

# **Escape From South Max**

Part One of the Series  
*Tales From the County Jail*

By  
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*Escape From South Max*  
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The author has rated this work **R** for violence, offensive language.

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## **Escape From South Max**

Nearly a decade had elapsed since Donny Ray had slit that old bitch's throat and he still thought about it every day. He had no remorse for having cut her so deep that the knife scraped against her spine. She deserved it. She should have given him her money. Now that he was in jail he thought about that incident more and more. It excited him. It made his heart pound and gave him an erection. He would sometimes use the memory of that old woman gurgling and fighting for her life as the prelude to masturbation. That was when he got his first taste of blood.

Some people become killers out of necessity -- they need money or they need an uncontested divorce. Something like that. Donny Ray began killing because killing was enjoyable. Taking down humans was the ultimate sport and drinking their blood gave him a sense of power. It was more than mere adrenaline. He could feel the victim's life coursing through his own veins as if he had just added their strength to his own. Of course the blood had to be consumed straight from the victim's warm body. It was an addiction -- and the frequency of his urges, killing three or four a week, that had been his undoing.

Donny Ray sat at the stainless steel table in the maximum security unit of the county jail where he was awaiting trial. He pretended to watch the television while he listened to the other fourteen inmates babble about meaningless things. They were all a bunch of mindless drones but he hoped that eventually one of them would say something useful. Maybe give him one little piece of information he could use. He was locked up for the time being but there was no way they would keep him here. Eventually someone would give up a clue that would help him escape. He listened and he watched.

##

Deputy Sharp sat at his desk in the maximum security unit looking around into the pods. He felt eyes scrutinizing him but he was unable to determine who they belonged to. There were six pods in this unit and with that many criminals in one place it was not unusual to get that feeling. He was always being watched, just like he was always watching them.

He heard the radio key up. "Unit 5, this is Unit 4." The shift leader was calling him.

He pressed the button on the side of his set. "Unit 5, go," he said.

"Unit 5, give me a call land line." Sharp knew that meant more work and his dance card was already full. He blew out a heavy breath.

"Ten four."

He picked up the phone and dialed the shift leader's intercom number. "What's up?"

"I need for you and five alpha to take Donny Ray Tucker to the conference room for a session with a shrink." Unit five alpha was Deputy Hall -- Sharp's partner.

"OK." He rubbed that back of his neck.

"Now listen. Tucker is a dangerous man and prone to violent behavior. I want both of you to escort him."

"No problem, Sarge." Sharp's voice sounded calm and compliant, but he was getting irritated at being treated like a rookie.

"And cuff this guy. I don't want any chance of him attacking anyone."

"This is not my first day on the job, Sarge. I got it covered." Sharp said as he hung up the phone. He turned to Hall who was now standing beside his desk and repeated their instructions. Then he rose and pressed the call box on the wall.

"Control, open Pod 346, please." The door buzzed and Deputy Hall pulled it open.

Sharp's veteran eyes scanned the pod as the stench of fifteen unwashed inmates wafted into the hall. "Tucker, let's go. You have an appointment."

The inmate strolled out of the pod and put his hands on the wall. "Are the showers working okay in there," Sharp asked.

"Yeah. They work just fine. Why?" Tucker's eyebrows crunched forward.

"Never mind." Hall shook his head.

After placing the handcuffs on Donny Ray's wrists, the two deputies led him down the main hallway to the conference room -- a place where inmates met with their lawyers, mental health professionals and police officers. Inside the small room, a young

woman was waiting and already seated at the table. Sharp guided the inmate onto the seat opposite from her and stepped away, resting his back against the wall.

The woman stood and addressed the two deputies. "I'm Marley Melloy. I am a forensic psychologist and I'm here to examine Mr. Tucker."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Sharp.

"I need to speak with my patient privately, if you don't mind."

Sharp gave his partner a glance. He, too, looked uneasy about leaving Tucker in here alone with this woman. "You sure you wouldn't like for us to stay? Just for your safety, you understand."

