

An Inspector Brian Golding Mystery

THE POINT OF MURDER

A Gripping Crime Thriller



LORNE KENT

ACCLAIM FOR *THE POINT OF MURDER*

“Acclaim is on its way from:”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“More acclaim is on its way from:”

— *Self-Publishing Review*

“Loved the book. Brilliant and fascinating.
This author grabs your attention and does not let go!”
— Marc Soucy, *Retired Ottawa Police Service Officer*

THE POINT OF MURDER

LORNE KENT



**THE POINT
OF MURDER**

A NOVEL



Ottawa
Ontario, Canada

THE POINT OF MURDER - Pre-Release Edition
Copyright © 2022 David Lorne Harrison.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

ISBN: 978-1-7778271-0-6 (Hardcover)
ISBN: 978-1-7778271-1-3 (Trade Paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-7778271-2-0 (EPUB eBook)

This is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real places are used fictitiously. All names, characters, and some places are the products of the author's imagination. Any similarity of this work's characters to persons, alive, dead or fictional, is unintentional and entirely coincidental.

Cover images: Shutterstock-717893398, Sandra Harrison
Author photo: Stephen Harrison
Cover and book design: David and Sandra Harrison

Typeset using typeface: Adobe Caslon Pro
Printed in Canada
Publisher: David Harrison Books, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

www.davidharrisonbooks.com

This novel, my first, is dedicated to my wonderful wife
and partner for life, Sandra.

CHAPTER 1



Monday, May 31st

The lacy white drapes in his bedroom window fluttered in the cool, early morning breeze. The window was open from the warm night before, but a cold front had come through. The air was damp and chilly.

A rooster's early morning alarm call woke him up with a start at 5:00 a.m. Today was finally the day. It was no good trying to sleep anymore. His heart and breathing raced with excitement as he looked forward to this evening's main event.

He'd been paid \$100,000 for his up-front fee.

I finally get paid tonight. The rest of that cool quarter-million will sit very nicely in my Swiss account, he thought, smiling to himself.

His bed and breakfast was a modern, elegant house way out in the boonies. He'd booked a three-day stay online before leaving to fly here. Far out in the country, it was well away from the city police, just in case everything went south.

Reaching under the bed, he pulled out his hard-shell carry-on case and laid it on the bed. He twisted the handgrip on the

LORNE KENT

extendable handle first one way, then the other. A hidden compartment unlocked with a solid click.

The fresh, inky perfume of the two hundred U.S. \$20 and \$50 bills wafted up. His nose twitched. There was enough cash to rent a car, live on for a week or so in this foreign country, and buy the supplies he needed. He locked and returned the case to its hiding place.

The day before, he'd carefully thought out today. Needing to be calm, cool, and collected for tonight, he'd planned to visit one of the local tourist spots to destress and relax.

He came out the door dressed in a light spring jacket, then quickly retreated to put on a warmer hoodie.

Shouldering his backpack, he took a deep breath and quietly snuck out of the B&B.

The empty, long, straight road beckoned.

The silence was deafening. Then, red-winged blackbirds and chickadees sang out their dawn chorus. A city boy, he'd rarely experienced the heavenly songbirds in the countryside.

A hairy woodpecker hammered out its breakfast. Deep in thought about that night, he instinctively looked up. Flying overhead were flocks of gulls returning from their overnight roosts across the river.

The entrance sign to the Point was some way off. He quickened his pace to get a healthy workout. The cool, early-dawn mist eddied around him.

Dew lay heavily on the grass.

His walk down the gravel road to the river swept away the mental dust and cleared his head. The earthy fragrance left by the overnight rain hung heavy in the air.

Once having descended the wet, verdant slope to the floating dock, he finally felt completely at ease. To his left, the maple, elm,

THE POINT OF MURDER

and cedar trees amongst the tall white pines stood a hundred metres away. A natural-born explorer, he hiked towards them. Goose bumps raised on both his arms as the gentle breeze rolled in a chilled mist from the river.

It was almost fully light. At the North Shore, he sat down, tempted by the hip flask of Scotch he'd practically emptied the evening before. It was too early to start, for fear of it turning into another of his all-too-frequent booze binges. He needed to stay alert and on top form today.

Leaving the flask, he pulled out the water bottle. His ears pricked up at the distant sound of a speedboat or jet ski and, wondering who else could be out so early, he wandered along the shoreline towards the sound.

Along the way, there was a sign he couldn't fully understand. His English was poor. It said something about restricted access and rare plants, as far as he could tell. Ignoring the sign, he blundered along the shore to the end of the point. Trampling on a few plants was the least of his concerns compared to the mayhem he was going to cause that night.

The sound was now loud through the mist. He could barely make out a Sea-Doo or jet ski coming towards him at high speed.

It was about 6:30 a.m. The sun had risen only a short while ago. To his surprise, the jet ski operator suddenly turned about thirty metres away. It was now broadside towards him. Shutting down the throttle, the operator took something long and shiny out from between his knees and pointed it at him.

A targeting laser punched a narrow beam of red light through the early morning mist. He watched, petrified, as the laser beam drew a red dot onto his legs, then up across his torso and into his right eye. Temporarily blinded, he turned away. Three seconds later, he re-focused his eyes on the man.

LORNE KENT

“What the hell? Who is this damned guy, and how did he know I was here?” he shouted out, frightened.

