

SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT

By Stephen Leather

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Jack Nightingale fights his battles in the shadows – in the grey areas where the real world meets the supernatural. But when he arrives in San Francisco to take on a group of Satanists bent on opening a doorway to Hell, the danger is out in the open and all too real.

The Apostles – a Satanic coven using murder and torture to pave the way for a demon to enter the real world – realise that Nightingale is on their tail. And unleash their own brand of monsters to take him down. With Nightingale's life – and his very soul – on the line, he has only days to stop The Apostles from bringing death and destruction to the entire world.

Jack Nightingale appears in the full-length novels *Nightfall*, *Midnight*, *Nightmare*, *Nightshade* and *Lastnight*. He has his own website at www.jacknightingale.com He also appears in several short stories including *Cursed*, *Still Bleeding*, *The Tracks* and *My Name Is Lydia*.

CHAPTER 1

Sister Rosa had five minutes of her life left when she opened her eyes. She had no way of knowing that, but she did know that her God had deserted her utterly when she needed Him the most. Her arms were stretched out on either side of her and she could feel ropes cutting viciously into her wrists. Her ankles were also securely tied. She tried to scream, but the gag in her mouth muffled all sound. She was naked.

She could hear chanting, but in a language she had never heard before. A flickering light cast shadows on the walls and the air was filled with the tang of burning herbs.

There were figures standing around her, dressed in long black robes, their features hidden by tall pointed black masks.

The chanting stopped, and a deep, muffled voice spoke, though there was no way to tell which masked figure was talking. "Peter. It is time."

One of the figures moved nearer to where Sister Rosa lay spread-eagled on the giant cross. It stopped, facing her, then bent down to show her what it held in its hands. A hammer and four large steel nails. Sister Rosa tried to scream, but the gag muffled all sound. The hammer and nails were passed in front of her face again, and the figure walked to her left. Sister Rosa began to recite the Lord's Prayer as she felt the point of the nail pressed into her palm, then her body arched in agony as the first hammer blow was struck. The first blow pieced her palm, but three more were needed to drive the nail all the

way into the wood. Tears were running down her cheeks, but the gag efficiently stifled her sobs. The pain of her last minutes on Earth was far beyond anything she had experienced in her previous fifty years. She tried to focus on the words of the Lord's Prayer but the pain drove the words from her head.

The robed figure had now moved to her right hand, the nail was in place on her palm, and again the hammer came crashing down. Once more her body arched as it desperately tried to cope with the violence of the assault.

Four more heavy hammer blows for each foot, and then the figure straightened up to survey its handiwork. The masked head gave a slight nod.

Sister Rosa lay trembling, blood seeping from the wounds in her hands and feet.

The figure walked to a small wood altar, where a silver cross stood upside down. It put down the hammer and picked up the cross before walking back towards the blood-spattered body of the helpless woman. The longer end of the cross, nine inches of smooth polished silver, was placed between her legs and held there. Peter moved it gently backwards and forwards for a few moments, then with brutal force rammed it hard inside the woman. The gag muffled most of her screams.

Blood sprayed over Sister Rosa's legs and her body gave one last enormous heave, before it could bear no more and she lost consciousness.

Four more figures strode towards the cross, attached a heavy chain to a hook at the base, then hauled it off the floor with a pulley placed in the high ceiling. The end of the chain was fastened to another hook in the wall. The cross now hung three feet off the ground, with the nun's head hanging downwards, blood flowing from her wounds and pooling on the floor.

The chanting began again, this time with a feverish intensity to a gathering crescendo. One of the figures held both arms aloft, and there was instant silence. Again the command rang out.

"Peter."

The figure of the tormentor walked back to the altar, picked up a short curved knife in its right hand, and a large plain bronze bowl in its left. The figure walked back to the center of the room and placed the bowl on the floor beneath the bound woman's head. Peter held the knife aloft with both hands and shouted a Latin phrase. The robed figures chanted back in Latin.

