

Spiked

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Poisoned Pen Press



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*This book is dedicated to Julia McCarthy,
who possessed nothing but an exceptional soul.*

Chapter 1

Lowell, Massachusetts
Monday, October 19
7:50 a.m.

Eddie Bourque gulped the last of his bitter Arabica, then lifted the empty mug over his head and wagged it at the waitress. He put it down, exhaled noisily and looked out the window at the hard sleet slanting to the street. His flip-top reporter's notebook, on the table, was still empty.

“Just amazing,” continued Councilman Eccleston. “In the front of the spoon I see myself upside down. But when I look in the back,” he flipped the spoon, “I'm upside up.” He grinned, delighted, then pumped his eyebrows up and down.

“Councilman, you started to say—”

“In a minute, Eddie,” Eccleston said, turning the spoon.

The waitress filled Eddie's mug with black java that looked an hour past its prime. She left four shots of non-dairy creamer on the table and went away. Eddie added two creams and stirred the drink with his ballpoint.

Eddie's partner on the newspaper's political beat, Danny Nowlin, had assured him that the councilman had a tip—a tip so hot that Danny would have followed it himself if he weren't too busy on a long-term news feature. But two coffees into the interview, Eccleston had offered no sizzle, not even a news brief.

If Danny's going to dump Eccleston on me, I hope he's chasing a Pulitzer.

Five-term City Councilman Manuel Eccleston was sixtyish. He had greased-down ginger hair, a flushed, overscrubbed complexion, and an enduring dazed look about him—one part curiosity, two parts brain concussion. A former Lottery Commission hack, Eccleston had retired on a disability. Bum leg, blood clots, sciatica—he had claimed them all, which meant he could only golf where nobody knew him.

Eccleston flipped the spoon again. “You ever seen this trick?” he asked.

“No,” Eddie said. “It doesn't work for me.”

Eccleston looked up, and Eddie pounced. “It must be tense times for you incumbents, three weeks before the election. The opinion polls have it close.”

It was an educated guess. Eddie had seen no polls—no news agency had commissioned one, and the politicians guarded their own poll results like missile codes. But whenever eighteen candidates compete for nine open seats, there has to be a close race *somewhere*.

Eccleston struck at the bait. “It’s a crazy season, like they say—all politics is *loco*.”

Eddie bit his bottom lip until it hurt. In political circles, Eccleston was known as Manny the Mangler for his regular assassination of the King’s English. If the King were still around, Manny would hang.

Eccleston went through the election ticket, top to bottom, rating each incumbent’s chance for reelection. He offered a rosy, but plausible, analysis: that Manny and four of his political allies would survive.

“So you think your block will keep its majority.”

Eccleston shook the spoon at Eddie. “We better. This city is at a critical conjunction.”

Manny was swimming near the hook, and Eddie didn't want to spook him. He shrugged, resisted the urge to reach for his pad, and inwardly begged for more.

The councilman leaned over the table. He said, "Government needs to take a lesson from business." His breath smelled mysteriously like baking soda. "What does business do with employees who don't pull their own freight?"

Eddie bit his lip again.

Eccleston rapped the spoon on the Formica. "They fire 'em." He leaned back. "And a certain neighborhood of this city ain't working out."

That didn't make any sense. Eddie drained his mug. He said, "You can't fire a neighborhood."

Eccleston's index fingers came together at eye level. "We have to think outside the box," he said, as his fingers traced a triangle in the air.

Eddie reached for his pad, a narrow spiral notebook with a red "E" emblazoned on the cover. The councilman's eyes got big. "You're not writing this down, are you?"

"Got to," Eddie said. "Forgot to wear a wire this morning."

Eccleston gave a nervous laugh. He scratched his scalp with the spoon, and kept his voice low.

“This ain’t for the paper.”

“Councilman,” Eddie said, sounding like a disappointed father, “you didn’t arrange this meeting to send me home empty-handed.”

Eccleston looked outside. He tapped the spoon in his palm. “The situation isn’t ripe yet.”

