoke-filled room and hallway toward me. He was 6-foot tall, light brown hair, slender. Willi the nephew.

I stepped toward him, blocking his gun hand outward with my left hand while smashing my open right hand into his Adam's apple. He gasped in pain and staggered backward, his gun was idly waving at the end of his arm. Clearly, he was hurting too badly to even aim. I hammered him with a right cross to the jaw, and he hit the floor like an anvil dropping on a cartoon character.

His gun bounced across the floor of the living room. I stepped over the gasping Willi and spotted the gun at the feet of a man sitting on a couch. Given the guy's startled, wide eyes and gaping mouth, I assumed he was a paying customer and not a threat to me. I leaned over Willi, gave him a love tap on his forehead with the butt of my Ruger—just wanted to make sure he slept tight. I grabbed Willi's pistol, a Glock, and slid it into the jacket pocket I had yanked the grenade from.

The room was full of smoke. But I could see that there was a total of three men sitting on some well-worn, upholstered furniture, coughing and rubbing their eyes.

“You,” I growled, pointing at one of the men, who looked like Benjamin Franklin, “come here!” He got up and took two steps over to me, closer but not too close. He

probably thought I was going to smack him around, and I have to admit it was a tempting idea. Instead, I handed him two pairs of plasticuffs and told him to cuff the other men.

“But—” one of them started to protest.

“—What? You already paid?” I interrupted him. “You let this guy cuff you or I'll beat you senseless and leave you for the police. Your choice.”

Mr. Protest looked at the other two men, who were shrinking from me in fear.

“Cuff 'em,” I growled.

Ben Franklin did as he was told, securing the other two, then meekly submitting to being cuffed. They stood nervously in a row, like schoolboys waiting to be dressed down by the principal.

“I'm sorry about what comes next,” I said but wondered whether I was really and truly sorry. “Actually, let me correct myself. You deserve this.” I hit the foreheads of the two guys nearest me with the butt of my Ruger, smashing each to the floor. Ben Franklin was the last. He jumped away, but I have long arms. I grabbed him, spun him around, applied the butt of my Ruger to his forehead, and dropped him unconscious next to his fellow johns. I turned and headed for the stairs.

“Hold it,” a very tall, string bean of a man grunted from midway up the stairs. There was a pistol in his hand, aimed in my direction. “Show me your hands.”

I raised my right hand with the Ruger, hoping his eyes would lock on my gun. Like a magician working a

magic trick, my left went into the jacket pocket for the second smoke grenade. "Both hands up!" he said angrily, his attention focused on my pistol.

I pulled the pin on the grenade and flung it at him. He started to back up the stairs, then stopped, and began firing. As soon as I released the grenade, I dropped to the floor, rolling over and over into the living room, stopping once I was out of his line of sight behind the arch. I came out of the roll onto my feet, my Ruger still in hand. I reached around the arch, aimed in String Bean's vicinity, and fired four times. Then I crouched low, poked my head around, and fired twice more, catching him in the chest with both shots.

He crumpled downward, toppling face first on the stairs, bumping all the way to the first floor, and stopping in a lump at the bottom of the stairway. Three guards down, four to go: two in the back bedroom on the first floor; two somewhere upstairs. What with all the commotion and shooting, I was expecting they would arrive with pistols ablaze.

There was a barrage of gunfire from down the hall from the rear of the building. Bullets chewed up the walls, the stairway railing, and the molding that framed the living room arch. This was no time to be fastidious about personal hygiene: I hit the floor next to the body of the stocky guard, pulled out my second Ruger, and put both guns on the floor. Then I tugged his unconscious bulk on top of me and grasped both pistols, holding them close to my thighs.

The gunfire stopped. Through screams and shouts

from upstairs, I heard footsteps approaching fast. I peered past Stocky Guard's right ear. Two men in black T-shirts and swastika tattoos on their forearms stood back to back in the foyer, scanning their surroundings for me. There was still enough smoke left from the grenades that it was hard for them to spot me immediately.

Then one of them glanced directly at Stocky Guard on top of me, did a double take, and grunted at his partner as he brought his gun to bear on me. The second man had just begun to twist around when I fired the Rugers, shooting both of the men. They were flung backward, landing in a heap on top of String Bean at the bottom of the stairs.

I shoved Stocky Guard's body off of me—geez, the guy needed a better deodorant—and stood up. I put a fresh magazine in one Ruger and holstered it. I moved quietly to the men in a heap at the bottom the stairs and checked their pulses. All were alive. Great! I thought. You are all winners of a set of free plasticuffs. I walked over to Crew Cut and Willi the Nephew, checked them and also awarded them free plasticuffs. Due to all the bullets flying around, I thought I should check the three johns on the living room floor. Turned out they were all breathing. None had been shot. The astounding amount of violence I encountered on my missions from the Chairman always made me grateful when people survived.

