

“On the Grind” by Stephen J. Cannell
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Chapter One – Part 1

Just an hour before my whole life turned upside down, I was making love to my wife, Alexa, in our little house on the Grand Canal in Venice, California. It was the first week of May and a spring storm was washing across the L.A. Basin, filling gutters and runoffs with dirty brown water, pushing a slanting rain against our bedroom window, blurring the view.

I knew the police department was about to charge me with a criminal felony, I just didn't know exactly when. I had chosen to make love to my wife partially to ease a sense of impending doom, and partially because I knew it was going to be our last chance.

The Tiffany Roberts mess was already in full bloom, leaking toxic rumors about me through the great blue pipeline down at Parker Center, turning my life and entire twenty-year police career radioactive. Why do I seem to keep volunteering for these things?

So doom and dread hovered as knowledge of what lay ahead turned our lovemaking bittersweet, changing the tone like a low chord that announces the arrival of a villain. We were lying in an uncomfortable embrace, listening to the rain on the windows, when the doorbell sounded.

“That’s probably it,” I said.

“Guess so,” Alexa replied, her voice as dead as mine.

I got up, found my waiting clothes folded neatly over the bedroom chaise. I skinned into a pair of faded jeans and a USC Trojans sweatshirt that I'd grabbed from my son Chooch's room, then padded barefoot to the front hall and unlatched the lock without bothering to look through the peephole. I already knew who was going to be there.

The door opened into a whipping rain. Standing on my front steps were three uniformed police officers in transparent slickers.

“I'm Lieutenant Clive Matthews, Professional Services Bureau,” the cop in the center said. I'd seen him before, mostly in restaurants around Parker Center. He was an IAD deputy commander. A big guy with a drinker's complexion. He was supposed to be in AA, but the exploded capillaries on his ruddy face were a death clock that told me the cure hadn't taken.

“What's up, Loo?” I said, my voice flat.

“Charge sheet.” He thrust three typed yellow forms at me.

A PSB charge sheet lists the crimes being filed against you by Internal Affairs. It's basically an accusation of misconduct which starts a lengthy disciplinary process that usually ends at a - career-threatening Board of Rights Trial, which is in effect a police administrative hearing. The fact that a deputy commander in uniform was personally delivering the goods was representative of the gravity of my predicament.

Matthews handed me a sealed envelope. “Your letter of transmittal.” The document

confirmed the delivery of the charge sheet and started the clock on an array of procedural administrative events.

“You have to sign the top copy for me. Keep the other,” he instructed.

“You guys couldn’t wait until tomorrow?” I looked past him at the two stone-faced IOs standing a foot back, one on each side of the lieutenant. Water droplets had gathered on the plastic shoulders of their see-through raincoats.

“Nope,” the lieutenant replied. “Chief Filosianni and the city attorney request your presence in his office at Parker Center immediately.”