

Detective McIntosh is thrust into Reno's corruption after a brutal attack reveals the city's darkest secrets. Battling political power and buried crimes, he pursues justice with grit and moral resolve in this tense, character-driven noir.

Blood Under Nevada Skies: A Frank McIntosh Thriller

By Terry Richardson

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A FRANK MCINTOSH THRILLER

BLOOD UNDER NEVADA SKIES

RENO

THE BIGGEST LITTLE CITY IN THE WORLD

TERRY RICHARDSON

Blood Under Nevada Skies

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Chapter Five – Thin Ice

By morning, the photos were burned into Mac's brain. Calloway wasn't just Mac's Lieutenant. He was the department's prizefighter, the show pony, the name trotted out to the press whenever the mayor needed a "hero in blue." The Reno mayor was notorious for promoting poor leaders to Chief, and Calloway threw the best parties, crushed the best numbers, and handed out commendations like Halloween candy. He'd been the golden boy since day one—first to show, last to leave, always three steps ahead of the next promotion. Every rookie wanted to be him or be on his good side. Mac had witnessed it a hundred times: a handshake in the hallway, a backslap in the break room, and suddenly a career obstacle melted away. The guy had gravity. And if the golden boy took bribes, cut deals with monsters, then the rot didn't just go deep. It went all the way to the bone.

Mac spent half the morning looking at the surveillance photos, flipping them back and forth in his hands with a kind of grim reverence, until the paper edges went soft and greasy. Each shot felt like an indictment, not just of Calloway but of the whole goddamn system. There was no denying it now. He'd staked his reputation on the notion that some part of the city was worth saving, that every conspiracy and cover-up had a weak link, a sliver of

daylight. But if Calloway was in the pocket of dirty California developers and the mayor was involved, then every other uniform in his chain of command could be a pawn, and worse, another bought-and-paid-for traitor.

Ortega caught him in the detective's bullpen. He moved like a man who'd already read the morning's bad news—loose-limbed, chin tucked, trying to occupy as little space as possible. He sidled up to Mac's desk and peered down at the mess of paperwork, coffee rings, and the unspoken threat of everything Mac had uncovered in the last forty-eight hours.

"You look like hell," Ortega said, low and gruff, the way you say it to someone who's dying but doesn't want to admit it yet.

Mac didn't answer. He just slid one of the pictures across the battered Formica, face-up and loaded. Ortega's eyes flicked to the photo. He stared for a long time without blinking. Mac could see his friend's brain trying to auto-correct the evidence, to find a flaw in the frame, anything that could make this just another bad rumor.

But there was no wiggle room.

Ortega's lips pressed together in a hard line. "Shit," he said. "If this gets out, the whole department's gonna implode."

“That’s the idea,” Mac muttered. He didn’t look up.

Ortega’s hand hovered over the picture. He didn’t touch it. “You’re not thinking straight,” he said. “You go after Calloway, you’re not just picking a fight with him. You’re going up against every cop who owes him favors. You’ll be out there alone.”

Mac finally met his gaze. “I’ve been alone my whole damn career.”

It was true and not true. Mac had partnered with half the old guard, survived the rookie hazings, the midnight car chases, and the desk duty after the first time he slugged a white shirt. He’d racked up suspensions and commendations at roughly the same rate. But real friends? Only the ones who’d seen the inside of Internal Affairs and lived to drink about it. The rest either kept their distance or fell in line—good soldiers, not good men. He’d learned to eat alone, drive alone, carry his own secrets like a concealed blade.

Ortega tried again, voice softer, more desperate. “You bring this to IA, it’s just gonna disappear. You know that, right? Half of those guys are handpicked by Calloway’s people. Christ, Mac, you got no leverage.”

“IA’s not the play.” Mac tapped the stack of photos. “The only way this sticks is if it goes public.”

Ortega recoiled like he'd been slapped. "You're going to talk to the press?"

"Maybe," Mac said. "Or maybe I find someone who hates dirty politicians and cops more than they hate me. Someone with enough dirt to force the department's hand."

Ortega shook his head. "You're gonna get yourself killed."

Mac shrugged. "At least then I'll stop getting up at three a.m. to puke my guts out."

Ortega looked like he wanted to say something else, but all the words died in his mouth. He stood there for another minute, staring at the photographs, then turned and walked away without a goodbye.

Mac watched him go. He knew how this played out. The next time he saw Ortega, it would be in the men's room, whispering over the urinals, or maybe in front of a disciplinary board. That was fine. He was used to bridges burning behind him.

He spent the rest of the day doing what he did best: digging. He called in every favor he had left, every snitch, every bartender and bail bondsman with an axe to grind. Most of them hung up on him. A few offered condolences.

One or two promised to pass along a name, a number, a place to meet after dark. Every call made the noose a little tighter. By dusk, he'd mapped out a short list of people who might have something on Calloway, or at least on the developer, Ferragamo.

He stopped by the evidence locker, checked out a file from an unrelated case, keeping his head down. He could feel the shift in the air around the office. Cops who used to give him a nod now looked past him, like he was already drifting out of focus. Two uniforms in the hallway stopped talking when he walked by, then faked a laugh as soon as he turned the corner. None of it surprised him.

