

CATHERINE
COULTER

ENIGMA



GALLERY BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

PROLOGUE



People couldn't move out of his way fast enough, some of them even crossed the street to avoid getting too close to him. He realized, on some level, that what was going on in his head was making him look and act crazy, but he couldn't help that. Maybe the blur of his thoughts, the dizziness, the weakness he felt would get better. His brain tripped away from that thought so fast he couldn't catch it long enough to consider what it meant.

At least he'd managed to get what he needed from Morley's Gun and Sports. He'd broken in, found the AR-15 he was looking for displayed on a wall, and was aware enough to wrap it in a bag along with the Remington cartridges so people wouldn't see he was carrying a rifle. And he'd found some hunting clothes on a display table, grabbed up chinos, shirts, boots, and socks. It had felt strange to be putting on real clothes, clothes that sort of fit. He'd left his green drawstring pants, smock, and slippers on the floor.

CATHERINE COULTER

He put one foot in front of the other on the street, focused only on moving on. He waved down a passing bus and held out the money he'd stolen to the bus driver and let him pick out what was owed. The bus was a gift. Maybe he wouldn't be too late. He sat down, breathed slowly in and out, and whispered his mantra over and over so he wouldn't forget: *I've got to save her; I've got to get to her in time.*

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GEORGETOWN
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SUNDAY, MID-JULY

Dr. Janice Hudson clutched Savich's arm, her words tumbling over one another. "Thank goodness you were home, Dillon, and you came. Listen, I was outside weeding my impatiens when I saw a man ring Kara's doorbell. She opened the door and he started yelling at her, waving his arms around, and then he shoved her inside and closed the door. I heard her scream."

"Did he see you?"

"No, no, he didn't. He's a young man, Dillon, unkempt, baggy clothes, and he had a long package under his arm. I thought it could be some sort of gun." He wanted to tell her that was unlikely, but he'd known Dr. Janice Hudson all his life; she'd been a close friend of his grandmother's. She'd also been a psychiatrist for more than forty years, and he could only

imagine what she'd seen in that time. He'd trusted her instincts enough to drop everything and run over when she'd called him.

"I called 911, too, but I don't know how long it will take them to get here. You have to help Kara, she's such a sweet girl. Like I told you, she's pregnant; the baby is due in one week. She's been renting the house for nearly six months and—"

She drew a deep breath, got herself together. "That's not important. Dillon, when I saw his face, and the way he moved, stumbling and weaving when he stood in place, he seemed severely disturbed, probably medicated. Every now and then he screams at her—there, listen!"

It was a young man's voice, a mad voice overwhelmed with panic. "*You've got to understand! You have to come with me; we have to get away from them. I know they're coming and they'll take you. You've got to come away with me before it's too late!*"

"Who will take her? Before what's too late? He sounds paranoid, delusional. He's been yelling about the baby, ranting and cursing about some kind of gods, making no rational sense. He hasn't said who those gods are, but I'm frightened for Kara, especially if he's armed. I've dealt with people as disturbed as he is too many times in my life not to be. Dillon, you've got to help her, now."

Savich turned to see a police car pull up, a Crown Vic behind it. Two officers piled out of the squad car, and behind them Detective Aldo Mayer, a man other cops called Fireplug

behind his back, hauled himself out of the Crown Vic, looking harassed. Savich could let Mayer deal with this. Mayer had experience, and he'd clearly been close when the call came in. Savich saw him wave to the two officers and motion them over.

The man screamed at them through the front window. *"I know they sent you, but how did they find me so fast? It's too soon! You stay away, I've got a rifle. Stay back!"*

He pushed the barrel of an AR-15 assault rifle out from between the drapes and fired. The cops scrambled for cover as bullets struck the side of the Crown Vic and the patrol car. There was silence again, except for the sirens in the distance.

"Dillon, they're not cops to him, they're here to take him to the people he fears. If he snaps, he might hurt Kara and the baby. His paranoia is out of control, he'll do whatever he thinks he has to do." She leaned into him. "I know a way you can get into Kara's house without anyone seeing you. What do you say?"

