



AT
THE
QUIET
EDGE

A NOVEL

Bestselling author of *Jane Doe* and *False Step*

VICTORIA HELEN
STONE

PRAISE FOR VICTORIA HELEN STONE

Evelyn, After

“Hands down, the best book I’ve read this year. Brilliant, compelling, and haunting.”

—Suzanne Brockmann, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Readers will cheer on Evelyn when the power dynamic with her lying, cheating husband shifts, even while they watch her flirting with disaster in her steamy affair with Noah. A solid choice for Liane Moriarty readers.”

—*Library Journal*

“Stone (a nom de plume of romance writer Victoria Dahl) . . . ably switches to darker suspense in a compelling story exploring what lurks behind a seemingly perfect life.”

—*Booklist*

“Stone pens a great story that will have readers wondering what will happen next to the characters involved in this mysterious tale . . . Fascinating tale told by a talented storyteller!”

—*RT Book Reviews*

“Victoria Helen Stone renders the obsessions and weaknesses of her characters with scorching insight. Her sterling prose creates a seamless atmosphere of anticipation and dread, while delivering devastating truths about the nature of sex, relationships, and lies, often with a humor that’s rapier-sharp. *Evelyn, After* reads like *Gone Girl* with a bigger heart and a stronger moral core.”

—Christopher Rice, *New York Times* bestselling author

Half Past

“A gripping, haunting exploration of the lengths to which we’ll go to belong, *Half Past* will hold you in its thrall until the very last page. Stone’s expert storytelling, vivid characterizations, and tantalizing dropping of clues left me utterly breathless, longing for more—and a newly minted Victoria Helen Stone fan!”

—Emily Carpenter, bestselling author of *Burying the Honeysuckle Girls* and *The Weight of Lies*

“A captivating, suspenseful tale of love and lies, mystery and self-discovery, *Half Past* kept me flipping the pages through the final, startling twist.”

—A. J. Banner, #1 Amazon and *USA Today* bestselling author of *The Good Neighbor* and *The Twilight Wife*

“What would you do if you found out that your mother wasn’t your biological mother? Would you go looking for the answer to how that happened if she couldn’t provide an explanation? That’s the intriguing question at the heart of *Half Past*, Stone’s strong follow-up to *Evelyn, After*. [It’s] both a mystery and an exploration of what family really means. Fans of Jodi Picoult will race through this.”

—Catherine McKenzie, bestselling author of *Hidden* and *The Good Liar*

Jane Doe

“Stone does a masterful job of creating in Jane a complex character, making her both scary and more than a little appealing . . . This beautifully balanced thriller will keep readers tense, surprised, pleased, and surprised again as a master manipulator unfolds her plan of revenge.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“Revenge drives this fascinating thriller . . . Stone keeps the suspense high throughout. Readers will relish Jane’s Machiavellian maneuvers to even the score with the unlikable Steven.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Crafty, interesting, and vengeful.”

—*NovelGossip*

“Crazy great book!”

—*Good Life Family Magazine*

“Stone skillfully, deviously, and gleefully leads the reader down a garden path to a knockout WHAM-O of an ending. *Jane Doe* will not disappoint.”

—*New York Journal of Books*

“*Jane Doe* is a riveting, engrossing story about a man who screws over the wrong woman, with a picture-perfect ending that’s the equivalent of a big red bow on a shiny new car. It’s that good. Ladies, we finally have the revenge story we’ve always deserved.”

—*Criminal Element*

“Jane, the self-described sociopath at the center of Victoria Helen Stone’s novel, [is] filling a hole in storytelling that we’ve long been waiting for.”

—*Bitch Media*

“We loved being propelled into the complicated mind of Jane, intrigued as she bobbed and weaved her way through life with the knowledge she’s just a little bit different. You’ll be debating whether to make Jane your new best friend or lock your door and hide from her in fear. Both incredibly insightful and tautly suspenseful, *Jane Doe* is a must-read!”

—Liz Fenton and Lisa Steinke, bestselling authors of *The Good Widow*

“With biting wit and a complete disregard for societal double standards, Victoria Helen Stone’s antihero will slice a path through your expectations and leave you begging for more. Make room in the darkest corner of your heart for Jane Doe.”