Eddie got it—Eccleston was playing defense. He wanted to tip Eddie to something juicy, off-the-record, with a conditional release date. Then, even if Eddie heard the news someplace else, he would be bound by the embargo, and the councilman could be sure the story wouldn’t run before it was ripe.

Of course Eddie could refuse the deal and pursue the story on his own. But then there would be no guarantee he’d get it. Later, when he was ready, Eccleston would leak it to the TV stations.

Eddie looked in his coffee mug. He shook a last drop into his mouth. “You have me curious, councilman,” he admitted. “What’s your timetable?”

“After the election.”

“Christ Almighty, this *is* big,” Eddie muttered.

Too big, he decided, to pass up. He tucked his

pad and pen into his overcoat. “Okay, deal. Now empty your pockets, and make it good.”

It was an urban renewal project, Eccleston explained. A big one. Some of Lowell’s power-brokers were scheming a total makeover of the immigrant neighborhood known as the Acre—out with the low-income tenements, in with the luxury condos. Tearing down a neighborhood? That would be six months of screaming headlines, once the story broke.

Eddie drummed his fingers on the mug. He found himself looking forward to a controversy that would break a long string of ordinary days. “The neighborhood groups will hate this,” he predicted. “I can’t imagine how much political heat this might bring.”

“If you can’t take the heat,” Eccleston said, “then get out of the frying pan.”

Eddie bit his lip a third time. “Is Congressman Vaughn on board?”

Manny frowned. “Vaughn’s a pain in the ass. But people are working on him.”

“The real question,” Eddie said, “is *why* is this happening?”

The councilman sat back. A smile spread across his face. He rubbed his finger and thumb

together in the pantomime that means money.

“How much?” Eddie asked. “Who’s getting it?”

Eccleston pulled an imaginary zipper over his lips.

“Come on, Manny,” Eddie pleaded, “that’s the key to the goddam deal.”

Eccleston grimaced. “If anyone figured out I took a leak to the press, my butt would be in a sling.” He rubbed his chin. “But I might have something else you can write about later this week. I’ll let you know.”

They finished their coffee over small talk. Eddie paid the tab and pocketed the receipt for his expense report.

As they stepped outside, Eccleston turned up his collar. “Remember,” he said, “you and I did not have this conversation.”

“What conversation?”

“Good man.” He leaned into the sleet and walked off.

Eddie strolled toward downtown with the sleet at his back. The Lowell Daily Empire Building rose behind a row of low brick offices.

The newspaper’s ten-story tower is among the tallest buildings in downtown Lowell. But it

stands out more for unique style than for height. The men who owned the textile factories of the Industrial Revolution built nineteenth-century Lowell mostly of red clay. Main Street is an alley between rows of interconnected brick buildings, three or four stories high. Most look like banks, handsome and serious, trimmed with granite arches and marble sash. But the theater magnate who founded *The Empire* in 1920 built his newspaper a limestone tower, ringed by black marble ledges at each floor.

A later publisher lit the tower's roof with fat tubes of neon gas bent into a letter "E" two stories tall. The Empire E flickered red like fire in a bottle.

Eddie took a shortcut through a cobblestone alley. Manny had dished a good tip after all, even if it wasn't on the record yet. *How hot is Danny's story if he took a pass on this one?*

Eddie hadn't gone twenty paces when his pager buzzed. He checked the telephone number displayed on its screen, and then called the city desk on his cellular phone.

City Editor Gordon Phife answered. "Start hustling toward the cop shop," he ordered. Phife's voice was all business. No silly impressions, no

movie quotes, which were Gordon's trademarks. His serious voice was rare; it could make a routine assignment feel like the biggest story on the planet.

Eddie broke into a trot toward police headquarters. "I'm on it," he said.

"Crack dealer shot up the basketball courts on Lila Street early this morning. A teenager got hit, not fatal—we think. My police reporters aren't in yet and I goddam can't find Nowlin, so I need you to jam this one on deadline. The cops have a press conference scheduled for right now. If you get me a story by ten, we'll make the late editions and be on the street before the noon news."