Another cop car pulled up to the curb, the officers quickly taking cover. Detective Mayer shouted through a bullhorn, "Sir, we're not here to do you any harm. There's no reason for anyone to get hurt. We can talk, we can figure this out. Tell us the problem, tell us how we can help you."

"Don't lie to me! I know who you are. They found me and sent you. I can beat them, at least for a little while. Leave or I'll kill you,

all of you if I have to! Do you understand me? They don't know everything. I figured it out; I fooled them! I got away from them. Get back!"

Savich heard tears bubbling in his shattered voice. And a deep well of madness, and fear.

The man screamed, *"I'll kill everyone to stop them, do you hear me? I'll kill all of us!"*

He fired off another half-dozen rounds through the small space between the tightly pulled drapes. A front tire on the lead patrol car burst, and bullets shattered the passenger-side window of the Crown Vic, sending Detective Mayer to his belly.

They couldn't return fire, they had no idea where Kara Moody was.

The distant sirens were closer now, and soon there would be pandemonium in the street. Savich would lose his chance. Dr. Janice was right: He had no choice. The man was unpredictable and dangerous, and he had an assault rifle. Savich felt the familiar weight of his Glock on his belt clip and hoped he wouldn't have to use it. He saw Sherlock's beloved face, remembered Sean's manic laughter when he'd beaten his father at a new video game, and prayed he wouldn't take a bullet. Savich said to Dr. Janice, "Tell me how to get in the house."

As she spoke to him, Savich texted Metro detective Ben Raven.

Urgent. Come to 2782 Prospect Street.

Hostage situation. Mayer here. Bail me out.

Savich heard the man yelling again, his panicked madness giving way to something like determination, and acceptance. *“I mean it! It has to stop. I won’t let them hurt her. Leave. Tell them they can’t have her!”*

Savich climbed over Dr. Janice’s fence and dropped onto Kara Moody’s side yard. There were only three high windows on the near side of the house, no chance the man would see him. Savich pushed through a planting of red petunias and white impatiens, cut through a huge star jasmine that covered a root cellar door at the back of the house. Dr. Janice had lived next door for fifty years and knew the original owners had dug out the space to use as a bomb shelter, something from another age.

He moved the jasmine away, saw the moldy wooden door Dr. Janice had described to him. It wasn’t locked. The rusted handle creaked and groaned as he pulled it open and looked down at rotted wooden stairs that disappeared into blackness. He pulled out his cell phone to use as a light, and carefully stepped down the stairs until he felt the rotted wood begin to give way, and jumped, knees bent, to the dirt floor. He felt a rat carcass crunch beneath his boot, breathed in stale, nasty air, cooler than outside, and nearly coughed, but managed to

hold it in. He doubted anyone had been in this shelter since the Nixon administration. His cell light haloed spiderwebs draped from open beams, crisscrossing the space, and more rodent carcasses littered the dirt floor. Jars were lined up on warped wooden shelves, covered with mold, dirt, and spiderwebs. Straight ahead another set of sagging wooden stairs led up to a door. Dr. Janice had told him it opened into a closet in the second bedroom, the baby's room.

He thanked heaven for small favors when the stairs held his weight. He tried the narrow door at the top. It was locked. He grabbed the wooden rail to steady himself, reared back, and slammed his shoulder against the lock. It held. He reared back again and this time he kicked it, nearly lost his balance, and felt his heart do a mad flip. The door popped open. He prayed the man hadn't heard him.

He shoved the door slowly outward, pushing aside cardboard boxes stacked against it, until he had enough of a path to pass. He eased the outer closet door open slowly and looked into a room painted a light blue. A bright mobile with the name *Alex* hung over a crib, and next to the crib was a rocking chair with a blue throw and a dresser painted with Walt Disney characters. Everything was ready for the baby's arrival.