I stepped to the living room arch and listened. I heard deep, muffled voices, maybe the johns, maybe the

remaining guards. I also recognized the soft sound of female whimpering. It sounded like more than one woman, but I couldn't be sure.

Well, what now, Tyrrell? If you go up the stairs, you'll be an easy target. If the remaining guards were to come down the stairs, then *they* would be the targets. So, it was unlikely anyone was going to be eager to use the stairs. How the hell are you going to save these women now?

Almost on cue, the remaining upstairs guards appeared, moving very slowly down the stairs from the second floor and crouching behind two women in the scantiest of lingerie. Both women's hair fell past their shoulders, providing more cover for their cowardly, neo-Nazi captors. The only thing I saw of the two men was their swastika-tattooed forearms, which were wrapped around each woman's neck. They held guns to each woman's waist with their free hands.

“Put your gun down,” one of the guards said.

“Or else?” I asked.

“Or else what?”

“You're supposed to say, 'or else,' and then threaten the woman.” I was stalling. Two men moving slowly, hiding behind innocent women, and aiming guns at those women, presented minuscule targets. The first hostage-and-guard pair was about halfway down the stairs, the second pair was a few feet behind. And did I mention they were moving? If I shot and missed, the odds were very good that I would blow one or both of the women away. But if I didn't shoot, one of the two guards would shoot me, leaving

nobody to save the kidnapped women. This seemed an impossible situation.

“Put your gun down, asshole,” one of the guards shouted.

I whispered, “Please, God, help me with this.”

Without the tiniest hesitation, I swung my arm up and fired once at the guard closest to me. A micro-second later, I swung my arm over and shot the second man a micro-second later. I held my shooter's stance, gun at the ready, as the two guards went limp, releasing the women, and collapsed straight down onto the stairs.

The women were horrified, gasping for breath, looking down at the bodies, then at me, then back down at the bodies. Their fear kept them frozen in place on the stairs.

“Come down,” I said, firmly but gently.

They stepped over the bodies on the stairs and made their way down to the living room arch where I was. They glanced this way and that, trying to absorb the carnage.

“Are there any more guards in the house?” I asked.

One of the women, a sandy blonde with large blue eyes, was too stunned to answer. The other, a brunette with dark brown eyes, shook her head.

“Are there still john—” I stumbled over the word; it seemed inappropriate with these two young women. “Are there any more men upstairs?”

“Yes,” the one who had shaken her head replied.

“Do you know how many?”

She shook her head.

“Is it a full house?”

“No, not tonight.”

“You sleep downstairs, don't you? Do you have clothes there?”

“Yes.”

“Why don't you go down there, get dressed, and wait for me? Okay?”

They both hesitated.

“You're all right now. Really. It's safe now. Go get dressed and wait for me. I'll come get you.”

They lingered, still unsure what to do.

“Please, I'm going to be sending the other women down—I need you to help them.”

The brunette nodded, grabbed the blonde by the hand, and gently pulled her toward the basement door.

I slapped fresh magazines into both Rugers and slid them into their holsters, hoping I wouldn't need to use them anymore. I ran up the stairs quietly, landing on the edge of each step with my toes, pushing off almost as soon as I touched the step, and hoping to avoid creaking noises. When I reached the second floor, I looked down the hallway and listened. I could hear young women crying softly. There were no male sounds except one: to my right, I could hear the huffing and grunting of a man trying to achieve orgasm.

Really? I wondered. There's been all kinds of

noise, shouting, and shooting, and you're still in there humping away on some poor, drugged-out young woman. You're either a drunken moron not to have stopped and hidden, or you're so desperate to get your rocks off that you didn't stop to find out what was going on. Or, most likely, you're both: a desperate, drunken moron.

I walked down the hall toward the grunting and stopped outside the door where the sounds were coming from. I brought my knee up to my chest then extended my leg in a hard, swift kick. The door rocked on its hinges and separated from its frame by an inch. Without delay, I brought my knee up again and extended forward in another ferocious kick. The door exploded inward.

The balding, pot-bellied john was scrambling off the bed like a crab scuttling backward. The young woman grabbed for the dingy sheet and pulled it over her nakedness. Tears ran down her face.

“What the fuck?” the john shouted in a raspy voice. “Who the hell are you?”

“Your worst nightmare,” I said calmly.

He was trying to yank up his pants when I hit him with a right cross. I think maybe the Chairman allowed me to utilize the wrath of God, because the john rocketed backward through the air, crashed into a wall, and slid to the floor. He was unconscious, and I was pretty damn sure his jaw was broken.

What the hell? I thought. Let the punishment fit the crime: I stomped on his gonads. I'm a big boy. Six feet two,

two hundred twenty pounds of muscle. When I stomp, it's significant. The john moaned in pain even though he was unconscious. I left his pants still down around his ankles and plasticcuffed his wrists. Not a pretty picture.