He staggered backwards in complete surprise. His heart pounded in his chest. Turning back into the woods, he ran for his life.

“Fuck! What the hell is that?” he screamed, petrified, as he felt a sharp bee-sting on the back of his head.

Reaching up, he felt a small dart that had punched through his hood, pinning it to his head. The dart couldn't have been more than three centimetres in length, he thought. It must have had barbs on the end, as it didn't fall out, and it hurt like hell when he tried to pull it out but couldn't.

The Sea-Doo throttled back up with a roar and sped off.

Oh no, I can't feel my lips or my tongue.

He made it back to within a few metres of the sign on the shore about rare plants. Disoriented, he sat down, exhausted. He tried to take some more water, but his mouth and throat were already so numb he couldn't even manage that.

My head feels like it's going to burst. I think I'm going to pass out.

His lungs only partially filled with slow, shallow, laboured breaths. He was too weak to get up and sat there for what seemed like forever.

After twenty more minutes, he struggled for his last breaths. His heart pounded in his chest. He laid down on his back and stared up into the foggy, fuzzy, red-blue morning sky with dilated pupils.

I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I'm going to die here. Today. Now.

He wanted to close his eyes and quietly pass into unconsciousness, but his wide-open eyelids were now paralyzed, along with most of the rest of his body. There was nothing he

THE POINT OF MURDER

could do but stare at the fog falling down onto him through a pool of tears welling up into his eye sockets.

I can't see, I can't see. It's all blurred.

Tears ran down his cheeks. A wave of intense regret washed over him as his brain rushed with thoughts of all of his life's bad choices and their consequences.

Longing for his native homeland, he knew death was near and wished he weren't dying here, alone, in this damned foreign land.

Breathless, rooted to the ground, and hearing the sweet, twittering birdsong of the late dawn chorus, he passed into oblivion.

CHAPTER 2



Wednesday, May 19th, Somewhere Over Poland Seventeen Days Before Pinhey's Victim Found

Aeroflot flight SU2578 Airbus A330-300 was en-route from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to London Heathrow. They had left Russian airspace a while back and were now flying over Poland.

It was lunchtime. The plane was cruising on auto-pilot while Captain Alekshey Shevtsov and his co-pilot, First Officer Katya Volkov, were enjoying a hot, airline-provided lunch.

"This is a real treat," said Captain Shevtsov to his co-pilot, "they had some no-shows in first class and had some leftover hot meals. This salmon in herb and butter sauce with asparagus and baby potatoes is delicious. So much better than the economy class slop they usually serve us."

"Yes sir, this is really delicious. Makes a very nice treat, yes?"

The flight had been uneventful so far, with no turbulence after take-off. Their peaceful flight was rudely interrupted when their radio squawked in their headsets.

THE POINT OF MURDER

“Aeroflot SU2578 – this is Gdańsk Air Traffic Control. Divert to and land at Gdańsk Airport immediately. This is imperative. A terrorist threat against your aircraft has been confirmed. They say they’ve acquired surface-to-air missiles and will be targeting your airplane soon. Divert and land at Gdańsk immediately,” the ATC said in a strident tone. “Acknowledge and confirm.”

“What the hell is going on?” said Captain Shevtsov.

“Gdańsk ATC, this is Aeroflot SU2578. Say again. Why are you asking us to divert and land at Gdańsk?” asked First Officer Volkov.

“You must comply immediately. Jet fighters of the Polish Air Force will be there soon to escort you down.”

“Really, do you believe that? What do we do?” asked the frightened first officer of her captain.

“I don’t know what is going on, but I don’t think we have any choice in the matter,” he replied.

And then, suddenly, without warning, two MIG-29 jets came up alongside them.

“My God, they can’t be any more than fifty metres from our wingtips. Are they crazy or what?” the captain shouted.

Not having any rear-facing radars, the pilot and first officer had not known what was behind them, and the Polish MIGs had appeared out of nowhere. Having been a Russian fighter pilot himself in the nineties flying MIG-29s, Captain Shevtsov knew only too well what an advanced killing machine like the MIG could do to a commercial airliner carrying over 275 souls and 139,000 litres of jet fuel.

“Volkov, re-program Gdańsk Airport as our new destination,” commanded the captain. “Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. I am sorry to tell you that, due to a mechanical issue, we have to make an emergency landing at Gdańsk Airport.

LORNE KENT

Please fasten your seat belts. I apologize for this delay, but I am sure we can sort it out quickly and have you on your way again soon.”

“Good call,” said Volkov.

“Well, I couldn’t totally panic everyone and tell them we might be shot down by terrorist surface-to-air missiles or by the Polish Air Force, could I, now?”

“As it is, the passengers must already be getting edgy and asking the cabin crew what the MIGs are doing out there.”

Thirty-year-old passenger Dimitry Ivanov was a well-known online dissident journalist in Russia. He’d been outspoken of late in his online criticism of his government’s alleged human rights violations and the arrest and jailing of the opposition party leader.

As one of the founders of the online blog ‘Freedom for Russians’, he had been on the radar of the Russian FSB, the Federal Security Service, for the last two years. He’d been a rebellious teenager and a trouble-maker in his youth, always having an anti-authority outlook on life.

