

**STEPHEN J.**

**ON THE GRIND**

**CANNELL**



**ST. MARTIN'S PRESS**

**NEW YORK**

*This book is dedicated to Reuben Cannon,  
my old friend and brother from another mother.  
He makes me laugh, insists I pray before meals,  
and always makes me look to my better self.*

*Love you, Reub.*

# **CHAPTER 1**

Just an hour before my whole life turned upside down, I was making love to my wife, Alexa, in our little house on the Grand Canal in Venice, California. It was the first week of May and a spring storm was washing across the L.A. Basin, filling gutters and runoffs with dirty brown water, pushing a slanting rain against our bedroom window, blurring the view. I knew the police department was about to charge me with a criminal felony, I just didn't know exactly when. I had chosen to make love to my wife partially to ease a sense of impending doom, and partially because I knew it was going to be our last chance.

The Tiffany Roberts mess was already in full bloom, leaking toxic rumors about me through the great blue pipeline down at Parker Center, turning my life and entire twenty-year police career radioactive. Why do I seem to keep volunteering for these things?

So doom and dread hovered as knowledge of what lay ahead turned our lovemaking bittersweet, changing the tone like a low

chord that announces the arrival of a villain. We were lying in an uncomfortable embrace, listening to the rain on the windows, when the doorbell sounded.

"That's probably it," I said.

"Guess so," Alexa replied, her voice as dead as mine.

I got up, found my waiting clothes folded neatly over the bedroom chaise. I skinned into a pair of faded jeans and a USC Trojans sweatshirt that I'd grabbed from my son Chooch's room, then padded barefoot to the front hall and unlatched the lock without bothering to look through the peephole. I already knew who was going to be there.

The door opened into a whipping rain. Standing on my front steps were three uniformed police officers in transparent slickers.

"I'm Lieutenant Clive Matthews, Professional Services Bureau," the cop in the center said. I'd seen him before, mostly in restaurants around Parker Center. He was an IAD deputy commander. A big guy with a drinker's complexion. He was supposed to be in AA, but the exploded capillaries on his ruddy face were a death clock that told me the cure hadn't taken.

"What's up, Loo?" I said, my voice flat.

"Charge sheet." He thrust three typed yellow forms at me.

A PSB charge sheet lists the crimes being filed against you by Internal Affairs. It's basically an accusation of misconduct which starts a lengthy disciplinary process that usually ends at a career-threatening Board of Rights Trial, which is in effect a police administrative hearing. The fact that a deputy commander in uniform was personally delivering the goods was representative of the gravity of my predicament.

Matthews handed me a sealed envelope. "Your letter of transmittal." The document confirmed the delivery of the charge sheet

and started the clock on an array of procedural administrative events.

“You have to sign the top copy for me. Keep the other,” he instructed.

“You guys couldn’t wait until tomorrow?” I looked past him at the two stone-faced IOs standing a foot back, one on each side of the lieutenant. Water droplets had gathered on the plastic shoulders of their see-through raincoats.

“Nope,” the lieutenant replied. “Chief Filosianni and the city attorney request your presence in his office at Parker Center immediately.”

“I get to contact my Police Officers Association steward before answering these charges at a Skelly hearing,” I said. “That right is guaranteed me under rule six of the city charter. The chief knows that, so what’s with this midnight meeting?”

“It’s not a command performance. The chief is extending you a courtesy. Your POA steward has been notified. If it was up to me, I’d just body-slam you like the piece of shit you are.” He said it without raising his voice or putting any inflection on it. “You might want to get your shoes and jacket. It’s pretty wet out here. You can ride with us.”

“What is it, Shane?” Alexa was coming out of the bedroom, walking down the hall.

I turned to look at her. Breathtakingly beautiful. Black hair framing a fashion model’s cheekbones. Incredible blue eyes that were locked on me. She was belting her robe, her black hair tousled with the memory of sex. I knew these might be the last friendly words we would speak.

“IA. They have a charge sheet. They want me to come with them.”

STEPHEN J. CANNELL

"It's almost midnight," she said, standing behind me. "Can't it wait until morning?" She should have demanded the circumstances. It was a mistake; but then, I knew she was as upset about all this as I was.

"You might also want to come with us, Lieutenant Scully," Matthews said, glancing at Alexa. "The chief is waiting in his office with several people. I think you both need to hear what he has to say."

So that's what we did. Alexa got dressed. I was in the bedroom with her for a minute to get my nylon windbreaker out of the closet. I looked over and saw that she was putting on her sixth-floor attire—dark pantsuit, blouse, gun and badge.

"So it begins," she said, her voice lifeless.

"Yep."

I went into the bathroom to run a razor over my chin. A consideration to this late-night meeting with the chief. For a minute I saw my reflection in the mirror staring back. A familiar stranger with battered eyebrows scarred in countless forgotten brawls. The face of an unruly combatant. My brown eyes looked back at me startled by the sudden confusion I felt.

Five minutes later I was in Lieutenant Matthews's car with the two IOs. One was named Stan. I didn't catch the other guy's name. Not much talk as we headed to Parker Center, with Alexa following us in her silver BMW a few car lengths behind. I had fallen from respected member of society and guardian of the public trust to detestable scum in the eyes of the three men riding in that maroon Crown Vic with me. In their eyes, I was a turncoat. A cop gone bad.

I thought I knew what to expect, but the truth was I had little idea of what lay before me, little understanding of the mess I had so willingly stepped into.

## ON THE GRIND

But that's life. I guess if you could see all the dead ends and blind turns, it wouldn't be as interesting. At least that's what I kept telling myself.

The windshield wipers on the detective plain-wrap slapped at the rain as we rushed along the 10 Freeway in the dead of night, the tires singing in the rain cuts. No red light, no siren. Just a maroon Ford with four stone-faced cops. All of us in the diamond lane, heading toward the end of my career at breakneck speed.