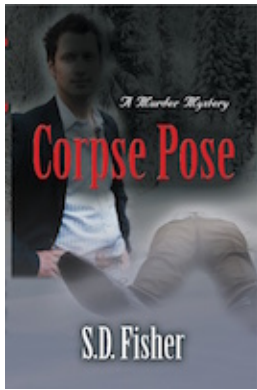
The book cover features a man in a dark blazer and a blue and white striped shirt standing in a snowy, forested area. In the lower right foreground, a person is lying face down in the snow, wearing tan trousers and dark shoes. The background is a dark, misty forest with snow-covered trees.

A Murder Mystery

Corpse Pose

S.D. Fisher



A rising male model and fashion designer is grotesquely murdered. A disfigured detective is called out of medical retirement to head the investigation and provide political cover for the Chief of Police.

The search for the killer leads former Lead Detective Lafe Larson and his old partner, Mike Zwygert, straight to a modeling agency boiling over with jealousy, resentment and fear on the inside while, outside, anti-gay church demonstrators clamor for death to homosexuals.

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Corpse Pose: A Murder Mystery

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First Edition

Chapter 1

Everyone loves to see an arrogant, vain, self-absorbed prick brought down. That's why you'll like my story.

My name is Lafayette "Lafe" Larson. In a moment, I'll explain how I came by my given name - unusual for the Upper Midwest - but let's get some background out of the way first.

I'm a private investigator and a former lead homicide detective, invalidated out of the force after ten years on the job.

You love irony? Well, here it is. In Gulf War II, I survived numerous firefights without a scratch. Only when I came back to the U.S. did I get rounds to the head and leg. Hence, the forced retirement.

I limp and the right side of my once handsome face is a ruin. Some of the detectives on my former squad are happy about that fact, and I don't begrudge them their satisfaction at my comeuppance. Karma can be an exacting bitch about such things.

My injuries mean I can't chase down criminals anymore, but I sure can scare the hell out of them simply by attempting a smile. And if they get close, their ass is mine.

I said I was arrogant. I came by my big-headedness honestly. I learned it from my father, the late John G. Larson. He was a polymath, a Distinguished Professor of Logic and Mathematics and probably master of a dozen other fields he didn't deem important enough to mention. There wasn't a subject on earth he couldn't comprehend completely, except humility and the ability to ever admit

he was wrong. Until his mind entered its final stage of betrayal, my father regarded the progressive dementia that destroyed him as a monumentally grievous error on the part of the universe because it deprived existence of his genius.

If it sounds like I'm blaming him for my arrogance and sometimes abrasive manner, I'm not because he gave me a great gift as a counterbalance to those negatives - I'm smart and literate as hell.

Because he recognized my intelligence, my father didn't like the profession I chose, just as he didn't approve of me entering the Army before becoming a police detective. As he put it, "it's a waste of the brain power I endowed upon you." Like I said, he was not a modest man.

That's probably why I did join the service in the first place - simply to prick the balloon of his ego and enjoy the hiss of deflation. Or to find out how I'd fare in combat. Or because I was a 20-year-old bored with college. Take your pick.

I never talked about what happened in Iraq with my father because I knew it would horrify his sentiments. He was what I called a "practical pacifist." He hated war in any form, not because of all the death and destruction but because it was a personal affront to the logic he so treasured. To him, war simply didn't make sense, so why pursue it?

To the day of his death, he didn't know that I was a machine gunner and good at it, so good that my buddies called me "Lafe the Strafe" or simply "Strafe."

I hated those nicknames. It implied that I wildly mowed down people for the hell of it. Actually, I was and am the total opposite - coldly efficient under fire. That's

what made me so good. Put any weapon into my hands - a Beretta M9 pistol, an M-16, a SAW, a Ma Deuce, whatever - and I was an enemy's nightmare. And I took pride in being that nightmare. You want to protect yourself and your buddies by doing the best job possible. It's the eternal verity of combat - by being a better killer, you protect your own.

I said that I was arrogant courtesy of my father. My vanity and self-absorption? That came from my mother's side of the family.