Marley looked down at the inmate's cuffed wrists. "He's restrained. Thank you for your concern, but I'm sure I'll be fine."

"Okay Ms. Melloy. We will be just outside the door if you need us," Sharp said. He looked into Donny Ray's eyes. "Mr. Tucker, we will be able to see you from out there. Don't do anything stupid."

The inmate smirked as the two deputies walked out into the hallway and closed the door. "She's one fine little shrink," said Hall.

"Yeah, well just keep your eyes on the inmate," Sharp responded.

##

Marley walked back toward the table and she caught the inmate fondling her body with his eyes. She hurriedly took her seat, attempting to get some of her parts out of his view before she began her evaluation.

"The Commonwealth's Attorney has asked me to come and find out how you are doing. Are you okay with talking to me for a few minutes?" She put on her best sympathetic smile in an attempt to put him at ease.

"So you're working for the guy who wants to fry me. And you think I'm going to give you information to help him do that. You're crazy, lady." Donny Ray glanced at the door, then returned his gaze to her throat.

She understood his reluctance, but she had a job to do. "It's not like that, Donny. I'm not here to talk about your charges. I only want to find out if you are capable of

assisting in your own defense and in order to do that I need to talk with you. Can we do that?" She twisted a pen in her fingers as she searched his face for signs of insanity.

Donny Ray stared into Marley's eyes for a few seconds. Then his eyes moved down to her breasts where he lingered long enough to make her uncomfortable. She cleared her throat and shifted in her seat. Donny Ray laughed.

"Will you allow me to interview you or not?" she repeated. It irked her to be treated like a sex object. She could hear her own pulse as it began to speed up.

His gaze shifted again to her throat. He could see the artery in her neck throbbing and he licked his lips. His eyes narrowed.

"You look hot. I bet your blood tastes sweet," he said. "The young ones always do."

Marley leapt to her feet, knocking her chair over. She moved to the side of the table and backed up to the window nearest the door. "Maybe we should try this some other time," she said. Her mouth had suddenly gone dry and she was barely able to get the words out.

She turned slightly and raised her hand to get the attention of the deputies outside. They were both looking the other way; their eyes fixed on something in the pod across the hall. She decided to knock on the glass but before her hand made it to the window, Donny Ray jumped to his feet and lunged at her. He pinned her against the window with his body and thrust his face toward her shoulder.

Marley's scream penetrated the door as she struggled to push the monster away. He was too strong. Even without his hands, he kept himself pressed against her and she was unable to move. She turned her head, trying to get a glance at the deputies outside -- a move that exposed her neck to the mad man.

Donny Ray shoved his mouth to the area where he had seen that artery pulsing and bit down as the door flew open. Deputy Sharp grabbed the shoulders of Tucker's jump suit and jerked him away from her, taking some of her skin which his teeth refused to release.

Wincing in pain, she watched as the officer threw him to the floor. His legs flew open as he hit the ground and Marley launched a foot directly into his groin. He screamed and his knees reflexively curled toward his chest, giving him the appearance of a baby in a womb. Panic overwhelmed Marley and the adrenaline made her heart race. She had to get away. Now. She bolted for the safety of the booking office.

She could hear the inmate crying out in agony as a call came over the radio. "I need medical backup in the conference room." Her hand shook as she covered her neck.

"Roger. All units, medical backup in the conference room," repeated the controller. The sound of boots pounding the floor echoed in the hallway as every deputy in the facility hustled to the scene.

The booking officer started to run past Marley, then stopped when she noticed the blood on the doctor's collar. Her eyes flew wide open. "You need medical help. Wait right here, okay?"

She hurried back to her desk and called for help. Less than a minute later, a nurse rushed into the booking area, where she found Marley and began wiping the blood away to get a closer look.

"What on earth happened?" she asked.

"He bit me." Marley braced herself on a fingerprint machine and winced when the nurse dabbed at the hole in her neck. "This is going to be a tough case."

