

Nessie is a photographer who comes home to find her best friend lying in a pool of blood to discover she's dead. Nessie ends up falling in love with the detective working April's case. He starts getting cold feet, why?

The Third Eye

By Jackie Adams

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***THE
THIRD
EYE***

JACKIE ADAMS

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Chapter 1

The camera has always been my best friend. It was there for me when I had family gatherings. It was there for me when I hung out with all of my friends. It's been here when I needed to make money. It's like an extension of my body.

Little did I know it captured a killer in the background of one of my shots. Little did I know it was too late to tell. Little did I know it could have saved the next victim if only I had seen him before. I guess that's life's breaks, though. Too little too late.

This tragic occurrence changed my life forever. I always did appreciate my photographs, but now I look closer, feel a depth I hadn't felt before, and pay more attention to the background of my pictures.

I turned the photograph into the cops. Detective Swarm told me they had already captured the killer. He said he knew exactly who it was in the beige raincoat and hat in my photo holding the bloody knife. He said the case is closed. Who am I to argue with law enforcement? There is just one problem. It happened when I came home from a wedding photo shoot.

I enter my apartment, "What the hell happened in here?" It looked like we just threw the wildest party of the century

minus the beer cans. The apartment was torn upside down. I call out, "Aaaaaapril."

I want some answers from her. This is ridiculous. I pick a lamp up and put it back on the end table. "Aaapril." I walk into her bedroom and see her lying in a pool of blood pool on her bed. I scream backing out of the room. I stop touching things and call 911.

I don't remember what I said. I just know what it felt like minutes after I was surrounded by law enforcement. They were everywhere. I did recognize one, Detective Swarm. He recognized me, too. I'm sitting on the couch, and he knelt in front of me. "Look Vanessa, I need answers."

"I... I don't know what happened. I was at a wedding photo shoot, and I came home. I thought April had another party. It's definitely not the first. I wasn't really thinking clearly because I was so tired. I walked through, fixed the lamp, and then I... I found her in the bedroom like that." I raise my hands toward the bedroom door. "Oh my God, is she... is she... dead?"

Detective Swarm looks down to the floor then back up to me with a slight nod letting me know that she is dead. My hands shake. Detective Swarm asks, "Did Miss Jones have any enemies? Someone who may have felt rejected? Or maybe she made someone upset?"

I shake my head, "No, no... April was the sweetest woman in the world. Everyone loved her. She has a boyfriend. His name is Stan Carson." I reach for my phone. I look up Stan's number and read it out loud to Detective Swarm.

Swarm asks me, "Do you have somewhere you can sleep tonight for the week?"

I tell him, "I'll go to my sister's house." I think of how chaotic it is there with her four kids, but she does have a guest room. "I don't think she'll mind me bunking with her."

"Okay, pack up as much as you need and leave the scene." Detective Swarm puts his hand on my shoulder. "I think you've seen enough for one night."

As I'm packing my suitcase, I call my sister and tell her everything that happened just as I told Detective Swarm. She says, "Oh my! Get over here as soon as you can. I'll feel safer knowing you're here with Teddy and me."

The whole drive over there I'm racking my brain wondering if April mentioned any kind of trouble. I come up with nothing. I try to think of anybody who could do that to April. She and her boyfriend were on good terms. They had never even been in an argument. I know, because it's the one thing April always bragged about. She even told me he's the most stable man she had ever dated. Who does that leave?

I pull into my sister's driveway and park behind her Tahoe. I can see her looking out the window as she holds my two-year-old nephew. I walk up to the front door letting myself in. "Lisa, thanks for letting me stay here. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it." I set my suitcase on the floor.

She says, "Of course. Go ahead and take your suitcase into the spare room. The dresser is empty. You can unpack. There are hangers in the closet."

I put my suitcase on the bed and unzip it. As I'm unpacking the clothes, I wonder back to any of April's exes. There were only two, and neither were violent. I hang the blouses and pants up. Lisa leans against the doorframe. "Are you okay? That must have been traumatic to walk into?"

I zip my empty suitcase and put it on the floor of the closet. "I'm pretty shaken up." She puts my nephew Kyle on the floor. He walks over to me, "Aunty."

"Oh wow, he said Auntie!" I bend down and pick him up. I give him the tightest hug. I need it more than he does. He says, "Auntie."

I smile at him, "Yes, Aunt Nessie."

"Nessie, do you know how long you're staying. I'm only asking, so I know what to tell Teddy."