The knife flashed down across Sister Rosa's throat, laying it wide open and ending her agony. Peter picked up the bowl in both hands and let it fill with the spurting blood. The chanting began again, as Peter placed the bowl back on the altar and moved back towards the others.

Another word of command was given, and again the chanting stopped. The same muffled voice spoke, more softly this time.

"Peter, you are now fully initiated amongst us. Disrobe, and present yourself to us, that we may welcome you to our number with the kiss of our master, and you may offer us the blood of the sacrifice to drink. As a full initiate, you are also required to provide Service to the Temple."

The reply came loud and immediate.

"Thy will be my will, O Abaddon."

Peter stood in the middle of the group, removed the mask, shook off the robe and let it fall to the ground. Naked and confident, cheeks bright, eyes alive with excitement, a telltale flush at her throat, the tall, beautiful, young woman shook her red hair loose and presented herself to her fellow disciples.

CHAPTER 2

The young man known as Simon was the first to leave the temple, since he was not permitted to witness the Service to the Temple, or attend the drink and drug-fueled coupling that always followed a sacrifice. His real name was Lee Mitchell, but so far as he knew only Abaddon knew that. He changed back into his street clothes in the Robing Room. By the time he'd finished pulling on his Chinos and crew-neck pullover, a robed and masked figure had arrived and placed a black hood over his head. The figure took Mitchell by the hand and led him out of the door, across a graveled drive and into the back seat of a white Lincoln Town Car with blackened windows. Only full initiates were allowed to know the location of the group's ceremonies. Mitchell heard a driver get behind the wheel, start the engine and drive away from the house.

Twenty minutes later, the driver stopped the car in a side street on the outskirts of San Francisco. "You can take the hood off now, Simon," said the driver. "After the next meeting we won't need to do this any more. You'll be fully one of us. Do not look back as you leave the car. Just walk away."

Mitchell removed the hood. There was a black tinted window separating the passenger seats from the driver. He said nothing, just got out and walked twenty yards to where he'd parked his own car, a black Porsche 911.

Thirty minutes later, he was outside his house. He parked and climbed out to stare at the Golden Gate Bridge half a mile away, its lights flickering

through a drizzly mist. He opened the front door, walked straight to the downstairs bathroom and vomited into the sink until there was nothing left in his stomach.

He washed his face, then rinsed with mouthwash to get rid of the foul taste. He stared at his reflection in the mirror. His eyes were wide and bloodshot, his skin was white and pasty, he looked as if he hadn't slept for a week, which was close to the truth.

He walked down the corridor to his study, picked up the phone and tapped in a number. It was answered on the second ring, but went straight through to voicemail. Mitchell cursed under his breath. He considered putting the phone down, but knew that he needed help and this was the only way to get it. He took a deep breath to steady himself. "It's Lee," he said. "You have to come and get me. I can't take this any more. They crucified a nun, a fucking nun. And it's my turn next, you have to help me. I need to get out now. Call me back as soon as you get this."

He put down the phone and went over to his drinks cabinet where he poured himself a large whiskey. He was on his second gulp when the phone rang. He hurried over and picked it up.

"You need to relax, Lee," said a slow Texan drawl. "Have a drink."

"I'm having a drink," said Mitchell. "A big one."

"I need the names, Lee. I need to know who is in the group. And where they hold the meetings."

"They won't let me see the house until I'm one of them."

"Then you need to wait."

"I can't! I've told you what they want me to do. They killed a nun today."

"One more visit, Lee. We'll fix you up with a GPS."

"Are you mad? If they catch me with anything like that, anything at all, they'll kill me for sure."

"What about Abaddon? Have you learned anything else about her?"

"No. And I can't ask, can I?"

“Have you seen anyone else? Anyone you recognize?”

“Two so far. Look, you have to get me out of San Francisco. You said you could get me a new identity.”

