



Nora Roberts

WRITING AS

RJ.D.OBBER

Glory in Death

Chapter 1

The dead were her business. She lived with them, worked with them, studied them. She dreamed of them. And because that didn't seem to be enough, in some deep, secret chamber of her heart, she mourned for them.

A decade as a cop had toughened her, given her a cold, clinical, and often cynical eye toward death and its many causes. It made scenes such as the one she viewed now, on a rainy night on a dark street nasty with litter, almost too usual. But still, she felt.

Murder no longer shocked, but it continued to repel.

The woman had been lovely once. Long trails of her golden hair spread out like rays on the dirty sidewalk. Her eyes, wide and still with that distressed expression death often left in them, were a deep purple against cheeks bloodlessly white and wet with rain.

She'd worn an expensive suit, the same rich color as her eyes. The jacket was neatly buttoned in contrast to the jerked-up skirt that exposed her trim thighs. Jewels glittered on her fingers, at her ears, against the sleek lapel of the jacket. A leather bag with a gold clasp lay near her outstretched fingers.

Her throat had been viciously slashed.

Lieutenant Eve Dallas crouched down beside death and studied it carefully. The sights and scents were familiar, but each time, every time, there was something new. Both victim and killer left their own imprint, their own style, and made murder personal.

The scene had already been recorded. Police sensors and the more intimate touch of the privacy screen were in place to keep the curious barricaded and to preserve the murder site. Street traffic, such as it was in this area, had been diverted. Air traffic was light at this hour of the night and caused little

distraction. The backbeat from the music of the sex club across the street thrummed busily in the air, punctuated by the occasional howl from the celebrants. The colored lights from its revolving sign pulsed against the screen, splashing garish colors over the victim's body.

Eve could have ordered it shut down for the night, but it seemed an unnecessary hassle. Even in 2058 with the gun ban, even though genetic testing often weeded out the more violent hereditary traits before they could bloom, murder happened. And it happened with enough regularity that the fun seekers across the street would be miffed at the idea of being moved along for such a minor inconvenience as death.

A uniform stood by continuing video and audio. Beside the screen a couple of forensics sweepers huddled against the driving rain and talked shop and sports. They hadn't bothered to look at the body yet, hadn't recognized her.

Was it worse, Eve wondered, and her eyes hardened as she watched the rain wash through blood, *when you knew the victim?*

She'd had only a professional relationship with Prosecuting Attorney Cicely Towers, but enough of one to have formed a strong opinion of a strong woman. *A successful woman,* Eve thought, *a fighter, one who had pursued justice doggedly.*

Had she been pursuing it here, in this miserable neighborhood?

With a sigh, Eve reached over and opened the elegant and expensive bag to corroborate her visual ID. "Cicely Towers," she said for the recorder. "Female, age forty-five, divorced. Resides twenty-one thirty-two East Eighty-third, number Sixty-one B. No robbery. Victim still wearing jewelry. Approximately..." She flipped through the wallet. "Twenty in hard bills, fifty credit tokens, six credit cards left at scene. No overt signs of struggle or sexual assault."

She looked back at the woman sprawled on the sidewalk. *What the hell were you doing out here, Towers? she wondered. Here, away from the power center, away from your classy home address?*

And dressed for business, she thought. Eve knew Cicely Towers's authoritative wardrobe well, had admired it in court and at City Hall. Strong colors—always camera ready—coordinated accessories, always with a feminine touch.

Eve rose, rubbed absently at the wet knees of her jeans.

"Homicide," she said briefly. "Bag her."

It was no surprise to Eve that the media had caught the scent of murder and were already hunting it down before she'd reached the glossy building where Cicely Towers had lived. Several remotes and eager reporters were camped on the pristine sidewalk. The fact that it was three A.M. and raining buckets didn't deter them. In their eyes, Eve saw the wolf gleam. The story was the prey, ratings the trophy.

She could ignore the cameras that swung in her direction, the questions shot out like stinging darts. She was almost used to the loss of her anonymity. The case she had investigated and closed during the past winter had catapulted her into the public eye. The case, she thought now as she aimed a steely glance at a reporter who had the nerve to block her path, and her relationship with Roarke.

The case had been murder. And violent death, however exciting, soon passed out of the public interest.

But Roarke was always news.

"What do you have, Lieutenant? Do you have a suspect? Is there a motive? Can you confirm that Prosecuting Attorney Towers was decapitated?"