He stepped quietly into the hallway, guessed he was thirty feet from the living room when he heard the man screaming

at the cops again. *"Bastards! They sent you, didn't they? But they don't want me dead, not yet at least, so he told you not to kill me."*

Savich heard Kara Moody's voice, soft and low, but he couldn't make out what she was saying. She sounded controlled, trying to keep him calm. He prayed she could hold herself together a bit longer. It might help keep the man from shooting her . . . and then possibly himself.

Savich held his Glock at his side and walked as quietly as he could through the updated kitchen toward an arched opening to the dining room. The L-shaped living room was beyond it, and he saw Kara Moody first, her ankles and wrists duct-taped to a chair, her long straight dark hair straggling around her face. A burgundy Redskins T-shirt covered her big belly and her loose white cotton pants. Her narrow feet were bare. She was in her midtwenties, and pretty. Her eyes were fastened on her feet, trying to avoid the man's eyes, and his attention. Savich moved forward, saw the man standing by the window in profile, the assault rifle held loosely at his side. Savich wondered where he'd gotten hold of that killing machine. He was swaying back and forth. Was it from stress or drugs? Probably both. He'd sounded young, but still, Savich was surprised to see he was no older than twenty-five, slight, maybe one forty, and no taller than five foot nine. There was a light beard scruff on his narrow face. He might have

been good-looking if rage and fear weren't contorting his face. He wore a wrinkled shirt over baggy chinos that looked like he'd lived in them since he'd escaped from wherever he'd been held, from the people who'd probably been trying to take care of him. Were they the gods he was running from, the gods he believed had found him so quickly and sent the police to bring him back?

Savich flattened himself behind the dining room wall, next to the arched opening, and calmed his breathing. He heard Detective Mayer's voice on the bullhorn trying to reason with a man who had no tether to reason, offering to provide him whatever he wanted if he didn't harm Ms. Moody.

The man screamed, *"You're a liar! I don't believe you, not a word! I won't let you take me, or take her. Do you hear me?"* He let out a high, mad laugh. *"I will not let you win!"* He screamed the words again, wailed them. Then he stopped, turned to face Kara Moody, and whispered, *"I don't know what to do. I've got to figure this out. I want what's best for you, I do, only not how you'd think. But maybe it doesn't matter now."*

He began shaking his head, and his free hand tugged at his hair. He was ready to break and yelled, *"What am I going to do?"*

Kara Moody raised her head, and Savich realized she knew as well as he did it was crunch time and she had to try. "Please listen to me. Please tell me who you are and why you want me

to go with you. Go where? Who is after you? After us? Can't you see I'm pregnant?"

He ran to her, leaned forward, cupped her chin in his hand, and jerked her face up. *"Of course you're pregnant. Why do you think I came? Did you call them? Did you tell them I was here?"* He stopped again, shook his head, as if trying to straighten out his thoughts. *"No, you didn't call them; I didn't let you. I had to tie you up, you know that, don't you? You'd have run before I could convince you to come with me. Wait, then who called them? I don't understand. I don't understand!"*

Savich couldn't act, the man was too close to her, his face nearly touching hers, close enough to kiss her. Her voice remained amazingly calm as she whispered into his face, "No, I didn't call them. I don't like them, either. I don't want them to get near me. Who are you? Have I seen you before? Were you in Baltimore?"

"Baltimore," he repeated, as if trying to make sense of it.

He reared back and screamed at her, spittle flying, *"I'm an enigma. He keeps telling me that's what I am, that is what we are. I can't let them take me, can't let them take you! It's evil, a monstrous evil!"* He shoved himself back away from her.

"Drop the gun now!"