“And I can. But I need the names, Lee.”

“No, not until I’m safe, it’s all I have to bargain with. Get me out of here and I’ll tell you everything I know.”

Mitchell gulped down more whiskey.

“Okay, the airport in two hours time. Take a cab to the station and change cabs there. You’ll be met at the Delta desk in Departures. A woman called Valerie.”

“How will I recognize her?”

“She’ll recognize you.” The line went dead.

Mitchell put down the phone and raised his glass to his lips. He flinched at the sound of a car in his driveway. Doors opened and slammed shut and he heard footsteps on the gravel. His heart began to race and he put down his glass with a shaking hand. He hurried to the living room window and peered through the blinds. There was a black SUV parked behind his Porsche. He turned and ran for the french doors and sprinted across the garden. His neighbor’s Rottweiler barked as Mitchell scrambled over the fence. He heard shouts behind him but he didn’t look back as he ran.

CHAPTER 3

Jack Nightingale frowned as he emerged into the Arrivals hall. On a list of things he hated, airplanes ranked just behind elevators, but nobody ever needed to spend four hours sitting in an elevator without a cigarette. Flying economy across a continent at two hours notice was no way to spend a day. He stopped walking and looked at the mass of people waiting to meet passengers, some holding up scrawled notices, others with iPads held aloft, the name neatly printed. He saw nobody he recognized amongst them.

“Jack.”

Nightingale turned and saw a tall, slim, black woman, dressed in what was probably a very expensive dark-blue pant-suit. He nodded at her. She didn't smile.

“Valerie. You're looking lovely as always.”

“Welcome to San Francisco,” she said. “No suitcase?”

Nightingale held up the small black leather holdall he was carrying. “I travel light,” he said.

“This way,” she said, and walked away.

Nightingale followed her as she threaded her way through the crowds, out through automatic doors, across a road towards a white limousine parked by the curb, engine running and a black man in a gray suit sitting behind the wheel.

The driver got out to open the door but Nightingale beat him to it. He held the door open for Valerie. She flashed him a tight smile and slid inside. Nightingale followed her.

The car drove off in the direction of the private aviation terminal, through a security barrier and out onto the apron to stop in front of a gleaming white Gulfstream jet. Valerie climbed out of the car and walked up the stairs to the plane's open front door. Nightingale followed her inside.

Anyone seeing Joshua Wainwright for the first time might not immediately have jumped to the conclusion that he was a billionaire. Not that a billionaire wasn't entitled to wear a Dallas Cowboys baseball cap if he chose to, or be sitting back on a white leather sofa with his python-skin boots up on the table in front of him. The huge cigar he was smoking worked well for a man of extreme wealth, but Nightingale could never get over how young the perpetually smiling, slim, black Texan always looked. Mid twenties, maybe. Thirty at the most.

"Come on in, Jack," said Wainwright, "take a load off. I guess you might be needing a cigarette right about now. Thank you Valerie, if you'd like to wait in the car Jack should be leaving in thirty minutes."

Nightingale took the white leather armchair that Wainwright had waved him to and lit a Marlboro as Valerie headed out of the cabin. Wainwright let him smoke his way through half of it before breaking the silence. "Jack, you look like shit."

"Flying cross-country does nothing for me or my clothes. I need a sleep and a shower. And I need to know what's so urgent that I couldn't have driven. You know I hate flying. Especially in economy."

"Sorry, Jack. Last seat on the plane, that's what Valerie told me."

Nightingale smiled tightly. "First class was pretty much empty."

Wainwright shrugged, then pressed the call button and a tall blonde appeared. She was wearing a stewardess uniform, though it looked to have been designed with more thought for form than function. The short skirt,

tight jacket and high heels wouldn't have passed muster with Delta, but it obviously worked for Wainwright. And Nightingale.

"Another Glenfiddich for me please, Amanda. You, Jack?"

"Coffee will be fine. Splash of milk."