##

Two weeks later, Donny Ray limped around his cell, still feeling the kick he had taken to his jewels. He was now housed in solitary confinement where they had placed him after the incident with the psychologist. Of course, he had no intention of being there for long.

They called this place "the hole". It was an eight by twelve cell which looked like it had not been cleaned or painted for a decade and it smelled like urine from that era as well. The good news was the lights barely worked which meant he could sleep anytime, day or night.

When he had packed his belongings for this move, the inmates in his old pod had acted happy to see him go. He made people nervous even when he was on his best behavior. But this transfer had been good. He had made a friend here in the hole -- a man named Sam who lived in the cell next door. Sam did not seem to care what crime Donny had committed. In fact, with a little mentoring, he might just become a killer himself.

The two of them had never seen each other because of the concrete wall between them but they could, and did, talk. There was little else to do and for the first time, Donny Ray found someone with whom he felt comfortable. He could talk to Sam; and they talked a lot.

The two shared the tales of how each had happened to be in the least desirable cells in this undesirable jail. And they shared, as all inmates do, information they had managed to gather about the place; intelligence about the guards, the layout of the facility, and the way it was operated. It is said that knowledge is power and in jail, a little power goes a long way.

Yesterday Sam made up a short rap which pleased his friend greatly. He recited it through his cell door.

*"Donny Ray Tucker,  
You a bad ol' sucka,  
But you never be freed,  
'Cause you made the woman bleed."*

The two of them laughed and hooted until Deputy Sharp opened the door. "Quiet down," His voice rang through the pod. There was silence for a moment which was followed by a deafening bang as the door slammed, signaling his departure.

"That was pretty rich, Sam. But you're wrong about one thing. I am gonna be free. I'm getting out of here."

"Sure, Donny. I know you will." He sounded sincere, but Donny knew that was the way you survived in jail. You became a good actor -- you sounded like you needed to sound.

"Yeah, I'm gonna be free real soon."

"If you're serious about that, I know a little something you might could use," Sam said.

Donny Ray pressed his face against the door, his heart fluttering against his chest. "What you know? Don't hold out on old Donny, now."

Sam hesitated for a beat and when he spoke his voice sounded tentative. "You think you can take care of a little business for me after you get outta here?"

The information would come at a price and that made Donny's urges flair. Under other circumstances, he would slowly suck the blood from Sam's body until he decided to talk. But these iron doors took that option away. He would have to play this game by Sam's rules.

"You know me, Sam. I take care of my friends." He was not going to do anything to get noticed when he got out. He would go underground and survive off the blood of

street hookers. Nobody noticed when they disappeared. No, he would not get pulled into a scheme that would get him caught, but Sam did not need to know that.

Sam's voice was a mere whisper now. "My ex-wife needs to die. Think you can take care of that for me?"

"It would be my pleasure. Why do you think I'm in here? I didn't get locked up for littering. It was for doing what I love best...killing." And that much was true.

"Okay. I got two things should help you." Sam paused as if he were waiting for his student to get out his note pad. "First, the idiots in the control room don't pay much attention when a guard calls for a door to be opened. I saw an inmate being put in his pod once and it was the inmate who used the call box to get the door open. Now the deputy was with him, but control opened the door for the *inmate* all the same."

Donny considered this. It might be useful, or not. What if the controller had known what was going on...had not been fooled at all? But if it had been a case of negligence, then you had something. This might call for some experimentation.

"Good. What else you got?" A sweat bead formed on his lips.

"Alright, now this one is for sure. That deputy Hall is a duck if ever I saw one. He is afraid of inmates...and if he thinks it will make you more docile he will give you chewing gum. Do I need to tell you what you can do with that?" There was a smirk in Sam's voice.

"Your ex is as good as gone, my man." He almost meant it, too. If she was a low life, like Sam said, she would make a good enough target for his lust. He pumped a victory fist in the air.

##

The next day Tucker sat in his cell with all the tools of the trade in his hands. Sam had been right about the deputy -- he was a pushover. Donny had not only gotten the chewing gum, but he had managed to keep a plastic spork from his breakfast tray. Now he had everything he needed.

