

NEW YORK TIMES
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JAYNE
ANN
KRENTZ

SHATTERING
DAWN

TITLES BY JAYNE ANN KRENTZ

THE LOST NIGHT FILES TRILOGY

Shattering Dawn

The Night Island

Sleep No More

THE FOGG LAKE TRILOGY

Lightning in a Mirror

All the Colors of Night

The Vanishing

Untouchable

Promise Not to Tell

When All the Girls Have Gone

Secret Sisters

Trust No One

River Road

Dream Eyes

Copper Beach

In Too Deep

Fired Up

Running Hot

Sizzle and Burn

White Lies

All Night Long

Falling Awake

Truth or Dare

Light in Shadow
Summer in Eclipse Bay
Together in Eclipse Bay
Smoke in Mirrors
Lost & Found
Dawn in Eclipse Bay
Soft Focus
Eclipse Bay
Eye of the Beholder
Flash
Sharp Edges
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Absolutely, Positively
Trust Me
Grand Passion
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Wildest Hearts
Family Man
Perfect Partners
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When She Dreams
The Lady Has a Past
Close Up
Tightrope
The Other Lady Vanishes

The Girl Who Knew Too Much

'Til Death Do Us Part

Garden of Lies

Otherwise Engaged

The Mystery Woman

Crystal Gardens

Quicksilver

Burning Lamp

The Perfect Poison

The Third Circle

The River Knows

Second Sight

Lie by Moonlight

The Paid Companion

Wait Until Midnight

Late for the Wedding

Don't Look Back

Slightly Shady

Wicked Widow

I Thee Wed

With This Ring

Affair

Mischief

Mystique

Mistress

Deception

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Dangerous

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TITLES BY JAYNE ANN KRENTZ AND JAYNE CASTLE

No Going Back



JAYNE ANN
KRENTZ

**SHATTERING
DAWN**

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As always, to Frank, with love

CHAPTER ONE

MAYBE THE STALKER would not return tonight.

Maybe she had imagined the ghostly figure in the hoodie and running sweats. Maybe no one was watching her. Maybe she was falling into a vortex of delusions and hallucinations.

No. She might be losing it but she was not that far gone—not yet, at any rate. She was not hallucinating. She was a rational, logical woman descended from a family tree that had produced a lot of highly successful individuals in fields ranging from psychiatry to engineering.

Okay, so she wasn't one of the overachievers, and yes, there was the occasional self-declared psychic like Aunt Cybil dangling from a branch or two. The point was, none of them had wound up in an asylum. As her mother said, every family had a few eccentrics.

Amelia Rivers hovered in the shadows of her second-floor apartment balcony and struggled to suppress the stirring tentacles of panic. The balmy San Diego night seemed to close in around her.

Dr. Pike was right. She was developing a full-blown phobia, complete with anxiety attacks and excuses. At the rate she was losing ground she would soon become a total recluse after sundown. Pike had warned that the fear would eventually creep into the daylight hours. She probably should not have canceled the last two appointments with him. He meant well. She did not doubt his concern for her mental health. But she no longer had any real hope that he could help her deal with the visions.

She checked her watch. It was almost one o'clock. She clutched the old-school film camera in one hand and waited. The stalker would either show up or not. She no longer knew which outcome she wanted. Both were equally scary. If the watcher was real, she was in danger. If she had hallucinated him, she should probably check herself into a psychiatric hospital.

From where she stood, she had a view of the lushly planted courtyard and the glowing blue pool in the center. The four wings of the two-story apartment complex surrounded the gardens on all sides. There were four entrances. Each was guarded by a high wrought iron security gate and there were cameras, but it was easy enough to slip onto the grounds if you waited for an opportunity to follow a resident inside.

There was no roving guard or drive-by security service. Amenities on that level were only available at the more expensive properties. She was on a budget. It was tough to make a living as a photographer.

Last night the stalker had arrived from the service lane gate, which was veiled by a couple of palm trees and a bunch of strategically planted bushes. No one wanted to look at the massive garbage and recycle bins.

The walls of night seemed to move in on her. She would not be able to stay outside much longer.

Stupid phobia.

She was coming to the grim conclusion that she had imagined the stalker when she glimpsed a slight movement in the shadows near the service lane gate. She almost stopped breathing.

The figure in the hoodie emerged from behind the mass of greenery that shielded the entrance on the far side of the courtyard. The vintage Nikon camera that she had purchased from an online collector shook a little in her fingers. She was already tense but the fresh dose of fear-driven adrenaline sent shivers through her.

The stalker went swiftly along the path that led to the pool and disappeared behind the equipment shed. Something about the smooth, efficient—one could even say *predatory*—way he moved was as disturbing as the silent shriek of her intuition warning her that she was the stranger's

target. Dr. Pike could blame her nerves as much as he liked. She no longer gave a damn. She knew this creepy sensation all too well. This was not the first time she had been hunted.