I turned to the girl. The corner of her mouth was curling up the tiniest bit in an uncertain smile.

“Thank you,” she whispered huskily.

“You're welcome. Go all the way to the basement and get dressed. Wait with the others, okay?”

She nodded.

“Go now.”

She nodded again and was gone.

Two of the other bedrooms on the second floor produced two sleeping girls—probably from the drugs they'd been given. In the last two rooms, two johns cowered behind little wooden chairs while the girls remained in the beds, covering themselves with sheets. The johns both had their pants pulled up and shirts on, but the shirts were unbuttoned. The girls turned from me to the johns and back to me.

I asked the two girls to come into the hall, asked them to wake up the two sleeping girls and help them get to the basement and get dressed. While they did as I had asked, I collected the two johns into a single room.

“Drop your pants,” I said.

Their bodies were rigid with fear; their hands held stiffly over their heads.

“Don't make me tell you again.”

They reluctantly began to do as instructed.

“And your underwear.”

“Hey, come on,” one of them wailed.

“I've taken out eight men so far. You want to be nine and ten?”

They dropped their underwear to the floor.

“Stand back to back and raise your arms out from your sides.”

They followed instructions, and I plasticuffed the men together at their wrists.

“Sit on the floor.”

They complied. I plasticuffed the ankle of one of them to a cast-iron radiator leg.

“Comfy?” I asked, not waiting for an answer. “Good. Sit tight and the police will be by to arrest you.”

“Oh, come on!” the one who liked to wail wailed again. “It's a victimless crime.”

“Oh, really?” I knelt on one knee, but I still towered over the man. “These girls have all been kidnapped, drugged, prostituted against their wills, and they're all underage. Have you any idea how long you're going to prison for?”

“No, no, wait a minute—” this from the other man. “Can't we come to an understanding? I can make it worth your while—”

“Shut up,” I said, cutting him off. “There is good news in this scenario: once you go to prison, the sex is unlimited and free.”

They both looked as if they had swallowed

scorpions. After a moment of panicked silence, they began jabbering. I stuffed their underwear in their mouths.

Two more floors to go. Two more floors of frightened young women and despicable low-lives. The thought exhausted me. I was disheartened but walked slowly to the top of the next flight of steps to the third floor. I barked in an imitation of my boot-camp drill instructor.

“Hey, assholes! Yes, I mean you, you gutless pieces of animal feces. Stop whatever the hell you're doing, step away from the women, and go to the corners of your rooms. Do it *NOW*, or I am going to feed you your own testicles. And I'm going to make sure you chew thoroughly and swallow. *NOW—go!*”

I could hear footsteps on the third and fourth floors. After about 10 seconds, everything was quiet.

In a gentler, but still penetrating, tone, I called out, “Girls, please wrap yourself in a sheet or blanket and come out into the hall. Please. You're safe now. Come on out.”

There was a soft shuffling of feet, and the doors on the third floor opened and five young women, wrapped in bedding of some kind, appeared.

Speaking much more quietly, I said, “You're safe now. Please go to the basement and get dressed and wait there. The police will be here soon. “

They paraded downstairs, slowly but steadily. I ran upstairs to the fourth floor and found three more girls and three more johns. I left the johns standing in the corners of the bedrooms and gathered the girls, draped in sheets, in

the hallway.

“Is this everyone on this floor?”

One of them, a slender girl with reddish brown hair, shook her head and whispered, “There’s one more man in the last room.” She was pointing down the hall to a door on my right. “He’s really bad. Scary.”

“Okay, I’ll take care of him. You’re safe now. Please go to the basement and get dressed.”

“Will . . . will we be going home?” asked another girl who appeared to be barely thirteen-years old.

“Yes. Soon.”

After the girls went downstairs, I collected the johns in the hallway. It was amazing: now that they were dealing with a large, obviously angry, obviously dangerous man, they behaved like sheep instead of men dominating girls. None of them said anything, obediently doing what I told them to do. A far cry from bullying and raping teenage women. I had the men form a small circle. They were facing outward and their wrists were plasticuffed together. Their male apparatuses were exposed to the world. I plasticuffed two men’s ankles to stairway railing posts.

“You all just wait here. The police will probably come by in the next 10 minutes or so.”

I glanced down the hall to the room where the really bad man was. The door was shut. My attention hadn’t been solely focused on it, but I was pretty sure that the man inside had not opened the door, not even wide enough to take a peek at the goings on in the hall.

The man nearest that door, a scrawny, brown-haired man with a bad complexion, begged, “Please, mister, can’t we—”

“Shut up,” I hissed, inches from his face. “Be quiet, or I’ll kill you right here, right now.”

He pulled his head back away from me and nodded.

Time for a final charge, Tyrrell. One more “really bad” man and then you’re finished. I rushed along the hallway on tip toe, stopped to listen at the door, and heard nothing. Then I made my final appearance on the Capture the Bad Guys Tour.