—Eliza Maxwell, bestselling author of *The Unremembered Girl*

“If revenge is a dish best served cold, Jane Doe is Julia Child. Though Jane’s a heroine who claims to be a sociopath, Jane’s heart and soul shine

through in this addicting, suspenseful tale of love, loss, and justice.”

—Wendy Webb, bestselling author of *The End of Temperance Dare*

“One word: wow. This novel is compelling from the first sentence. An emotional ride with a deliciously vengeful narrator, Jane’s tale keeps readers on the edge without the security of knowing who the good guy really is. Honest, cutting, and at times even humorous, this is one powerhouse of a read!”

—Brandi Reeds, bestselling author of *Trespassing*

False Step

“[A] cleverly plotted thriller . . . Danger and savage emotions surface as [Veronica] discovers that she’s not the only one whose life is built on secrets and lies. Stone keeps the reader guessing to the end.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Intense and chilling, *False Step* wickedly rewards thriller fans with a compulsive read that’ll leave readers wondering how well they know their loved ones. I was riveted!”

—Kerry Lonsdale, Amazon Charts and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author

Problem Child

“Outstanding . . . Readers will find vicarious joy in Jane’s petty vengeance and unabashed meanness to anyone who tries to take advantage of her. Stone turns some very dark material into an upbeat tale.”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“This installment is highly recommended for fans of edgier psychological fiction.”

—*Library Journal*

The Last One Home

“Stone gradually reveals her multifaceted characters’ secrets as the intricate, fast-paced plot builds to a surprising conclusion. Fans of dark, twisted tales of dysfunctional families will be satisfied.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“The story gives just enough detail each chapter to keep the reader intrigued about where it is going to go next . . . family secrets will never be looked at the same.”

—*The Parkersburg News and Sentinel*

“A slow burner . . . *The Last One Home* takes its time to set the scene for the twists and revelations that will come in the last chapters of the book.”

—*Mystery & Suspense Magazine*

“*The Last One Home* is elegant and chilling, an indelible novel of family secrets. I couldn’t put it down until I learned the truth about these finely drawn characters—the ending left me absolutely shocked and amazed, and I can’t stop thinking about it.”

—Luanne Rice, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Shadow Box*

“Gripping and relentless, *The Last One Home* stalks you like the serial killer within its pages: you know danger is right around the corner, but you don’t know when it’ll strike. And just when you think you have the story figured out, Victoria Helen Stone rips the rug right out from under your feet. Highly recommended!”

—Avery Bishop, author of *Girl Gone Mad*

“In *The Last One Home*, Victoria Helen Stone weaves another sure-handed story, this one about mothers, the fierce love they have for their children, and just how far they will go to protect their progeny. This is a suspense novel that’s in part a love story, as well as a chilling mystery. But it’s the kind of tale that sneaks up on you, revealing discoveries in the last scorching chapters that flip the whole narrative on its head. Full of shifting family loyalties and recollections of the past, and creepy, alone-in-the-

countryside vibes, this book held me, start to finish, in its mesmerizing thrall.”

—Emily Carpenter, author of *Reviving the Hawthorn Sisters*

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ALSO BY VICTORIA HELEN
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LAKE UNION
PUBLISHING

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

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**AT
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CHAPTER 1

The police officer stared at her from behind mirrored sunglasses, his blond brows raised high enough to crease his forehead into deep wrinkles. Lily couldn't make out his eyes behind the lenses, but she tried her best to hold his gaze and look innocent.

The smile lines around his mouth seemed like a good sign, but the dimples she glimpsed when he spoke remained inert now despite her attempts at friendliness. He showed no interest in returning her smile, and she'd convinced herself he must be able to see the frantic thud of her pulse in her throat.

"No," she said again, repeating her answer as if saying it twice would make it more true.

"You're sure about that?" he pressed. "You didn't see anything?"

