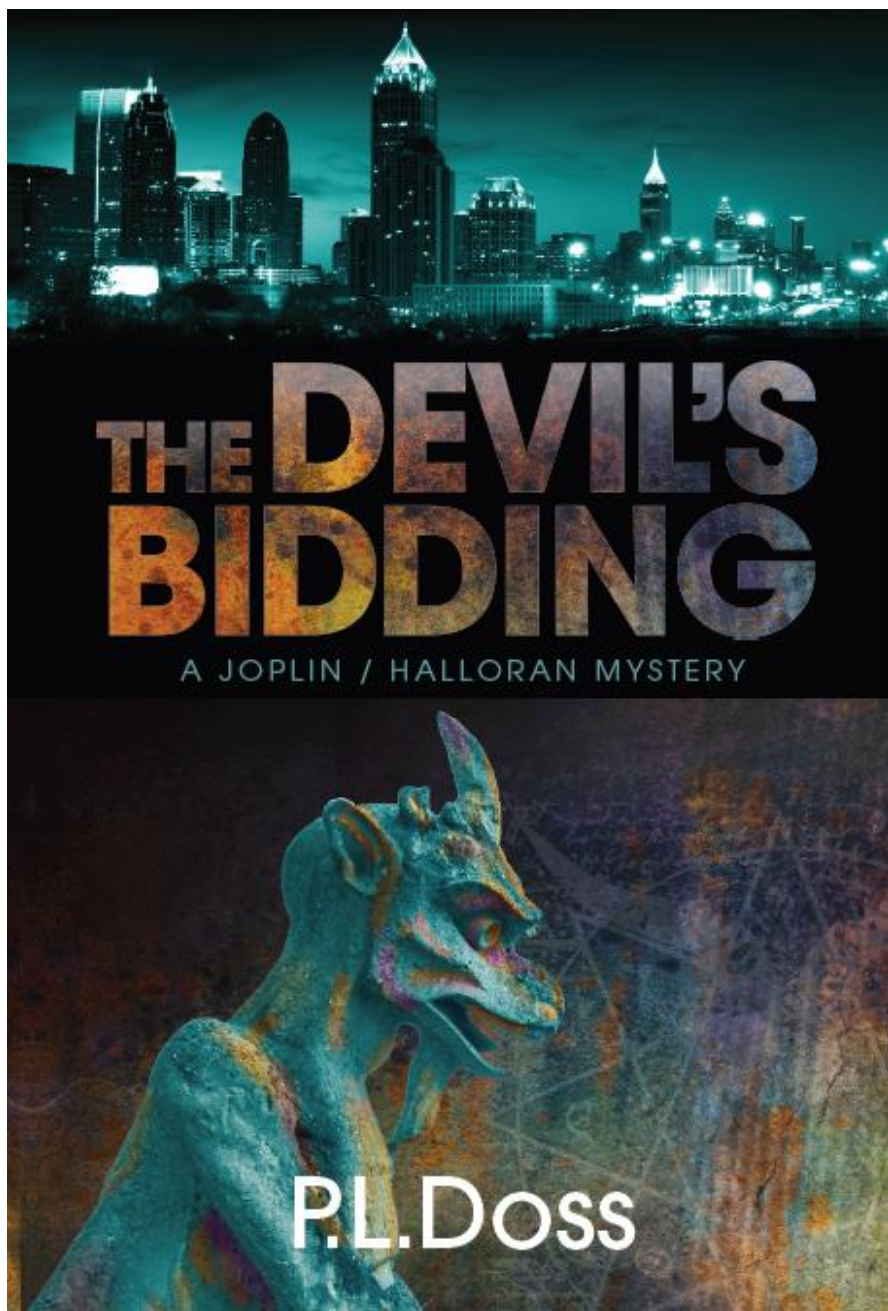


Media Kit



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Author: P. L. Doss

Contact:

Jane Ryder, author support specialist

Ryder Author Resources

<https://www.ryderauthorresources.com/>

jane@ryderswriters.com

(520) 237-1853

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Social Media:

Author's Website: <http://pldoss.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PLDoss/>

Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7376497.P_L_Doss

Description/Synopsis:

It's almost Thanksgiving, and Hollis Joplin, a death investigator for the Milton County ME's Office in Atlanta, is looking forward to the holiday season, not to mention his wedding to Carrie Salinger in the spring. But his rare sense of optimism is shattered one morning when he receives what appears to be a set of crime scene photos. The victim

turns out to be a former girlfriend, and her fiancé, a prominent black attorney, becomes the chief suspect. The dead woman's father, a retired Marine Corps general, wants Joplin to be part of the investigation. Concerned that the person who sent him the photos is trying to implicate him in the murder, and even more concerned the murderer may be someone very close to him, he agrees.