His latest run-in with the authorities was with the Moscow Police after he’d organized through social media a physical rally in Moscow to protest the lack of internet freedom. Knowing only too well the FSB had the legal power to conduct targeted killings overseas, if ordered by the president, he had been fearful of taking this trip in case he might become a target himself.

Six friends of various nationalities, all living in different parts of Russia, made frequent contributions to his blog and were all on the FSB’s radar. Little did he know that one of his so-called online friends was, in fact, an undercover FSB agent.

THE POINT OF MURDER

The FSB had been gathering intelligence on the 'Freedom for Russians' group by hacking into their email servers and making fake posts on his forum and on popular Russian social media sites such as YouTube and VKontakte.

They were trying to stir up his contempt for the government's regime even further to make outrageous statements and claims clearly worthy of arrest and detention.

It was only fifteen minutes later when they approached Gdańsk. "Gdańsk ATC, this is Aeroflot SU2578. Request approach and landing instructions," called out the captain.

"Aeroflot SU2578, set heading oh-seven-zero, descend to flight level two-zero."

Taking manual control, the captain turned east-northeast and descended to two-thousand feet, as instructed.

"This is your captain speaking. We are approaching Gdańsk airport. Cabin crew, do last-minute cabin checks, and prepare the passengers for landing."

"Aeroflot SU2578, you are on the glide path for runway B. You have been cleared for landing. Once down, take taxi-way five B on the left of the runway. Proceed to gate twelve at terminal two."

The two MIGs had left both sides of the airliner but had been ordered to stay behind it, out of sight, with weapons armed, unbeknownst to everyone on board.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we're on final approach to Gdańsk and will be at the gate very shortly. Cabin crew, take your landing seats."

Three minutes later, the cabin door opened at gate twelve as the jet's engines were shutting down.

LORNE KENT

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain again. We ask you all to deplane in an orderly manner into the transit lounge while we thoroughly inspect the aircraft for your own safety. We appreciate your cooperation.”

Dimitry’s legs were stiff. With unsure, jerky movements, they carried him along the aisle toward the open airplane exit after he grabbed his only luggage, a wheeled carry-on.

At the end of the jetway stood two well-built uniformed security officers. They were scanning the passengers, clearly looking for someone. Suddenly they froze and stared. Their eyes locked onto their target.

Oh my God, they’ve seen me. They’re staring at me.

Dimitry quickly looked away, grabbed the handrail and slowed his pace. With almost buckling knees, he reluctantly walked towards them.

The security officers each grabbed one of Dimitry’s arms and pushed him to the side. “Sir, please come with us.”

“What do you want? Where are you taking me? I’ve done nothing wrong.”

He worked out regularly and was fit, but it was pointless putting up a fight and struggling. They’d soon get the better of him.

“Sir, come with us. Don’t make a scene. Leave your bag with this desk agent.”

He was dragged off to a nondescript interrogation room about five metres square through a locked, unmarked security door. The room was bare except for a steel table, two metres by three, a hard-looking steel chair along one side and two similar chairs on the opposite side. It was windowless, the temperature frigid. A video camera with a blinking red LED was high on the wall facing the

THE POINT OF MURDER

single chair. The room was lit by a single stark, cold-white light bulb hung from the ceiling.

His heart nearly jumped out of his chest as he was pushed through the door and saw the damp floor with large patches of brown stains. Goose bumps raised all over his arms.

He immediately imagined visions of waterboarding and bloody baseball bats.

Oh, no, please no.

The steel chair was so cold as he sat down. His right leg was in tremor, and his feet fidgeted. Two uniformed police officers entered and sat on the two chairs opposite. Dimitry recognized their uniforms as those of the Policja, Polish State Police.

“Be careful you don’t slip on the wet floor. We had a large coffee spill, and it’s just been mopped up, very poorly, I might add,” said the taller officer as he noticed Dimitry’s fidgeting.

Dimitry’s lips parted. His cheeks raised slightly. He bowed his head and sighed a moan of relief. Looking up at the two officers with a slow smile, he wondered how he could have been so melodramatic in his imagination.

“Mr. Ivanov, I’m ...”

“But, but how did ...?”

“Before you interrupted me, I was about to say I’m Inspektor Wójcik, and this is Inspektor Nowak, and yes, we know all about you travelling under a false name with a fake passport. We could arrest and detain you for that alone, but that’s not what concerns us today.

“Tell us why you’re travelling to London.”

Dimitry had taken the precaution of booking his flight only as far as London Heathrow. As far as anyone else knew, that was his final destination. But once there, he’d book his onward flight.

LORNE KENT

“We’ve been informed by the Polish Internal Security Agency, ISA, and British MI5, that you’ve been searching the internet for Semtex plastic explosives and detonators,” Wójcik said.

He lied. About ISA and MI5. Wójcik and Nowak had already been using their own powerful computers to trawl the internet for suspicious searches for bomb-making materials and other terrorist supplies. But it sounded impressive to name the ISA and MI5, and Ivanov wouldn’t have been any the wiser. It was all part of their ruse.

“What are you saying? I wouldn’t know what to do with that stuff anyway. I am a simple tourist going to stay with friends I haven’t seen in a long time.”

“We do not tolerate terrorism in any shape or form in Poland, nor does the U.K., and your activities on the web of late have been highly suspicious,” continued Wójcik.

Dimitry’s brow was wet with sweat, despite the coldness of the room and the steel table and chair. Wójcik and Nowak went over and over the same questions in different forms. Every few minutes, Dimitry wiped his brow with a progressively sodden handkerchief.

