



THE **★★★★**
BETRAYAL

A PRECINCT 11 NOVEL



JERRY B.
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#1 NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

THE ★ ★ ★ ★
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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

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The Betrayal

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jenkins, Jerry B.

The betrayal : a Precinct 11 novel / Jerry B. Jenkins.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-4143-0908-8 (hc)

1. Police—Illinois—Chicago—Fiction. 2. Police corruption—Fiction. 3. Chicago (Ill.)—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3560.E485B48 2011

813'.54—dc22

2011020854

Printed in the United States of America

17 16 15 14 13 12 11

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my brothers

Jim, Jeoff, and Jay

Chicago Police Department
Organized Crime Division

Chief: Fletcher Galloway

Deputy Chief: Jack Keller

Gang Enforcement Section Commander: Pete Wade

Gang Investigation Section Commander: Boone Drake

Division Secretary: Haeley Lamonica

1

DISSONANCE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Boone Drake awoke before sunup with little recollection of the previous two days.

Oh, he knew the basics—where he was, that he was fortunate to be alive. Two uniformed officers still guarded his door. The noises and odors invaded his room at what everyone still called Cook County Hospital. And slowly, it all began to come back.

Boone, a detective in the Gang Enforcement Section of the Chicago Police Department, had masterminded the most massive sting in CPD history, bringing down the heads of not only the biggest street gangs in the city but also the Outfit—the old crime syndicate.

Key to the operation had been the secret spiritual conversion

of gang kingpin Pascual Candelario—and his becoming an informant.

Candelario had been processed at central booking, then spirited to a secure location until he was due to testify before the grand jury. The story became the biggest in Chicago in decades, and the priority of the CPD became to protect Pascual at all costs until he was transferred to begin his testimony.

Two nights before, Boone and four undercover cops had ushered PC out and made their way to an unmarked van. As the group passed a security guard, Boone glanced back to find the man in full crouch, reaching behind his back. Boone had bellowed, “Gun!” and moved between the shooter and Candelario.

The man produced a .45 caliber Glock and squeezed off one deafening round from fifteen feet away. The slug hammered into Boone just below his left clavicle and knocked him to the floor. He felt his left lung collapse.

Two officers emptied their service revolvers into the man while the other two hustled Pascual into the van. Boone lay there knowing Pascual was safe and that every Chicago cop in the vicinity would respond to an officer-down call.

Boone had felt himself go woozy and fought to remain conscious. “Suicide shooter?” he rasped. “Had to be an inside job.”

And he felt himself drifting, drifting. An injection. Floating. Then roughly slid into the back of an ambulance for the trip to John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital. Being bathed for an operation, anesthetic drip, the sweet relief of unconsciousness.

Boone had awakened midmorning the next day, screaming pain in the shoulder, exhausted, achy all over, his mouth

cottony. His former partner and now boss, Jack Keller, leaned close. “You got questions?”

“We got a traitor?”

Jack whispered, “That or a real smart gangbanger.”

Boone had had another miserable night, and not only because of the constant interruptions to check his vitals. He had been nearly shot dead, and to the best of his recollection he was on heavy doses of Percocet and OxyContin, not to mention a morphine drip. Maybe that’s why the activity in his private room the day before now ran together in his mind, a jumble of incomprehensible images—including one he would never forget.

Boone had so looked forward to seeing Pastor Francisco Sosa, but now he could dredge not one memory of his visit. He had intended to tell Sosa something—something about him and Haeley. Their first kiss. The prospect of a second gave him something else to look forward to.

Today’s dawn brought a male nurse who seemed terminally cheerful and insisted on turning on the local news. “I wouldn’t normally do this,” the man said, “but Indian summer doesn’t often hit us in February, does it?”

Boone squinted at the TV. A few minutes after sunrise the temperature was already pushing fifty, with the possibility of sixty by midafternoon. And of all things, not snow but rain. Thundershowers.

Would anything in Boone’s life be normal ever again?

“Don’t get too comfortable,” the nurse said, opening the drapes. “After breakfast a physical therapist will get you up and walking.”

“I’m high,” Boone slurred. “Remind me what comfortable means.”

“After that your surgeon should visit, but I don’t even try to predict timing for those guys. You wanna go potty before all the fun begins?”

“I do, but do we really have to call it that?”

The nurse laughed. “Just trying to be delicate, Detective. You know you’re on the front page of the *Trib* this morning?”

“You don’t say.”

“I’ll bring you one later. Now let’s do this.”

The nurse removed the wrappings from Boone’s shins that inflated and deflated every few seconds to prevent blood clots, then slipped an anklet with rubber traction onto each foot. He helped Boone sit up and slide his legs off the edge of the bed, advising him to stay seated and get his bearings before trying to stand with his IVs attached.

Days before, Boone had been in the best shape of his life, but wobbling toward the bathroom in his cursed, open-backed gown, aided by a nurse and hissing against pain that pushed past his drug-induced haze, he felt disjointed and twice his age.

He had always hated immobility and dependence, but he knew they would be his lot until he could rehabilitate himself. Boone would be obsessive about that. He was already determined to snap back faster than any patient his caregivers had ever seen. And yet he couldn’t deny that his bed, which had been miraculously changed during the moments he had relieved himself, appealed to him like an oasis.

As the nurse got him situated again, Boone pressed back against the cool sheets and felt as close to comfortable as he

had since being wheeled in from surgery. Something told him that wouldn't last. Unique as this experience was, something else was off. Boone couldn't put a finger on it yet, but that would be his project for the day. He would eat what they told him to, ingest what they prescribed, start with as much physical therapy as he could abide, ask every question that came to mind . . . and try to get a handle on what had gone wrong.

