

KINDNESS  
KILLS



KINDNESS  
KILLS

DUNCAN OTHEN



© 2005 by Duncan Othen. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society.

Scripture references marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture references marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-655-3

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2004097736

# Acknowledgments

I want to thank two knowledgeable people who helped me with my research: James Brosius, Chief of Police in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, and Dr. Elizabeth Belraj, Cuyahoga County Coroner.

I also want to thank four other special individuals for their valuable advice about certain sections of this novel: Greg Dorner, Al Wilson, Ann D'Agostino, and Jeanne Othen.

This book is dedicated to Jeanne, Sean, and Shana.



**BOOK ONE:**  
**THE TORMENTED**



# Chapter One

**W**hen Sally Malloy noticed the clock in the store window she realized she only had twenty minutes left to live. She knew they would kill her at one o'clock if she failed at her assignment. She had been ordered to find the secret location by then or die, and with the deadline rapidly approaching she knew it was hopeless. They had deliberately given her vague directions, and she had no idea where to go.

She noticed her shadowy form on the window and shivered involuntarily, knowing it was probably the last time she would see her own reflection. She moved closer and squinted at the glass, seeing the lined, tired face of a woman in her fifties who had a look of helpless terror in her eyes. In a way, she was glad to be so frightened. Maybe her fear could somehow inspire a sudden idea that would save her life.

Sally finally turned away from the window and hurried along the sidewalk on Western Avenue, breathing heavily

from increasing anxiety. A damp wind from Lake Michigan swirled around the tall buildings of Chicago and pushed from behind as if urging her to hurry. The cold temperature didn't bother her; she had on a heavy coat that was torn in a few places but quite warm, and a gray woolen hat she had selected from a shelter's clothing bin because it complemented her long gray hair.

Not many people walked the streets in this part of Chicago after midnight and she was oblivious to the few she passed. She kept glancing back at the towering buildings in the Loop which loomed above her in the distance, their lights gleaming through the darkness like thousands of evil yellow eyes silently watching her.

She had been told that a dramatic event would occur at one o'clock in the morning in an alley somewhere in this section of town; something she alone must witness; a tragedy the entire nation would hear about from the news media. That was all they said, except of course, if she disobeyed they would torture her to death.

A few weeks ago she had shared a thermos of coffee with an elderly homeless man who had suddenly collapsed from a heart attack. She desperately tried to revive him, but he died anyway with an overwhelming fear shining in his eyes. She fervently wished she could have saved him and all the other homeless people who had died during the years she had spent living on the streets. And now, in the final moments of her life, she understood the lonely terror they must have felt at the end when they realized they had no chance of surviving.

Sally turned down a side street and walked one block, then headed north on Artesian Avenue. The street was flanked by crumbling brick buildings with broken windows,

many of them abandoned. If this was a normal night she would go inside one and sleep till dawn, but she certainly didn't have that option now. It would be one o'clock in a few minutes.

She stopped and glanced up at two tall abandoned buildings that towered over her like enormous twin gravestones. Huge planks of wood covered the windows and obscenities were spray painted on the doors. The alley between the buildings was too dark for her to see beyond the entrance. Could it be the right one?

She looked up at the night sky, disappointed that the moon's soft glow was barely visible from above the black curtain of clouds. It would have been wonderful to have gazed on its inspiring ivory luster one more time. She stifled a sob as she walked into the alley, realizing this would be either the best decision she ever made or her last one. Her heart fluttered wildly as she stepped around the trash scattered along the ground and after walking a short distance, she saw someone. There was enough grayish light shining from the street at the other end of the alley to reveal a figure up ahead, searching through the contents of a garbage dumpster.

She approached as quietly as she could and finally stopped and took several deep breaths. "Hello," she said cautiously. The person didn't respond, still bent over the side of the rusty dumpster rifling through its overflowing contents. "Hello there," she said louder.

A man straightened up and stared at her blankly. She moved closer and even with the drab lighting she noticed how dirty his face and clothes were. He had a round face with a few wisps of blond hair on top, just like a baby. She remembered him from one of the shelters. His name was

Burt, a simple minded, heavyset middle-aged man with large, innocent blue eyes. She recalled that someone had once referred to him as “Street Claus” because he spent his days wandering the city streets giving away whatever food he had to strangers, especially other homeless people. One day last winter a street person had complained about the sub-zero temperature, and Burt quickly pulled off his own coat and shirt and handed the man the clothing, walking away down the sidewalk bare-chested and seemingly oblivious to the frigid wind and the raucous laughter of everyone he passed. He would have ended up with frostbite except a social worker saw him and took him to get another jacket. The last time Sally had seen Burt she noticed he was extremely disoriented, wandering around aimlessly and mumbling to himself.