Eve slowed her ground-eating stride briefly and swept her gaze over the huddle of soggy, feral-eyed reporters. She was wet, tired, and revolted, but she was careful. She'd learned that if you gave the media any part of yourself, it squeezed it, twisted it, and wrung it dry.

"The department has no comment at this time other than that the investigation into Prosecuting Attorney Towers's death is proceeding."

"Are you in charge of the case?"

"I'm primary," she said shortly, then swung between the two uniforms guarding the entrance to the building.

The lobby was full of flowers: long banks and flows of fragrant, colorful blooms that made her think of spring in some exotic place—the island where she had spent three dazzling days with Roarke while she'd recovered from a bullet wound and exhaustion.

She didn't take time to smile over the memory, as she would have under other circumstances, but flashed her badge and moved across the terra-cotta tiles to the first elevator.

There were more uniforms inside. Two were behind the lobby desk handling the computerized security, others watched the entrance, still others stood by the elevator tubes. It was more manpower than necessary, but as PA, Towers had been one of their own. "Her apartment's secured?" Eve asked the closest cop. "Yes, sir. No one's been in or out since your call at oh two ten."

"I'll want copies of the security discs." She stepped into the elevator. "For the last twenty-four hours, to start." She glanced down at the name on his uniform. "I want a detail of six, for door-to-doors beginning at seven hundred, Biggs. Floor sixty-one," she ordered, and the elevator's clear doors closed silently.

She stepped out into the sixty-first's lush carpet and museum quiet. The halls were narrow, as they were in most multi-habitation buildings erected within the last half century. The walls were a flawless creamy white with mirrors at rigid intervals to lend the illusion of space.

Space was no problem within the units, Eve mused. There were only three on the entire floor. She decoded the lock on 61-B using her Police and Security master card and stepped into quiet elegance.

Cicely Towers had done well for herself, Eve decided. And she liked to live well. As Eve took the pocket video from her field kit and clipped it onto her jacket, she scanned the living area. She recognized two paintings by a prominent twenty-first century artist hanging on the pale rose-toned wall above a wide U-shaped conversation area done in muted stripes of pinks and greens. It was her association with Roarke that had her identifying the paintings and the easy wealth in the simplicity of decor and selected pieces.

How much does a PA pull in per year? she wondered as the camera recorded the scene.

Everything was tidy, meticulously so. But then, Eve reflected, from what she knew of Towers, the woman had been meticulous. In her dress, in her work, in maintaining her privacy.

So, what had an elegant, smart, and meticulous woman been doing in a nasty neighborhood in the middle of a nasty night?

Eve walked through the room. The floor was white wood and shone like a mirror beneath lovely rugs that echoed the dominant colors of the room. On a table were framed holograms of children in varying stages of growth, from babyhood on through to the college years. A boy and girl, both pretty, both beaming.

Odd, Eve thought. She'd worked with Towers on countless cases over the years. Had she known the woman had children? With a shake of her head, she walked over to the small computer built into a stylish workstation in the corner of the room. Again she used her master card to engage it.

"List appointments for Cicely Towers, May two." Eve's lips pursed as she read the data. An hour at an upscale private health club prior to a full day in court followed by a six o'clock with a prominent defense attorney, then a dinner engagement. Eve's brow lifted. Dinner with George Hammett.

Roarke had dealings with Hammett, Eve remembered. She'd met him now twice and knew him to be a charming and canny man who made his rather exorbitant living with transportation.

And Hammett was Cicely Towers's final appointment of the day.

"Print," she murmured and tucked the hard copy in her bag.

She tried the tele-link next, requesting all incoming and outgoing calls for the past forty-eight hours. It was likely she would have to dig deeper, but for now she ordered a recording of the calls, tucked the disc away, and began a long, careful search of the apartment.

By five A.M., her eyes were gritty and her head ached. The single hour's sleep she had managed to tuck in between sex and murder was beginning to wear on her.

"According to known information," she said wearily for the recorder, "the victim lived alone. No indication from initial investigation to the contrary. No indication that the victim left her apartment other than voluntarily, and no record of an appointment that would explain why the victim traveled to the location of the murder. Primary has secured data from her computer and tele-link for further investigation. Door-to-doors will begin at oh seven hundred and building security discs will be confiscated. Primary is leaving victim's residence and will be en route to victim's offices in City Hall. Lieutenant Dallas, Eve. Oh five oh eight."

Eve switched off the audio and video, secured her field kit, and headed out.

