



# ALAFAIR BURKE

"212 scares you and keeps you turning the pages into the wee hours."  
—Harlan Coben

# 212

a novel

**212**

**A Novel**

**Alafair Burke**

 HarperCollins e-books

*For Philip, Mary, and Anne-Lise Spitzer*

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## CHAPTER ONE

MAY 27

Tanya Abbott noticed the quiver in her index finger as it pressed the three silver buttons in the rain—9...1...1. Listening to the ring, she found herself mentally calculating the number of days that had passed since she had first arrived in New York City.

Tanya had put the number at twenty-six by the time the dispatcher answered the call. It had been three full weeks and another five days.

“Nine-one-one. What is your emergency?”

She’d taken the Amtrak to Penn Station three Thursdays ago, and now it was Tuesday night. Twenty-six days in New York. Twenty-six days since she had started over again. Twenty-six days, and already she was calling 911.

“Hello? Is anyone there? What is your emergency?”

Tanya cleared her throat. “The penthouse apartment at Lafayette and Kenmare.”

“That’s your location, ma’am? Tell me what’s going on there.”

The corner of Lafayette and Kenmare was no longer Tanya’s location, but twenty minutes earlier, she had been inside the luxury penthouse perched on top of the white brick building on the corner. She’d sipped Veuve Clicquot from a crystal flute while leaning against the black granite bar. She had lounged on the low white-leather sectional sofa with her legs crossed modestly as her host pointed out the panoramic SoHo views, temporarily obscured by cascading sheets of rain. She had followed him into the master suite. She had cleaned herself up with a washcloth in the gleaming marble bathroom when it was all over.

“A shooting. There’s been a shooting.” Tanya used her palm to wipe away the drops of water from her eyes, tears mixed with rain. Her attempts were futile, serving only to smear mascara across her clammy cheeks.

“You heard gunshots?”

“Inside the apartment.”

“Ma’am. I need you to use your words. You heard gunshots from inside the apartment? Could you tell what direction they were coming from?”

“There was a shooting. Inside the apartment at Lafayette and Kenmare.”

“I’ve got your location as Lafayette and *Bond*, ma’am. Did you mean to say Lafayette and Bond?...I need you to speak to me, ma’am. Can you tell me if you’re okay? Are you hurt?”

Tanya hadn’t realized that she had run five full blocks before finding a pay phone. She couldn’t even remember crossing Houston. Maybe her heart was pounding because of the running. She found comfort in the thought of some distance between her and the apartment.

“Lafayette and Kenmare. The penthouse.”

“Can you tell me your name, ma’am? I’ve got an ambulance on the way. Just keep talking to me. My name’s Tina Brooks. Can you tell me your name?”

Tanya returned the handset to its cradle and sprinted south on Lafayette toward the subway station at Bleecker. She hadn’t given her name to the dispatcher, and she hadn’t used her cell phone. She could move swiftly without prompting attention from the other pedestrians who were also rushing for shelter.

At the same moment Tina Brooks had dispatched an ambulance to the penthouse, she had no doubt sent a police car to the pay phone on the corner of Lafayette and Bond to search for the anonymous caller who had dialed 911. But before either vehicle reached its intended destination, Tanya Abbott would be long gone, drying her face against her damp sleeve and catching her breath on the 6 train.