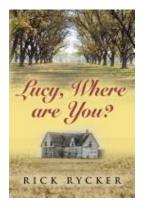


# Lucy, Where are You?



RICK RYCKER



This detective novel is the first in what may become a series revolving around the main character Randy Shaw who is a private investigator. His abilities, along with the special talents of his wife, Lizette, will lead the reader on a suspenseful ride through many twists and turns on the way to solving the case.

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Rick Rycker

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This book is a work of fiction. Any resemblance of any of the characters to persons alive or dead is strictly coincidental. The locations however can be found in the Irmo and Columbia South Carolina area.

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## Chapter 1

The windows on the old farm house were the old fashion double hung kind with the lock centered at the bottom of the top pane. The screens were old and tattered. Lucy's bedroom was on the first floor. She was sound asleep clutching her stuffed elephant, the one Bill, her mom's boyfriend, had won for her at the county fair last summer. Bill Tanner was trying very hard to fill the void left in Lucy's heart after the death of her father three years ago. Eric Fender was killed in a horrible plane crash along with the pilot James Duggan. The two were out scouting for the ideal place to build a new fishing resort near Lake Murray in South Carolina, when the Cessna 182 apparently flew into a severe wind shear. At 500 feet Duggan, a relatively inexperienced pilot, couldn't correct in time and they crashed into Lake Murray. Lucy and her mother Dina suddenly found themselves alone in this world. Dina had to take a job as a waitress at Willy Martin's restaurant. She met Bill there and the two have been dating for fourteen months. Lucy likes Bill but she still misses her daddy. Dina is just thankful that someone was there to help her pick up the pieces. The work is hard and the hours are long at the restaurant, but it helps to stay busy. Outside of Bill, Willie, and a few regulars that always seem to set in Dina's section, she and Lucy have no friends or relatives here in Irmo. The old farm house was left to Eric by his Great Uncle.

The two knew that Dina would be immersed in her nightly hot bath and they would have less than thirty minutes to execute their plan to steal Lucy. It was simple to cut a hole close to the lock and with a quick thud from a right hand, the lock was exposed. She was gone in less than five minutes.

Dina reluctantly withdrew herself from the rejuvenating hot water and toweled herself off. Dressed in just her house coat, she started downstairs to check on Lucy." 911,what's your emergency?"

"I need help, my little girl is missing!"

"Just remain calm ma'am, we have someone on their way....just stay on the line with me. Okay?" Dina was beginning to lose control and she could feel the tears welling up. "Just hurry!" she said.

"The officer just told me they will be there in less than ten minutes," The 911 operator stated.

"I was just upstairs, taking a bath." Dina cried. Why didn't she make Lucy's room the one upstairs? Dina was careful not to disturb anything in Lucy's room. She wanted to give the police every chance to find whoever it was that had taken Lucy. She was beginning to feel totally helpless and angry with herself at the same time. The tears were like swollen rivers as they cascaded down her cheeks. Somehow she managed to see through them well enough to unlock the front door when the police arrived. "Mrs. Fender, I am Officer Mack Wilson. Can you show me to your daughters room?" Dina pointed with a shaking finger in the direction of Lucy's room . Mack took one step inside and saw the open window. "Have you been outside of the house." He asked Dina.

"No, why?" She replied.

"We need to preserve any footprints that the subject or subjects may have left beneath the window." Mack called dispatch and requested an AMBER alert. One was sent out immediately. By then Officer Dave Ragowe was on scene. The two officers searched the girl's room for any clues that they could find. They found the broken piece of the window, but little else. They could tell that Lucy must have been sound asleep when she was taken, because there were no signs of a struggle. The stuffed elephant lay mockingly in the bed next to where she had been.

Dina had called Bill and he was pulling up out front. He scrambled to take Dina in his arm. He could see that she was a complete wreck. He held her close, trying to provide her with all the strength he could muster. He could feel her trembling in his arms. It can't be because it is cold he thought. It must still be 80 degrees out. As he held her, his mind went back to the thousand of conversations that they had. He had pleaded with her to sell the old farm house and for her and Lucy move in with him. After all, this old place is so far out on old Kennerly Rd. It would be better if they moved in with him on Lordship Lane. Dina had always told him that she couldn't bring herself to sell, because this house was one of the last pieces of Eric that she could hold on to.