After an hour, the officers realized they were stagnating and stopped for a break. Wójcik turned toward the other officer and whispered, with a carefully adjusted volume to make sure Ivanov could just about hear him, “I think it’s time, don’t you?”

The two officers got up, left the room, and locked the door behind them.

Dimitry’s brain worked overtime. He gulped in a large breath of air and breathed a long, deep sigh as he contemplated what they had meant.

I think it’s time, don’t you? Whatever’s next? What are they going to do to me now?

CHAPTER 3



Wednesday, May 19th, Gdansk, Poland

The two Polish officers made their way to the flight crew lounge, where the Aeroflot pilot and co-pilot had been taken and were being watched.

“Captain Alekshey Shevtsov, I presume?” asked Inspektor Wójcik, looking at the nearest person with four gold stripes on the sleeve of his jacket.

“Yes, that’s me,” said the Captain as the Inspektor approached.

“All is well, we intercepted and arrested the terrorists, and the threat to your plane has been eliminated. You are free to leave and resume your flight. We’re sorry for the inconvenience.”

“That’s all well and good for you to say, but our passengers are worried, and many had connecting flights they’ll miss. And we have to take on additional fuel as taking off again and climbing to altitude will leave us flying on fumes by the time we reach London if we don’t.”

“OK, that’s your call, sir. I am sure you can handle it.” The two Inspektors turned and left.

LORNE KENT

Inspektor Nowak whispered to Wójcik, “Well, that was easy; our fake terrorist scam actually took them in. At least we’ve got him now.”

Captain Shevtsov worked out the amount of fuel they needed to compensate for the unscheduled landing and takeoff. He used an airport phone to call the depot and requested the fuel.

Joining their passengers in the transit lounge where the cabin crew had stayed to care for them, the flight crew stood while Captain Shevtsov announced, “Ladies and gentlemen, the faulty indicator light on our aircraft has been fixed. We’re taking on more fuel now, and we’ll be able to leave shortly. Thank you for being so patient.”

Meanwhile, Dimitry had calmed down in the interrogation room and was thinking rationally again. He thought there was something off about the two Inspektors.

Their uniforms were almost, but not quite, perfect. Having spent his early twenties in Poland while studying political science at Warsaw University, he was fluent in Polish. As the rabble-rouser, he had also had some run-ins with the Policja, so he knew their uniforms well.

Although the officers’ shirts had ‘Policja’ printed in white on both the back and the sleeves, he could swear the shirts were black, but they should have been a dark navy. The stark, white light bulb made it hard to make out the exact colour. And their voices had a slight Russian accent to them.

Thinking everything was about to turn south for him, Dimitry wondered if the so-called Inspektors were, in fact, Russian agents. The door unlocked. He bit his lip, bounced on his right toes again and steeled himself for the worst to come.

THE POINT OF MURDER

“Ivanov, your plane to London is leaving now without you, so you might just as well fess up,” said Inspektor Wójcik.

Maintaining his silence, Dimitry wondered how he was going to get out of this and, more to the point, did they know his real reason for travelling to London and onward to Canada? He started to suspect one or more of his group of six so-called friends as having betrayed him to the FSB.

Taking his time to remember each of his friend’s behaviours and emails with him of late, he homed in on one likely suspect, the late-comer Mikhail Kascheev. Mikhail had been particularly curious about Dimitry’s activities, wanting to know what he was up to all the time. Although they were all part of the same 'Freedom for Russians' group and had the same ideological values, it was still unsettling to have Mikhail poking around in his life so frequently.

Dimitry had so far kept from the Inspektors the real reason for his trip. His client would pay him well, and he wasn’t about to give that up.

After badgering away at Dimitry for two more hours, Inspektor Wójcik turned to Nowak and said, “Let’s go outside. We need to talk.”

“Look, we’re getting nowhere, and he’s not going to give it up. We need to be strategic here. He’s not the big fish, after all,” said Inspektor Wójcik outside the locked door. “I think we should release him, give him some rope and a false sense of security, track him and his communications, and let him lead us to his target and his client. We also have to minimize the political fallout this is going to create. Did you set up the Wi-Fi hot-spot trojan?”

“Yes, as soon as I heard the plane was on its way in, I put the trojan horse software onto all the Wi-Fi hot-spot routers in the airport. When he comes out of here and connects his phone to the

LORNE KENT

internet through Wi-Fi, the hot-spot will check his phone number and, if it's his, will install the secret spyware on his phone," said Nowak.

"Let's do it," said Wójcik. Re-entering the room, he said, "Ivanov, you're free to go. Get the hell out of here. If we ever catch you with any explosives or detonators, you'll finish up in Black Dolphin."

The slip of the tongue, naming Russia's worst prison, finally confirmed Dimitry's suspicion that the so-called Inspektors were not Polish Policja at all but were Russian agents, most likely FSB.

Dimitry shook his head in disbelief. His knees buckled beneath him again, but for better reasons this time, and he thanked God even though he wasn't a religious person. He walked past the two Polish or Russian agents without saying a word, and made his way to where they had taken his bag from him. Showing the gate attendant his passport and boarding pass for his old flight, he finally laid his hands on his bag again.

His case had obviously been searched, but nothing had been taken. *Rank amateurs!* Dimitry thought.