Internal Affairs wouldn't touch this with a goddamn cattle prod. The Chief and his lieutenants would bury it before sunrise. The only path left was the one that led straight through the heart of the enemy, with no backup and no guarantees.

If he wanted justice for Robbie Diaz, he'd have to walk the line himself—one man against the machine.

That night, Mac found himself parked in his battered Tahoe outside the Silver Rail. The bar's neon sign stuttered in the wind, painting the wet asphalt in a sickly pink pulse. Inside, shadows moved behind the fogged-up windows: off-duty cops, bitter old men, a handful of casino rats, and

the women who stuck to them like barnacles. Mac watched the door for a solid hour, waiting for a face he recognized, a pattern that made sense.

None came.

Instead, he sat with the windows up, engine idling, hands clenched around the steering wheel until his knuckles burned. He thought about the years he'd spent chasing ghosts and dead ends. Every time he'd tried to bring a bastard to justice, there'd been another bastard waiting to close the case, another dirty handshake behind the curtain. He thought about the way Calloway grinned during those morning briefings, the greasy charm, the way he made every problem sound like a joke.

He wondered what Calloway would do when he learned there was a new problem in play—one that wouldn't roll over, wouldn't take a bribe, wouldn't back down even when the odds said fold.

Mac stared into the blue-black Nevada night, past the shadowy parking lot and the glow off Fourth Street, and understood what he'd stepped into wasn't just another departmental embarrassment or a round of slap-and-tickle for Internal Affairs. He wasn't chasing down a simple payoff or textbook abuse of power. He was staring straight into the marrow where the city's bones had rotted

away and only the skin still pretended to hold it together. If Calloway was the point man for the mayor's favorite fixers, then every case Mac had ever worked, every tip he'd taken, every scumbag he'd put away—none of it meant shit. The game was rigged from the opening deal.

He sat in the car a long time, watching the clock on the dashboard nudge closer to midnight, listening to his own pulse pop in his ears. For a minute, he tried to imagine a version of himself that did the smart thing—one who let the machine grind along, who kept his head down and his pension intact, maybe even bought a boat when he finally retired to the coast. He tried to want that life. He really did. But he couldn't. Some ruined part of him had to see it through, because he'd spent twenty years convincing himself that Reno could still be rescued, that there was something worth saving under all the crap. He'd seen too many bastards walk, too many kids disappear into the cracks. This time, it wouldn't be enough to just document the rot.

He was outnumbered, outgunned, and probably already under surveillance. But that was the job. And if the department was going to treat him like a walking dead man, he'd return the favor.

He was declaring war.



About the Author

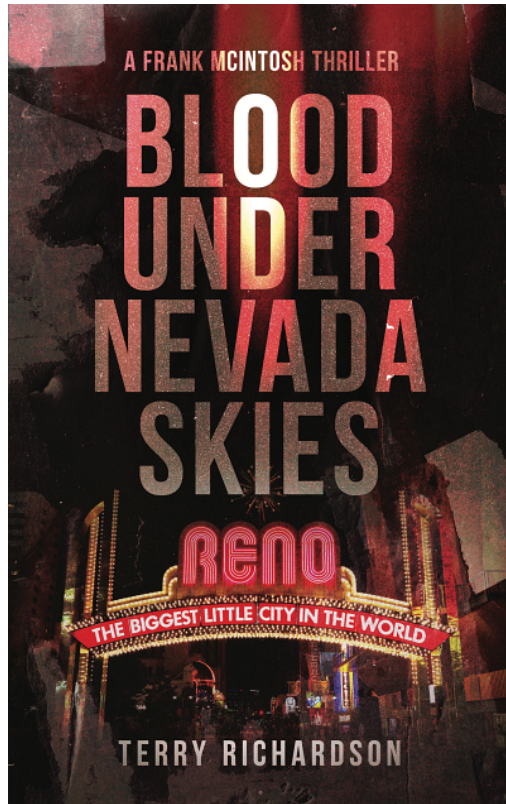
Terry Richardson is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and a seasoned law enforcement leader, educator, and executive. He began his policing career in his early-20's, promoting to Sergeant and later advancing to Deputy Police Chief, earning recognition for his commitment to community safety, officer development, and ethical leadership. Throughout his service, he received numerous commendations and medals, including one for his investigation into misconduct among senior staff—a testament to his integrity and willingness to confront difficult truths.

Beyond policing, Terry has held several senior executive roles in public administration, including Police Commander, State Chief Personnel Officer, and State of Nevada Director. His

career has been consistently marked by distinction, service, and principled leadership.

Terry holds a Master of Science in Management and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice/Public Safety, graduating with high academic honors. He also served as a Professor of Criminal Justice, teaching courses in criminal law, administrative justice, and leadership in law enforcement.

With a career spanning law enforcement, higher education, and executive leadership, Terry brings a rare combination of authenticity and insight to his writing. His work blends the grit of real policing with the strategic perspective of a commander and the reflective depth of an educator—resulting in storytelling that is both compelling and true to life.



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