



“Gerritsen is a
born storyteller.”
—LEE CHILD,
#1 *New York Times*
bestselling author

THE

SUMMER

GUESTS

A THRILLER

TESS

GERRITSEN

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

PRAISE FOR *THE SPY COAST*

“Tess Gerritsen writes in a smoothly elegant style; it’s always a delight to read her. *The Spy Coast* is a marvelously plotted read with action-packed pages, g-force twists and turns, and a platoon of fascinating characters. I truly hope to see Maggie Bird and her team of silver-haired helpers on the pages again.”

—David Baldacci, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

“Master storyteller Tess Gerritsen has written an ingenious, spellbinding novel that moves from Bangkok to a small town in Maine, seductive settings where secrets are kept and lives upended . . . *The Spy Coast* is utterly thrilling, full of morally complex characters with deeply buried secrets and a life-and-death chase into the past and back again. It’s a great novel.”

—Luanne Rice, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Powerful, resonant, absorbing, freighted with menace and suspense . . . Gerritsen is a born storyteller, and this new series showcases her talents more than ever. Irresistible and highly recommended!”

—Lee Child, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

“A riveting tale filled with engaging characters. I look forward to the rest of the series.”

—Kathy Reichs, author of the Temperance Brennan *Bones* series

“Tess Gerritsen is a brilliant, must-read novelist, and she’s done it again with *The Spy Coast*. Readers will want to follow the adventures of Maggie Bird and her band of Mainer compatriots for a long, long time.”

—C. J. Box, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Storm Watch*

“For decades, Midcoast Maine has enjoyed a reputation as a haven for spies living in anonymous retirement. Now bestselling author Tess Gerritsen has taken this apocryphal (or not!) premise and transformed it into a crackerjack thriller. *The Spy Coast* is my favorite kind of page-turner, rooted in relatable, if ruthless, characters and grounded in a meticulously observed sense of place.”

—Paul Doiron, bestselling author of the Mike Bowditch novels

“I loved it. A hugely entertaining read!”

—Ann Cleeves, creator of the Vera and Shetland series

“This is a nice take on retirement—five old spooks whose bones may ache but whose minds remain sharp. You can expect mystery, action, and bloodshed in this exciting thriller launched straight from the peaceful shores of Maine.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“The plot bustles along nicely, careening from Thailand to Italy and many points in between, but the real surprise is the richness of Gerritsen’s supporting cast, a cantankerous bunch whose love for one another runs deep.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Gerritsen . . . branches out into the world of espionage . . . expertly mixing spy drama with romance and wry comedy . . . Gerritsen fans and readers of Richard Osman’s Thursday Murder Club mysteries will love this.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“Tess Gerritsen delivers a thrilling, endearing read.”

—Seattle Book Review

**THE
SUMMER
GUESTS**

OTHER TITLES BY TESS GERRITSEN

Choose Me (with Gary Braver)

The Shape of Night

Playing with Fire

The Bone Garden

Gravity

Bloodstream

Life Support

Harvest

Keeper of the Bride

Thief of Hearts

In Their Footsteps

Girl Missing (Previous title: *Peggy Sue Got Murdered*)

Presumed Guilty

Whistleblower

Never Say Die

Under the Knife

Call After Midnight

The Martini Club

The Spy Coast

Rizzoli & Isles

The Surgeon

The Apprentice

The Sinner

Body Double

Vanish

The Mephisto Club

The Keepsake

Ice Cold

The Silent Girl

Last to Die

Die Again

I Know a Secret

Listen to Me

**THE
SUMMER
GUESTS**

**TESS
GERRITSEN**

 **THOMAS & MERCER**

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First edition



To Jacob

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CHAPTER 1

Purity, Maine, 1972

On the last day of his life, Purity police officer Randy Pelletier ordered a cup of coffee and a blueberry muffin at the Marigold Café.

It was what he always ordered after getting off the night shift, his reward to himself for the lonely hours spent in his cruiser, keeping the streets and back roads of his town safe from drunk drivers, speeding tourists, and the occasional rabid raccoon. He sat at his usual corner table next to the window, where he could enjoy the warmth of the morning sun while keeping an eye on the activity on Main Street. A good cop never stopped being watchful, even while off duty. Just as important, people walking past the café could see him in the window, keeping an eye on things. Visibility was important to the community, and if any problems arose, the town knew exactly where to find their local peace officer: sitting right here, at the window table in the Marigold.