He continued to stare at her in silence so she patted him reassuringly on the shoulder. “It’s OK. I’m Sally, Sally Malloy. I was sent to find an alley.” She paused, realizing that wouldn’t make sense to anyone. “You’re Burt, aren’t you?”

Burt scratched at his chest which was covered with a torn and faded Chicago Bears sweatshirt. “I can’t find it. Somebody told me it’s in one of these alleys, but I look in all of them and it ain’t anywhere.”

“What are you looking for?”

“Shoes, boxes and boxes of new shoes. He say they in a big garbage can, but I can’t find them no place.”

“Shoes? Some shelters are giving them out for the winter. You want me to take you to one?” She paused, realizing with a jolt of fear that there wasn’t enough time left to go anywhere.

He shook his head adamantly. “Shoes ain’t for me. I wanna give ‘em away. Gotta be here somewhere.” He

turned away and leaned over the edge of the dumpster. He began mumbling incoherently, and she listened carefully but couldn't understand anything he said. His words were jumbled up in a nonsensical order.

“Burt, is there anything you have to tell me? Anything to show me?” She waited in vain for an answer and resisted the urge to break down and cry. “Burt, if this isn't the right place they're going to kill me.”

He ignored her, continuing to talk to himself in a low monotone while he pulled out garbage. She went over to a pile of crates and sat down beside them, well within their dark shadow, and leaned against the cold brick wall. She decided she would sit and wait. Watching someone sift through garbage could not be the important event they had wanted her to see, but it was past one o'clock now and too late to look anywhere else. They would be coming for her soon.

She wondered what would happen to her after she died. Would she simply cease to exist? Was there an afterlife like her Christian friends claimed? Was heaven a place too wonderful to describe, like a beautiful pasture for sheep with Jesus being the gate and the good shepherd? It was very confusing.

She closed her eyes and listened to the clattering sounds of bottles and cans being thrown on the ground and struggled to fend off the constricting sensation in her throat. She didn't hear anything different, it was a just feeling that made her open her eyes and peer over the crates. She saw a man standing behind Burt, glancing around the alley. He wore a long, shapeless beige raincoat and a hat that was pulled down over his forehead. She sensed a tremendous

energy emanating from him, a raging inferno of adrenaline powered fury.

Burt continued pulling out trash, completely unaware that someone was behind him. She saw the man step towards Burt. A silver object gleamed in his hand as he grabbed Burt from behind and quickly pulled it across his throat. He slashed across several more times and Burt's arms flailed wildly until they suddenly dropped limply to his side. The man in the raincoat laid Burt down on the ground and crouched over him, whispering something she couldn't quite make out. She saw him pull out a piece of paper and put it in Burt's pocket. She put her hands over her mouth to stifle a scream.

A car horn blared in the distance and the man jumped up and looked behind him. He then turned around in her direction and took a few steps towards the crates, staring past them to the alley's other entrance. His face turned at an angle and the dim light shined on his profile for an instant, long enough for her to recognize him with a shiver of revulsion. It was him! He was the one!

She pulled her head down so he wouldn't see her and restrained herself from yelling with unbridled horror. She had found the right location after all. They had sent her to witness this murder.

She heard his footsteps crunch on garbage and she pressed against the wall, listening intently as her hands shook uncontrollably. She waited a long time without hearing anything else before she finally looked over the top of a crate and saw he was gone. Burt was lying on his back on the ground and she hurried over, groaning with sorrow as she knelt beside him. His throat was slashed wide open

and blood was oozing out. His face was frozen in a terrified expression and his lifeless blue eyes stared up at her in silent accusation.

Tears welled up in her eyes. “I’m so sorry, Burt. I didn’t know. I would have yelled for you to run.”

She noticed the piece of paper the murderer had placed in his pocket; it stuck out enough that she could tell it was a page torn from a book, its edge smeared with blood. She turned and ran back out of the alley, stumbling over trash, too upset over Burt’s brutal murder to feel any relief that her own life had been spared. It was incredible that now she knew something no one in the entire nation knew. She knew the identity of the Homeless Slasher; the serial killer whose murders were front page news; the one who had frustrated the police for two years now and brought fear and death to so many. If she hadn’t seen his face so clearly in the light she wouldn’t have believed it was him. It raised a multitude of confusing questions in her mind.

But it wasn’t important that she understand everything, she would go to the police immediately and tell them his name so the murders could finally end. Suddenly, she felt as if someone punched her in the stomach, and she stopped running and knelt down on the pavement, moaning loudly. “So that’s why,” she said in a bitter whisper as she gasped for air.

She knew what their next order would be. They didn’t even have to tell her. They would forbid her to reveal the murderer’s identity to anyone. She would have to keep guiltily silent as other innocent people were slaughtered one-by-one. What better way could they devise to torment

her? And if she disobeyed them, they would kill her in the most excruciatingly painful way ever devised.