

Scalise/*And Every Man Has to Die*

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And Every Man Has To Die
A River City Crime Novel

by

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'Tis a hard winter when one wolf eats another.
-Russian Proverb

ONE

Friday, July 11th, 1998

2214 hours

Graveyard Shift

"Adam-122, on scene," chirped Officer Katie MacLeod's radio.

Adam-122 was the call sign for Officers Battaglia and O'Sullivan. Despite the joking demeanor both of them always seemed to put on display, Katie was glad they were responding with her. The call came in as a violent domestic dispute in apartment #7 of the Delilah Apartments. The neighbor who called it in reported crashing noises and screaming from inside the apartment. If there was a scrap going on, it'd be nice to have Sully and Batts at her side.

Katie guided the patrol cruiser along the curb, gliding to a stop. She allowed herself a quick look at the small four inch by four inch computer display in the console area. The devices were fairly new to the River City Police Department, though she

knew they'd been in cars down in L.A. for almost a decade. The amber screen was so small that she had to page down twice to read the entire description of the call, including which apartment the witness lived in. Then she reached for her own microphone.

"Adam-116, on scene."

"Copy, Adam-116."

Katie glanced around and didn't see another cruiser. Then she remembered that the Delilah Apartments had a rear entry, too. Battaglia and O'Sullivan probably parked behind.

Katie grabbed her PR-24 side-handle baton and stepped out of the vehicle. Out of habit, she closed the door silently, easing it shut instead of slamming it. She slid the heavy metal baton into the ring on her belt and made her way to the front door. The heavy sway and solid tap of the baton against her side gave her confidence. Most smaller officers seemed to prefer the straight wooden baton, but Katie stuck with the larger side-handle. While some complained that it was unwieldy, she found that she liked the heft. More than that, it got the job done.

The front entrance to the apartment complex was supposed to be secure, but someone had used a softball sized rock to prop the door open. Probably Sully. He was more thoughtful than Batts. Grateful, Katie pushed the door open further and stepped inside. A large, steep staircase awaited her on the left. On the right was a narrow

hallway. A sign indicated that apartments one through five were on the ground floor. Six through ten resided upstairs on the second floor. The third floor was home to eleven through fifteen.

Katie started up the stairs toward number seven.

"Adam-122, start medics." The slight elevation in Battaglia's voice came through, even over the radio. *"I've got a conscious female, suffering from blows to the head."*

"Copy. Is she breathing?"

"I just said she's conscious, didn't I!"

"Copy, but Medics need to know—"

The harsh buzz of multiple radio transmissions interrupted her.

"Other unit?" the dispatcher asked.

"-22," O'Sullivan said quickly, *"the neighbor says the suspect is probably still in the building. He just left less than thirty seconds ago."*

Katie quickened her steps as she neared the top of the steep staircase.

"Description?"

"He's a white male," O'Sullivan answered, *"large build, wearing a white tank top."*

Katie reached the top of the stairs. She started to turn the corner to her left when a mountain in a sleeveless, white tank top barreled toward her. As soon as his chest brushed up against her, he immediately stopped short.

The man gave Katie an appraising look. She stared back at him resolutely.

“Police,” she said in a firm voice, pointing at the top stair. “You need to have a seat right there.”

He didn’t comply. Instead, he stood staring at her with dark, flat eyes. Katie could see the gears working inside his mind and immediately sensed she didn’t have much time. Wrapping her left hand on her side-handle, she depressed her radio mike with her right.

“Adam-116, I’ve got him here on the stairs. He’s –”

The man burst forward. He barreled into Katie, driving her backward. Panic flared in her stomach as she lost her balance, falling to the rear. The man’s huge hands clutched at her shoulders and upper arms, pulling her to the ground with him. The two tumbled down the narrow stairs in a heap. As they bounced and jostled awkwardly, Katie’s equipment on her belt dug into her sides, caught on the railing, twisted on her belt. Her baton momentarily caught in the fold of her knee, causing a twinge of pain.

Suddenly, a shot of piercing pain blazed through Katie’s left ankle. She imagined a piece of the banister must have shattered and been jabbed through the leather of her boot and into her flesh. She tried to suppress a cry, but could only dampen it to a painful grunt.

The disorienting roll down the stairs ended as the pair flopped into the entry-way. Katie landed on her back with his weight on top of her. The bullet-resistant vest softened the sharpness of her landing, but did nothing to blunt the force. Her breath

whooshed out as her lungs collapsed. Frantically, she struggled for breath, her mind whirring.