“Refill?” said the waitress, her coffeepot poised over his cup.

“Sure thing, Carla.”

“How was it last night?” she asked, pouring her usual rich, black brew.

“Pretty quiet.”

She laughed. “And we like it that way!”

“We sure do.”

“Why don’t I bring you another muffin? Fresh batch just came out of the oven.”

His waistline might not appreciate it, but his growling stomach would, so he didn’t refuse her. Who could refuse Carla, who kept the town well supplied with gossip and baked goods? As she went back to

the kitchen, he unfolded his copy of the latest *Purity Weekly* and scanned the headlines on the front page: **Summer Reservations Hit Record High . . . Black Bear Sighted on Oak Street . . . Car Crash Sends Two to Hospital**. He turned the page to the local police blotter, on page three. Not that he needed to read it; he already knew the details of just about every traffic citation, every 911 call, over the past week.

Cory, James, Boston, MA: speeding

Simpson, Richard, Purity, ME: expired registration

Allen, Jonathan, Augusta, ME: public drunkenness

Wiedemann, Scott, Albany, NY: public urination

All in all, a typical week in July, when half the people in town were tourists from away, here on vacation, uninhibited and often drunk. Every summer they invaded, from Massachusetts and New York and beyond, streaming into Maine to escape the heat and stink of their cities. It was Randy's job to keep them from hurting themselves or others and then to wave them back home, hopefully with their wallets a little lighter.

The doorbell tinkled. Randy looked up to see two of those out-of-towners walk into the Marigold. He knew the two men weren't locals because they were both wearing black leather jackets when it was almost seventy degrees outside. They paused inside the door and scanned the café as if casing the room. They spotted Randy and momentarily froze.

That's right, gentlemen. Law enforcement was watching.

"Table for you boys?" said Carla. A fellow could be eighty years old, and not only would Carla still call him a boy, she wouldn't be above whacking him on the behind for bad behavior.

"Um, yeah," one of the men finally said.

Randy watched as Carla led them a few tables away, close enough for him to keep an eye on them. They both picked up plastic menus and studied the breakfast offerings a trifle too intently, as if trying to avoid Randy's gaze. Another detail that made him think these two bore closer watching. He was more accustomed to dealing with rowdy teenagers and drunk drivers, but he knew that big trouble sometimes found its way even to small towns, and he liked to think he was ready to handle it. He could even imagine the headline, splashed across the *Purity Weekly*. No, make that the *Boston Globe*:

Maine Police Officer Single-Handedly Captures Wanted Duo

He didn't know if these men were armed, but it never hurt to be prepared, so he reached down and quietly unsnapped his holster. They were studying the menu, which was only a page long and offered nothing more exotic than French toast and fried eggs. It was yet another clue that something was not right about this pair.

The shorter man suddenly glanced over his menu at Randy. It was just a flick of his eyes, but in that instant, their gazes connected. Held. In the periphery of his vision, Randy saw Carla walking back toward their table, coffeepot in hand. Heard the roar of an engine on Main Street.

He was so focused on the two men that he did not see the white van streak past the window.

He heard the screech of tires, the sickening bang of metal slamming into metal, and he turned to the window. Saw shattered glass littering the street, and—sweet Jesus, was that a *body*?

“Oh my God!” cried Carla, still clutching the coffeepot as she stared out the window.

Randy scrambled to his feet and ran out of the Marigold. The first body lay only a few yards away in a spreading pool of blood. It was a man, his spine so grotesquely twisted that he looked like he'd been taken apart and reconstructed all wrong, his feet pointing backward. Across the street was another body, a woman, her pink blouse shorn open, one ripe breast indecently exposed for all to see. Randy dragged his attention away from the bodies and looked down the street, toward the sound of a blaring horn. A third body was splayed across the road—another woman, this one with her chest cage crushed almost flat, oranges and apples spilling from her shopping bag.

At the end of the block was a white van, its front end embedded in the side of a parked blue sedan.