"I'm sure. Nothing strange around here last night, not that I noticed." Her smile trembled at the edges when his straight mouth stayed firm. "And obviously we're pretty focused on security. Have to be." Her wide gesture toward the storage lockers behind her felt far too dramatic, a hostess showing off prizes on a game show.

"Obviously," he said, finally removing the shield of the reflective glasses. His eyes angled purposefully toward the camera mounted above the gate. Hazel. He had kind hazel eyes and more smile lines to frame them, and the sight eased her fear down by the tiniest fraction.

"Yeah," she offered lamely, following his gaze to the unblinking black of the camera's lens. It perched high above the sad lilac bush she and her son had planted five years earlier. The damn thing had only grown scraggly leaves and hadn't flowered yet, and when her eyes drifted to the branches, she couldn't help but see it as a sign of her failures.

"How many cameras are there? Do they all function?"

“Yes, they work.” She pulled her gaze from the shrub to force herself to meet his eyes. “But the gate never opened after hours last night, Officer. I would have received an alert if it had. It was quiet out here, and the gate is completely disabled after six on Sundays, so the only way in is over the razor wire.”

“It’s ‘Detective.’”

“Pardon?”

“It’s *Detective* Mendelson. I don’t think we’ve met, but I’ve seen you around, I think. Perils of a small town. I’ve probably stood in line behind you at the hardware store.”

“Of course!” she said brightly, though she didn’t remember him, and he was handsome enough that she probably would have. Was it possible he recognized her from the police station? But there had been only two detectives on the force the last time she’d been called in, and he hadn’t been one of them.

She cleared her throat. “Are things that serious? You only said someone reported a car lurking around. Was there a break-in?” Angling her neck, she looked past the gate toward the business park on the other side of the street.

Movement drew her gaze, and she spotted Sharon in front of the upholstery shop, crossing her arms, head craned to the side as she tried to spy. Of course.

Sharon waved cheerfully when she caught Lily staring. The woman had never once expressed any chagrin over what she called her “attention to detail” and Lily called “general nosiness.”

“Detective, if Sharon was the one to call, you should know she has a tendency to overreact. She’s very nice, don’t get me wrong, but . . .”

“You haven’t noticed any parked cars on the road? Maybe people meeting out here at night? Perhaps a woman you’ve never seen before?”

Alarmed at this sudden shift in questioning, she quickly shook her head.

“The lack of lights on this street can encourage unsavory activities,” he added.

Lily was very aware of how dark it could be here after the sun went down. Her place was lit every hour of the day to protect the storage units, but the constant light made her home stand out like a beacon.

It felt eerie driving down the deserted road at night, the facility that housed her apartment spotlighted in the blackness for all to see. Every other business in the isolated development closed at five, six at the latest. On slow Sunday mornings Lily could walk the road for an hour without seeing another soul.

“The street is kind of a catchall,” she said with a shrug. “The UPS guy sometimes sits on the road to have his lunch. People pull over to text or make phone calls. At night . . . I’m not sure. Maybe it’s the latest version of Lover’s Lane for local teenagers? I wouldn’t be surprised. It’s probably a good spot for a meeting place.”

“There’s a back gate?” he asked, ignoring her theories.

“Yes, but it’s only for emergency use and also has an alarm. That’s the reason for the on-site apartment. I’m on call twenty-four hours a day to address any security problems.”

“You live here alone?” He looked past her again, toward the office this time, and the hair rose on the back of Lily’s neck. She got this question surprisingly often, and she hated it every time, but a law enforcement officer like Detective Mendelson was probably the only person who had a good reason to be curious.

And Lily really needed to keep him focused on her and not the maze of hiding places lurking at her back. She needed him to look at her and believe her, so that he would go away and never come back.

“My son and I live here.” She flashed a purposeful grin, determined to make herself believable. “Yes, I know it’s an odd place to live, but it’s a nice, quiet location to raise a family. It’s just us and the pigeons.”

He didn’t laugh as he took a business card from his pocket and handed it over. He didn’t even offer the smile she’d worked so hard for. “The world can be a dangerous place on your own, ma’am.”

“Oh boy, I know.”