He carefully pulled the blade from the disposable razor. The guards issued one to each inmate every day. It would have to be turned in soon and they were supposed to make sure the blade was still in it. But they never looked that close. He folded the foil gum wrapper to the same size as the blade and pushed it into the head of the razor where the blade had been. At a glance, it looked like the blade was still in place. Close enough.

The spork was plastic, but fairly flexible. He folded the bowl of the spork back and forth until it fatigued and separated from the handle. Gently, he sawed into the handle with the razor blade until he had a split of just the right size. Then he pushed the blade into the split, making a nice makeshift knife. He pulled the gum from his mouth and formed it around the handle to hold the blade in place, then hid it under his mattress to let the gum dry.

One part of the puzzle was now in place. He would have to do some perfecting of his skills to make the plan come together ... and so he practiced in the privacy of his secluded cell. He had to sound like a deputy.

##

Three days passed and each day Donny Ray renewed his promise of freedom to himself. But promises were not the only thing on his schedule. He had been practicing a critical skill and now it was time to test it. He pushed his face close to the open slot in his cell door and took a deep breath.

“Control, open door 349,” he bellowed through the slot. A few seconds elapsed before one of his neighbors spoke up.

“Hey, Sharp,” the voice echoed through the pod, but there was no reply. “Deputy Sharp. I need to talk to you.” Again, no response. “Come on Sharp, I heard you. I know you’re out there.”

Donny Ray grinned as he returned to his bunk and sat down. His plan just might work.

##

Three weeks had passed and Marley's neck was still not quite healed. The doctor had warned her about infection from human bites and had even made her take an HIV test. As she walked through the set of doors leading into the jail, she worried about this session. It would be the first time she had seen Tucker since he had bitten her. She felt the muscles tensing in her stomach with each step she took closer to the meeting place.

“Good morning, Dr. Melloy,” said the shift leader. His forced smile made her even more ill-at-ease. Was he worried about this meeting, too?

“Hi, Sarge.”

“Our boy is ready for you in the conference room.” He grinned.

She winced as she said, "I hope he's ready to behave himself."

"No worries, Ma'am. He won't give you any trouble this time. We put him in the restraint chair." His voice said that he was proud of that device.

"What is that?" she asked, her eyebrows scrunched in puzzlement.

"It is a clever device, actually. It is designed for guys like him. His arms and legs are strapped to the chair and there are two straps which cross over his chest." His hands made a criss cross motion over his body. "He can barely move in that chair."

Some of the tension drained from her face and she asked, "Then everything is ready?" Marley had been mentally preparing for this interview for days, now. Her dad, a retired cop, was worried about this guy. And if he was worried, she was worried. But she was determined to not let it show. Dad had asked her to get someone else to handle it, which had triggered her feminist instincts. If you wanted her to not do something, the last thing you wanted to do was indicate that she might not be able to handle it. Now she was here with steel determination.

"Yes, it is ready for you," he confidently replied. He touched her elbow, directing her toward the conference room which had been the scene of her last confrontation with this monster. It was reassuring to have this strong deputy by her side as she passed through the doorway.

Deputy Sharp and his partner were standing on either side of Donny Ray, who was seated in a heavy plastic chair. He was strapped down just like the Sarge had said, and sitting in a semi-reclined position with a black helmet on his head. His eyes stared at her neck through a clear plastic shield which extended from the helmet and covered his face.

Sarge took his place behind the inmate and Marley sat across the table from him. A weak smile crossed her lips and she greeted Donny Ray. He nodded silently.

"Can we talk for a few minutes, Mr. Tucker?" Marley asked.

He leered at the scarf around her neck. "Why are you covering it up? I want to see your love bite."

Marley was determined not to dignify the inmate's remark. She took a deep breath, exhaled and asked, "Do you know what day of the week it is?"

He shifted his eyes to Deputy Sharp, then back to Marley. "Wednesday," he said.

"Good. How about the month? Can you tell me what month it is?" Again he gave the correct answer. She felt more confident now. Maybe she could get this thing done and get out of here soon.