The world around him seemed to halt on its axis. He moved past horrified pedestrians, their hands clapped over their mouths, past the two men in leather jackets, who'd followed him out of the café and now stood with mouths agape in horror. Through the freeze-frame of carnage, across shattered glass and blood-spattered pavement, Randy alone seemed to be in motion. As he drew closer to the crashed vehicles, he

saw **TARKIN FINE CARPENTRY** printed on the white van. He knew this van. He knew the driver. Black smoke was rising from the engine, a terrifying harbinger of more disaster.

Through the driver's window, he saw Sam Tarkin tilted forward, face down against the steering wheel. Randy yanked open the door. He couldn't see any blood, any obvious injuries, but Sam was moaning, shaking.

Randy reached across Sam's lap and released the seat belt. "You need to get out!" Randy yelled. "Sam? Sam!"

Suddenly Sam's head snapped up, and Randy stared at a man who *looked* like Sam Tarkin, with Sam's dark hair, Sam's angular face, but the eyes . . . what was wrong with his eyes? The pupils were dilated to black, bottomless pools. An alien's eyes. No, this sweating, shaking creature looked like someone else. *Something* else.

Randy glanced at the black smoke billowing out. He had to get him out, now. He grabbed Sam's arm and pulled.

"Get away!" Sam shrieked. "Get away from me!" He clawed at Randy, and his fingernails gouged flesh.

Face throbbing, Randy jerked away and felt blood trickle down his cheek. *What the hell, man?* Enraged now, he wrenched Sam out of the van, and they both went sprawling onto the pavement. Even then, Sam kept fighting him, thrashing. Desperate to control the man, Randy grabbed Sam's throat with both hands and squeezed. He squeezed so hard that Sam's eyes bugged out and his face darkened to a horrifying shade of purple.

"Stop it!" Randy yelled. "Stop fighting me!"

He did not feel Sam reach for his holster—the holster he'd already unsnapped. Suddenly there it was, staring at him: the barrel of his own gun.

"Don't," he said. "Sam, don't."

But it was not Sam Tarkin looking back at him.

And it was not Sam Tarkin who pulled the trigger.

CHAPTER 2

MAGGIE

The present

It was the perfect summer evening: Maggie and her friends gathered around her picnic table, sipping martinis and bird-watching. Peering through binoculars as barn swallows dipped and swirled like bits of blue confetti over her freshly mowed field. Everyone relaxed and laughing and unarmed.

Although Maggie wasn't *entirely* certain about that last detail. She just assumed no one had felt the need to pack a firearm tonight, and really, what would be the point? They were all perfectly capable of unleashing mayhem with merely a shard of broken glass, and at the moment, they were each holding an easily shattered martini glass as they discussed this month's chosen title for their book group: *The Genius of Birds*. The book had been Maggie's selection, so it was her turn to host tonight's meeting of the Martini Club, the name they'd adopted for their pleasantly boozy get-togethers. Serving as host was not an onerous task, because dinner was always potluck, and Maggie's primary responsibility—indeed, the most important responsibility of these evenings—was having a sufficient selection of liquor on hand. For this group, *sufficient* meant three different brands of vodka, two brands of gin, dry vermouth, red and white wine, and, for after dinner, a selection of single-malt whiskys.

Today's weather was gloriously warm, so they'd carried the gin and vodka, vermouth and ice bucket outside to Maggie's picnic table to enjoy the view over her rolling fields. Three years ago, when Maggie had first come to Purity, this view was what had convinced her to buy Blackberry Farm and finally put down roots. Here, she'd found a measure of peace. During the summers, she collected fresh eggs from her flock of layer hens and sold them at the local farmers' market. During the winters, she shoveled snow and nurtured her newly hatched chicks and perused the seed catalogs for her vegetable garden.

But no matter the season, these evenings with her four friends carried on. She'd known them for decades, since long before they'd all migrated to Purity, Maine, where they now quietly blended in with other retirees. Where people asked few questions about their previous careers and left them to their secrets. Secrets they felt free to share only among themselves.

Tonight, Ingrid Slocum had appointed herself the bartender, and she was already at work mixing a second batch of martinis, vigorously shaking ice cubes in the stainless steel cocktail shaker. The merry clatter brought back Maggie's days at Camp Peary, otherwise known as the Farm, where four of them—Maggie and Declan, Ben and Ingrid—had first bonded as clandestine officer trainees. Looking around at their faces, Maggie could still see them as they'd looked in their younger years: Ben Diamond, bull necked and muscular, with a glare that could freeze an assailant in his tracks. Eagle-eyed Ingrid Slocum, always the quickest to think her way out of any locked room. And Declan Rose, the dashing diplomat's son who could charm a stranger with just his smile. Four decades later, their hair was grayer—or, in Ben's case, shaved off entirely—and along with the passage of time had come the inevitable wrinkles and stiff joints and more than a few extra pounds. But the Farm veterans were still the Four Musketeers, undaunted by the encroaching years, eager for any challenge.