He finally met her eyes again, studying her until she had to force herself not to squirm. His sharp jaw ticked once, then twice before he finally nodded. “I’ll be sure to drive out more often now that I know you and your boy are here. Call me if you see anything.”

Oh, damn it. She’d only been trying to seem harmless, not helpless. But she’d taken her acting too far.

“Thank you, but we’re really fine. Like I said, it’s quiet!”

He started to turn away, then changed his mind, his shoulders softening a little. “I know Herriman seems safe and quaint, but there are dangerous people in every community.”

A moment of new worry for Everett broke through the red buzz of Lily’s fear. “Was this more than a tip about a car?”

At long last, Detective Mendelson offered a smile, and his dimples were just as charming as she’d imagined. “Just keep your eyes open, since you’re alone out here at night. Do you have cameras pointing outward? We could review the footage together.”

“The cameras are focused on the gates and the buildings, but I’ll be sure to take a look. The company is pretty strict about customer privacy. We’re part of a big chain, and you know how that goes.” She rolled her eyes as if she considered their rules a burden, but in this case it was a blessing.

“Got it.” He glanced around one last time, then pointed at her hand. “You’ve got my card. Get in touch anytime. I mean it.”

For a brief second she got the impression he might be flirting, but maybe that was why he kept the dimples under wraps. He was pretty cute, and certainly not out of her age range for dating. He looked maybe forty-five? Forty-six?

As if she could risk a cop hanging around.

As if it mattered when she hadn’t dated since college.

She knew thirty-two wasn’t old, but good God, she felt old. Tired of all these years dangling from a cliff’s edge. She couldn’t add new risks to her world. She had to fight her own impulsiveness for the sake of her son. If she drew police attention back into her life . . . If she lost her job . . .

Lily raised her hand in a small wave as the detective took a backward step toward the sedan he’d parked outside the gate. He hadn’t pulled in to one of the visitor spots. Cop instincts, maybe, wanting to leave himself a quick exit in case of an emergency. She admired the watchfulness. She could understand it.

Staring hard until he slipped back into his car, Lily managed another friendly wave of appreciation as he shut the door behind him. He was done. He was leaving. She was safe.

Detective Mendelson had barely made the turn out of the entrance when Sharon Hassan’s foot hit the street. She stepped off the curb to hurry across the road toward Lily.

“Is anything wrong?” she called with far too much excitement in her voice.

“No, nothing.”

“Is Everett okay?”

Lily’s irritation faded a little at the concern for her son.

“Everything is fine! The cops were just checking on that car you saw hanging around last night.”

“Me?” Panting from her near jog to get a little gossip, Sharon pressed a hand to her chest. “No, I didn’t call. Was there a robbery? A break-in?”

Lily frowned at that surprise. “Nothing like that. Just a suspicious car, maybe.”

“Wasn’t that Detective Mendelson? There must be something going on if they sent an actual detective.”

Lily watched as his car disappeared up the road, wondering if she’d been too quick to focus on her own worries. She’d assumed Sharon had been in her shop for a late appointment and had seen the delivery dropped off for Lily after dark. And that definitely would have looked suspicious. But if it wasn’t that?

A little icy fear trickled along her nerves. Were her old ghosts back to haunt her? Had Mendelson only been testing the waters?

She dragged a sleeve over her forehead to wipe off the nervous sweat. “He didn’t offer any specifics. Just asked if I’d seen anything out of the ordinary. A car, people, he wasn’t really clear.”

“Well, I’ll keep my eye out, and I’ll remind Nour to keep the alarm set when I’m not around. She always forgets, and she wears those dang sound mufflers when she’s using power tools. Someone could walk right in and steal the whole place right from under us, and she’d look up an hour later to an empty shop.”

Lily suspected Sharon was actually right about that. Nour was nothing like her wife. She kept her head down and her eyes focused on upholstery and woodworking, and she cared nothing for gossip. Then again, Sharon’s penchant for loose talk fit in perfectly with her front room job of going over fabrics with interior designers and their clients. She always had local stories to pass along, even if Lily had no idea who most of the people were.

Lily had been a part of the community when she’d first moved here, but trying to keep up with cleaning a house, cooking meals, and