I put Kyle back on the floor where he walks over to his mom hanging on to her leg. "Detective Swarm mentioned a week. Is that overstaying my welcome?"

"Oh no, of course not. You stay as long as you need to." She reaches down and picks Kyle back up holding him to her chest.

I sit on the bed, "This week I'm going apartment shopping."

She lifts Kyle higher into her arms, "Yeah, if I were you, I wouldn't want to stay in that apartment again either. Plus, without April it's probably a lot more expensive?"

I ask her, "Do you have a newspaper?"

Lisa says, "I have better than that. I have a friend who is a real estate broker. She helps people with leases, too." She puts Kyle back on the floor. "Let me go write her number down, and

I'll give it to you." She holds Kyle's hand and walks down the hall to the kitchen.

I think to myself, I'm never going back to that apartment. I'll get a hotel room if I have to. She brings back a card. "Here."

I flip it over and it has a dentist's name on it. She shrugs, "If you need a dental appointment, he's the guy to call, too."

I turn the card over to her friend's name and number, Justine Wheeler. "Do you think it's too late to call her?"

She looks at the clock on the end table next to the bed. "How about I call her tonight? I'll get you an appointment. When do you want to search?"

"Well, I just finished a big job doing a wedding. I have enough money in my savings, and I'm not working right now. Tomorrow?"

Lisa asks, "That soon, huh?"

I rub my hand across the bedcover, "The sooner I find one the sooner I'm out of your hair."

"Sis, you're not a nuisance to me."

She walks out of the room, I guess to call Justine Wheeler. I bow my head looking at my feet feeling the emotions starting to sneak in. April's... dead. I'll never hear her laugh again. She'll never walk back into my life. She'll never throw another party.

Lisa walks back into the room, "Justine says she'll meet with you tomorrow at ten o'clock. She says you're lucky there are a lot of available apartments because it's spring. Most people are buying homes right now."

I smile at her, "Have I told you that you're the best sister on the planet?"

She looks at me and rolls her eyes, "Are you saying there are better sisters on other planets?"

I stand up, "Impossible." I walk into the hall with her following me. "Do you mind if I get something to drink?"

She says, "You help yourself. Don't keep asking stupid questions. Make yourself at home."

Teddy is sitting on the couch, "Did you just call your sister stupid?"

She sighs clearly frustrated, "No, I said stupid questions. Why don't you make yourself useful and take the trash out?"

Teddy gets up grumbling, "Always something to do around here."

I offer, "I can get it!"

Teddy says, "That's okay, I'm used to your sister treating me like a slave."

She rolls her eyes again, "Whatever."

I rinse the glass out and put it in the sink, "I'm going to turn in for the night."

"Goodnight, Nessie."

"Goodnight Lisa."

I get under the covers and can't get the image I had of April out of my head. I toss and turn most of the night. By the time eight o'clock in the morning rolls around I get out of bed, take a shower, and get dressed.

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I walk into the kitchen, "I didn't think anyone else was awake."

"Gabby and Ariel had school this morning. I've been awake since five o'clock."

I put my hand on my waist, "I don't know how you do it."

"It's all about the love, sister." She says as she puts a plate of breakfast in front of me.

I want to tell her I don't do breakfast, but it smells so good... I don't want to hurt her feelings. I take a few bites of bacon. "Where's Kyle?"

"Teddy took him to daycare on his way to work."

"Ah," I tell her, "The whole apartment was chaos. Stuff had been thrown to the floor. I thought April had another wild party. She's been known to do that. Who would tear up our apartment like that? And why?"

"Well," Lisa says, "maybe they were trying to find valuables or they were looking for something?"

I ask her, "You think it was more than one person?"

"No, I just said they, because I don't know if it was a man or a woman."

"True, I guess I better be going. I need to stop by my shop before meeting with Justine." I hug her. "Thanks a lot for making this happen so quickly for me."

On the way to my photography shop I stop at Coffee Matters and order a caramel cappuccino. My photography shop is called Eyelusion. I've been doing photography all my life, but opened the shop about ten years ago. When I arrive, my shop

is an absolute mess. There's folders, pictures, and files all over the floor. I call 911, again! This time I ask for Detective Swarm. I tell him about my office.

First the police arrive. I give them my statement. They wanted to know the last time I was in my shop. I tell them yesterday morning before the wedding photography shoot. Then Detective Swarm arrives. I walk over to him and lean in, "I don't think this was a coincidence, do you?"