Eddie sped up. Sleet stung his eyes. "How much space do I have?"

"I'll hold a five-inch hole on page one, and maybe another six inches inside. I could yank an in-house ad if you need more, but I doubt you'll have the time for it."

The police station was in view. Three television vans from Boston news stations were parked outside, their silver satellite antennas reaching thirty feet high. "Looks like everybody's here," Eddie said. "Channels Four and Five, and that blow-dried asshole from Channel Eight."

“Chuck Boden? The Empire’s most famous former reporter?”

“Yeah, I’ve seen him on assignment, but haven’t spoken to him since I’ve been back in Lowell.”

“You *know* that TV tabloid hack?”

Eddie felt the sweat from his short jog, hot on his back. “Before you came, I *interned* here with Chuck Boden—”

“You shittin’ me?”

“—And I can tell you, he was all hair and ego back then, too.”

“Well, pop that guy in the head for me,” Phife said. “Then get back here with my story.”

Eddie laughed and hung up. Police headquarters was a two-story cement building with a few skinny windows, tinted black. He bounded up four stairs and slipped into the main foyer as the police chief stepped to a podium cluttered with microphones. There was a stack of press releases on a table. Eddie grabbed one and skimmed it. It was a simple story, and a good one: At three-thirty in the morning, a street dealer peddling cocaine mixed with crushed aspirin had an argument with an unsatisfied customer swinging an ice axe. The dealer insisted all sales were final, and whipped

out a pistol. A stray bullet hit a teenaged runaway, and everybody ran like Prefontaine when the cops showed up.

The chief's remarks were vague and unhelpful. Eddie jotted down a few throwaway quotes about how hard the police were working to solve the case. During the Q&A, Eddie asked about the caliber of the gun and the number of shots fired. The chief ummed and ahed, asked himself another question and answered that one. Eddie pressed, and the chief gave it up. It was a .40 caliber gun. And there were two shots. He refused to say if the police had found the pistol.

Eddie started to press him again, but Chuck Boden from Channel Eight cut him off.

“Chief,” Boden began, his voice a rich baritone. He looked away and paused a moment for drama. “If you could speak directly to the people who committed this terrifying act near the heart of this great city, what would you say? And what *can* you say to the residents afraid to come out of their homes while this shooter is still at large—perhaps ready to strike again?”

The chief frowned and looked Boden over. The TV man had coiffed sandy hair, a square jaw and a deep tan, even in late October. His olive-

colored suit tapered from his broad shoulders to his tiny waist. The chief said, “First, let me assure the residents that this violent act will not go unpunished. The detective squad is pursuing leads, and we’re confident an arrest will be forthcoming. To the perpetrator, I’ll say this. Turn yourself in, because we’re going to get you.”

Boden smiled, all shiny white teeth. He had his sound bite.

The press conference broke up and Eddie went for the chief with more questions. Boden got to him first, and put a microphone in the chief’s face. The Channel Eight cameraman filmed over Boden’s shoulder, as Boden lobbed a few more softballs. When he was done, the cameraman walked around to film over the chief’s shoulder. Boden pulled a comb from his pocket and dragged it once through his hair. Then he nodded in silence for the camera for ten seconds. That footage would be spliced over the chief’s comments to give the illusion that their conversation was filmed simultaneously from two angles.

Eddie edged past the cameraman, keeping his back to Boden. But the TV man’s voice boomed in his ear.

“Eddie Bourque?” Boden said. “I was so

happy when I saw my old pal's byline back in *The Empire*." His sarcasm was as subtle as his breathless news reports. "It's been what, seven or eight years? And look at you, right back where you started." Even his *grin* was sarcastic.

Eddie responded to Boden's uppercut with his jab. "Kicking your ass on stories around here is a habit of mine. You'll find I guard my news tips more carefully than I used to."

Boden's grin fell. "Those were *my* tips," he said, the words grinding in his throat. "You still can't accept that anyone could have beaten you to a story." He caught himself, shook his head, and broke out a new grin, this one patronizing. "Anyway, it's great to have you back in the market. I'm sure they miss your reporting in Maine."

