

“On the Grind” by Stephen J. Cannell
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Chapter One – Part 2

“I get to contact my Police Officers Association steward before answering these charges at a Skelly hearing,” I said. “That right is guaranteed me under rule six of the city charter. The chief knows that, so what’s with this midnight meeting?”

“It’s not a command performance. The chief is extending you a courtesy. Your POA steward has been notified. If it was up to me, I’d just body-slam you like the piece of shit you are.” He said it without raising his voice or putting any inflection on it. “You might want to get your shoes and jacket. It’s pretty wet out here. You can ride with us.”

“What is it, Shane?” Alexa was coming out of the bedroom, walking down the hall.

I turned to look at her. Breathtakingly beautiful. Black hair framing a fashion model’s cheekbones. Incredible blue eyes that were locked on me. She was belting her robe, her black hair tousled with the memory of sex. I knew these might be the last friendly words we would speak.

“IA. They have a charge sheet. They want me to come with them.”

“It’s almost midnight,” she said, standing behind me. “Can’t it wait until morning?” She should have demanded the circumstances. It was a mistake; but then, I knew she was as upset about all this as I was.

“You might also want to come with us, Lieutenant Scully,” Matthews said, glancing at Alexa. “The chief is waiting in his office with several people. I think you both need to hear what he has to say.”

So that’s what we did. Alexa got dressed. I was in the bedroom with her for a minute to get my nylon windbreaker out of the closet. I looked over and saw that she was putting on her sixth--floor attire—dark pantsuit, blouse, gun and badge.

“So it begins,” she said, her voice lifeless.

“Yep.”

I went into the bathroom to run a razor over my chin. A consideration to this late-night meeting with the chief. For a minute I saw my reflection in the mirror staring back. A familiar stranger with battered eyebrows scarred in countless forgotten brawls. The face of an unruly combatant. My brown eyes looked back at me startled by the sudden confusion I felt.

Five minutes later I was in Lieutenant Matthews’s car with the two IOs. One was named Stan. I didn’t catch the other guy’s name. Not much talk as we headed to Parker Center, with Alexa following us in her silver BMW a few car lengths behind. I had fallen from respected member of society and guardian of the public trust to detestable scum in the eyes of the three men riding in that maroon Crown Vic with me. In their eyes, I was a turncoat. A cop gone bad.

I thought I knew what to expect, but the truth was I had little idea of what lay before me, little

understanding of the mess I had so willingly stepped into.

But that's life. I guess if you could see all the dead ends and blind turns, it wouldn't be as interesting. At least that's what I kept telling myself.

The windshield wipers on the detective plain-wrap slapped at the rain as we rushed along the 10 Freeway in the dead of night, the tires singing in the rain cuts. No red light, no siren. Just a maroon Ford with four stone-faced cops. All of us in the diamond lane, heading toward the end of my career at breakneck speed.