The man whipped around at the sound of Savich's voice and yelled, "No!" He jerked up his rifle, screamed, *"How did you get in here?"*

Savich fired, hit the gun, and sent it flying out of the man's hands, skidding across the oak floor to fetch up against a chair leg. The young man howled and lunged toward Kara, his hands outstretched. Savich fired again, striking him high in the shoulder. He flinched, but it didn't stop him. His hands were reaching toward her big belly. Savich took careful aim and fired just as Kara lurched back in the chair and it toppled over. The bullet blew a cloud of blood from the man's head, and he jerked backward at the impact. But it had only grazed him, and he whirled around again to face Savich. He looked confused, like a child being disciplined for something he didn't understand. He licked dry lips, whispered, *"I don't understand. You're not a god. They don't want me dead. Who are you?"* He grabbed his shoulder when his brain finally recognized his pain, and he staggered, tears streaming down his face. He slammed his other hand to his head, and brought it down again, stared at the blood seaming between his fingers. He made a small mewling sound, his eyes rolled back in his head, and he fell on his side to the floor. He was out.

Savich pulled Kara's chair back up, saw she was all right. "Hold on." He knew everyone had heard the shots. He raced to the window to see a newly arrived SWAT team jogging toward the house, their weapons at the ready, bulletproof shields in front of them as they prepared to rush the house. He heard Mayer's voice shouting, "Go, go, go!"

As if choreographed, a dozen cops rose up from behind their police cars to fan out behind them. Savich threw open the door, raised his creds in the air through the opening, yelled, “FBI! The shooter is down! It’s over! The shooter is down!”

It was as if they didn’t see him, hadn’t heard him, as if they were guided missiles set on their course. They kept coming. Savich understood the adrenaline rush, knew their training had hardwired them not to stop until they got to Kara Moody.

He yelled again, “FBI. Dillon Savich! The man is alive but he’s down! Don’t shoot! It’s over!”

The SWAT team leader stopped, raised his hand. “Is that you, Savich? Dillon Savich?”

It was Luke Palmer, twenty-year veteran, a man he’d met a couple of years before at the gym, a man he knew was scary good at his job.

“Luke, yes, it’s me, Savich! He’s down, unconscious! Ms. Moody is unhurt.”

“But how did you— Never mind.” Luke turned, spoke to his team, then shouted to the cops surrounding the house, “Stand down! It’s Agent Dillon Savich. The shooter is down!”

There were shouts in return, and Luke yelled out again, “It’s over! Stand down!” He and his people lowered their weapons and were soon all in the house. Luke paused a moment and shook Savich’s hand. “Nice work.”

Detective Mayer roared through the open front door,

yelled, “What do you mean it’s over? Savich? What is the fricking FBI even doing here?”

Savich looked over at Mayer, a man who relied on intimidation to get his way, a man who liked to enforce rules but only if they didn’t apply to him. He’d always disliked Savich, called him a glory hound to his face and who knew what else behind his back. What would Mayer call him now? Savich didn’t care. He turned back into the house. He’d deal with Mayer later.

He saw Luke and his SWAT team had already secured the man’s rifle and clamped his wrists in front of him with flex-cuffs, even though he was unconscious. Savich supposed the bullet that had grazed his head had knocked him out. He hoped there was no more serious damage. A team member began applying pressure to the shoulder wound and another pressed a bandage against the man’s head. The bullet wound in his shoulder looked to be through and through, hopefully not too serious.

Savich went to Kara Moody. A Metro officer was cutting the duct tape from around her ankles and wrists with a pocket knife. She gasped in pain when her wrists were freed. The officer gently pulled her arms back in front of her and began rubbing her wrists.

Savich went down on his haunches in front of her. “Your shoulders should stop hurting soon, and in a couple of minutes you’ll have your feeling back.”

Kara stared at him, licked her dry lips. “You shot him twice. He’s not dead, is he?”

“No, he’s not dead. You don’t know who he is?”

She shook her head, a hank of sweaty hair stuck to her cheek. “I’ve never seen him before in my life. He said he wanted to save me from something, but when the cops arrived he thought they were here to take him, and take me, too—some-where, he didn’t say. He was mumbling, shaking, and a couple of times he staggered.” She stopped talking, took a breath. Then she attempted a smile. “I know who you are—you’re Dr. Janice’s friend, Dillon Savich, the FBI agent. She’s told me about you. She told me she was glad she had at least one friend at the top of the food chain, someone who kicked big butt.”

He started to say something about Sherlock kicking big butt, instead he said only, “Yes. Dr. Janice called me.”

