

## **CHAPTER 3**

But that wasn't even the worst of it. The worst part happened outside the chief's office just after the meeting broke up. Alexa and I were caught waiting for the elevator with the others. The rage on her face told me she was about to let me have it right there in the sixth-floor hallway despite the audience of concerned onlookers standing behind us.

"You're moving out of the house tonight, you son of a bitch."

I'd been expecting this, but her voice was so low and filled with hate, it sent a chill down my spine.

"Before tonight, nobody ever said anything about you having an affair. Of course, with that in the picture this all makes much more sense."

"Let's not go into it here, Alexa," I said softly.

"Go home. Pack up your things and get out. I'll spend tonight in a hotel. I don't want to see you when I get home tomorrow."

"Alexa, please, let's talk about this."

STEPHEN J. CANNELL

“Talk about what? Throwing your honor and integrity away for a few dollars and a cheap piece of bleached-blond ass?”

“That’s not—”

“Shut up, Shane. Be out of the house by morning. I’m hiring a divorce attorney.”

Then she stepped into the elevator and punched the button. None of the witnesses to this disaster moved to get in there with her. In the face of such rage, they let her ride down alone.

After she was gone, Lieutenant Matthews turned to me. “You still have your gun and badge,” he said. It was a statement, not a question.

“Yes.”

“Your commander is down on five. He came in specially at the chief’s request to accept your resignation and equipment. We can take the stairs.”

So I left them all standing there. The rawboned, ash-blond fed, the city attorney, the Legal Affairs guy and my worthless POA—the whole seemingly ungrateful mess. I followed Lieutenant Matthews down one flight of stairs to Homicide Special.

As I entered the squad I saw the old mismatched cubicles, borrowed from other departments, the bric-a-brac of felony fliers and fugitive want notices pinned on the cork walls. The metal desks and clashing styles of cribbed office furniture. It had once seemed comfortable and familiar. Now it felt as cold as a doctor’s examination table. There were only one or two cops working late, because at midnight this place wasn’t like other squad rooms. One of the nice perks about Homicide Special was, except for the long hours we spent when a new case was breaking, the unit operated mostly on a day-shift mentality.

The lights were on in Jeb Calloway’s office and I could see him through the glass—a five-foot eight-inch muscle freak with a black

## ON THE GRIND

shaved bullet head. He was originally from Port-au-Prince and, because he was a popular CO with a ripped muscular body, we called him the Haitian Sensation. He'd been my boss for two years and he'd always given me a fair shake. But not tonight. I wasn't counting on anything tonight.

Lieutenant Matthews and I entered Jeb's office and he immediately got to his feet and handed me a sheet of paper.

"That's a Surrender of Property receipt for all your city-issued equipment. I already got your two-way radios and homicide books out of your desk. I'll need you to have a meeting with Sally Quinn at nine tomorrow to pass over any outstanding case information she doesn't have." He was all business. No *Sorry about this*, no *What the hell happened, Shane?* Just, *Here's the property sheet. Get the hell out of here.*

I read the one-sheet. "Some of this stuff is at my house or in my car at home," I told him.

"You can sign it tonight and bring it all in and leave it with Sally tomorrow. I'll be at the chief's weekly meeting."

"Okay."

"I'll take your gun and badge now," he said.

I pulled them off my belt and laid them on his table. Almost twenty years on the job and in a second it all ended with that simple statement. We performed the receipt-of-badge signing ceremony.

"Anything else?" I asked. And then came the one comment that told me he cared.

"You fucked up big, Shane. I can't believe you could be so stupid."

"Right." I turned and left.

Lieutenant Matthews didn't stick around to drive me home.

STEPHEN J. CANNELL

He had a detonator on his liver that needed a barstool. One of the IOs drove me, the one whose name I couldn't remember. I sat beside him in the same maroon Crown Vic. We rode in silence until just before we hit the freeway, when he glanced over and saw I hadn't clicked up. He gave me a piece of advice that would define my life for the foreseeable future.

"Better fasten your seatbelt for the ride," he told me.