"It was Vermont," Eddie corrected, immediately regretting that he had acknowledged the slight. "Check my clips since I've been back. I'm a couple scoops ahead of you."

Boden chuckled. "You scooped me where? In *The Empire*? You mice can roar all you want—around here, nothing is news until *I* say it's news."

"You mean the daily hype you do?" Eddie said.

“I got a million viewers every night at six and eleven. What’s your circulation? Forty thousand?”

That punch stunned Eddie. Then Boden swung the haymaker. “Speaking of Vermont, I hear there’s going to be a wedding up there in the spring, for another former colleague of ours.”

Eddie felt battered. He tried for nonchalance. “Pam and I are still friends,” he said, “and I couldn’t be happier for her.”

Boden moved in to finish him off. “I never thought it was in her best interest to follow you from Lowell to Vermont,” he said. “But I guess I was wrong—she found the man of her dreams. He’s a teacher or something?”

“A college professor, in journalism,” Eddie corrected.

Boden looked delighted. He waved, flashing his white caps. “See you around, Ed. When you come to Boston, let me know. I’ll arrange a tour of a big-city newsroom for you.”

Eddie for an instant savored the mental image of his fist shattering ten grand in dental work. But that was not his style, especially not while at the police station. He was livid he had let Boden get to him. *This job is just temporary*, Eddie reminded himself.

The police chief was finishing another TV interview. Eddie shook Boden out of his head. He was here for a story, and nothing was more sacred than the news. He put his fingertips on the chief's shoulder to turn him away from other lingering scribes, and kept his voice low. "Did you recover any bullets or shell casings?"

"Not yet. The shooter may have grabbed the casings. We'll be looking to dig a slug out of a wall or a fence."

Eddie said, "If you know the caliber of the gun, and you don't have a slug, I'm assuming you have the weapon, right?"

The chief looked at his shoes to see if his pants were down. Trapped, he gave up the info. "We believe our officers have found the weapon, which could have been dropped when the shooter jumped the fence around the basketball court."

That was all Eddie could get; the chief was back on guard. He thanked him and ran out of there. Cars honked in protest as Eddie ignored the signal lights and dashed across the intersection toward the Empire Building.

Phife called out the moment Eddie burst off the elevator. "Twenty minutes, Eddie. I need time to read it."

Eddie nodded and slammed into his chair. A paper cup on his desk held two inches of tepid coffee the color of potting soil. It had been terrible on Friday when it was fresh from the vending machine. Eddie downed it in one gulp and pounded the keyboard with his middle fingers:

LOWELL—*An argument over impure cocaine burst into violence early this morning when a man fired two gunshots into a crowd on Lila Street, wounding a teenaged runaway who was not involved in any drug transaction, police said.*

He probably could write a better opening with more time, but it would do. He phoned the hospital and asked about the victim; she was listed in good condition with a wound in the shoulder. In a second paragraph, Eddie typed her name and her prognosis. In a perfect world, he'd call her family for comment, but deadline is imperfect.

The third graph stated plainly that the shooter fled and got away. The fourth, that police had recovered a gun. It was the one detail nobody else got at the press conference, and Eddie wanted it high in the story. Let Chuck Boden choke on it.

Then, some description:

Lila Street is in the heart of the Acre, the

neighborhood home to most of the city's low-income and working-class immigrants. The street is tightly crammed with triple-decker apartment houses that were once home to mill workers in the city's days as a nineteenth-century textile power.

Now, many of the buildings are decrepit, with peeling paint and sagging porches. Yet, most are overflowing with families, many of which came to Lowell from Cambodia in the 1980s in flight after the genocide of the Khmer Rouge regime.

The language was bumpy, but Eddie had no time to smooth it. In the five minutes he had left, he added the details about the gun, the number of shots fired and the chief's promise to solve the case.

Bang. He smashed the send key to file the story.

"You got it, Gordie," he yelled across the newsroom.

Phife flashed thumbs-up and called up the story on his own screen to edit it.