“If she hadn’t, I might be dead. Thank you.”

He smiled, still feeling the rush of adrenaline pumping through him. “I’m as relieved as you are that we’re both still alive.” He looked toward the unconscious young man. “I’m glad he’s alive, too.”

Savich felt her eyes on his face. “He looks so young. Why me? Why did he come here, to me?” Her breathing hitched and a lone tear streaked down her cheek. She tried to raise her arm, but it still hurt too much. Savich wiped the tear away. She said against his hand, her own hands on her belly, “Thank you

for our lives.” She looked over at the still figure. “He is mad, isn’t he?”

Savich saw the living room had filled with cops, most of them shooting looks at him. He turned back to Kara. “He seemed to be.” He noticed how hard she must have pulled against the duct tape that bound her ankles and wrists, hard enough to leave angry furrows. “Now you need to get back to thinking about yourself and your baby. There’s nothing more to be afraid of. The police will find out who he is and why he came here to you.” Savich hoped that would be true, that Mayer would chase it down.

A paramedic came to look at Kara. “Are you all right, ma’am?”

She managed a nod.

“How does he look?” Savich asked, nodding toward the young man being loaded onto a gurney.

“The shoulder doesn’t look bad. The bullet tore through fat and muscle and exited. There’s always a lot of bleeding from scalp wounds, but his skull seems intact. We don’t know why he’s unconscious, though. We need to get him to a CT scanner right away.” He gave Savich a salute. “He was either very lucky or that was good shooting,” and he ran after the departing gurney.

Savich heard Mayer shout his name. He rose and turned to see Fireplug charging him like an enraged bull. He didn’t want

to have to deal with Mayer now, with everyone's adrenaline still running high, with violent emotions still boiling below the surface. He didn't want to have to punch him out, say something he'd be sure to regret later. Then again, maybe not. No, he had to keep a lid on it. Where was Ben Raven when he needed him? Savich straightened, looked at Mayer straight on, and kept his voice calm. "Detective Mayer, you'll be pleased to know Ms. Moody is all right."

"I don't care if you live here, or if a neighbor called you! It doesn't matter. You had no right to enter her house!"

Savich imagined hurling Mayer through the window, watching him land on his face in the rosebushes. But that wouldn't do. Savich turned his back on Mayer and helped Kara Moody stand up. She sagged against him, and he held her up, began rubbing her back. Her belly was as big as Sherlock's had been right before Sean was born. He realized he'd rubbed Sherlock's back just that way.

He heard Mayer's furious voice. "I'm going to see you brought up on charges, you pushy bastard, you interfered in a police matter. You've got no defense."

Before Savich could figure out how to answer Fireplug, he heard Detective Ben Raven's voice shouting, "It's all right, Aldo! Pull yourself together. Savich checked with me first!"

Savich thought that sounded good, even righteous.

Mayer whipped around, his face red, his pulse pounding

in his neck. “Don’t try to protect him, Raven! He shouldn’t be here and neither should you! I was over on Wisconsin when the call came in, I was first on scene. I don’t even know how he got into the house without any of us seeing him.”

Savich said, “Dr. Janice Hudson, whose house is directly next door, called me because I live on the next block. She was a psychiatrist for nearly half a century, and she was certain he was on the edge, that there wasn’t time to wait. She knew a back way into the house.”

Raven grabbed Mayer’s arm before he could move on Savich. “Use your brain, Aldo, calm down! The hostage is okay. The shooter is down. We won. We all won. Isn’t that victory enough?”

There was stone silence from Mayer. He sucked in a breath and stepped back, shook off Ben’s hand. “This isn’t over, Savich.”

“It should be, Detective,” Savich said. He sent a nod to Raven and said to Kara Moody, who’d been staring at Mayer, obviously confused. “When’s the baby due?”

She looked at the man’s blood on the oak floor, knew she could have so easily died, Alex could have died. But they hadn’t. She gave Savich a big smile. “Well, actually, soon now. I’ve been in labor for the past ten minutes.”