

**KILL FOR  
ME**

**"Unguessable and  
unputdownable."  
—ALEX  
MICHAELIDES,  
author of *The Silent  
Patient***

**KILL FOR  
YOU**

**STEVE  
CAVANAGH**

**INTERNATIONALLY  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR**

**A NOVEL**

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**STEVE CAVANAGH**

KILL FOR ME,  
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**ATRIA** BOOKS  
New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

KILL FOR ME,  
KILL FOR YOU

For Marie and Tom

Stronger than lover's love is lover's hate. Incurable, in each, the wounds they make.

**EURIPIDES**

Revenge, the sweetest morsel to the mouth that ever was cooked in hell.

**WALTER SCOTT, *THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN***

## CHAPTER 1

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# AMANDA

Amanda White lifted the lid from the electric baby bottle sterilizer and stared inside at the .22-caliber revolver. It looked like the gun was sweating, its steel frame and barrel beaded with balls of hot condensation, the steam rising gently from the base. Turning away, she found her soft leather gloves, put them on, and carefully lifted the weapon clear.

The gun had to be clean today. No fingerprints. Last night she had the idea of using the sterilizer to remove any prior trace of her DNA from the weapon. It seemed fitting somehow that one of Jess's things should have a part in this. She was surprised that the sterilizer still worked. It hadn't been used since Jess's first birthday, when she'd switched her to sippy cups. She and her husband, Luis, had decided to keep the sterilizer, though, in case Jess ever had a baby brother or sister down the line.

None of that could happen now.

The heat from the sterilizer had begun to peel away the duct tape wrapped round the butt of the gun. It still felt alien in her hand. All of those days she'd driven out to the woods to practice shooting tin cans hadn't mattered. She still wasn't used to handling the weapon. She was a New York liberal. Anti-gun. A law-abiding taxpayer. Perhaps she was none of those things anymore. Death changes you.

When that death was your six-year-old girl and, a week later, your husband, there was more to it than mere grief. That kind of death didn't ride alone. It

brought more dark horsemen with it: unemployment, debt, addiction and pain that at times was too great to bear. Amanda's life had imploded in loss.

She put the revolver on the dining table, dried it with kitchen towels, and loaded it with five expectant rounds of ammunition.

She only needed one of those rounds to end her suffering. It was an easy shot. Her arm would rise, the barrel level with the top of the man's head, and then... pull the trigger. She checked the clock. Six thirty in the a.m. He would be leaving his apartment soon. She needed to get ready. At seven fifteen Amanda passed through the entrance to the Ninety-Sixth Street subway station on the Upper West Side. A light rain was just beginning to fall. A man with dark hair, wearing a black overcoat, swiped his MTA card at the turnstile. Amanda waited a beat, pulled the hood of her sweatshirt over her ball cap. Five more people passed through the gate before Amanda slid her card over the sensor and turned left for the platform designated *Downtown & Brooklyn*.

She skipped down two flights of stairs. Before she reached the bottom, she saw the man in the overcoat again. Side view. He had a dark beard, which he kept neat. AirPods in his ears and a thick scarf round his neck, tucked into the folds of the coat. Like the other twenty or so people on the platform, he had his head down, gazing at his cell phone. Time check. Seven nineteen. They had just missed the express to South Ferry that only stopped at Times Square, Penn Station, Fourteenth Street, and Chambers Street. If he'd taken the express, he would've had to get off at Chambers Street, then change for Flatbush to make his stop at Wall Street.

Amanda kept him in her sight line but moved behind him to his eight o'clock position. Not directly behind him, because he might pick up her reflection in the train window as she moved. Her face was mostly covered, by the cap and scarf, but she couldn't take the chance he might spot her, recognize her.

Like he had last time.

At seven twenty-one, the #1 rolled in on a blast of ice-fresh September wind. The train slowed, stopped. Amanda moved forward. A voice on the PA system announced the train's arrival. There were now maybe a hundred people spread out on the platform. Rush hour on the subway. People going about their lives, getting through the journey, thoughts of their jobs already heavy in their minds.

Not for Amanda. Not anymore.

The train doors slid open and commuters poured out. Amanda had to brush past a teenager in a school uniform and a construction worker with his hard hat clipped to his shoulder bag. They both said something as Amanda pushed in. She didn't care. She couldn't risk the man in the overcoat making it onto the train without her, leaving her stranded on the platform. That had happened before too.

She moved forward. He was five feet ahead. The departing passengers had left room in the car, but not much. There were two of the prized orange seats left. As usual, he made for them, and managed to get one this time. Amanda turned her back on him, took hold of a pole in the center of the car, and let it fill up. Let the embarking passengers jostle her up the car a little until she was close enough to reach out and touch him. She kept her back to his seat row.

The doors closed. Bodies crushed together all around her. Yet she had enough room to turn. And she did. A half turn. There were two people standing side by side in front of the seated man in the overcoat. Their backs were to each other. An arm's width between them. The man in the overcoat started manspreading. The woman seated to his right gave him a dirty look and then swiftly returned her attention to the laptop balanced on her knees. The young man to his left was playing a video game on his phone. They ignored the man. Or tried to.