Down below, the stalker reappeared from behind the pool house. She held her breath, raised the camera, and focused through the viewfinder. She could not use a flash. The bright burst of hot light would interfere with her other vision. But she was not out here on the balcony, braving the oppressive weight of the night, because she hoped to grab a photo of the stalker's face. She was after some very different images, the kind that could only be captured with an old-fashioned single-lens reflex camera and black-and-white film. A digital camera would not work for what she had in mind.

The hooded figure glided toward the courtyard stairs that served her wing of the complex. Sure, he might be a new tenant who happened to live on her floor, but what were the odds?

She waited as long as she dared, letting the stalker get close, and took the picture. The snap of the shutter sounded loud to her ears, but down in the courtyard the figure in the hoodie did not appear to hear it. He continued to head toward the stairs of her building.

A rush of panic hit her. She took another shot, this time with the flash. The bright burst of light grabbed the stalker's attention. He stopped abruptly and looked up. The hood of his sweatshirt still shielded his face.

"You down there in the gardens," she called, going for an irritated but unsuspecting tone. "Would you mind getting out of the way? I'm trying to practice my night photography."

The figure did not move. She got the feeling he was trying to decide how to handle the situation.

"Feel free to stay in the scene," she said. "But I'll be publishing these pics online, so if you value your privacy—"

The stalker made his decision. He whirled and ran, heading back toward the service lane gate.

The balcony door of the apartment two doors down on the right opened. Irene Morgan appeared. She was dressed in a slinky satin bathrobe and a

pair of sexy, stylish mules. Her mane of blond hair hung in deep waves around her lovely face. No matter what she wore she managed to project a vibe of Old Hollywood glamour.

“Amelia?” she said in a loud whisper that enhanced her husky voice. “What’s going on? Are you okay?”

“Yes, fine,” Amelia said. “Sorry to wake you. I was trying to get some night shots.”

“Shut up out there,” the jerk in the apartment between Amelia’s and Irene’s yelled through an open window. “I’ve got an early-morning meeting.”

“Right, sorry,” Amelia said.

The window slammed shut.

“Jerk,” Irene murmured.

“Jerk,” Amelia echoed in low tones. She raised her voice. “It’s all good, Irene. Don’t worry.”

“Okay.” Irene yawned and went back inside.

Amelia darted into her apartment, closed and locked the balcony door, turned on the lights, and took a few deep breaths. Now came the hard part. She wasn’t finished. She had to go downstairs into the gardens to get the other photos.

When her nerves steadied, she went to the table next to the front door of the apartment, picked up the Taser and the key fob, steeled herself, and opened the door.

She went quickly along the open-air walkway that ran the length of the second floor and rushed down the stairs to the courtyard. The panic monster crouched at the edges of her awareness, threatening to pounce. In an effort to hold the anxiety at bay she chanted the signature sign-off of the podcast she and her friends, Pallas and Talia, produced. *We’re in this together until we get answers.*

Unfortunately there was no *we* involved tonight. She was on her own.

Cold sweat was trickling between her breasts and dampening the front of her T-shirt by the time she reached the courtyard path. She went into her

other vision and reminded herself to focus on what she had come out here to see. *Do not get distracted by the fog*, she told herself.

Technically speaking, there was no fog. She had finally come to understand that what she was viewing was an ankle-deep river of luminous paranormal radiation flowing the length of the garden path. The mist was the result of the many layers of energy prints that had been laid down over time by people who had walked along the sidewalk.

In the past few months she had struggled to adapt to her strange new talent, but the learning curve was steep, not to mention unnerving. The one thing she had concluded was that the splashes of energy laid down by individuals were as unique as their fingerprints.

She had also figured out that the energy in the prints faded with time as others walked the same path and left their own tracks.

Fortunately the stalker's footprints were only minutes old. They seethed with strange, erratic currents that sent icy frissons across her senses. Her intuition was screaming at her again but she did not know if it was reacting to the stalker's prints or the claustrophobia generated by the night. She managed to focus through the viewfinder and snap off a couple of shots.

That was it; all she could handle. Taser in one hand, camera in the other, she fled back toward the stairs. She was breathing hard and trembling by the time she was safely inside her apartment.

Stupid, stupid phobia. This was getting ridiculous.

She slammed home the three locks on the door; set the camera, key fob, and Taser on the small hall table; and went around the corner into the kitchen. She opened a cupboard, took down the bottle of pricey cognac that Irene had given her for her birthday, and poured a healthy shot into a water glass.

She carried the glass around the end of the wide island that divided the kitchen from the living room and began to pace, sipping methodically, until she had her nerves back under control.

When she was satisfied that she was no longer a complete wreck she set the unfinished cognac aside. She had work to do. She went back around the