### Lucy, Where Are You?

Dina was staring at his eyes, and could read what he was thinking. "I guess we should have moved in with you, and maybe this wouldn't have happened," Dina said.

"Oh Babe, we will get her back," Bill said trying to comfort her. They both knew that cases like this rarely ended well.

The police department was in full swing now. They had dusted for prints on every surface in Lucy's room that was big enough to contain a print, and even some that weren't. They had casted some footprints from outside the window. Photos were being taken of every angle both inside and out.

Officer Wilson was talking with Detective John Stone. They knew at some point they were going to have to ask Dina and Bill for a ten card, so they could eliminate their prints from any that might remain. Dina was eager to cooperated when asked for her prints and her official statement regarding the evenings events prior to her finding Lucy missing. Bill was somewhat reluctant to give up his prints. He had been involved in a few home invasions when he was younger. Even though he was never caught, the thought crossed his mind that somehow giving his prints now would link him to those break-ins back in his youth.

His excuse was that he was allergic to the ink that was used. He finally gave in and submitted his prints when the officer told him that it was a plant extract based ink and was hypoallergenic.

The news crew from WIS TV was parked out on Kennerly and was straining to get a look at the crime scene. As long as the Police Tape was up the crew respected it and didn't cross it. Bill knew however, that as soon as that tape came down, it would be like a feeding frenzy at Shark Realm Adventure Aquarium in Camden New Jersey. He asked one of the officers on scene if it would be possible to leave the tape up for a day. The officer said, "When we clear the scene, sir, we are required to remove the tape." Bill realized that he was going to have to find a way to get Dina passed the awaiting news vultures.

"Detective Stone, may I have a word with you?" Bill asked.

"Sure, how can I help?" Stone replied.

"I was wondering if you could put Dina in your car and drop her off at my place. I don't want her exposed to the waiting news crew out there."

"Sure, I can't think of a better way to slip her past them," Stone said. Bill gave Stone the address on Lordship Lane.

As soon as the police technicians were done collecting what evidence they could find, they were ready to clear the scene. The tape came down and the questions were being shot like hot flaming arrows toward Bill. He was valiantly standing his ground. A voice cut through the clamoring noise. "Sir, Marsha Laws WIS TV news, are you a person of interest in this case?"

"I have not been referred to as such." Bill answered.

"Ms. Laws, I don't think that is any of your or any listeners of WIS's business," Bill snapped back. It was amazing, the effect on the whole tone of the conversation seemed to shift away from Bill and more toward Marsha Laws. She had been after Eric relentlessly before he died. It was no secret In Irmo that she had a crush on Eric and didn't seem to care who knew it. Eric was a very handsome man. Well built, you know the rugged outdoor type. His blond hair seemed to always be well kept. Even in a hurricane his hair seemed to stay put and not have that wind-blown look about it. Eric showed

no interest in Marsha. She was a very pretty and shapely woman but Eric loved Dina with every fiber of his 6 foot 2 inch frame. Marsh knew this and it

"What is your relationship with the family that lives here?" Marsha asked.

"I think you handled that quite well," Stone said.

"Thanks," Bill replied. "Where is Dina?"

only made her more determined to have him.

"I used your distraction, to slip her into the back of my car," Stone said.

"Good let's get her out of here," Bill said.

Willie Martin was in his restaurant early Sunday morning even though the doors wouldn't be open to the public for several hours. He was nervous. He had heard what had happened to Lucy and really didn't want the police department poking around him or his restaurant. If the word got out that he was up to his eyebrows in debt to old man Randolf, people might think he was somehow involved. Now he wishes that he wouldn't have hired Dina. She was so pitiful after Eric's death though. How could he turn her down, after all the three of them always came in on Sunday around four in the afternoon for an early dinner. And she was a great waitress. She was very courteous to the customers and was willing to work the 12 hour shift that he asked her to work six days a week. The only day that Dina was off was

Sunday. She and Lucy still tried to carry on the tradition of Sunday dinner at the restaurant. Dina makes pretty good tips working for Willie. The old farm house has long since been paid for so the only expense that she has is the utilities and of course the ones associated with trying to raise a nine year old daughter. Now that seems like the least of Dina's worries.