Several more questions were directed at him. What is the time of day? Where are you? Who is the President of the United States? Each was answered appropriately.

She wrote some things on a legal pad and then looked up. "I am going to report to the court that you are competent to stand trial, Donny." Her voice exuded authority now.

She looked at his face, trying to catch his reaction. As his eyes narrowed she shivered. She had never before sensed such profound evil as she saw in him, but she would not allow him to intimidate her. "Have a good day," she said as she rose to leave.

"Your blood is sweet. I can't wait to get a proper taste of it," he said. He chuckled as she turned toward the door. She took two steps and then turned back around to face him.

"How is your crotch feeling these days?" she tossed at him as she stepped out of the room. Tucker growled like a feral dog as he watched her walk out of sight.

##

With the doctor gone, the three deputies freed Donny Ray's legs and wrists, unfastened the straps across his chest and helped him stand. They removed the helmet from his head and placed it in the empty restraint chair.

"Let's get him back to his cell," the Sarge instructed. But as soon as he had said it, the radio began to crackle and spit out a call for help.

"All units, Unit 8 needs back up in the west wing. All available units respond."

The shift leader made a quick decision. "Sharp, take Tucker back to his cell. We're going to help Unit 8." And with that, the two officers ran out of the room and down the hallway leaving Sharp alone with Donny Ray. Boots beat the floor throughout the jail as deputies hurried to answer the call for aid. Soon the hall was deserted as the battle ensued in the west wing.

Donny Ray knew this was the chance he had been waiting for. He watched Sharp closely as he slipped his home made razor knife from the pocket of his baggy jump suit. He hid it behind his back and held it there, waiting for just the right moment – a mere fraction of a second when the deputy was not looking.

It took longer than he wanted, but at length he got his chance and in a blink of an eye, the blade was hooked around Sharp's neck. Tucker jerked his hand back until he felt the blade penetrate skin, then he pulled it violently across, unzipping the deputy's neck.

Dropping the weapon, he slid behind his victim. He reached around his neck with both hands. Sharp began flailing his arms about; unable to cry out, unable to get away. Donny Ray now had a firm grip on his bleeding throat and he stuck his fingers into each side of the wound. Then he pulled hard, ripping a huge hole in his victim's neck with his bare hands.

Blood spurted onto the walls and the floor as the deputy was lowered to the concrete. Donny Ray attached his mouth to the gushing cavern and took a quick gulp of blood before leaving the officer for dead on the conference room floor.

He stuck his head out of the doorway just far enough to get a look around. No one was in the hall as he slipped out of the room and passed the control booth. He caught just a glimpse of the controller as he jetted past his window. The controller was too busy dealing with the situation in the west wing to notice him -- another stroke of good luck.

He darted down another hall and found a set of doors that led directly to the outside. He knew the controller was much too busy to pay attention to him as he pushed the button, activating the call box on the wall.

"Control, open 518 and 535," he said in his best deputy voice. The door buzzed and he pushed it open. He slipped through and waited. The second door buzzed and he walked through to the public part of the jail. He was free. Now he had to get away from the jail without being seen, then get to the park. He had buried a bug-out box there. It contained money, a change of clothes and a gun. It would come in handy.

The main lobby was just ahead. He would have to make it through there to get to the outside world. There were a few people sitting around in plastic chairs waiting for whatever the jail was making them wait for. He had to look like he was supposed to be there in his bright orange jump suit. His gut tightened and he fought to keep his breathing under control. He wiped his face and hands onto his sleeves and then rolled them up to hide the blood. Now or never.

He stood up straight and strolled out into the crowd, pretending he was the governor of this fair state. One man looked at him with confusion scrawled across his face. Donny nodded toward him -- he nodded back. A few more steps and he pushed open the main door and slid out into the fresh air. The sunlight bit into his eyes. He had forgotten how that felt and he squinted hard to see the world around him.