Where's backup?

What's my next move?

Why can't I breathe?

The large man let out a long, ragged grunt and pushed himself up. The release of weight from her chest provided some relief, but she still gasped and labored to fill her lungs. The sickening feeling of being unable to breathe began to fade as sweet oxygen trickled in.

The man got his knees under him and started to rise. His head turned left and right, searching for an escape. Katie's hand flashed out, clutching his wrist.

"You're under arrest!" she tried to say, but could only wheeze out the final syllable.

His gaze snapped back to Katie. He stared at her a moment, his flat countenance revealing nothing. Katie took advantage of his hesitation to draw a shallow breath. Then she repeated, "You're under arrest. Stop resisting."

She felt a momentary sense of the ridiculous, uttering those words while lying on her back beneath his powerful frame. An image of the defiant mouse firing a middle finger at the descending eagle flashed through her mind.

"*Nyet,*" the man grunted. He jerked his arm, breaking Katie's grasp on his wrist.

Katie drove her left knee upward with as much force as she could muster, slamming into his groin. His eyes bulged in surprised pain. The collision sent throbbing waves of pain down her leg to her injured ankle. She did her best to ignore it.

Reaching up, Katie cupped his chin in her right palm. With her other hand, she tried to find a grip on the hair at the back of his head. The short military haircut allowed her no purchase, so she settled for pressing her palm against the rear of his skull and cork-screwing. This forced the man's head down toward the floor beside Katie. His large form twisted slowly, then fell like a giant redwood. Katie imagined the entire move took almost an hour, though she knew that it had been perhaps a second.

That single second seemed to be enough time for the massive man to recover his senses after the blow to his groin. He drew back his left hand and threw a ham-sized fist at Katie's head. Instinctively, she tucked her chin and pulled up her shoulder. The blow landed square on her shoulder joint. Pain reverberated through her arm and chest. She let out a small cry of pain and anger.

He smiled and drew back his arm again.

Tucking her shoulder had caused her to lose her position of modest control on his chin, so she abandoned that grappling move altogether. Instead, she pulled back both arms to defend against the punch. She took the blow on the meaty part of her forearm.

Katie bit back a yelp. Without hesitating, she rolled away from the man, giving

herself some distance. The roll was awkward as she bumped and clumped over the gear on her belt. As soon as she was facing him again, she pushed up to her knees.

He stood, rising up like a grizzly bear in front. Cold anger flashed in his eyes. He muttered something in guttural Russian. She didn't know what the words meant, but she understood the sentiment.

Katie dropped her hand onto her radio. Her thumb sought out the small, depressed red button that would tell every cop in the city she needed immediate help. Before she could find it, he took a step forward.

Katie rose to her feet to meet him. As soon as she put weight on her left foot, a flood of pain thundered up her leg. She shifted her weight and struggled to remain standing.

A cruel smile formed on his lips as he moved toward her. His fists hung at his sides, clenched into massive, tight balls.

Katie felt strangely calm. She knew what she had to do. This guy was a wife-beater. He was a big man who thought he was indestructible. He was double her size and strength. She was going to have to shoot him. Or at least demonstrate that she was willing to do so.

She reached for her pistol, but her hand clutched at nothing. Her fingers searched wildly for a moment before she realized that her holster was empty.

Panic flared in the pit of her stomach. Before she could piece together what

might have happened to her gun, the man was upon her. Instead of punching her, he barked out a short laugh and said something derisive in Russian. His palms exploded toward her, catching her full in the chest. The force of the push drove her backward into a row of metal mailboxes along the wall. Something clipped her on the back of the head. She felt a trickle hot blood ooze out of the cut.

No gun.

What now?

He started toward her again, that same expression of cold anger and utter arrogance beaming out at her. She could read his thoughts in his icy eyes. He thought she was nothing more than something to toy with now. Someone to express his dominance over, just like he'd probably been doing with whatever woman was upstairs for however many years. The same kind of guy who didn't think she could do her job because she was a woman.

Katie set her jaw.

"Fuck you," she whispered, sliding her baton out of its holder and pulling it into a ready position.

He paused for a moment, watching as she brandished the metal tube. The smile on his lips spread, exposing his square, yellow teeth. "Fuck me?" he asked, his accent thick. He pointed at the baton. "I fuck you with that, *suka*."

"You're under arrest," Katie repeated grimly.

He let out another short, barking laugh and started toward her again. He offered no caution, no defense. Arrogant confidence accentuated his every motion.

