

To Serve  
& Protect



# To Serve & Protect

A Novel By

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*For Mom, Kelly, and Reggie.*

—*J. K. M.*



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many of the settings in this novel are based on actual locations in Goshen, N.Y. and Washington, D.C. As with so much in life, the work of others is a vital component of success and I am grateful for the help of so many, but would like to single out a few.

Although I tried to remain as faithful to their advice as the story-line would allow, this is a work of fiction and any errors are purely my mistake or the result of literary license.

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For more information on *To Serve & Protect* as well as my new projects visit [www.JKMagee.com](http://www.JKMagee.com).



# 1

Jean Black could see the Washington Monument looming off to his left, and could feel the warmth of the rising October sun on his exposed face, as he made his way from Constitution Avenue to the Lincoln Memorial. The cold, damp air whipped his thick brown hair and he thrust his hands deep into his jacket pockets, his fingertips sliding across the dimpled grip of his 10mm Colt.

A man in navy pinstripes was leaning against a thick pillar of the memorial, engrossed in a *Washington Post*. Black pulled the collar of his leather jacket tight around his neck, watching for the paper to lower, waiting for their eyes to meet. It was Forest, and once he saw Black, he folded the paper, stuffing it into his pocket while he moved down Lincoln's marble staircase.

"Mr. Dresden," Forest acknowledged as he extended a mammoth hand.

Black took it. "Mr. Forest," he said, thinking about how long ago the name game had worn out its excitement.

"It was awfully good of you to come on such short notice," Forest said as they moved away from the memorial, and headed toward the cherry trees running the length of the reflecting pool.

“I was surprised to hear from you so soon. We generally don’t handle things this way.”

“I apologize for that. I figured you might be hesitant, but this seemed worthy of your time. This is why you pay me,” he said, confident of his intentions.

“I’m a creature of habit, Calle. Change is not something I enjoy—”

“But you’re here,” Forest interrupted.

Black paused to consider the man and his interjection.

They were compatriots but opposites in every sense. Although Black was tall, about six-foot-four, Forest was a giant. Where maturity and purpose had etched several lines in Black’s solid face, youth made Forest look smooth and plump. “No matter how hard I try, I can’t get my curiosity under control. It’ll be my undoing. You’ve never steered me wrong, so I came. What’s so important?” Black asked.

“A senator.”

“I might be interested,” Black said, pausing to groom his moustache with his fingertips. “The client?”

“Seems as clean as can be expected,” Forest said.

Black hesitated. “To be honest, I’ve had retirement on the brain lately.”

“You?” Forest said, his tone catching Black off guard.

“That surprises you?” he asked, but got no response. “You thought I was going to do this forever? Well, I’ll tell you a few things. I’m growing a little long in the tooth for this line of work. Plus my conscience is attempting a resurgence, which isn’t exactly a comforting thought.”

“I guess it’s time then,” Forest said.

“So tell me more about this senator,” he said, looking across the solitude of Constitution Gardens, as it began to give way to early morning joggers and pet owners.

“It’s West Virginia Senator Byron Mitchell. He’s an old geezer, lives with a younger woman and a butler. Been over there forever,” Forest said, staring past the slender monument and in the direction of the Capitol Building.

“Can the client afford it?”

“Easily.”

“I’m staying at the Hyatt Regency on New Jersey under the name Dresden. I’ll be there one night. Have them send an information packet on Mitchell, then leave it at the front desk for me. I won’t wait around, so make sure they understand it must arrive by tonight,” Black said, and moved away.

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Beyond Black’s reflection and the heavy rain sheeting across his hotel room window was New Jersey Avenue and its inching traffic. He was trying to talk himself out of killing again. He was losing the argument. A single legal folder labeled *West Virginia* lay on the bureau next to him. Inside were a photograph, an accompanying personal description document, an instruction page, and a set of keys to a Dodge waiting for him at the Hotel Washington.

The photograph was of Byron Mitchell. The short typewritten page fastened to the photo gave addresses, telephone numbers, vehicle types, plate numbers, and more than enough background information. “Eliminate West Virginia” emblazoned the top of the instruction page, which included several very spe-

cific questions the client needed answered, as well as a list of evidence the client wanted him to find.

A wicked grin appeared at the corners of his mouth as he pictured himself as an evil Sherlock Holmes. The addition of snooping to his repertoire was not unusual; in fact, it had become one of the reasons clients chose him. It hadn't always been; clients had only been interested in the who, and how much, at the onset of his career. Now they wanted the why, and Black had a talent for eliciting answers, through force and snooping.

The only obstacle left to dissuade him was the conversation with the client. Forest was nothing more than a locator and a courier; in the end it was his choice. And he never made it without following all precautions, the last being the conversation.