Eddie leaned back and looked around the newsroom for the first time that day. It was a long,

narrow space containing twenty-five beaten metal desks, layered with strata of newsprint, overstuffed manila folders, reams of government documents and empty Chinese food boxes. Eddie's desk was messier than most. He filed paperwork by the geological method—oldest stuff on the bottom. Nowlin's desk, the next one over, was neater than most. It held only his computer, a desk blotter with his appointments printed neatly in ink, a foam wrist pad to ease his carpal tunnel syndrome, and a framed picture of his wife, Jesse.

With the writing deadline for the last edition gone by, the room was quiet. Most of the reporters on the day shift were out meeting sources. A few worked the phones.

Look at you, right back where you started.

Eddie picked up his telephone, changed his mind, and slapped it down.

What are you afraid of? He snatched back the receiver and dialed a Boston number with the eraser end of a pencil.

A man answered. "Boston Globe, where may I direct your call?"

"Human resources, Patricia Dannon, please."

The phone rang seven times.

A woman answered, pleasant but rushed. "Ms.

Dannon's office, may I help you?"

"Yes, yes," Eddie said, keeping his voice low, yet trying to sound breezy. "Edward Bourque from *The Daily Empire* in Lowell. Is Ms. Dannon available?"

She wasn't. Eddie took a deep breath and plunged on anyway. "I sent Ms. Dannon my resumé and some story clips some time ago, and I haven't heard from her. I wanted to make sure my material arrived. Perhaps I could make an appointment—"

The secretary cut him off, icy and efficient. "That won't be necessary. I'm sure your material is here, Mr. Bourque." The woman's voice sweetened. "Please be patient with Ms. Dannon. She's four weeks behind on her rejection letters."

A million hot ants tangoed over Eddie's face. He thanked her—out of habit, nothing more—and hung up, muttering. "Save the stamp."

Across the newsroom, more potential bad news. Franklin Keyes, the paper's executive editor, was reading Eddie's story over Phife's shoulder. Eddie trusted Phife, but Keyes outranked him as second-in-command to the publisher. It was too bad; he wasn't half the editor Phife was. A good editor is more than a magician with rough news

copy, a good editor is a bullshit-stopper who protects reporters from dumb assignments or silly decrees rolling downhill from upper management. Franklin Keyes was a bullshit superconductor. When it hit him, it accelerated.

Eddie's phone rang. It was Bruno, his barber, whose shop faced Fire Department headquarters.

"I just-a saw the dive team scrambling," he said, the words running together in a thick Italian accent that was a put-on. Bruno was third generation American. He thought an accent was good for business in an immigrant town.

"You gotta have-a somebody in the shop with you," Eddie said, mimicking the barber. "Because I know you were-a born in Worcester, and not even the Italian section."

Bruno laughed. "You keep the secret, Eddie, or your next flat-top not be so flat."

Eddie chuckled and hung up. The dive team rolling usually meant somebody had spotted a floater in the canals. He called the Fire Department. The dispatcher was abrupt, but Eddie got an address out of her. It was just a few blocks from the paper.

Phife was still tied up with Keyes. Eddie typed

him a one-line message about the body in the canal and sent it to him electronically.

Outside, Eddie walked three blocks to Dunkin' Donuts. The sidewalk was deserted. There were few footprints in the fresh snow. In summer, Merrimack Street was crowded with businesspeople in suits and shoppers hustling between the boutiques, old men leaning their crooked backs against brick walls and talking conservative politics, and packs of teenaged girls comparing their glitter lipsticks and their babies.

Eddie bought a large dark roast with cream, and then trudged into the wet sleet toward the Worthen Canal.

Nineteenth-century Irish immigrants had dug Lowell's canals to channel the muscle of the Merrimack River to the city's textile mills. The mill companies had long gone south in search of cheaper labor, but the canals—six miles' worth—still churned out bodies. Most were heroin addicts with blue skin and sticky white lips puckered in an overdose kiss. Other addicts, stoned stupid and too scared to call 911, dumped the bodies into the canals. They floated with the trash, the brown bubbles and little oil slicks, passing over stolen shopping carts and discarded tires. There

was barely a ripple as the canals dragged their dirty cargo around the city like tired blood.