Stone went into Chief Hewitt's office. Mike Hewitt has been the Chief of Police here for over 9 years, Mayor Jackson keeps getting re-elected and he keeps Mike on as Chief. Things seem to run pretty smooth most of the time. There was that double homicide two years ago on Canterfield Rd. in the Whitehall Lakes area. But the folks out there are kind of trigger happy. Now this, what are the good people of Irmo going to say? The Chief called Stone and said that he was coming in and he wanted to be briefed on how this went down. Stone was sitting across from the desk when Chief Hewitt arrived. "Tell me John, what are the details?" Chief Hewitt said as he entered his office.

"Well Chief, it looks like two people broke through the bedroom window and snatched the little girl while her mother was soaking in a hot bath upstairs," Stone replied.

"That's kind of sketchy," Hewitt said.

"Sorry Chief, they didn't leave much behind as evidence."

"How do you know there were two people?" Hewitt asked.

"Well that window was just too high for one person to climb into unless they were 7 foot tall. I am figuring it had to be two, one boosting the other up," Stone said.

"Any idea who could have done it?" The chief asked.

"Well, our technicians lifted some prints but I suspect they belong to the mother or her boyfriend," Stone said.

"Is he a person of interest?" Hewitt inquired.

"I don't like him for it. He showed up right after I got on scene and was genuinely concerned for the safety of the mother and even got in a dig on Marsha Laws," Stone said chuckling as he stood up. "Yeah, she led with her chin, and the boyfriend let her have it. She deserved to be broiled even hotter than that but the boyfriend eased up on her." Stone still had a smile on his face when he said, "I used the distraction to put the mom in the back of my car and sneak her past the waiting news people."

"Let me know if anything further comes up," Said Hewitt.

"Alright," Stone grumbled as he disappeared around the corner.

Dina had somehow managed to calm herself and was sipping some herbal tea in the kitchen at Bill's house. Sleepy- tyme Vanilla with one teaspoon of sugar. It felt good sliding down her throat. Bill was making sure she had everything that she needed. She had kept a spare toothbrush and a change of clothes there just in case it got too late after one of their many excursions as a threesome. She remembers how much Lucy loved staying at Bill's. He had air conditioning. That was something they didn't have at the farm house. She also recalled that Lucy loved that Bill let her and Dina sleep in his big California King Sized Bed and he always slept in one of the other three bedrooms. He really didn't need a house that big but he got it for a great price. It had three bathrooms and a huge backyard. Last summer Bill built Lucy a large playground with a pretend boat complete with a big helm and wheel. Lucy would play until she dropped, refusing to come inside. Bill would have to go out and carry her back in and lay her on the big bed. Then he would pack all their stuff up and take them back to the farm house. Dina remembers that she never heard Bill complain even a single time about Lucy's antics. She could be a handful at times, but then again so could her mother. The tea was starting to do its job, Dina was starting to yawn. Bill said that he would go and turn the covers down for her. She pleaded with him to not leave her alone, not tonight, not after what had happened. Bill tucked her in and climbed in bed with her. He held her close and gently stroked her long raven hair as she slept. Lucy had gotten her daddy's hair, blond with never a hair out of place. Dina's sleep was troubled as one might expect after all that had gone on. Bill refused to sleep. He felt that he should stay awake as if he was standing guard over her.

The old farm house was silent again. It had stood empty for many years after Eric's Great uncle died. Phil Stewart contested the uncle's will, stating that he deserved it more than Eric, because he had spent more time there as a kid. The truth of the matter was Mark Sheffield, the Great uncle in question, loved his sister Ruth (Eric's Grandmother) more than his sister Donna (Phil's Grandmother). Donna the eldest of the three children, used to slap Mark around and Ruthie the middle child would always come to his defense. Mark never married and some thought it was because he hated all women, because of the way Donna treated him as a child. The truth was he

was just asexual. He lived in that old farm house all alone for twenty two years. He kept it up pretty well. He was quite handy with woodworking tools, so the house had some very beautiful and ornate crown moldings. It even had what they call a trey ceiling in the upstairs bedroom. It retained that old time feeling with a huge claw-foot bathtub. That is where Dina was soaking when Lucy was taken.