"Certainly, sir," replied the woman.

Amanda had a South African accent and a spectacular rear view, which Nightingale enjoyed as she walked away. She was back in a minute with the drinks, then disappeared to the rear cabin. Wainwright took a sip of his whiskey and lifted the glass to toast Nightingale. "Been a while, Jack."

"I suppose it has," replied Nightingale, "Too good to last. Still, always a pleasure."

"How you been?" asked Wainwright. "How was Louisiana?"

"Hot and sweaty," said Nightingale. "Why am I here?"

"Got a little job for you, Jack. A task." Wainwright lifted an attaché case onto the table and opened it. Nightingale was no authority on attaché cases, but he thought it had probably cost more than his last car.

Wainwright pushed three sheets of paper across to him. "Take a look at these."

Nightingale studied the sheets for several minutes. They each bore a photograph and a list of personal details. Names, ages, occupations, descriptions, addresses. Time and place where last seen. Name of the person who had reported them missing, and to which police precinct. Sister Rosa Lopez, schoolteacher and nun, aged fifty-three. Suzanne Mills, college student, nineteen. Michael O'Hara, retired, eighty-three.

"Missing persons? You want me to find them?" asked Nightingale. "All by myself in a city of nearly a million people? Isn't that what the cops are supposed to do?"

"I don't think anyone will be finding them," said Wainwright, "At least, not in this life."

"So if they're dead, why am I holding Missing Persons reports?"

"They're dead. Murdered. I know that but the cops don't. Yet."

“And you’re not telling San Francisco’s finest because?”

“Because it’s not the victims I’m concerned about. It’s the killers. I want you to find them, not the cops.”

Wainwright’s smile had disappeared now, and his cigar lay neglected in the ashtray by his side.

“It’s one killer?”

Wainwright shook his head. “Killers, plural. A group. They call themselves the Apostles.”

“You want me to track down a group of killers? Why not just call the cops or the FBI? They have specialists.”

“These aren’t your run-of-the-mill killers, Jack. This is more your territory. Ritual killings. Based here in San Francisco. One of them got in touch a few days ago. He was in over his head and wanted out.”

Nightingale took a sip of his coffee.

“They kill people at their rituals, Jack. He’d been to two of them, the first one he said some girl got a spear pushed into her throat by a guy called Thomas. From the description he gave, it was this girl Mills, missing a month. The last one, two nights ago, they crucified a nun. Crucified her upside down then drank her blood. A girl calling herself Peter did that one.”

Nightingale took a long drag on his cigarette. He looked down at the third photo.

“What about the old man?” he asked.

“The old man was a priest, he’s listed as missing from a retirement home, but my contact never mentioned him. The girl, Mills, was a theology student and sang in a church choir. Once I got the idea from her and the nun, we ran a search on missing religious figures. That’s the one we found. Wouldn’t surprise me if they’d gotten him too.”

“What about the bodies?”

“Disposed of. So the cops aren’t looking for killers.”

“Who’s your contact?”

“Guy called Lee Mitchell.”

“Where is he now?”

“I wish I knew. He phoned me, all in a panic. Now he’s disappeared.”

“And this group, the Apostles? What’s their story?”

“They use the names of Christ’s disciples. Except their leader.”

“Surely not Jesus?”

“No. The leader’s called Abaddon. She’s a woman but that’s all he knows. He hasn’t seen her face. Abaddon is an ancient name for the Angel Of Death. Mitchell was given the name of Simon. Each of the Apostles, as their initiation, needs to find and sacrifice a Christian. So there will be twelve killings in all.”

Nightingale stubbed out what was left of his cigarette. “Human sacrifice seems a little extreme. Is it normal in your world?” Nightingale knew of Wainwright’s reputation as a powerful Satanist, though he’d never seen any evidence of it. Or wanted to.