In front of him stood a parking lot. He wanted to look around -- see who was out here -- but knew he had to look like he belonged here. He walked into the lot, feeling like

he might have a heart attack any second. He slipped between parking spaces and used the cars for cover. A few rows down, he found an old Chevy covered in gray primer. The door was unlocked and there was a blue hoodie on the front seat.

He opened the door and got in. The car smelled like a dirty diaper. Had to look like he was supposed to do this--no gagging. He donned the hoodie and zipped it all the way to the top. Presto--disguise. His hands were shaking, but one minute later he had the Chevy hot wired and out of the parking space. As he pulled up to the end of the row, a Honda Civic was coming from the left and he had to stop. He glanced at the driver. It was her. The shrink. What was her name? Marley something. Melloy. Marley Melloy. His heart slammed his chest wall. He covered his face with a hand.

She drove past and seemed to not notice him. His first instinct was to let her put some space between them. But then he remembered her blood. So rich and sweet. So full of life. She had some of the best blood he had tasted. He pulled out behind her.

He wanted her blood. He wanted it bad. But he needed to get to his box. He could do both. He decided to follow her, see where she worked or lived -- some way he could find her later. Then go get his box. The box was critical. Then he would take her.

##

She had slept on her sofa -- just a nap to calm her frazzled nerves. The Tucker interview had not gone badly, but the evil she saw in the man stimulated her fight or flight instincts. She had needed chocolate -- and a nap. Chocolate had been good. The nap, not so much -- the dream kept disturbing her. Something about an old gray car diving slowly past as she pulled into the driveway. Had that really happened or was it part of her imagination? Something about the Chevy said danger. But why? After the forth iteration of the same dream, she woke up. Her shirt was soaked in sweat and her arms were covered in goose bumps.

The room was dark. Had she slept so long? She switched on a table lamp and looked at the walnut grandfather clock which stood across the room. It was 9:15 -- P.M. she guessed. She was hungry, but a shower seemed to be a more urgent need. If it did not settle her nerves, it would at least make her smell better. Afterwards she would try to analyze what her subconscious mind was trying to tell her in that dream.

She made her way to the bathroom and hit the light switch. The aroma of patchouli air freshener wafted into her nostrils. It was a relaxing, if somewhat arousing scent which she loved. She breathed deeply.

She cranked open the hot water knob in the shower, then began to undress while the water got hot. She looked into the face in the mirror. She saw a flash, just an whisper image of Donny Ray Tucker superimposed over her own face. Were all people capable of

the evil she saw in Tucker? Was she, herself, capable of such evil? Under the right circumstances, could that be her in a jail cell for murder? Could she even kill in self-defense? She doubted she could.

Marley raised onto her bare tip-toes and began a turn toward the shower. She stopped in mid turn when a shadow -- was it a man? -- appeared in the window. An electric buzz of fear tingled across her skin as she tried unsuccessfully to scream. The sound stuck in her throat. Then the wind blew a tree branch past the window and the shadow was erased. She blew out a hard breath and tried to slow her heart. She had to get a grip on her emotions before she found herself in the loony bin.

Marley stuck her hand under the running water and tested it, then adjusted the temperature before stepping inside. The pulsing wet massage made her muscles relax as she slathered shower gel over her body. She washed and took in the negative ions of peace, lingering longer than usual. So wonderful was her shower.

What was that sound? Did a door just creak?

No, Marley, we are not going there. Get a hold of yourself. Too many things going bump in the night. This is just plain irrational. She sighed. She would not let herself get pulled into the world of fear Tucker had tried to cast her into. There is no boogie man. Just her home, the magic of the shower and the seductive smell of patchouli.

The water began to go cold -- her cue to dry off and get dressed. She stood in front of the mirror clad only in a wet towel while she fussed with her hair for a few moments. Then she padded out of the bathroom and down the hall.

Her bedroom door raised its usual objection as she opened it. She had to remember to get that thing oiled...or greased...or whatever they do to make it quiet again. She stepped onto the hardwood floor of her luxurious bedroom. Her place of comfort, safety and security. She crossed the room to get to her favorite bedside lamp. Her door creaked again.