Black spent a few minutes disconnecting the hotel telephone and replacing it with a Motorola unit he kept in a small attaché case. The land-line was produced for the intelligence community, and it had two features of interest to Black: a source scrambler, and voice camouflage. It was 10 PM when he sat on the edge of the bed listening to its pulsing rings.

An edgy voice answered. "Hello?"

"Mr. Scaffiotelli?"

"Yes?"

"This is Mr. Dresden."

"I was beginning to think I wouldn't hear from you today. Mr. Forest said I would. I was ready to give up. It's getting late." Scaffiotelli sighed.

"I haven't committed myself. Your relief is somewhat premature."

"I'm sorry, I've never done this before."

“Most have not.”

“What can I say to convince you?”

“Are you sure this is the proper course for you?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Forest seems to have faith in you. In your financial ability.”

“We didn’t discuss that,” the man said.

“Account number A-118-64, United Bank of Switzerland,” Black stated. “The price is five-hundred-thousand dollars. Nothing will happen until I get confirmation the money is there. Once I’m certain, I’ll help you.”

“I will transfer the money immediately,” Scaffiotelli said. “When can I expect it?”

“I’ll be leaving Washington Tuesday, October twenty-seventh, so between now and then.”

“That’s awfully vague, and it’s a week away —”

“I was led to believe that urgency wasn’t an issue, so nothing here is negotiable.”

“Of course. Within a week’s time then?”

“And yours is up,” Black said, and replaced the receiver.

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Byron Mitchell considered himself a passionate man, and his feelings covered the spectrum from ardent hatred to enthusiastic love. He was an elderly conservative who barked his commands within the stone walls of Capitol Hill, and they rarely carried an importance demanding public awareness. However, for the last several weeks Mitchell had drawn the media spotlight, and seemed to be on the television every time there was a commercial break.

The media held a special place in Mitchell's heart, because he couldn't recall anything he despised more. Their newfound interest in him stemmed from his speaking out against the federal government funding abortions. The surge in favor of government intervention was at an all-time high, and Mitchell stood against it. In fact, he was the most vociferous critic in Congress. His opinions were unpopular, ridiculed, and the media was capitalizing on the fervor.

Although he had spent most of the day chairing a Select Committee meeting on abortion, his thoughts were not focused on legislative ideals or the unborn. They focused instead on the dinner his wife was hosting that evening for his constituency in West Virginia, and about a certain female intern he had befriended—but more so on the intern. She was petite, brilliant, and blonde, a lethal combination, he knew. He also knew he was acting like a schoolboy stricken with a case of puppy love. It baffled him how such a young girl could turn him, the harsh old man of Washington, into such a kitten. He needed to spend time with her before she left the Hill, devoting her full attention back to graduate school, and before his wife returned to Washington.

It was late when Mitchell reached his Capitol Hill office and started packing up for the day, preparing for his journey home. While he mused about how an evening with her might progress, he pulled a set of keys from his suit coat and got into his blue Mercedes which had been a reliable companion for twenty-eight years.



By Monday, October twenty-sixth, Black was growing tired of Washington and was more than ready to kill Mitchell. Toting a heavy-duty duffel bag, he got off the elevator at the parking sub-level of the Hotel Washington. It was deserted. Dressed in a leather jacket, dark navy denims, thin leather gloves, and soft-soled shoes, he made only the slightest sound, which the cement floor amplified and ricocheted. The key ring tag designated the car was tucked into slot 40, and a white Dodge Charger Daytona was waiting for him. He set the duffel on the hood of the car, unzipped it, and withdrew a retractable mirror, flashlight, and an electronic device no bigger than an MP3 player. He placed the device on the roof of the car and flipped a toggle switch. A dim screen warmed and displayed the words *SYSTEM RUNNING*.

Black knelt on the cement amid oil stains and glass debris and extended the mirror, searching the undercarriage with the aid of the flashlight. It was clean. No monitoring devices, and best of all, no explosive surprises. The small screen flashed the words *SYSTEM FREE*, concurring with his finding. He replaced the equipment and got into the sports coupe.

Once outside the city, and away from the tourists who were calling it quits for the day and most likely looking for a restaurant, he headed for Georgetown. The Dodge was one of those American testosterone monsters, all engine and gas tank. Black inserted a compact disc into the player, and began to tap his fingers to the ivory gymnastics of Thelonious Monk.

Senator Byron Mitchell lived in a ten-bedroom brick estate on R Street, and the sprawl of his residence mocked the packed homes of his neighbors.