And a well-made martini.

"It's a shame they're dying off," said Declan as birds swooped overhead. "In another generation, there'll be no more barn swallows left in Maine." He handed his binoculars to Ben. "Here, these are better than yours. Take a look."

Ben, who was clearly not as much of an avian fan, halfheartedly peered up at the swallows. With his shaved head and faintly menacing scowl, he didn't much *look* like a bird-watcher either. "Where did you hear that? About the barn swallows dying off?"

"It was in last month's *Purity Weekly*. The bird-watching column."

"You actually read that column?"

"Bird-watching's an excellent cover for surveillance. If you're caught and need to bluff your way out, it's good to know the basics of the subject."

"Anyone else, another round?" asked Ingrid. "Lloyd's bringing out his antipasti tray, and it's all rather salty. You'll want to keep your whistles wet."

Ben raised his hand. "Hendrick's, please, no vermouth. With all this talk about birds, my whistle's already gone dry."

"Snacks incoming!" Ingrid's husband, Lloyd, announced cheerily as he came out of the house bearing one of the antipasti extravaganzas that he was so famous for: feta skewers and artichoke hearts, marinated mushrooms and paper-thin slices of salami. "Just don't fill up on these," he warned. "My braciolo's warming up in the oven, and *that* deserves your hearty appetites."

Ben looked at Ingrid as she handed him his freshly shaken martini. "With that man cooking for you, how are you not three hundred pounds?"

"Sheer discipline," Ingrid said, and she settled into an Adirondack chair with her own drink.

"So are we all ready to discuss this month's book selection?" said Declan.

Ben grunted. "If we have to."

"Because I thought the book was absolutely brilliant." Declan waved his new ZEISS binoculars. "It inspired me to upgrade to these beauties."

"The book was far better than that ridiculous spy thriller we read last month," added Lloyd, settling his generous bulk in the chair next to Ingrid's. "Novelists never get it right."

"What was everyone's favorite chapter?" Declan asked.

"The chapter on sparrows," said Maggie. "I love how most people ignore them because they seem so common, so ordinary. Yet sparrows

have cleverly managed to infiltrate almost the entire globe.”

Ben snorted. “Are you talking about birds, or about us?”

“Well, there are parallels, don’t you think?” said Ingrid. “Sparrows are like the covert operatives of the avian world. Unobtrusive. Unnoticeable. They slip in everywhere yet rouse no attention.”

“Wait,” said Ben. “Could this be a first? Did we all actually *read* the book?”

They looked at each other.

“This *is* supposed to be a book group,” said Ingrid. “Even if we really come for the martinis.”

“And dinner,” added Lloyd. “Which, by the way, should be ready now.”

But no one moved. They were all too comfortable sitting in their Adirondack chairs, sipping their drinks and admiring the view. In the distance, bells tinkled as Maggie’s fourteen-year-old neighbor, Callie, just a twig of a girl in blue overalls, led her goats and her Jersey cow across the field, back to their barn. Callie waved at them; they all waved back. Crickets chirped and the swallows continued their aerobatic show overhead, flitting and swooping.

Ingrid sighed. “Does life get any better than this?”

No. It does not, thought Maggie. This was one of those rare perfect moments, with the tingle of vodka in her mouth and the scent of freshly mowed hay on the breeze. And dear Declan, sitting beside her, smiling. His once-black hair was now half-silver, but age had only deepened his Irish good looks, something she’d come to appreciate now, in the autumn of their lives.

She had spent her career on the edge of crises, never certain when everything might fall apart, so she knew how ephemeral moments like these could be, with everyone healthy and safe and no calamity in sight. But disaster could strike at any time, against any one of them: A car crash. A heart attack. A suspicious spot on an x-ray. Even on this perfect evening, surrounded by friends and with twilight settling gently over her fields, she knew that trouble was coming.

She just did not know when.