Marie Marechal Larson was a bundle of contradictions - a woman who was an experienced and highly respected instructor in the gentle art of yoga but who, at the same time, loved the violent sport of hockey (she was born Canadian, after all). Due to her encouragement, I excelled at both of her passions.

She was also a beautiful and talented artist, a specialist in pastels, and I inherited her appreciation of art in all its forms. I inherited her looks as well, and I was handsome as a movie star. At least that's what people kept telling me - "You're a blond, blue eyed Johnny Depp" - and I came to believe them.

My mother was proud of her French heritage (by way of Montreal) and missed no opportunity to mention that she was a distant relative of the Marquis de Lafayette. So, that's how I got my given name.

As a pastel painter, she was also eager to inform people that she "carried on the tradition of the great Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun," an 18th Century French pastelist. It was nowhere the size of my father's, but my mother had her own ego.

As a teenager, hockey consumed me. All that testosterone had to be burned off somehow. In Wisconsin,

loving art and yoga did not endear you to your teammates but I was an early-maturing 6 foot three, 225-pound center with a nasty streak, so a few fights squelched any trash talking that came my way. As captain, I led my high school team to the state championship and an unbeaten season - twice.

My mother cheered me every step of the way. When the big-time college hockey programs came knocking, she encouraged me to go that route. I never knew if it was Canadian pride behind that encouragement or perhaps a way to tweak my father's nose and escape his Jupiter-sized shadow for a moment. Maybe it was both. Dad regarded hockey as barely a step above savagery. The more he criticized the sport, the stronger and more persistent her support of my involvement became.

I'm glad my mother didn't live to see the result of the bullets shattering my face. Before the drunk driver claimed her life, she was inordinately proud of the fact that she had a strikingly good-looking son.

Now I'm half handsome, half rigid mask due to nerve destruction. Think Johnny Depp as Two Face with a speech impediment that appears and disappears depending on how the damaged nerves are firing or misfiring on any particular day.

You'd think the disfigurement would have rid me of my arrogance and high self-regard. Well, the bullets blew a lot of those qualities out of me, but they're not completely gone. It's part and parcel of who I am.

However, as a result of my injuries, I'm closer to being a man honest about himself than ever before.

The glib, charming bullshitter is gone.

Corpse Pose

The self-pity has largely disappeared as well although I'm aware enough to see traces of it in the words I've just written.

Most days, I'm no longer in the bottle.

Some days, I find peace.

Where do I find that peace?

It's an easy answer - and I'm not being facile here - I find it in justice.

Of course, every competent cop or PI seeks justice. It's bred into the DNA.

But here's the difference with me.

I don't just seek justice...I burn for it.

How much do I burn?

Once in Iraq, we were on patrol through a village when the enemy bungled a Willie Peter IED shell they were attempting to arm in order to blow us away. The lucky insurgents died instantly. One escaped the full force of the blast but not the white phosphorus that spewed from the explosion and coated him with the rain from hell.

Let me explain something about Willie Peter. It burns...and burns...and burns...and doesn't stop burning until either it runs out of oxygen or consumes itself.

That's how badly I burn for justice.

By the way, I put a round through that insurgent's head. It was an act of battlefield mercy. In between the screams, the last words on his lips were, "Shukran, shukran." Thank you, thank you.

I'll admit there have been days since I was shot when I wished someone would give the same mercy to me. I would have thanked them as well. But the fact that I'm writing these words show that I'm past that now.

Finding justice, in big and small ways, is the salve for a mental wound that will never fully heal.

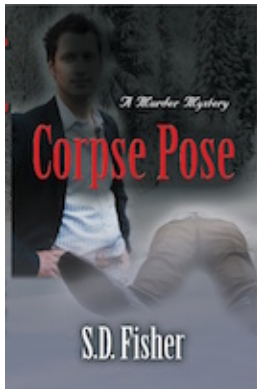
In recovery, therapists encourage you to write about the traumatic events affecting your life. It's cathartic. They expect a few pages at a minimum and a journal full at a maximum. But, as I said, I'm a highly literate man, so they got a full book.

That book is in your hands now.

A last bit of irony before you read my story.

It was murder that set me on the path to self-destruction.

It was the murder of Curt Hinderlin that got me off it.



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