He looks around my studio. "Too early to know, so it's hard to say." He looks concerned to me. Detective Swarm is a handsome man. Broad shoulders, brown curly locks of medium length hair, clean shaven, and a round face. I notice he's not wearing a wedding band.

I throw my hands up in the air, "But look at this place. It's identical to our apartment. How can you not believe it's linked?!"

He responds, "Calm down, I didn't say it can't be... I simply stated that it's too soon to know. I want the police to watch over you, though. Can you write your sister's address down on this?" He hands me a small tablet.

I tell him, "The police will scare Kyle, Gabby, and Ariel. They're my nieces and nephew. I don't want them scared. Maybe I should get a hotel room."

He shakes his head, "No, I'll send an undercover over to watch you. Don't worry about it."

I let him know, "I'm going apartment shopping today to look at somewhere else to live. I can't go back into that apartment."

"Yeah, I don't blame you. Whoever did that to April was raged. Seven stab wounds."

I get the chills, "Seven?! Why so many?"

"I don't know the answer to that, Miss Langer." He says, "Now if you'll excuse me."

On the way to meet Justine I get a creepy feeling I'm being watched. I look around and don't see anyone staring at me or even taking notice of me. No vehicles are following me. I pull up to Justine's office. It's called Realtor 1. I get out and look around again to be sure nobody followed me.

Justine walks out, "You must be Vanessa Langer, Lisa's sister."

I reach my hand out and tell her, "Everyone calls me Nessie."

She takes my hand, "Justine Wheeler." She leads me inside. "I have a few we can do a virtual tour of right from my screen here." She points at the wall mount. "That way we can sort through the ones you want to see and don't want to see. Your sister said you're short on time and want to move in asap. I only put the ones without tenants in them. Is that okay?"

I take a seat, "That's perfect! Yeah, I'd like to get in by the end of next week if that's possible?"

She says, "As soon as we get a lease signed and a background check on you... I can get you the key."

I ask her, "So within a few days?"

She answers, "Three at the most."

We go through several apartments. I pick out three. "Do you have time to go see them today?"

"Yes, I cleared my schedule for the week."

"Great, I have all day." She says as she grabs a folder and her keys. "Do you want to ride with me or take your own car?"

"I'd like to ride with you if that's okay?"

She nods, "Yes, I prefer it that way. It makes it easier for me to get directions from google without continuously looking behind me to make sure you're still there."

We get in her Lincoln Navigator. "This is a very nice SUV, Justine."

She nods, "Yes, having a luxury vehicle in times like this really helps. It's a career choice."

The first apartment we look at has three flights of stairs and no elevator. A part of me would feel safer, because crooks don't like making themselves known. Going up three flights of stairs would make oneself known.

The second apartment we look at has a door man, an elevator, a rooftop pool, a gym. It's a studio apartment, which is all I really need. It's pretty small, but within my price budget. "Justine, this is the one." I feel safer not having any walls for some weirdo to be lurking behind. I also feel safer having a door man, neighbors and people active in the apartment building.

"Okay, let me look here..." She pulls out a manila folder. She grabs some papers inside it, and says I have a pen if you just

want to fill out the papers. She puts the lease agreement on the kitchen countertop that wraps around the whole kitchen, separating it from the living room.

After I fill out the lease, I hand her my business card. “Oh, you own Eyelusions? I pass by that on the way to work every day.”

“You didn’t notice anything this morning or yesterday morning when you passed it by did you?”

She thinks back, “Nope, sure didn’t. Sorry.” She says, “As soon as they sign the lease agreement, I’ll get you the keys.”

I nod and we walk back to her SUV.

When I get back to my car I drive back to my shop. The cops have cleared out. I call Detective Swarm, “Is it okay if I start picking up the mess that was left behind?”

“Yeah, we got everything we could. We’ll see where it goes from here.”

I want to call April to see if she could come help me, but I realize she’s gone now. I can’t, and that makes me sad. I debate calling Lisa, but I look at the clock, and I realize she’s probably busy making her family dinner. I realize now it’s just me. My best friend’s gone, and my sister has a life of her own. I start picking up the folders, the photographs, and then I think about my basement. I wonder... I walk downstairs and the culprit was definitely down here, too.

I call Detective Swarm back, “This is Vanessa Langer. Did you check my shop’s basement.”

He said, "We checked every square inch of your building. Even out back."

When I'm off the phone with him I clean up the basement first. It's not too messy, because I didn't have a whole lot down here. It's where I develop my photographs. I pick the pictures up off the floor that had been hanging and drying. It's like he was looking for something. What?