Amanda unlocked her cell phone, selected the first of the preprogrammed timers and hit START just as the train began to move.

The timer ticked down from one minute thirteen seconds—the average time between train doors closing at Ninety-Sixth Street and the doors opening again at Eighty-Sixth Street.

When she still had a job, she'd been a manager in a retirement home, having worked her way up from caregiver to the person who ran the joint for the company. She had found that if she had something to accomplish, she would only do it if she sat down and wrote out a plan. Step by step. This was how she got her degree at night school. This was how she got her promotions to supervisor, deputy manager, and then manager. This was how she planned one of her paintings or sketches, which she worked on late into the night.

This was how she planned the murder she was about to commit.



Amanda took another glance in the man's direction. She wasn't concerned he'd spot her from behind or even from the side when they were this close. He wouldn't be able to see her face in any of the windows unless he stood up. She wore sneakers, a pair of baggy black sweatpants, a puffy coat, and a hooded sweatshirt beneath it. As covered up as she could get without standing out.

There were three stops on this train that gave her the opportunity she needed. It had to be timed perfectly. The shot coming just as the doors opened. Her aim concealed by the mass of bodies around her. Then she would scream, like others surely would, drop the gun, and run like crazy off the train. A gunshot on a crowded railcar would cause a panic, a stampede to get to safety. She would be one woman in a mass of people getting out of there, up the stairs, and straight out of the station, her head down in the crowd, and no one would be able to identify her. Not eyewitnesses, not security cameras. She would hide, perfectly, in plain sight.

The next stop would be Eighty-Sixth Street. Ten seconds left on the timer.

Ten seconds until the doors opened.

Amanda tilted her head slightly, side to side, checking to see who was getting off. She didn't want to be exposed. She needed bodies between her and the target. It looked like the pair between her and the man were staying on board.

The train slowed and stopped. A dozen people got off and a dozen more got on. A man in a business suit and raincoat carrying a half-folded golf umbrella boarded and stood beside Amanda, but with his back to her. The doors closed, the train started to move, and she hit the second timer.

One minute and twenty-two seconds until the doors would open on Seventy-Ninth Street. The longest average travel time of the three stops to Times Square. It was just one minute and fifteen between Seventy-Ninth and Seventy-Second, but Seventy-Ninth had better exits. No point in trying to estimate the average journey time from Seventy-Second to Times Square, as the train frequently slowed to let other trains through because the stop was so busy.

She'd planned for this, in detail. Now was the time.

The counter read fifty-one seconds.

Amanda took a breath, let it out slowly and put her hand in her coat pocket. Took hold of the revolver. Her gloves were thin leather, but even so it was a

delicate maneuver to snake her finger through the trigger guard without the leather catching.

The two passengers beside her still had their backs to one another, preserving the gap between them. She could see the top of the target's head, pointed down, his focus centered on his cell phone.

The train slowed down.

Fifteen seconds until the train doors opened. Fifteen seconds until she pulled the trigger.

The clickety-clack rhythm of the wheels on the rails slowed down a beat as the train reduced speed.

They emerged from the tunnel. The carriage suddenly lit up. She glanced out of the window. The platform looked busy. Some people to her right made their way through the mass of bodies toward the door.

A screech of steel on steel as the brakes kicked in harder. Eight seconds.

*Click-clack.*

She turned toward the target. Five seconds.

*Click—clack.*

She took a deep breath. Held it. Three seconds.

*Click—clack.*

Amanda drew the hammer back on the pistol in her pocket until she heard it...

The man's head shot up. He stared straight at her.

"You," he said, rising to his feet.

Amanda tried to pull the gun but hesitated. He'd seen her. He'd spoken to her. And that would draw attention. If she shot him now, people might see her do it. Since she'd lost her family, Amanda sometimes went days without another person speaking to her. This man, Wallace Crone, was the last person she wanted to speak to her. And his voice addressing her was like being shaken out of a long dream. The train driver hit the brakes hard, throwing her off-balance.

That moment's hesitation was long enough to give Crone the advantage and ruin her chance. He stood, grabbed her by the lapels, and shouted, "Help! Police, help!"

He pushed forward and the back of Amanda's head hit one of the upright poles.

"Get off me," she said.

His face was right up close to hers. She could smell the coffee on his breath. He gritted his teeth, called out again.

"Help me! Someone call a cop!" he said.

Amanda managed to pull the gun. Held it low, out of his line of vision.

"What's the problem here?" cried a voice. It sounded deep, authoritative. A man. A cop. Transit police. She could hear him moving toward them.

She dropped the gun, unnoticed, into the half-open golf umbrella of the businessman beside her. He promptly moved away, his eyes wide at the scene in front of him, not knowing whether to intervene and on whose behalf.

Amanda lost her balance and fell backward, Crone on top of her.

She saw the cop standing over them, pulling at Crone's arm, asking what the hell was going on.

Crone let go, but as he got up, he said something else. Something she'd heard him say a hundred times. But now, as those words broke the silence of her loss and her loneliness, they sounded as hollow as old bones.

She hadn't believed those words when she first heard them. She didn't believe them now.

"I didn't kill your daughter."