Wainwright took a long drag on his cigar and shrugged. “Not so much these days. Shedding blood is a very powerful charm and it’s necessary in many advanced rituals, but usually a chicken, maybe a goat. Sacrificing a human within a circle stores up immense power for the members of that coven. Looks like these guys are into it big time, and that’s way too much power for people to have.”

“And what do you want me to do?”

“I want to stop them before anyone discovers there is a Satanic link to the killings,” said Wainwright. “I don’t want Satanism splashed across the papers.”

“Giving you a bad name?”

“Satanism is best left where it belongs, in the shadows,” said Wainwright. “You know where the word ‘occult’ comes from?”

Nightingale shook his head.

“From the Latin, *occultus*. It means hidden. That’s how it’s meant to be, hidden from view. Look, Jack. These people aren’t just some street gang. And I don’t think they plan to stop at ritual killings. I don’t like this Biblical

connection either, whatever Abaddon has in mind could well make the group far too powerful, and maybe a lot more people end up dead. Maybe they're even trying something that could do real damage."

"So why am I on the case? To protect you or to stop something bad happening?"

Wainwright pulled on his cigar as he studied Nightingale with amused eyes. "Does it matter?" he asked eventually.

Nightingale shrugged. "I guess not." He put down the sheets of paper and lit another cigarette. "So do you have any idea who this woman might be?"

"Told you before, Jack. Chefs don't share their recipes with other chefs, and people in my world guard our secrets jealously."

"What do you think she's planning?" asked Nightingale. "What is this bad thing?"

"I don't know. That's what I want you to find out." He gestured at the sheets of paper. "Find out about these three people, find out if there are any more missing. Track down the Apostles. Stop them."

"Stop them how?"

"Anyway you need to."

Nightingale blew a smoke ring. "I'm not an assassin, Joshua."

"Just find out what's happening then. And report back to me. We can cross the T's and dot the I's later. See if you can track down where the ceremonies are being held."

"San Francisco is a big city."

"They blindfolded Mitchell since he wasn't a full member. Made him leave his car twenty minutes away, then drove him. It's a mansion, within twenty minutes drive, but he never saw the outside. With a crypt or a chapel built on, or maybe in the grounds."

"And you know where this Mitchell lives?"

"I didn't, but I do now. He was panicking when he called and for the first and only time he used his home phone. Up until that point he'd been

using throwaway cellphones and all I had was his first name. I told him to get to the airport and when he didn't turn up I got the number checked." He handed Nightingale a photograph of a good-looking man in his mid twenties. "The address is on the back, plus the few details I have."

Nightingale turned the photograph over. "He was a banker?"

Wainwright nodded. "A high-flyer, he figured that Satanic power would help him fly higher."

"What do you think happened to him?"

"His car's still in the drive and there's no sign of a struggle, so your guess is as good as mine."

"You went around?"

"I sent someone."

"And these twelve Apostles. Is there any connection between them? Any link?"

"I don't know," said Wainwright. "Lee said he had recognized some of the people there but he wouldn't give me any names until I pulled him out. I've arranged for any calls to the number he used to go straight to your cell."

The cockpit door opened and a middle-aged man in a white shirt with black and yellow epaulettes stepped into the cabin.

"Sorry to interrupt, Mr. Wainwright," he said. "We're scheduled to take off in ten minutes, unless you want me to take a later slot?"

"Ready when you are, Ed. My guest is just leaving. I'll be in Rome for two days Jack, then I'll check back with you."

The captain went back into the cockpit as Wainwright and Nightingale shook hands. Nightingale put the photograph and sheets of paper in his pocket. "I'll be in touch," he said.

"The sooner the better," said Wainwright. "You have to find what happened to those people and you have to make it stop. And, my friend, I don't think you have a whole lot of time."

CHAPTER 4

They kept the children in separate rooms because that made it easier to control them. The rooms were in the basement at either end of a long corridor that could only be reached from a secret entrance hidden in a closet. Three different construction firms had been hired to do the work, each believing that it was a wine cellar they were working on.