Katie loaded her weight on her good leg, blading her body slightly. She held the baton by the side handle with her right hand, wrapping her left hand around the shaft and cocking it near her body. She drew in a deep breath and waited.

When he was within range, he lashed out suddenly with a hard right. Katie was prepared, though. She launched straight forward, putting every ounce of strength into her attack in an all-or-nothing gambit. She propelled forward, driving the tip of the baton directly toward his solar plexus, every bit of her weight behind the blow. His huge fist grazed past her ear as she slipped inside his range.

A moment later, the baton struck. All of her energy combined with his forward motion to seemingly impale him upon the baton. He let out a cry of pain, surprise and anger. His sour, harsh breath washed over her as both of them toppled to the ground.

This time, Katie landed on top. Immediately, she scrambled up his body until she knelt straddling his chest. She slammed the tip of the baton into the floor next to his throat, then lowered the baton across his throat. She stopped short of applying anything more than token pressure. Her eyes blazed into his.

“You make one more move and I will crush your throat,” she growled at him.
“You’ll choke to death on your own blood. You hear me?”

He stared back at her, saying nothing.

She nudged his throat slightly, causing him to wince. "Do you understand?" she said, raising her voice.

He gave her a short nod.

"Good," she said. "Now put your hands straight out to the side. Slowly."

The man moved his arms in a slow motion until they were in position.

"Turn your palms to the ground," Katie ordered, staring into his eyes, but watching his hands in her peripheral vision.

Slowly, deliberately, he rolled his wrists until his palms were on floor.

"Good," Katie said again. "Now just lay there and don't move."

As if on cue, Katie heard the thundering sound of heavy boots on the stairway.

"MacLeod!" a male voice called out.

"Down here!" Katie yelled back.

The tramping boots came closer. A moment later, Sully reached the landing. He pulled up short for a moment, taking in the scene.

"Jesus," he whispered, then stepped forward and immobilized one of the suspect's arms at the elbow and wrist, using his knee and one hand.

A moment later, Battaglia appeared at the bottom of the stairs. He took one look at the scene, whispered, "Jesus," and then moved quickly to the other arm. "You cuff," he told Sully.

Katie kept her baton in place as Sully retrieved his cuffs from his belt, even

though she knew that if the man chose to fight now, she would never use such a desperate technique. Not with Sully and Batts here. But, before, when she'd been alone...

The metallic sound of ratcheting cuffs broke into her thoughts. "Got him, Katie," Sully said as he secured the suspect's wrist. "You can move."

Katie released her dominant position, then slid off the suspect to her own right side. The adrenaline that had sustained her just thirty seconds ago was already beginning to fade. She could feel the warm sticky blood in her hair. Her shoulder and arm throbbed with each pulsing beat of her heart. But it was the cold, cutting pain that lanced upward from her ankle worried her the most.

She slid backward until she backed into the wall, this time below the mailboxes. Dimly aware of a second set of ratcheting sounds while the other two officers took her attacker into custody, she set her baton on the floor, reached down and pulled up her uniform pant leg. She fully expected to see a ragged cut, but was surprised that the boot remained intact. No cut.

Katie stared for a moment, then realized that if the cutting hadn't occurred *outside* the boot, then the injury was all *inside* the boot. Which meant –

"You all right?" Sully's voice pierced her realization.

Katie glanced up at him. "What?"

"I said, are you all right?" Sully repeated, his face darkening with concern.

Katie swallowed and nodded. "I'm fine."

Sully gave her an appraising look, his eyes taking her condition in more completely. He opened his mouth to speak, but Katie cut him off.

"Just stuff him," she said, her voice sharp. "We'll talk after."

Sully's eyes widened slightly at her tone, but then he nodded in understanding.

"Let's go, asshole," Battaglia said, standing the suspect up. Sully took his other arm and together, they escorted him down the narrow hallway and out the rear door.

Katie let out a long sigh and looked down at her trembling hands. She knew that they'd have to walk him to the car in the rear, search him and put him in the back seat. That gave her about two minutes. Two minutes to get her act together.

She forced herself to her feet, leaning heavily on her right leg. She half-hopped, half-shuffled toward the stairs, her eyes scanning the dimly lit landing. When she didn't see anything, she moved to the bottom of the stairs and peered upward. Her eyes scanned each step, but she saw nothing.