It was past ten when she made it back to Cop Central. In concession to her hollow stomach, she zipped through the eatery, disappointed but not surprised to find most of the good stuff long gone by that hour. She settled for a soy muffin and what the eatery liked to pretend was coffee. As bad as it was, she downed everything before she settled in her office.

It was just as well, as her 'link beeped instantly.

"Lieutenant."

She bit back a sigh as she stared into Whitney's wide, grim-eyed face.
"Commander."

"My office, now."

There wasn't time to close her mouth before the screen went blank.

The hell with it, she thought. She scrubbed her hands over her face, then through her short, choppy brown hair. There went any chance of checking her messages, of calling Roarke to let him know what she was into, or of the ten-minute catnap she'd been fantasizing about.

She rose again, worked out the kinks in her shoulders. She did take the time to remove her jacket. The leather had protected her shirt, but her jeans were still damp. Philosophically, she ignored the discomfort and gathered up what little data she had. If she was lucky, she might get another cup of cop coffee in the commander's office.

It only took Eve about ten seconds to realize the coffee would have to wait.

Whitney wasn't sitting behind his desk, as was his habit. He was standing, facing the single-wall window that gave him his personal view of the city he'd served and protected for more than thirty years. His hands were clasped behind his back, but the relaxed pose was negated by the white knuckles.

Eve briefly studied the broad shoulders, the grizzled dark hair, and the wide back of the man who had only months before refused the office of chief to remain in command here.

"Commander."

"It's stopped raining."

Her eyes narrowed in puzzlement before she carefully made them blank.
"Yes, sir."

"It's a good city all in all, Dallas. It's easy to forget that from up here, but it's a good city all in all. I'm working to remember that right now."

She said nothing, had nothing to say. She waited.

"I made you primary on this. Technically, Deblinsky was up, so I want to know if she gives you any flak."

"Deblinsky's a good cop."

"Yes, she is. You're better."

Because her brows flew up, she was grateful he still had his back to her. "I appreciate your confidence, Commander."

"You've earned it. I overrode procedure to put you in control for personal reasons. I need the best, someone who'll go to the wall and over it."

"Most of us knew PA Towers, Commander. There isn't a cop in New York who wouldn't go to the wall and over it to find who killed her."

He sighed, and the deep inhalation of air rippled through his thick body before he turned. For a moment longer he said nothing, only studied the woman he'd put in charge. She was slim, deceptively so, for he had reason to know she had more stamina than was apparent in that long, slender body.

She was showing some fatigue now, in the shadows under her whiskey colored eyes, in the pallor of her bony face. He couldn't let that worry him, not now.

"Cicely Towers was a personal friend—a close personal friend."

"I see." Eve wondered if she did. "I'm sorry, Commander."

"I knew her for years. We started out together, a hotdogging cop and an eager-beaver criminal lawyer. My wife and I are godparents to her son." He paused a moment and seemed to fight for control. "I've notified her children. My wife is meeting them. They'll stay with us until after the memorial."

He cleared his throat, pressed his lips together. "Cicely was one of my oldest friends, and above and beyond my professional respect and

admiration for her, I loved her very much. My wife is devastated by this; Cicely's children are shattered. All I could tell them was that I would do everything, anything in my power to find the person who did this to her, to give her what she worked for most of her life: justice. "

Now he did sit, not with authority but with weariness. "I'm telling you this, Dallas, so that you know up front I have no objectivity on this case. None. Because I don't, I'm depending on you."

"I appreciate you being frank, Commander." She hesitated only an instant. "As a personal friend of the victim's, it'll be necessary to interview you as soon as possible." She watched his eyes flicker and harden. "Your wife as well, Commander. If it's more comfortable, I can conduct the interviews at your home rather than here."

"I see." He drew another breath. "That's why you're primary, Dallas. There aren't many cops who'd have the nerve to zero in so directly. I'd appreciate it if you'd wait until tomorrow, perhaps even a day or two longer, to see my wife, and if you'd see her at home. I'll set it up."

"Yes, sir."

"What have you got so far?"

"I did a recon on the victim's residence and her office. I have files of the cases she had pending and those that she closed over the last five years. I need to cross-check names to see if anyone she sent up has been released recently, their families and associates. Particularly the violent offenders. Her batting average was very high."

"Cicely was a tiger in the courtroom, and I never knew her to miss a detail. Until now."

"Why was she there, Commander, in the middle of the night? Prelim autopsy puts time of death at one sixteen. It's a rough neighborhood—shake-downs, muggings, sex joints. There's a known chemical trading center a couple of blocks from where she was found."