Stone called the lab and spoke with one of the technicians. "I need your report on my desk yesterday!" There was the sound of frustration in Stone's voice. It had been several days and no word from anyone, no ransom call, no results from the Amber Alert, nothing. Stone was running into one dead end after another. The department had scoured the neighborhood and surrounding woods all with not a clue. It was if Lucy had never existed. There simply had to be something that they overlooked. Someone somewhere had to have seen something. Stone had talked to law enforcement from Greenville to Cape Island. Nobody had seen anything. "Sorry John, we found a match on one of the shoe prints from outside the window. It was from a special order from Mason shoes," The lab Tech. said.

Doris Celeski has only been a lab Tech. for nine months. She worked her way up from simple Patrolman, to a member of the S.W.A.T. team, to taking special classes, all to get her where she had always wanted to be, a Crime Scene Investigator. She aced her State Certification test. Stone recognized her attention to detail the first case she worked. Too bad on this case there was so little to process.

"Can you get me a name of who bought that shoe from Mason?" Stone inquired.

"Already done, they said they have only shipped a pair to one person on the greater Columbia area." Celeski replied.

"Finally we caught a break, I am going to inform the Chief. Great work Doris," Stone said. The Chief had a scowl on his face as Stone walked through the door to his office.

"Well, what is on your mind John?" The Chief grumbled.

"Celeski in the lab just informed me that she traced a shoe print to one of the Card brothers. I am on my way out there now, just wanted to let you know," Stone replied. "I want to come with you," Said Hewitt.

The Card residence was in the south west part of Seven Oaks on Dutch Branch Road. Some say that the twins are mentally challenged. Their parents were killed in a drunk driver accident shortly after the boys turned 19. Now 25, they still live in the house in Seven Oaks.

Stone turned into the driveway, "Something just doesn't feel right," Hewitt said.

"Maybe you haven't lost all your instincts setting behind that desk," Stone replied. The two men approached the house with caution. The front door was slightly open. "Police!" Stone yelled. There was no answer. The Chief slowly pushed the door open. Both men entered, guns drawn. Stone went in first and went left, Hewitt went right. The living room was littered with pizza boxes and fast food sacks. The carpet looked as if it hadn't been swept in years. The place was a garbage pit, but no sign of the boys. Stone turned to check the kitchen. Hewitt started into the front bedroom.

"Stone, you better come in here." The chief said. As Stone entered the bedroom, he saw the bodies of the two Card boys. They were bound hand and foot as well as gagged. They each had taken one shot to the back of the head, at what looked to be close range.

"I'll call this in," Stone said.

It took a while for the forensic team to get there. Meanwhile Hewitt and Stone searched the rest of the house. Stone found a mattress and blankets in the basement along with some make-shift restraints. "It looks like Lucy has been here," Stone yelled. Hewitt came quickly down the stairs to see what Stone had found. The basement was damp and musty-smelling. Over in one of the other corners you could see black mold growing up the block wall.

"This place is a dump," Hewitt remarked.

"Yeah, I am beginning to believe the stories that these two were retarded. They should've never been left to fend for themselves," Stone said.

"Damn! This puts us right back to square one," Hewitt said as he made his way back upstairs. Stone was right behind him.

"The Techs are here," Stone said.

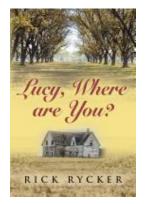
"Then let's get out of their way," Said the Chief.

### Lucy, Where Are You?

Doris led the team as they began to process the house. There was only one Tech. for the basement. The mattress yielded more than just long blond hairs, there appeared to have been several donors. DNA samples were taken from the mattress as well as the blankets just in case the hairs were too degraded to render any conclusive results.

Doris was the Tech. on the boy's bodies. She was busy collecting samples from under Jason's fingernails when she heard a voice yelling from the basement.

"We're going to need another body bag." Bob Walker the Tech. in the basement had found a badly decomposed body behind a box under the stairs leading to the main portion of the house. It had probably been there for nine months or more. The body appeared to be that of a young girl maybe 12 or 13 years of age. There was ligature marks around her throat as if she had been hung or choked to death. This discovery means that every inch of this house needs to be checked for blood and/or semen. Who knows what Jason and his twin brother Julius had done to the kids they stole and brought here. Bob had collected at least seven different samples of hair from the mattress and blankets. The lab was going to be busy for a long time. Making comparisons to the list of missing children in the past six years since the boys lived here by themselves.



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