The house roosted on a rising slope of green property where hawthorns, maples, pines, and birches were strategically placed to lend to a wealthy image. In Black's opinion the plot had succeeded. A brick wall encircled the entirety, and the driveway was a fifty-yard climb past a black iron gate.

The sky was turning prismatic as the five o'clock hour rolled around, and R Street began turning a shade of tangerine. Across the street from Mitchell's home, a sprinkler system began spraying a burnt lawn.

Black parked the Dodge opposite the senator's home in an alleyway, inches from the burnt lawn. Sitting behind the steering wheel of the car, he studied the estate's windows with the aid of a hand-held light gathering scope. He'd been here many times over the past week, studying Mitchell and his estate. Although the house was concealed by abundant foliage, he could see a servant through an upstairs window. According to the information provided him, the wife was in Charleston, West Virginia, throwing a campaign contributor's victory dinner. It was too easy, but he'd spent a week making sure.

Throwing the duffel over his shoulder, he crossed R Street and ran along the walkway to a corner of the senator's property where he'd be unseen by neighbors, and negotiated the brick wall. From the shadows of a large maple he watched for dogs or signs of a perimeter alarm system. There was nothing.

His research had gleaned that the house was equipped with an adequate security system, and that the senator never engaged it. But research and hands-on experience were sometimes two different things. He sprinted to the rear wall of the house where an open window was providing the dining room with fresh air.

Black slid his switchblade down the center of the screened window and stepped through.

He made his way out of the wood laden room, long polluted by the stink of national self importance and tobacco. Once upstairs, he homed in on a vacuum's humming. The butler was turned away, cleaning, as Black reached for his Oplus-XT. The tranquilizer pistol was loaded with a sedative/memory agent combination, that would knock the man out for a good long time, only to awaken with a severely confounded memory. When Black cleared his throat, his oblivious prey reeled right into the dart's trajectory. The man fell on a plush cream carpet with no blood, and no pain.

Black had been generous.

Life was pain as far as he was concerned, and it wasn't meant to be escaped. Black got paid to impart pain, and he considered it his duty to make sure it wasn't avoided. But he hadn't been paid to visit the butler, so the man got a pass.

"No freebies," Black said, and deposited the man in the masterbath tub.

In time, the distinct sound of a German diesel engine could be heard climbing the driveway. Its purr echoed as it entered a detached three-car garage, and was eventually followed by a slamming door and a throaty West Virginia accent calling for Leonard, the servant.

He can't hear you, Black thought. It rolled through his mind as though it were a line to a song. He retreated into the master bath, concealing himself in darkness, his silenced 10mm pointed at the room's door.

The seventy-year-old man lumbered to the second floor and

down the bright hallway leading to his bedroom door.

“Let the games begin,” Black mumbled.

Inside, Mitchell switched on a light, threw his suit coat on a brown armchair, kicked off his shoes, and sat on the edge of the bed to massage his eyes.

Black stepped from his retreat and stealthed toward Mitchell, unnoticed until he was on top of the man. The dark shine of an automatic pistol caught Mitchell’s eye as it struck him in the temple. He fell hard on the floor.

Leaning down, Black picked him up by the collar of his long-sleeved cotton shirt and threw him into the heavy brown armchair as if he were weightless. He withdrew three pairs of handcuffs and bound Mitchell’s wrists behind his back and his legs to those of the chairs. It was an old routine for him. Mitchell regained consciousness with enough energy to begin screaming commands as though he were in charge of a Congressional debate. Black’s leather-clad fist landed on his lips and split the lower one. Now the eye and mouth had small red rivers flowing from them.

“You’re making this so much worse for yourself than it has to be,” Black whispered in his ear.

“Who are you?”

The switchblade knife caught the senator’s cheek and provided an answer, while creating another stream of blood. The old man’s scream was almost deafening. “You’d be better served to consider the position you’re in. Now, then, the people I work for need to have certain questions answered, and this is what you should be worried about,” Black said, staring directly at the man, his face no more than six inches away.

“Why don’t you kiss my ass,” Mitchell said.

Black took his time, and without expression, began to throw punches that rocked the old man’s head from side to side.

“Enough, enough. What do you want?” Mitchell screamed.

“What do I want?” Black asked, as though the comment insulted him. Two hard downward punches landed on the old man’s chest, making kindling out of his sternum and two ribs. Mitchell was wheezing. The lung hadn’t been punctured, but was bruised. “And it’s enough when I say it’s enough,” Black said after a short pause, his voice calm, but piercing.

“All right, for Christ’s sake,” Mitchell moaned in submission.

Black pulled a chair up and sat before one of the most powerful men in America. He didn’t stare at Mitchell as he eased into the seat but concerned himself with getting comfortable.