The beacon that beckoned him was Haeley's next visit at the end of the day. Or might she sneak over on her lunch break? How great would that be? Maybe he could text her, ask her plans. Had she been there when Pastor Sosa was? Could she help him recall any of that visit?

But when Boone asked for his cell phone, intending to also text an apology to Sosa for anything he might have said or done, he was informed there was zero reception in Stroger Hospital. "Interferes with our equipment."

Fine. He'd call her from a landline. But first came breakfast. Swallowing was torture. Breathing remained a chore. And then came the physical therapist, who referred to herself as the PT. "You shouldn't need walker, crutches, or cane," she said. "You're unaffected from the belly down. I'll be right here if you need a hand."

She was half his size, yet Boone did find himself less steady than he expected. The trip to the bathroom should have been a harbinger, but food and more meds had made him overconfident. He shuffled down the hall—greeting and thanking the uniformed cops, rolling his IV stand with his good arm, and keeping his slinged other immobile. His recoup had only just begun, and already it seemed a life sentence.

At the end of the corridor, just past a waiting room, Boone

espied a covered balcony outside a sliding glass door. As he padded past he noted that it overlooked a parking lot. “What are the odds I could sit out there this afternoon?”

“Up to your doctor,” the PT said. “You’ll likely have to be in a wheelchair, in case we need to get you back inside quickly.”

She told him he had done fine “for a first outing” and that she would be back midafternoon for another round.

Dr. Robert Duffey visited late morning, wearing surgical scrubs. “If you saw me on the news,” he said, “we can keep this short.”

“Missed it,” Boone said. “Sorry.”

Duffey sighed. “MRI shows your shoulder is a mess. That’ll have to be rebuilt by an ortho guy. The clavicle, though painful, is the least of your problems. It’ll mend itself. A bullet fragment caught the pleura and—”

“Sorry,” Boone said. “I’m a layman.”

“That’s the double-layer membrane that surrounds the lungs and the chest wall. You were born with it airtight. It was compromised by the bullet, causing a pneumothorax, a collapsed lung. If it had been small it might have resolved on its own, but yours was total, so we had to get in there.”

“What’d you do?”

“Aspirated it. Released the air with a needle. Then drained it with a chest tube and a water seal bottle. That was supposed to allow air in the chest to move into the bottle but keep air in the room from entering the pleural space, and the pressure balance should have reinflated the lung.”

“Should have?”

Dr. Duffey nodded. “Didn’t work. So I scraped the surface

of the pleura to cause scar tissue, which makes the two layers stick together.”

“You’ve lost me, but you sound like you know what you’re talking about.”

The doctor smiled and looked weary. “That’s half the battle. You’re going to be okay, but you need to know that shoulder will never be the same—regardless who does the work, and I’ll refer you to the best. Rehab will make you wish you’d never been born.”

Boone had already been through days like that. A destroyed shoulder hardly compared to losing a wife and baby. But now, with Haeley’s kiss, he had more than enough to live for. He was reaching for the phone when Pastor Sosa poked his head in.

“Francisco! Do I need to talk to you!”

Sosa pulled a chair next to the bed. “This time I plan to take notes.”

“So you *were* here yesterday.”

“Doesn’t surprise me that you don’t remember. You made no sense, Boone.”

“Sorry.”

“You know what you said?”

“All I remember is that you were coming.”

“You asked me how many shoulders were in the human body! I assured you there was one per arm.”

Laughing made Boone grimace. “Man, sometimes it hurts even to think.”

Sosa read Scripture and prayed for Boone, then promised to try to make contact with Pascual Candelario if Boone could get the pastor approved through the powers that be.

“Obviously, it’ll be a while before I can get back to see him,” Boone said.

Boone decided against telling Sosa about the latest step in his relationship with Haeley. He found himself suddenly exhausted and was embarrassed several minutes later to awaken, realizing he had fallen asleep before Pastor Sosa had left.

By lunchtime he was ravenous and had still not called Haeley. She wouldn’t visit him during her break without his having asked. Anyway, he knew she didn’t get a lot of time. He resolved to call her after his afternoon PT. She would have to make arrangements for her son, Max. No way the nurses would allow the boy in.

After eating, Boone was drowsy again, wondering what the PT would do if she found him sleeping. Actually, he knew. Physical therapy took precedence.

Still something niggled at the back of his mind. Why had he heard from no one in Organized Crime? They’d been all over him the day before. At least Jack Keller should have called.

Where was Boone’s brain? He had forgotten to ask Dr. Duffey about sitting outside if the weather permitted.

The PT awakened him, and Boone proved only slightly steadier this time. She got him to go twice as far, and he noticed on his way past the small patio that there seemed no trick to opening the sliding door. Who needed permission anyway?

Back in the room he phoned Haeley, but a temp answered. “She’s in meetings,” he was told. And when he asked for Keller, he was told the same.

“Pete Wade?” Boone tried.

“The same, sir. Sorry. There’s actually no one here right now.”

“Not even the big boss?”

She paused. “You haven’t heard? Chief Galloway announced his retirement today.”

Wasn’t that just like Fletcher? The man had perfect timing. The OCD busts up all the gangs in Chicago, including the Outfit; how does one top that?

“Do me a favor. Tell Haeley I really hope to see her at the end of the day.”