The rooms were windowless but had been decorated with cartoon characters on the wall and SpongeBob SquarePants duvet covers and pillows on the bed. There were buckets in the rooms and each day they were given a bowl of water to wash in. Bathrooms had never been a possibility as that would have raised questions with the contractors. There was a CCTV camera in a glass dome in one corner of each room so that the children could be monitored at all times by their guardians upstairs. Each child had an X-box and a selection of games and a DVD player with stacks of DVDs, mainly cartoons.

The doors were wood with bolts top and bottom, and totally soundproofed. Even if one of the children screamed nothing could be heard in the corridor, never mind upstairs. Not that the children did scream. They had both cried for a few hours when they were placed in the rooms but they soon got used to it.

The boy was called Brett. He was ten years old, pale-skinned with ginger hair and a sprinkling of freckles across his nose. He was big for his

age and used to being the top dog in his class. He was an only child and had the arrogance of a kid who was used to getting his own way. The first time John had unbolted the door to give the boy a Burger King meal, the boy had demanded to be released as he'd glared up at him with his hands on his hips. John had said nothing, just thrust the meal into the boy's hands and slammed the door shut.

The girl had been much more docile. Sharonda, her name was. Also ten years old, her skin the color of milk chocolate, her hair long and curly, tied back with a Barbie clip. She had stayed curled up on the bed for the first twenty-four hours, ignoring him when he'd brought her food.

Now it was the third day and they had both become resigned to their captivity. They both spent their time playing video games, watching DVDs, or sleeping. Both had asked if there was a bathroom they could use and both had been told to use the bucket.

John slid back the bolts to Brett's room. The boy was sitting on his bed playing a war game on his X-box. The video games had been John's idea. He figured the video games would take their minds off their predicament and so far it seemed to have worked. Brett looked up as the door opened. He scowled when he saw the Pizza Hut box that John was carrying. "I don't like pizza," he said.

"I'll get you Burger King later," said John, tossing the box onto the bed.

"I want to go home," said the boy, his eyes still on the screen.

"Soon," said John. "We have to find your mother and father first."

"Where are they?"

"We don't know. That's why you have to stay here."

"I'm bored."

"It won't be long," said John. He gingerly lifted the towel off the bucket. It was empty. "You haven't been to the toilet."

"I don't want to," said the boy.

“Suit yourself,” said John. He pulled the door closed and slid the bolts across. He’d left the second pizza on the floor and he picked it up and walked slowly down the corridor to the second cell.

The girl was already on her feet by the time he opened the door. “Can I go?” she asked.

“Not yet.”

Tears ran down her cheeks. “You said I could go home today.”

He handed her the pizza box. “I said maybe. We’re still looking for your mum.” Both children had been told the same lie, that something had happened to their mothers and that John would be taking care of them until the police found them. That was the lie that had got Brett and Sharonda into the car. James was upstairs, monitoring the cameras.

“I need to use the bathroom.”

“That’s what the bucket is for.”

“I can’t use a bucket.”

“You have to.”

“The men who brought us here said they were policemen.”

The Apostles who had picked up the kids had been wearing uniforms. People respected uniforms. Children and adults.

“They were.”

“But this isn’t a police station.”

“This is my house. The police station isn’t a nice place for children. It’s best you stay here until your mother turns up.”

“If it’s your house, it must have a bathroom. Why can’t I use the bathroom?”

“Because you’re safe down here. Now eat your pizza.”

“I don’t like pizza.”

“Everyone likes pizza.”

“I don’t.”

“Well what do you like to eat?”

“Mac and cheese.”

“Okay, I’ll get you mac and cheese.”

“I want my mom’s mac and cheese.”

“Then you’ll have to wait.”