He immediately went to the Polish Airlines ticket counter to book a new flight to London Heathrow. He'd brought extra cash in his case to pay for emergencies like this without using a credit card.

Dimitry sat comfortably in the departure lounge and immediately connected to the airport's Wi-Fi and added to his 'Freedom for Russians' blog from his mobile phone. Cumbersome and slow though it was, he managed to write a ranting tirade of his experiences that day, claiming he was arrested because he was being too critical of his government.

Utterly oblivious to the fact the Wi-Fi routers had been hacked with a trojan horse, his phone was infected with invisible

THE POINT OF MURDER

spyware. The officers could now know his exact position anywhere in the world and read his emails and texts.



Polish Airlines flight LO281 landed and taxied to London Heathrow Terminal 2. It arrived at the gate right on time at 9:10 a.m., after a three-and-a-half-hour flight from Gdańsk, with a narrow forty-five-minute window to change flights in Warsaw.

Dimitry deplaned with his carry-on case, sailed through British customs and immigration with no problems, and found the nearest breakfast place at the airport. He was starving and ate a hearty full English breakfast.

He'd set out early that morning after an overnight sleepover on the benches at Gdańsk Airport. Now with a full stomach, he was finally beginning to relax after his harrowing day before, with the two fake Polish police officers who he was now sure were Russian FSB. He took a London taxi to the Sheraton Heathrow Hotel and planned his next steps.

In the privacy of his hotel suite, he connected to the hotel's Wi-Fi and booked his flight to Montréal-Trudeau International Airport. He booked one night at the Super 8 by Wyndham St-Jerome hotel, not far from Montréal. After checking they would receive packages for him, he finalized his order.

He'd spent weeks searching for the supplies he'd need. He asked for them to be carefully wrapped in layers of six-mil plastic sheet and aluminum foil to help reduce its almond-like smell. He ordered them, paying with a non-traceable, pre-paid credit card.

Shipping by FedEx had cost him, but he had plenty to spend after the windfall job he'd recently accepted. If the hotel asked him

LORNE KENT

about any almond smell, he'd say it was a large marzipan-covered cake for his mom. He was tired out and fell asleep on his bed.



Dimitry laid low for a few days in London to recover after his harrowing experience in Gdańsk. He then took a taxi to Heathrow Terminal 2. It was a daytime Air Canada flight arriving at Montréal–Trudeau Airport at 5:10 p.m. Coming through Canadian customs and immigration was a breeze.

If only all countries were as simple as this, he thought as he found his way to the Avis rental car counter. Nervously looking around, he presented his driver's license, quickly completed the forms, and paid. With the car keys, he walked out to the Avis car lot.

It had been a long, tiring, seven-and-a-half-hour flight from London. Thankfully, he had only a half-hour drive to his Super 8 hotel. He checked in and picked up his two FedEx packages from the hotel security locker. With them safely stowed away in the trunk of his car, he looked forward to a successful new job on Monday. Up in his room, he was tired out and fell asleep on his bed, fully clothed.

He awoke the next day refreshed, and ate another hearty breakfast, Canadian-style. Pancakes, sausages, maple syrup with strawberries, blueberries, and whipped cream rounded out his breakfast plate. He checked his maps and route through Montreal.

After a three-hour drive, he finally arrived at his destination.

CHAPTER 4

Friday, May 28th, Ottawa, Ontario

At fifty years old, Detective Inspector Brian Golding was a twenty-five-year veteran of the Ottawa Police Service, OPS.

He'd always wanted to become a detective. He came from a long line of police officers, and his family had encouraged his childhood play of 'cops and robbers.' Brian fondly remembered his days of always wanting to be the 'cop,' chasing and finding the robbers.

After his Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice at Conestoga College and completing his basic training at the Ontario Police College, he joined OPS as a fourth-class Constable twenty-five years ago.

He quickly rose through the four constable ranks to first-class Constable, then Detective Sergeant, and was promoted to Staff Sergeant fifteen years ago with the Guns and Gangs Unit. He'd taken a bullet in his calf during a daring raid on the Ottawa Hells Angel's clubhouse. Fortunately, no major blood vessels had been

LORNE KENT

hit, but a large chunk of muscle was irreparably damaged and had to be removed. He'd limped slightly on his left leg ever since.

When an Inspector position opened up ten years ago in the OPS Homicide Unit, he went for it. He loved his job now and considered himself lucky to have not been more seriously injured, or worse.

At six-foot-one, he was slim, fit, and healthy. His clean-shaven face was long and rectangular, with an attractively straight nose and rugged chin. With his fair skin, electric blue-grey eyes, and crows' feet at their side, he looked so handsome, his wife Sarah had told him years ago.

While driving to OPS headquarters at 7:15 a.m., his thoughts drifted back to his beloved wife, Sarah, who had died tragically eight years ago at the young age of thirty-eight from a ruptured brain aneurysm. It was so sudden. One minute she was there. The next day, she was gone.

She was the love of his life and had given him a beautiful daughter, Anna, who was only seventeen when her mom passed. Anna was now married herself to Jon Nolan, a professor of criminology at Carleton University. They lived in Old Ottawa South, not far from Carleton U. Brian had not re-married since Sarah passed.