She jerked her body around to face the sound just in time for a pistol to slam into the side of her head. She saw bright flashes of light and her ears rang. She stumbled backward as she struggled to stay on her feet. Then came the hands. They tore the towel from her body and threw her onto the bed. She looked up in the darkness to see the face. It was Tucker.

She saw him jump -- he was going to land on her body but she rolled to the side. He landed on her ankle as she was skittering away. The ankle popped and pain ran up her body and into her eyes. She kept moving until she was clear of the bed. She tried her right foot on the floor, but the ankle would not support her. There was no time to stand around

crying, which was exactly what she wanted to do. Tucker was off the bed and headed toward her.

Marley limp-ran into the hall and to the guest bedroom. She jerked the door open just as Tucker tried to grab her again. His arms wrapped around her body ... still shimmering from body oil which made her slippery enough to twist in his grasp as she was falling to the floor. She pushed away and managed to free all but her right leg when his mouth found her calf. He bit down hard and her blood oozed from the corners of his mouth. She screamed, but Tucker's were the only ears it fell upon.

Her left leg was free. She cocked it and took careful aim. His hungry mouth was busy drinking her blood -- too busy to notice when her foot crashed into his nose. He grunted and fell to the side. His eyes were closed and blood gushed from his nostrils. She slid across the floor to the side of the bed. Was he out? It looked like it.

She propped herself up with her back against the bed, still sitting on the floor, and closed her eyes. Adrenaline coursed through her body, causing her to shake. Tears streamed down her face. She took a deep, deep breath and let it out.

Then he was on top of her again. This time his unwashed body completely covered hers. She tried to move, but he had her pinned down. A hand grabbed her hair and yanked her head to one side. Then his teeth found her neck and it felt like he had torn her in half. The pain was unbearable as he began to slurp and swallow. Her very life was being sucked out of her body and she had lost the strength to resist.

She let her head loll further to the side, exposing her neck more fully. She just wanted to get it over with now. Then she saw it. He had laid his pistol on the floor beside her. Perhaps he, too, had thought that she had given up. Time slowed to a crawl as she reached for it. She raised it to the side of his head and squeezed the trigger. The gun jumped in her hand and Donny Ray Tucker fell to the floor beside her.

##

Turner Melloy stood over his daughter's hospital bed, stroking her hair and listening to the rhythmic beeping of her heart monitor. Her eyes began to flutter and then open. She strained to focus on his face.

"It's going to be alright, baby. You're going to be just fine," he said.

"Where am I?"

"You're in the hospital. A neighbor heard the gun shot and called the police. You almost bled out. It was close, but they got you here in time. They sewed you up and had to replace some blood."

"What about Tucker," Marley's eyes flashed fear.

"He won't ever be a problem again. He's dead."

She blew a puff of air and her eyes softened. "I should have listened to you," she said. "I should have let someone else handle the Tucker case. And I should have bought a gun like you said."

"You did just fine, baby. I'm proud of you." He squeezed her hand.

"Dad . . ." She turned away to look at nothing in particular.

"What is it, Marley?" His eyes furrowed.

Marley turned back to look into his eyes. "Thank you for being here," she said. A tear slid down her cheek.

"I love you, Marley. I'm just sorry I wasn't there to protect you. We'll talk about getting that gun later. Right now let's just get you well so I can take you home."

Her doubts were now laid aside. She did have it in her to kill. But now the question changed. Did she have the capacity for murder? She trembled.

## About the Author

J. S. Williams is a retired deputy jailer and a former Presbyterian pastor. He is a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's undergraduate school, Boyce College where he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies.

He is the author of several short stories including *Liberty Or Death* and the series *Tales From the County Jail*. The first two books in the Lance Scott series of thriller novels will be released soon. He lives in Kentucky with his wife, two dogs and five birds.

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If you have enjoyed this story, you are encouraged to take a look at his other works and spread the word to your friends. Reviews on venues such as Amazon, Barnes and Noble and GoodReads are especially appreciated.

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