

Shadows of Love, Betrayal & Murder by Jillian Bullock

CHAPTER 1

With the intense sun beating down and the sound of church bells ringing, Jennifer Tigger bolted up in a sitting position. Normally an attractive woman, now her face looked ravaged, in pain. She squinted her eyes, tried to focus.

Jennifer looked down and realized she had something in her right hand - a butcher knife. She brought the knife close to her face. Dry blood was caked on it and her hand. Disoriented, Jennifer squinted her eyes tighter as the church bells grew louder, hammering inside her head. She winced from the pain.

She turned to see a dead white man lying next to her. He had dry blood covering his shirt, along with a gaping knife wound in his chest.

If you ever wake up with a bloody knife in your hand and a dead body lying next to you, chances are your day is pretty much fucked, Jennifer thought.

Jennifer looked around and took in her surroundings. The bells stopped. She took a few deep breaths, closed her eyes and listened to the sounds of nature: birds singing, small animals scurried throughout the woods.

I don't know where the hell I am or how I got here... Damn, not again.

She looked back down at the bloody knife and then over at the drained of color, motionless man. He was in his early 30's, about six feet, dark hair, and a sturdy build. Jennifer scanned down at the man's lower half and noticed he was naked.

Shit, I didn't slip. I couldn't have.

Jennifer climbed to all fours, ripping her pantyhose in the process. The back of her hair and clothes were matted with dirt and leaves. She struggled to stand, still holding on to that knife. Looking around, then down at her dress, which had dirt on it, Jennifer noticed there was no blood anywhere else.

Her cellphone rang. She looked around to locate it. Moving to her pocketbook, some fifty yards from the dead body, Jennifer opened it with her left hand and pulled out her phone. Hitting a button, she held it to her ear.

"Hello, Dr. Tigger... What do you mean where am I?... What time is it?... What's today?... Sunday... Why are we meeting on Sunday?... I can't make it today... Dammit Robert, she's dead. She ain't going nowhere."

After Jennifer managed to find her way out Fairmount Park and back home, she planted her butt and pocketbook on the carpet in the living room. Kicking off her pumps, she removed the bloody knife from a plastic bag. Crossing her legs, Jennifer stared at the knife. She

saw her reflection in the small bloodless area. At her age, forty, Jennifer, with flawless mocha skin, had a youthful face. In fact, she was always approached by guys in their twenties asking her out on a date. Although flattered, she never hesitated to tell them her true age. No guy ever believed her and Jennifer always responded the same, “Women don’t raise their age. If anything they take a few years off.”

After she put the knife back into the bag and stood, Jennifer peeled out of the Blue Off-the-Shoulder Cloque Jacquard Cocktail dress that was soiled with dirt. She checked out her body in the full-length mirror that hung on the wall near the 70 inch SONY television. Wearing a pink and white strapless bra and matching panties, a smile eased across her face. She was thick in her legs, but that was from muscle, not fat. She had flat abs, toned, muscular arms and firm breasts. Jennifer turned to the side to check out her tight, well-rounded ass.

Her body showcased six tattoos:

The first one was positioned high on her left thigh: A butterfly colored in orange, red and yellow ink.

The next one was on her right upper arm: Red boxing gloves and under the gloves in red letters it read, SEXY WARRIOR.

The third tattoo was on her lower back: A big red heart and a black lightning bolt that sliced through it.

Next, the fourth one on her left calf: Roses with vines.

The fifth one was placed on her upper back on the left side: A naked woman on her knees with her head hung low and wings coming out of her back with the words - If you fall down...

The sixth tattoo was on her upper back on the right side: The same woman now standing with the wings spread out wide with the words - You must get back up.

Jennifer removed her ripped stockings and headed to the bathroom on the first floor.

Dropping her stockings into the trashcan, she pulled down her panties and sat on the toilet peeing with her eyes closed. Letting out a deep breath, Jennifer was feeling better, finally she got to release. She needed that.

Jennifer’s moment of relaxation was interrupted with a loud knock on the front door, which startled her. She opened her eyes and stared at the plastic bag on the floor in the living room. The knocking continued. It wasn’t a normal knock, more like a booming knock police did to let you know they were about to bust down your damn door.

Frozen with fear, Jennifer remained seated and quiet. It wasn’t like the police could hear her breath or pee, but to be on the safe side she didn’t move a muscle or breath. Not until the banging stopped. She sighed, took a few deep breaths. Grabbing a handful of tissue, Jennifer wiped herself, stood, pulled up her panties, and flushed the toilet. At the sink, she turned on the water and pumped liquid soap into her hands. She scrubbed thoroughly, like a surgeon getting

ready for surgery. The blood on her right hand washed down the drain.

Turning the water off, Jennifer stared at herself in the mirror. Her eyes were bloodshot, puffy and her eyeliner and mascara had smeared. She grabbed a robe from the closet and pulled it on, tying it in the front. She was about to leave when she stopped, returned to the mirror and looked at her messy hair. Jennifer pulled twigs and leaves out dropping them in the wastebasket. Turning the water on, Jennifer cupped one hand with water and pulled it through her hair. Still messy, but better.

Entering the living room, Jennifer grabbed the bag, the dress and her pocketbook and headed upstairs. In her master bedroom, she stood on the bed, removed a framed Paul Marrot – Butterfly Pink masterpiece, worth roughly \$3,100.

She punched in the combination on the wall safe and opened the door. It contained \$50,000 in cash, stacked in bundles, held together by rubber bands, a Met Life Insurance policy, a .38 Special, and now the plastic bag with the bloody knife.

Banging started up again on the front door. Jennifer locked the safe, put the picture back on the wall, and jumped off the bed.

At the door, Jennifer looked through the peek hole. She snatched the door open to see Donny McCain, twenty-nine years old, African-American, baby faced guy with a clef chin.

“What the fuck is your problem banging on my door like you done lost your damn mind?” Jennifer shouted.

Donny, who looked like a scared kid, entered as Jennifer slammed the door.

“Do you not know what neighborhood I live in? It ain’t the hood. These white folks are quick to call the police on us. You know that.”

“But, but you told me you would help me. Where were you last night?”

“You think I’m gonna help you when you’re acting a fool?”

“You owe me Jennifer.”

She took a deep breath and plopped down on the couch. Donny remained standing.

“I called you twenty times last night. Fifty texts... Rough night? You look like shit.”

“Whatever.”

“I’m in trouble. You promised you’d help me.”

“I can’t right now. Later.”

“When later?”

Jennifer rose. “Meet me at my office at three.”

She crossed to the front door with Donny following.

“I know I owe you Donny, but don’t ever pull this shit again or I’ll punch you in your throat. Understand.”

Fear washed over Donny’s face because he knew Jennifer meant it. He nodded and left.

Now showered, Jennifer’s face was make-up free and her hair was clean and pulled back in a ponytail. She sat at the kitchen table wearing a T-shirt and shorts. Nothing on her feet. She drank coffee and ate a bagel with cream cheese and lox as she focused on her laptop viewing

various listing of houses for sale in Delaware County. The homes listed were from \$850,000 to \$1 million. Jennifer closed her laptop and picked up her journal, an 8x8 notebook with colorful butterflies on the front and the word DREAM BIG in white letters.

She picked up a pen and started: *Dear Journal: Can someone commit murder and not realize he or she did the deed?*

Jennifer reached up to scratch her left ear and realized her blue oval sapphire and diamond halo stud earring was missing. She touched the other ear. That earring was there. She touched her left ear again.

“Shit. It’s probably out there with that dead body.”

Jennifer eyed her watch. She jumped up and raced out.