He had worked late into the previous night and early morning hours, and so was coming into the station later than usual. He'd woken up much later than intended, so he stopped at his local Tim Horton's drive-thru for a quick bagel and coffee. The shot of caffeine worked wonders to wake him up as he headed out for the parkway.

His 1968 Ford GT 390 engine purred. With his convertible soft-top down, the wind blew his hair about wildly as he drove his classic red Mustang down the western Kichi Sibi Parkway. It had

THE POINT OF MURDER

recently been renamed from the Sir John A Macdonald Parkway to cease honouring Canada's first prime minister, who was one of the architects of Canada's terrible residential school system that ran from the 1880s until 1996. That system forcibly removed thousands of indigenous children from their family homes to indoctrinate them into white Euro-Canadian cultures. Recently, many thousands of unmarked graves on the former sites of residential school grounds were discovered, re-igniting the public outrage at that system and Sir John A Macdonald's part in it.

Brian had just finished lovingly restoring his classic Mustang after buying it in a decrepit state five years ago. From thirteen years old and on, he'd loved to help his dad out in the family home's garage. His dad had owned a red Mustang then. Brian was always close to his dad, and having lost him to a heart attack ten years ago, he wanted to restore and own a Mustang again as a tribute to him. He'd decided to drive his new 'baby' to work today to show it off to his mates. Normally he'd drive his electric Tesla 3 to work and back.

Once downtown on Wellington Street, traffic slowed to a crawl. He looked out at the throngs of placard-carrying demonstrators but didn't feel at all annoyed at them. He was sympathetic to their cause, as he saw "Save Our Planet," "No More One-Time Use Plastics," and "Save Our Oceans" boldly displayed in red and orange paint.

"Woo-hoo, right on", he shouted out. Brian had been an environmentalist at heart for years. He got so irate when he read news headlines about the state of our oceans and planet. He hated the devastating effect that one-time plastics have had on our environment, oceans and marine life.

It was today the Canadian House of Commons was sitting in their temporary home on Parliament West Block on Wellington

LORNE KENT

Street voting on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. If there were three things Brian was passionate about, it was the environment, classic cars, and putting murderers away. Honking his horn and waving in support of the demonstrators, he drove carefully past. Eight minutes later, he was in his office at OPS headquarters at 474 Elgin Street.

Opened in 1983, the Elgin Street police station in the downtown core was a large, five-storey concrete building at the southern end of Elgin Street, a popular tourist and commercial street with many shops, cafés and restaurants. There were two below-ground levels and three floors above ground.

As usual, Brian's first order of business before the Homicide Unit got busy was to scan over the news on his computer. He never knew where it might help him in his investigations. He always made sure he was up to date with international, national and local events. After scanning the national headlines, he scrolled down the page when an unusual item caught his eye.

"International Uproar Over Russian Airliner Forced Down," shouted out the headline.

That's unusual, what do we have here?

It was a report about an international furore over an event that happened a few days before, about some Russian airplane being forced down over Poland. The report claimed a Russian dissident journalist had been arrested, detained, and questioned by Russian agents posing as Polish police. The Aeroflot flight from Moscow to London Heathrow had been forced to land at Gdańsk in Poland.

The man had been released after less than a day of interrogation, which, in itself, was suspicious. An Associated Press reporter filed the report based on online claims made in a "Freedom for Russians" blog and by interviews with some of the

THE POINT OF MURDER

passengers and the captain of the flight. The Russian dissident claimed that he had feared for his life because of his outspoken comments about the Russian government.

The captain could not confirm any of that. All he knew from the passenger manifest on their return to the airplane was they were short one passenger, one Dimitry Ivanov.

CHAPTER 5



Montreal, Eighteen Months Ago

Gedeon Dufrésne was at the pinnacle of his ‘career.’ At forty years old, his chosen path had taken him all over, from the USA and Canada to over a dozen European countries.

At five-feet-four-inches and overweight, he wasn’t at all like the archetypal tall, fit killer for hire. He could go about his business in plain sight, utterly unnoticed as one of those typical overweight North American tourists portrayed in contemporary movies. With his obsidian, down-turned eyes, he was dark, ominous and mysterious. They would drill right through you when he stared.

He’d acquired his skill set some years ago in the early 2000s after studying the methods of Julio Santana, the world’s most prolific hitman. His fractured childhood, born of a mother who had abandoned him at the tender age of nine and left him to the wrath of a father who was frequently drunk and violent, had turned him into a particularly vindictive teenager.

THE POINT OF MURDER

It didn't help that he'd been bullied and beaten in junior school over his short height and pudgy frame, having been pushed, shoved, and kicked about the playground by gangs of louts. Once in his teens, he was large enough to fight back the physical assaults, but the harassment, teasing and taunting continued relentlessly. He'd sworn he'd get revenge one day, carefully writing down their names in his little pocket notebook for later use when he was ready.

Years later, after dropping out of high school at age eighteen, he remembered his little notebook and started his methodical research to track them down, one by one. After several menial jobs, he hadn't accumulated much savings, so he couldn't travel easily. He sat down and had a long, hard think about how he would exact his revenge upon his so-called school-mates and the one person he hated the most, his father.

He'd found out, years later, that his mother had escaped his father's violent tirades by running off with her lover, who also happened to be his father's best friend. A Hungarian steel worker, his father had had a drinking problem since he was seventeen and had a hard time holding down jobs. He was often late for his shifts at the construction sites and even turned up over-hung on occasion. The last site manager had finally had enough and fired him.