Meanwhile, hotshot lawyer Tom Halloran, sometime friend and occasional bane of Joplin's existence, becomes involved in the appeal of a TV star's conviction for murdering his wife. The case is eerily similar to Joplin's: The actor is black, his dead wife was white, and both victims were strangled. Reluctantly, as always, Joplin and Halloran begin to share information.

Against a backdrop of racial tensions in a community that's becoming polarized by newspaper headlines describing a "modern-day Othello," they focus on whether the murders were committed by the same person. When more deaths occur, the answer seems clear--but as both men have discovered in the past, appearances can be deceiving, and villainy comes disguised in many forms.

About the Author:

While completing a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice at Georgia State University in 1987, P. L. Doss served a graduate internship at the Fulton County Medical Examiner's Office. Assigned to the investigative division, she discovered how important the duties of the investigators were in helping the forensic pathologists determine cause and manner of death. She was also able to observe many autopsies—an experience that proved to be invaluable in toughening her up for her career in law enforcement, first as a volunteer analyst in the Missing Children's Information Center at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and then as a probation officer and supervisor of officers at the Georgia Department of Corrections. She currently lives in the North Georgia mountains with her husband and cat and is working on a new book outside the Joplin/Halloran series.



Sample from *The Devil's Bidding*

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PROLOGUE

Cautiously, the cat crept out from under the bed. It had been a long time since the frightening sounds that had caused her to hide had stopped, but she was still wary. It was dark now, the pale light from the street showing only shadows, but that was no problem for her. She padded out into the hall, head turning, eyes

darting, but saw no one. The kitchen was also dark, but she saw a shape on the floor, and, as she got closer, breathed in a scent that was familiar and comforting.

The cat began to head-bump the figure, but there was no response. No petting of her head or tickling behind her ear. She tried again, and when nothing happened, moved on to the utility room where her litter box and food were kept. There was only dry food for her, a disappointment, but she was hungry and ate most of it.

After using the litter box, she returned to the figure on the floor. More head-butting still brought no response, so she curled up and put her head on her owner's back, then closed her eyes. The usual warmth she expected wasn't there, but it didn't occur to her to wonder why.

CHAPTER ONE

The first thing Hollis Joplin did when he got to the Milton County Medical Examiner's Office that morning, after Sherika had handed him a manila envelope delivered by FedEx, was head to the break room for coffee. He'd shared a cup with Carrie earlier, but it hadn't been quite enough caffeine after a late, somewhat booze-filled Friday evening at Davio's. Carrie had then gone back to bed. As an assistant ME, she had weekend duty just once a month, but Joplin worked rotating shifts with the other death investigators, and he was on for Saturday.

Making a mental note to turn down a second one of Gerry's potent dirty Martinis next time, Joplin shoved the envelope under his arm and grabbed a mug from the counter. He filled it from the large urn next to the microwave, hoping Sarah Petersen, his boss, had been the one to make the coffee that morning. She never seemed to make it either too weak or too strong, yet another reason she was held in high esteem by all the investigators. The pathologists, too, for that matter. Since becoming Chief Investigator eighteen months ago, she'd turned the unit into a well-oiled machine, leading by example whenever possible. Which meant getting to the office before anyone else and making sure she knew what the people under her needed to do their jobs.

Like decent coffee.

Joplin had been summoned to a vehicular homicide on 400 before he left the condominium he shared with Carrie, so it was after nine-thirty by the time he got to his cubicle. He'd intended to get started on his report of the scene, but decided to open the envelope first. Setting his mug on the desk, he sat down and slit the flap with a pen knife he kept in a side drawer. Inside were several eight-by-ten photographs.

The first picture was of a front door, black, with two potted plants on either side. The next showed a narrow entry hall that held only a rug and a chest of some kind, with a still-life painting of pears over it. The third picture was of a kitchen. The warm yellow walls held a pot rack and several prints of various herbs; stainless appliances and gray granite countertops made a nice contrast to them. Joplin was beginning to wonder if some realtor had heard that he and Carrie were thinking of buying a house after their upcoming wedding, when he was stopped short by the next photo.

It was of a woman lying face-down on the kitchen floor. Her head was turned to the side, but her long brown hair covered her face. She was wearing jeans and a black, fitted jacket, but her feet were bare. Joplin moved quickly to the next photo, which showed the woman from a different angle. Whoever had taken it had stood or knelt near her head this time. Two more photos were close-ups of the woman's hands, which were on either side of her, palms down, as if she'd fallen and had tried to get up. There was a wide silver ring on the third finger of her right hand and a diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand. The nails were pink and looked professionally manicured.