The sight of his leisurely behavior sent a tremor through Mitchell, and Black couldn’t help but crack a wide grin. “Now we’re going to have a discussion of sorts. If I may make a suggestion, you should take into consideration whether you want this to be easy or difficult.” There was no response. “If you were having money problems, you should’ve come to us. This could’ve been avoided.”

Mitchell’s tone brimmed with realization. “Are you going to kill me?”

The question sickened Black. He’d held up no better than a young boy or a woman. Although he did, in the past, have people die on him at this stage of an interrogation, he despised Mitchell all the same. Most people just give up.

Black moved forward in the chair. His eyes were blank, dis-

connected; it was just business to him. He was silent, staring past Mitchell, considering the collection of photographs crammed onto a nearby bureau.

Mitchell turned to see what he was looking at. There, frozen in time, sat his first wife, deceased, his current wife, Irene, and his five children.

Black stood up, and Mitchell's trance was broken. With his back to the senator, staring at a famous Monet, Black began to speak in his matter of fact tone. "You know why I'm here, Byron." He didn't consider anything he said an opinion. He wasn't interested in theory.

"Yes."

"When someone invests money and respect, he expects a return. I guess you misunderstood that. What you do understand are the who's and the why's. Answers are what my client expects now, and he expects me to get them from you. I feel he'd prefer them to be dragged out of you accompanied by as much pain as possible, and don't think that wouldn't get me off. It would. It would be like plucking a debutante's cherry for me. Believe me, I could make it last for days and days." Black was loosely circling Mitchell's chair as he spoke.

"I'll tell you anything you want to know," Mitchell said.

"You're the one who started all this wildness over on Capitol Hill, right?" Black turned to meet his prey's glare.

"Yes," Mitchell said. He sounded like a punctured tire; it was growing more difficult for him to get air into his lungs.

"Why?" Black said.

"Change. I suddenly found myself believing it was the right thing for America, and it suddenly became plausible to get paid

far more for it. I didn't want to leave my legacy intact, let them find their own way for a change. That's the reason, for the sake of change."

"A resurgence of conscience," Black said, pausing only for a second to consider the similarity with himself. "That's not like you. As for the other thing, you know they'll go to any length necessary to close the book on it, don't you?"

"Yes, I can see that now," Mitchell wheezed.

"Now, back to that earlier advice I gave you. Easy or difficult? Tell me everything I want to know, and you have my word you'll die quick, painless," Black said with a snap in his voice.

"Quick would be best." Mitchell said. He had no choice.

## 2

“I hate paperwork!” Thomas Martin announced as he stretched his arms over his head, stood up, and moved around from behind his weathered six-drawer desk. He ran his hands through his groomed black crop and began to file loose sheets and bound stacks of paper into a tall gray cabinet. The days were getting shorter and shorter as autumn entrenched itself, and he was determined to escape his office before the use of fluorescent light was required.

Martin was forty, divorced, and Chief of Police in the rural town of Goshen, New York. He stood six-foot one and weighed a trim but athletic one-hundred and eighty pounds, and his dark eyes and the shallow lines running across his forehead gave him an almost regal presence.

Moving a short corridor away, he stood under the booking room’s ceiling fan as it forced musty air toward the floor. “You read more than anyone I’ve ever met, Roberta,” Martin said to the night dispatcher as he stuffed his arms into the sleeves of his gray fleece jacket.

“Can’t help it. I have an intrigue deficiency,” she said, turning her attention away from the novel she’d been reading all week. “You taking off?”

“So what’s this one about?” he asked, leaning over to see who the author was.

“It’s a psychological thriller, juicy stuff. This Kellerman can sure spin them.”

“The Chris Parker Band is playing tonight over at The Inn, so I’ll be there if anyone needs me,” Martin said. The Inn was a jazz bar featuring live music five nights a week, and since four blocks distance from the police station was close enough to walk, he did.

“Needs you, that’s a laugh. The last excitement we had was old man Donovan out in the middle of Golden Hill Avenue, nude, trying to coax his cat out of Mayor Oliver’s tree. Besides, who are you trying to fool? You’re going to that bar to see Paulina,” Roberta chimed, returning to her novel.

He left her, shaking his head and smiling, closing the station’s door tight behind him.

The Goshen Police Department occupied an old thin railway station heavily layered with red and white paint. Amber lights flooded brick sidewalks, while the American flag and the New York Excelsior whipped in the stiff breeze. Crossing the street separating his station from the post office, Martin strolled the two-block stretch along West Main Street toward the center of town. The local pharmacist, John, was helping a customer near the front plate-glass windows of Baxter’s Pharmacy, and he shot Martin a wave as he passed. Across the street, he could see Sal inside Village Pizza, tossing pie dough into the air. He passed