Deciding to try his luck with a fresh start in a brand-new country, his father had emigrated to Montreal, Quebec, and soon met Gedeon's mom, a cashier at a local hardware store. Soon after, pregnant with her first child, she asked his father to marry her.

They were impoverished and married in a simple civil ceremony at the local courthouse.

After losing several jobs over his continued drinking problems, his father turned to crime to support his family. Despite

LORNE KENT

his drunkenness, his father was a successful small-time thief and had accumulated a large collection of non-cash takings from his house break-ins and convenience store hold-ups. His latest escapade, an armed robbery at a local jeweller's, had just taken it up a notch.

He'd never been identified or found and, once home, temporarily hid it at the back of his bedroom closet until he could fence it off, a haul worth about half-a-million dollars. His father was so focused on his task at hand that he hadn't noticed that Gedeon had arrived home and was watching him.

Gedeon executed a plan he'd been nurturing for a while to kill two birds with one stone. His father had fallen asleep on the bed in yet another drunken stupor.

Gedeon crept into his father's bedroom, took the half-empty bottle of Vodka back into his own room and poured in a massive amount of Valium. He'd been carefully researching for a while what the most dangerous drugs were to mix with alcohol.

Returning the dangerously spiked vodka bottle to his father's side, he thought, *This should slow down your central nervous system. You'll die peacefully in your next drunken stupor, you sonuvabitch.*

In the morning, Gedeon woke up and immediately checked in on his father. There were no signs of life.

The bastard got what he deserved. I couldn't stand another minute of his violent tirades, he thought, feeling no guilt or remorse.

At age twenty, that was his first killing of another human being.

After all those drunken beatings, he'd hated the smell of alcohol and had kept away from it. He'd tried smoking weed once but found it disgusting as well. Having seen how alcohol had ruined his father's and his family's lives, he didn't need drugs or

THE POINT OF MURDER

drink to make him high. He got his highs from planning how to rid the world of all his junior school bullies and teenage taunters.

Despite dropping out of high school, he was extremely intelligent, inventive, and creative. He was very tech-savvy and knew how to navigate the internet like the back of his hand. If he was going to improve his life, he had to be smart and keep out of trouble with the police and drug dealers.

He'd quickly found the Dark Web through the Tor web browser and had hooked up with two infamous black-hat hackers to learn their trade. Setting about turning the haul into hard cash, he'd soon found buyers on the Dark Web and fenced off most of his father's haul. With his newfound wealth, he'd rented an up-market two-bedroom apartment in Montreal's Mont-Royal district. He'd simply left his father to rot in hell and never returned to the apartment again. His father wouldn't have been missed anyway without a regular job.

Mechanically minded, Gedeon had always liked to build things, but his lack of money up until now hindered his ability to do much. He'd taken a Machining Techniques course at Montreal's Rosemount Technology Centre. Excelling at that, he'd made himself some delicate mechanical parts, mainly for Italian model cars, in off-hours at the College workshop.

Gedeon wanted to rid himself of all remaining vestiges of his father. He changed his family name from his father's Hungarian name of Becskei to a more French, Québécois-sounding name of Dufrésne. He liked his first name Gedeon, though. It meant warrior, devastator, destroyer. It was so appropriate to his mindset.

Gedeon had turned to his little notebook with the names of all those loutish thugs at school and had begun his life-long career of killing them off, one by one.

LORNE KENT

His IQ was a lofty 130. He changed the *modus operandus* for each murder, and being a master of disguise, he carried out his plan with abandon, much to the horror of many national police services. By now, he had gained so much fame he was also known to Interpol.

This is so much fun. I might as well get paid for it, he thought, and hired himself out as a paid assassin.

He was so egotistical that he left a plain small business card with only two words at each murder scene to taunt the police. Having an uncanny knack for making people disappear, he was notoriously known by police and admired by the criminal underworld as ‘The Magician.’

CHAPTER 6

Saturday, June 5th, West Ottawa

The low early morning sun shone through their floor-to-ceiling windows, bathing their kitchen and dining room in a relaxing soft, tawny glow.

Their swanky, up-market condo apartment was on the twentieth floor. It had fantastic views of Britannia Bay and across the Ottawa River, but their building was on busy Carling Avenue near Andrew Haydon Park. It was too noisy to sit out on their balcony for a day of relaxation. They craved the quiet solitude and tranquility of the countryside and often went for drives or to sit and read in a quiet spot with no one around.

“Hey, Mel, do you fancy spending the morning at Pinhey’s Point today?”

“Yes, that would be great. I think we owe ourselves some well-deserved R&R after this horrible past week, don’t you?”

It was the middle of the second heat wave of the year and found Ian and Melanie Perkins keen to make an early start to their day of relaxation as they both had had a stressful week.

LORNE KENT

Working for a high-tech company in Kanata, Ian had put in long hours all week to finally finish off his software project, due the day before. The day before that, Melanie, an E.R. nurse at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, had been in the emergency room when a beautiful five-year-old blonde girl died in her hands.

The girl's mom had been driving their car when it was T-boned by a van running a red light and was in serious but stable, condition in the ICU. It was heart-wrenching for Melanie. Both were looking forward to a weekend off, which was rare for her, as she often had to take weekend shifts.