Katie pulled her small backup flashlight from her belt and flicked it on. She bathed every step with the wavering light, but there was still no sign of her gun. She turned and swept the light beam slowly around the landing. Her heart began to pound again, a different brand of fear growing in the pit of her stomach.

Any cop that loses her gun –

Then she saw it, tucked into the corner of the landing. It must have been torn

from her holster as the two of them were tumbling down the stairs, then skittered across the landing into the corner.

Katie limped heavily to the corner, reached down and retrieved the pistol. A quick examination revealed no damage. She slid into her holster with relief, then shuffled back to the foot of the stairs. The throbbing in her ankle now dwarfed the pain in her shoulder. She eased herself onto the third stair from the bottom and straightened her injured leg.

Waiting, Katie took several deep breaths to calm herself. Even so, her hands still trembled with the after-wash of adrenaline. She felt like she wanted to cry. She wanted to scream in anger. Sink into a warm bath. Instead, she sat and waited.

A short time later, Sully appeared again. "He's in the back of our patrol car," he reported. "Now, are you okay?"

Katie swallowed. "I'm a little hurt. Did you get probable cause to arrest him up there at the apartment?"

Sully shrugged. "Close enough. I'll need to finish my interview with the neighbor. The wife has a shiner and a split lip, but she's not saying anything."

"Well," Katie said, "you can add assault on a law enforcement officer to whatever other charges you end up with."

Sully's eyebrows went up. "He hurt you?"

Katie nodded.

“Bad?”

She shrugged. The motion caused her to wince in pain from her shoulder. “Bad enough,” she said, trying to keep it together. “I probably need to see a doctor, anyway.”

“What happened?”

“I think I broke my ankle when we fell down the stairs.”

Sully looked up at the steep, narrow staircase and whistled. “I can see that happening easily enough. What else? Do you need anything?”

Katie took another deep breath. “I could use a ride to the hospital,” she half-joked.

“I’ll call an ambulance,” Sully said.

“I don’t know if that’s necess—”

Sully raised his radio to his mouth. “Adam-122, I need an RA here for an injured officer. Conscious and breathing. Possible broken ankle.”

“Copy.”

“And start me a supervisor,” Sully added.

“Copy.”

Katie scowled. “Thanks, Sully. Now the whole world knows.”

He shrugged. “Everyone on the job is going to find out that you kicked the shit out of a guy three times your size anyway, MacLeod. So what’s the big deal?”

"The big deal is, I'm hurt. I don't want everyone to know that."

"Why?"

She didn't answer the question. He wouldn't understand, anyway. Instead, she said, "It's not just cops, bonehead. Everyone with a scanner knows, too."

Sully shrugged. "I still don't see—"

"The asshole in the back of your car knows, too." Tears rose in her eyes. She used the back of her hand to brush them away with annoyance. "I don't want him knowing he hurt me, all right?"

"Okay," Sully said.

"I mean, I know he's going to find out eventually, once we charge him and everything," Katie said, her words tumbling out. "He'll see the report and we'll go to court and all that. But I don't want him to know *now*. I don't want him to know how close —"

Sully reached out and rested his hand on her left shoulder. "It's okay. I understand."

Katie looked up and met his gaze. "Do you?"

Sully grinned and shrugged. "Kinda. But not really."

Katie smiled through her tears. "You're an asshole, Sully."

"Aye, lass," he whispered in his faux brogue. "But don't worry about it. The dude in our car isn't listening to anything except country music right now." Laughter

glinted in his eyes. "Cranked up country music, actually, since he looked like the heavy metal type."

Katie let out a small chuckle. "All right. Good enough."

Sully squeezed her shoulder gently. Then he raised his radio to his mouth again.

"Adam-122 to Officer Battaglia."

"Go ahead," replied Battaglia. Katie heard a snatch of a twanging guitar in the background.

"Go ahead and transport to jail," Sully transmitted. "I'll stay here and finish up."

"Copy."

Sully slid his radio back onto his belt. "He'll be long gone before the ambulance gets here," he told her.

"Thanks," Katie said. Slight nausea crept into her stomach as the adrenaline faded further. She swallowed heavily.

Sully chuckled and shook his head. "Katie MacLeod, I've gotta hand it to ya. You are the bomb, lass."

Katie managed a weak smile, but said nothing.

Together, they waited for the Sergeant Shen and the ambulance.

2217 hours

Valeriy Alexandrovich Romanov stood in the enclosed bus stop, smoking. He watched what he thought of as something akin to a street opera performance at the apartment complex across the street...

Read the rest of *And Every Man Has To Die!*