

Blood Traitor

by a.e. Tyree



Book 1 of the
Jerrod Somerset Mysteries

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A novel

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Chapter 1

The smell hit Jerrod before he got out of the car.

He pulled up behind the two parked patrol cars, killed the engine, and scrubbed the fatigue from his face with his hands. His upper canine teeth elongated and sharpened at the rich coppery tang of blood. He flicked his tongue over them to make sure they weren't fully extended and hauled himself out of the car, the howling wind off the Bay slicing through his thin coat. Thank God he knew enough to eat before going to a crime scene.

A patrol officer hurried toward him as he slammed the car door. Jerrod flashed his badge and the officer pivoted back to help corral the restless crowd. Even in the middle of a cold night, death brought out the ghoulish. Jerrod shook his head. Some things never change no matter how long you live.

Jerrod paused at the dingy studio apartment's threshold and peered inside. A Hispanic woman sprawled face down on the floor in front of a blood-sprayed bassinet. A motionless child, still partly covered by a pink blanket, lay awkwardly twisted in the pooling blood. Across the room, a Hispanic man sat on the floor, his brains splattered on the wall behind him, a shotgun propped between his legs pointing at what was left of his head.

"Murder-suicide I'm guessing," said an improbably young-looking man. He held out his hand. "Rodney Chen, second assistant Medical Examiner".

Jerrod shook the proffered hand. "Inspector Somerset. Do you always assess the crime scene before you've examined the bodies?"

Rodney glanced away. "It's a game I play with myself."

Jerrod stared down at the shorter man and said nothing.

"Not that I think murder is a game." Rodney stepped back. "It's like making a bet with myself to see how often first impressions can be wrong."

Jerrod let his breath out slowly and unclenched his fists. He'd seen more death than most humans could comprehend, but never considered it game. Jerrod brushed past Rodney to look closer at the man with the gun.

Rodney followed him. "I assure you, Inspector, I never let those impressions interfere with what the evidence is saying. I take my job very seriously."

If he hadn't been so exhausted, Jerrod might have laughed at Rodney's earnestness. It seemed like decades since he had worked with someone that green. He gestured toward the victims. "What can you tell me about this?"

Rodney cleared his throat. "The woman was shot once in the back, probably while trying to get away. The infant must have been in her arms – she apparently caught the exiting bullet in the neck. And the man..." Rodney glanced over at the man's body and cleared his throat again. "He took a bullet to the head."

“Time of death?”

“Based on liver temp I’d say between one and three this morning. But I won’t know for sure until I do a full examination.”

Jerrod turned his back on Rodney, and faced the officer standing at the door. “You there-- who was first on scene?”

“I’m Officer Larsen, sir. I was.” The young officer pulled out his notebook.

Jerrod walked to the door and motioned toward the crowd outside. “You already get statements?”

“No one saw anything, sir.”

Jerrod snorted. “In this neighborhood I would have been surprised if anyone had.” He glanced outside at the angry faces in the crowd. Through the centuries, from Seven Dials to Five Corners, and now in Hunter’s Point, the poor were always suspicious of the police. He knew they had a right to be. He sighed. “Do we know anything about the victims?”

“Their ID’s were badly-made fakes, probably here illegally. We have nothing else on them.”

“Okay Larsen. Get their names and addresses and disperse the crowd. There’s no need for an audience to watch the bodies being moved.”

He turned back to the room, scribbling notes quickly. “Chen, how soon will you have a full report on the victims?”

“We’re a bit backed up right now, perhaps by the end of the week.” Rodney said.

“Make that by the end of today.” Jerrod said.

Rodney stepped back and paused before speaking. “Sir, I know you’re fairly new to the SFPD, but there have recently been all sorts of budget cuts. For something that will almost certainly end up being ruled a murder-suicide, well-- my boss won’t authorize overtime to get it done any sooner.”

Jerrod tilted his head and stared at him for a long minute. He grabbed Rodney’s lab coat lapels and pulled him over to the dead man. “How tall would you say he was?”

Rodney stared wide-eyed at Jerrod’s hand clutching his coat. Jerrod continued. “No answer? Well I’d guess he was about five-foot-five, when he still had a head.” He released Rodney and squatted, grabbed the victim’s limp hand and jerked it toward the shotgun’s trigger. “This barrel is 30 inches long. It would take a basketball player’s arms to reach this and still blow his own head off at this angle.”

Jerrod dropped the man’s hand. It flopped back down into the blood and pulverized sheetrock. He kicked the man’s shoe-clad feet, “No using his toes to pull the trigger. You think this was a murder-suicide. Are you that green, or that stupid?”

Rodney looked down at the floor and said nothing for a moment. He pointed at the woman and child. “And them?”

“I don’t know yet, but I’m afraid it might be as simple as wrong place, wrong time.”

Rodney nodded. “Crime Scene Unit is almost done. I should start prepping them for transport.” Jerrod was staring at the bodies of the woman and child. Rodney jerked his head toward the man’s body. “I’ll start with him, if you want to take a closer look at those two.”

Jerrod knelt by the two bodies, looking for anything out of the ordinary. He reached toward the child’s body and hesitated. The blood of a child was more intoxicating than an adult’s, purer, and sweeter. He’d known other vampires to go on feeding frenzies after tasting the blood of young children. Had he eaten enough to be this close to her blood?

His heart racing, he steadied his hand, took a deep breath and slowly slid the tip of his pen under the blanket edge, lifting it. He froze for a moment. Sniffed deeply. None of this blood was from the child. All the blood saturating the blanket was from the mother. He took another look at the child. She was unnaturally pale, which would be normal if she bled out, but where was the blood?

“Chen, when you do the autopsy, can you pay special attention to the wound pattern on the child’s neck?”

“Why, what did you find?” Rodney asked, walking over to the two bodies.

Jerrod ignored his question, glanced at his watch. “What time can you realistically have something for me?”

Rodney looked at Jerrod, studied his face for a long moment. “I’ll admit I am a little green. But I keep my ear to the ground and I try to learn. And despite the fact that you’re an ass, I would like to establish a good working relationship with you.”

Jerrod grinned, impressed. “Go on.”

“The story about your unusual transfer has made the rounds. You may have been a hotshot detective back in New York, but things run a little differently in San Francisco. The politics here are cut throat and you’ve already made some enemies by stepping over cops who have been on the list for promotion for a long time. So as a friendly warning, I would suggest you don’t push on your first case out, especially not a case like this.”

Jerrod leaned against the door jam and sighed. If Chen had served under the Pope during the First Crusades, or in the Tudor Court, perhaps he could understand what real cutthroat politics were. Jerrod rubbed his eyes and looked at the crime scene. Three illegal Hispanics dead in a shitty apartment in the projects; no one else was going to care about this.

“What are you going to do?” Rodney asked.

Jerrod glanced over his shoulder as he walked out the door, “Whatever I have to, to solve these murders.”

About a.e. Tyree

a.e. Tyree believes anything is possible, which may be why she is drawn to writing paranormal stories. A corporate executive and life coach by day, she spends her nights writing stories.

To learn more about a.e.Tyree's work, visit her website at www.aeTyree.com