Ian was thirty-three years old, five-feet-ten, well-built but not overweight, and was fit and healthy. His skin was tanned and matched his light-brown, short-cropped hair.

Melanie was two years younger than Ian, five-feet-two with dark-brown, shoulder-length hair.

Heading west, they drove the twenty-two kilometres from their condo to their favourite relaxation spot – Pinhey's Point on the Ottawa River. It was 9:00 a.m. when Ian parked their car in the dusty, dirt parking lot.

"Come on Sammy, good boy," said Ian, as he pulled the leash on their five-year-old golden retriever. Sammy jumped out of the car, eager to have a run.

The main historic stone Hamnett Pinhey's house blocked the morning sun from them, cooling them slightly as they walked by. Once past the tall cedar hedge and out into the open, the bright, golden sunshine poured onto them as they ambled down the narrow gravel path to the bottom of the hill. The sweet, sharp fragrance of fresh-cut grass on the just mowed rich-green slope and picnic area refreshed them. Large swaths of invasive Sumac added dashes of red to their vista.

THE POINT OF MURDER

“It’s going to be a scorcher today,” they both exclaimed, giggling.

They often came here for the tranquility and exquisite views across the Ottawa River to the Gatineau Hills in Quebec.

“They’ve got the pontoon dock out now,” said Melanie, pointing to her right. “Look, there are four yachts moored in the bay.”

The buzz of a small propeller airplane drew their attention to the Ottawa River. They watched as a float plane landed out in the main river channel. Carefully managing the throttle and deftly using the rudder, the pilot manoeuvred the small plane into the bay between the yachts, cutting the engine about forty metres away as it floated gracefully, silently, up against the pontoon dock. A middle-aged couple and young boy, about ten, clambered out onto the unsteady, rocking platform. They came ashore with picnic chairs, a hamper and a blanket.

“Oh wow, that’s what I call the way to have a picnic with your grandson, eh, Mel? One day, perhaps,” said Ian wistfully.

“What, one day the plane, or one day a grandson?” asked Melanie cheerfully. “I can’t help you with the airplane, but I sure can help you later to get started on the grandson part,” said Melanie cheekily with her sexiest smile.

They walked over to the northern-most corner of the site to the other side of the spit forming Pinhey’s Point. A large grassed area led on from the gravel entrance walkway. At its end was a fenced-off area of mixed low bush and mature trees of maple, elm and white pine on the narrow spit of land forming the point itself.

The shore was hard, rocky shale with layers of rock having splintered away down to the water’s edge, leaving masses of small, split, flat stones scattered on the shoreline. They settled down in

LORNE KENT

their folding beach chairs, far away from the parking lot and other walkers.

A cool north breeze blew gently straight down the Ottawa River. It tamed the heat, making sitting on the rocky shore quite comfortable. The slight swell of the river calmly lapped against the flat stones.

They hadn't planned to do much, having brought their reading books and packed lunches for a small picnic for a few hours of relaxation. Ian played Frisbee with Sammy to tire him out so he could dog-nap. After Ian had walked Sammy to do his business, they settled down to a snack and a flask of coffee before relaxing into their books.

Sammy's leash was off while he was napping, since they were sitting far away from other people, and Sammy couldn't easily get lost. The spit was quite narrow, and they had a clear view of it from their chairs on the rocky shoreline.

They were so engrossed in their mystery novels they hadn't noticed Sammy get up and wander off on his own.

Ruff, Ruff, Ruff Sammy barked deep and loudly like he had never done before.

"What is it, Sammy?" Ian asked. They both shouted after Sammy, but to no avail. There were signs posted at the entrance to the fenced-off bush area saying that it was ecologically sensitive with fragile flora and shoreline. They were reluctant to go into the bush, but after a few minutes of calling Sammy, he still would not return to them. They had no option but to go in there after him to find out what all the ruckus was about.

Ian went first, being careful where he trod to make sure he didn't damage any delicate plants or tree branches. After only thirty seconds, his heart instantly galloped. He looked at a

THE POINT OF MURDER

decaying corpse covered in maggots in and around the facial openings.

“Oh my God, stay there Mel.”

“What is it, Ian? Oh no, no, no, no.”

Melanie looked over Ian’s bent shoulders. Her knees crumpled beneath her as she clasped her hand to her mouth in horror and astonishment. Tears poured down her cheeks as the sight of death immediately reminded her of the beautiful five-year-old girl that had died in her arms only two days ago.

She felt faint. Snapping to, she pulled herself upright and hugged her husband tightly. She’d experienced so much trauma in the E.R., but nothing had prepared her for this sight and smell. The stench of death was awful; the maggots were so creepy and disfiguring, making it hard to see much of a face. The face had also been partly eaten by animals. They hadn’t noticed the smell before, as the breeze blew through the bush carrying the stench downriver away from where they had been sitting.

They instinctively backed off and did not touch the body. No trauma was immediately apparent, but they didn’t approach closer to find out. It was obvious the man had long since died, and clearly there was nothing they could do for him.

The man’s body was dressed in a hooded warm spring jacket with dark pants and black leather walking shoes. It was odd because this day was so hot, and it was obvious the body had been there for several days. It was partly covered with a thin layer of leaves and small branches, probably blown in, as there was no grave.

They both turned into the wind, gulped a huge breath of fresh air, and walked away three metres. Ian punched 911 into his phone.