I call Detective Swarm back, "Do you think he or she thought April was me?" I get quiet, "He or she was definitely looking for something. I can tell by the way my photographs are placed on the floor. Do you think they were looking for my photo I took that I showed to you?"

"Can you bring that back in Miss Langer? And don't jump the gun. We're not even sure if the break ins are related yet." I can hear his chair squeak as he leans back.

"How long are you there for?" I ask him. "I'm in the middle of cleaning up the place."

"Never mind, I'll swing by and get it from you. Do you have it with you?"

"Yes, I have it here. Let me check. Here it is. Still in the mug I put it in."

"Okay, give me about an hour. I have a few things to do around here, then I'll stop by your place on the way home."

The basement is all done. Now I'm working on the shop's main floor. The photograph is the only thing the person could be looking for. I don't have anything else, and they didn't take

anything of value. My lenses are still here, my cameras... nothing stolen.

Soon I hear the bell on the front door. I look up as I'm picking up some folders on the floor. Detective Swarm looks around, "You don't have anyone to help you clean up this mess?"

"My best friend died, detective... and my sister is busy with her three kids and husband."

He takes off his beige trench coat and puts it on the back of a chair. "Mind if I help?"

Two hours later, we both bend down and go to grab the same last file. Our faces are just an inch away from each other. We both freeze looking into each other's eyes. Then we both awkwardly stand. I look around, "Well, that about does it, detective. Thanks for the help."

He says, "If I were you... I'd work on getting that door fixed."

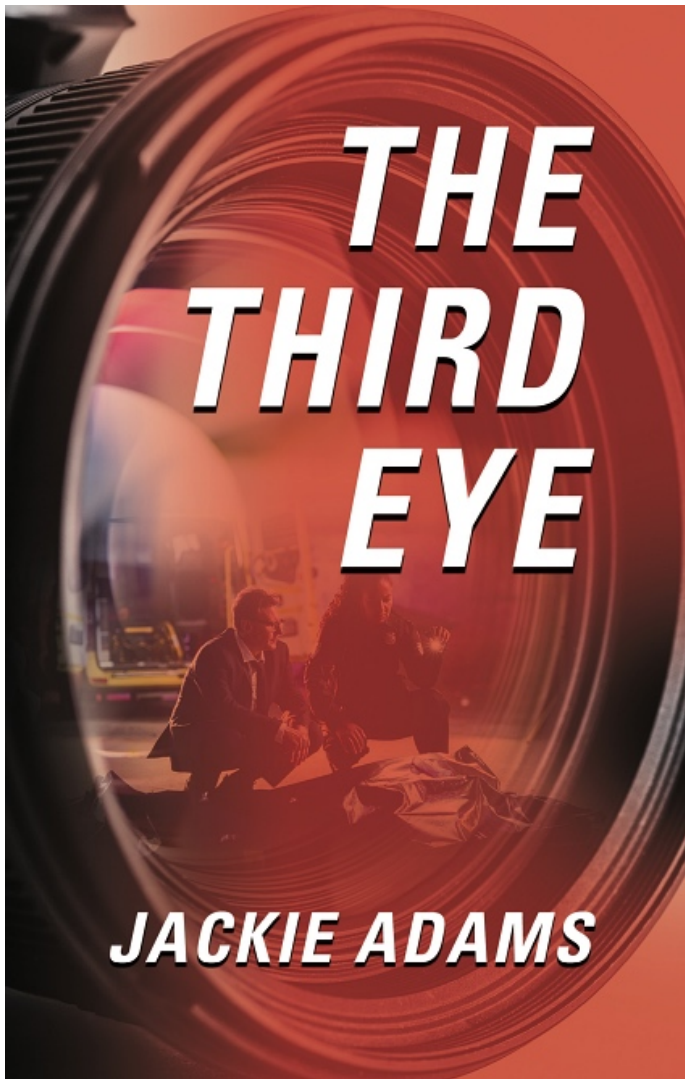
I hand him the SD card. I tell him, "I have someone coming at six to fix it. Thanks for the advice anyway." The least I can do is be nice to him after he just helped me for hours. I hand him his coat, "Have a good evening, detective."

As he leaves, the contractor arrives to look at the door. "Is it possible to have it fixed tonight? I'd hate to leave my shop unlocked overnight after what happened."

"I can't get to it until six o'clock tomorrow morning. I can board it up for you, though? I'll make it so that once we leave

nobody can get in it without making a lot of noise and having tools with them. We can open it tomorrow once I arrive.”

“I guess that’ll have to do.”



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