He was certain she was dead.



Sarah Petersen looked up from her computer to see Hollis Joplin standing in the doorway. His large head, thick blond hair looking a little unkempt, was cocked to one side, and his green eyes were definitely blood-shot.

“Can I talk to you?” “Sure. What’s up?”

He placed some photos on her desk and nodded toward them. “I’d like you to take a look at these.”

She gave him a quick glance, eyebrows raised, then picked them up. Shuffling through them, Sarah frowned when she got to the fifth picture. “You take these?” she asked, looking up at him.

“No. According to Sherika, FedEx delivered them. I’ve never seen them before. But my name is on the envelope.”

“Obviously, it’s a crime scene, even though there aren’t any labels or case numbers on the backs of the photos. The question is: whose? You didn’t take these, but somebody did.”

“Right. I kept the envelope they came in, but it didn’t tell me much. It was labeled ‘Overnight Delivery,’ sent on November 8, 2013, but the ink on the sender’s label was smeared, making it illegible.”

“You think that might have been deliberate?” “Sure seems like it.”

The phone on Petersen’s desk rang, cutting off further speculation. She was silent as she listened, but grabbed a pen and wrote something down. “We’ll get on it,” she said, then clicked off and handed Joplin the page from her note pad.

“We’ll have to figure this out later, Hollis. There’s a body at that address that’s more important. Why don’t you leave these with me,” she added, gesturing toward the photos.

“Fine with me. Maybe Sherika knows a little more about who sent them.” “If she doesn’t, nobody does,” Petersen said. Their receptionist had her finger on every pulse in the ME’s office. The living ones, anyway.

The address was in Brookhaven, which straddled both Dekalb and Milton counties. More specifically, in Historic Brookhaven, on West Brookhaven Drive. Joplin, an architecture buff, knew that Salson Stovall and Solomon Goodwin had been responsible for much of the development there, inspiring wealthy Atlantans to build summer homes in the area in the late nineteenth century, much like their Buckhead neighbors. But it wasn't an actual neighborhood until 1911, when several investors bought a tract of land they named "Brookhaven Estates" and hired Herbert Barker, a New Jersey golf pro, to design a golf course for it. The area then became the first community in Georgia to be created around a golf course.

It was something that couldn't be said about Ansley Park and Druid Hills, which seemed to please the Historic Brookhavenites. And they totally separated themselves from the newly-created city of Brookhaven, which included North Brookhaven and Town Brookhaven and was in less wealthy Dekalb County. Milton County, re-created in 2003 through a clever and calculated bit of political gerrymandering that gobbled up the choicest parts of Fulton County, had the most desirable addresses, in their opinion. Which was also what residents of John's Creek, Dunwoody, Buckhead, Ansley Park and Midtown believed. The proverbial pecking order never failed to amuse him.

He turned left off Peachtree onto Peachtree-Dunwoody, then took Winall Down over to West Brookhaven Drive. The trees in the beautifully-kept yards surrounding the Capital City Club were still ablaze with color, due to an extended Indian summer that year. Joplin turned left again and drove slowly, looking for 1452. It was directly across from the clubhouse, but he was disappointed to see that it wasn't one of the houses built by Hal Hentz or Neel Reid or even Preston Stevens, who had designed the clubhouse; he was familiar with the styles of the houses they'd created. But it wasn't new, by any means; probably built in the early teens of the twentieth century, Joplin decided. Unfortunately, whatever style it had started out with,

it hadn't retained it, and seemed to be comprised of a series of lateral additions made over the years.

Sarah had told him that the body wasn't actually in the house itself, but in a carriage house at the back of the property. Joplin drove down the driveway to the right of the house and parked behind a gray Nissan sedan that he knew belonged to Ike Simmons, a senior detective with the Atlanta Homicide Unit. They had been partners for seven years before he'd left to join the Milton County ME's office. And since the APD's jurisdiction included parts of Milton, as well as Dekalb and Fulton counties, they continued to work together. They'd also been best friends. Still were, for that matter.

He grabbed his bag and slid out of the car, then walked around the other cars, which included an APD car and a blue Audi, to reach the front door of the carriage house. As it came into view, he began to walk more slowly, then stopped altogether. The door was black, with two potted plants on either side. To anyone else, this would have seemed like mere coincidence, but Hollis Joplin had an eidetic memory, and his mind retained images of anything he'd ever seen, often in three dimensions. It helped him in his work as the "eyes and ears" of the forensic pathologists who would perform autopsies on the bodies he saw at death scenes. But it had wreaked havoc on his ability to sleep at night since his teenage years, as well as on his relationships.

So Joplin knew exactly what he would find behind the black door with the plants on either side.