John locked the door and climbed the stairs. He closed the trapdoor that concealed the stairs, and pushed open the door to the hallway. James was lying on a sofa, reading a book. The CCTV monitors that gave views of the two cells and the walls surrounding the property were on the wall above a desk. James ran a hand through her long blonde hair. “How are they?” she asked.

“They’re eating. They both want to go home.”

James laughed and tossed her hair. “Well that’s not going to happen, is it?”

John shrugged. “So long as they’re quiet, that’s all that matters. I hate it when they cry.”

CHAPTER 5

Nightingale picked up a rental car from Avis at the airport, a blue Ford Escape with less than a thousand miles on the clock, and had bought new clothes at a WalMart. He booked himself into the La Luna Inn motel and asked for a room away from the main road, Highway 101. Nightingale was dog-tired from traveling, but a shower and change of clothes put him in a fit state to work. He was in a diner drinking coffee and waiting for a burger when his cellphone rang. The number was blocked, but he took the call.

“Is that Jack?”

“Who wants to know?”

“My name’s Lee Mitchell. I’ve just spoken to Joshua and he told me to call you.”

“Yeah, he’s out of town.”

“Joshua says you’ll help me.”

“I’ll do my best. Where are you?”

“I don’t know you, Jack. I don’t know you from Adam.”

“I understand. But I work for Wainwright. And he’s told me to take care of you.”

“They’re on to me. And if they get me, they’ll kill me. And worse.”

“I’ve got your back, Lee. Now listen to me. The phone you’re calling me on? Is it yours?”

“It’s a disposable cell with a new Sim card.”

“Good job. But as soon as this call is over, dump it. Use landlines from now on. Public payphones are best. Where are you staying?”

“A hotel. In Oakland.”

“Did you register in your own name?”

“Of course not. And I paid in cash.”

“Where did you get the cash from?”

“What?”

“The cash. Where did you get it from?”

“An ATM.”

“Near the hotel?”

“Shit. Yes.”

“Don’t go back to that hotel, Lee. Don’t go anywhere near the ATM. I’ll pick you up.”

“They can track my phone? And my credit cards?”

“It’s possible,” said Nightingale. “In my experience the sort of people you’re dealing with can do pretty much anything they want. What are you wearing?”

“My regular clothes. Polo shirt. Chinos.”

“Buy something else, something you wouldn’t normally wear. A hoodie would be good. And carry something.”

“What?”

“Anything. A carrier bag. A rucksack. Anything that stops you looking like a banker on the run. Now where can I pick you up?”

“I’m scared, Jack.”

“I know you are. But I can help you.”

“When does Joshua get back?”

“Tomorrow. The day after, maybe. He’s overseas. Give me a time and a place, Lee. I’ll take care of you.”

“Okay, okay. How about Alcatraz? There are always lots of tourists around. Take the nine-ten boat tomorrow morning. What’ll you be wearing?”

“Light raincoat, black Levis, brown shoes. I’ve got dark hair and a boyish smile.”

“You think this is funny?”

“I was trying to lighten the moment,” said Nightingale.

“Yeah, well don’t. Just be at Alcatraz tomorrow.”

“Why Alcatraz? Why not just come to my hotel?”

“Because, like I said, I don’t know you and I don’t know who to trust. The only way to Alcatraz is by ferry so I’ll get there early and see everyone who arrives. If I see anything that doesn’t feel right then I’m canceling.” The line went dead.

About the Author

Stephen Leather is one of the UK's most successful thriller writers, an eBook and Sunday Times bestseller and author of the critically acclaimed Dan "Spider" Shepherd series and the Jack Nightingale supernatural detective novels. Before becoming a novelist he was a journalist for more than ten years on newspapers such as The Times, the Daily Mirror, the Glasgow Herald, the Daily Mail and the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong. His eBooks have topped the Amazon Kindle charts in the UK and the US and he was voted by The Bookseller magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the UK publishing world. You can find out more from his website www.stephenleather.com and you can follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/stephenleather.