The Worthen Canal, which passes through some of the city's roughest neighborhoods, was known to produce a murder victim on occasion. Since it flowed from the outskirts of the city to downtown, it was usually impossible for police to pinpoint where a body had been dumped.

Diesel exhaust was heavy at the scene. Three cruisers with blues spinning, a fire engine, and an ambulance idled in a semicircle near the edge of the canal. A swelling crowd of scanner junkies had gathered, kept back from the interesting stuff by yellow police tape.

It seemed a big production for a dead drug addict. *Better put Danny on alert. I might need a hand with this one.* Eddie paged Nowlin to his cell phone number.

Eddie didn't know the uniformed cop working crowd control along the police tape, but that wasn't usually a problem. The trick was to hold the notebook in plain sight and act like you were invited.

"Captain McCabe here yet?" Eddie asked the cop as he ducked under the tape.

The officer's whole face squinted, like a guy

waking up to a bright light. “He’s back there. Who are you?”

Eddie walked on. “Edward Bourque, from The Empire. If McCabe comes this way, tell him I got here as fast as I could. Thanks.”

He didn’t look back.

Gerald McCabe was a source of Eddie’s. Both used to work the graveyard shift. Eddie would tip off McCabe whenever the patrolmen’s union planted a story in the paper whacking police management. And anytime Eddie missed a late-night car wreck or bar stabbing, McCabe would ring Eddie’s cell phone.

The captain’s thick frame—an oil drum on cannon legs—stood out among the handful of uniformed officers breathing steam in the winter air and peering into the water. A police photographer clicked photos. A diver in a skin-tight blue suit dropped a rope ladder over the canal’s edge. Another diver crouched ready with a large vinyl sack.

The stone and concrete canal was about as wide as a city street. It smelled like a wet basement. Water ran through it about five feet below street level. Two weeks of relentless cold had iced the canal at its edges, narrowing the flow of water to a channel down the middle.

A body lay face down, partially trapped in the ice. It was a man, judging by the gray trench coat. He was maybe five-foot-nine, dressed in dark slacks with black-stocking feet. The left sleeve of his raincoat was torn off at the shoulder, exposing a bare arm, ugly white and bent back the wrong way at the elbow.

Eddie had seen bodies before—real bodies, like this one, so unlike the illusions in caskets made up by an undertaker. He asked McCabe, “Suicide or overdose?”

“Neither. The chief’s on his way.”

The chief didn’t go out in the snow for accidents or for addicts. Eddie gulped the rest of his coffee, wished he had another, and then got to work. He sketched the scene and the position of the body in his notebook, and listed the cops he recognized.

He scanned for details that would illustrate the story. The closest building was a three-story brick cube, the backside of a hardware store. There were two faces in a second-floor window, probably store employees on a gawk break. In the other window, somebody had taped a red and blue political sign. It read “Re-elect Hippo Vaughn to Congress.” The sign was either a year old, or a

year premature. Vaughn had been reelected in a landslide last year, but it reminded Eddie he had promised Phife a campaign analysis on the upcoming city election.

Above, on the building's roof, something drew his eye. A silhouette against white sky. He shielded his eyes with the notebook. A woman's face teased from behind long black hair. She swept the hair back with a red mitten, revealing skin the shade of clear tea. She was young, maybe late twenties, and striking—Cambodian, most likely. Eddie's eyes lingered on her.

A yelp echoed off the canal walls.

"Shit! This is cold," a diver yelled from the water. "My balls are shrinking to BBs."

McCabe bellowed at him. "You don't need 'em. I wear out your old lady whenever you work a double shift."

All the cops chuckled. The diver yelled back, "Small price to pay for overtime."

The divers slipped the bag under the body and fed straps up to the cops on the ledge. The uniformed guys pulled up the corpse and set it face-up on the ground. McCabe wrestled his huge hands inside rubber gloves and squatted next to the body in silence for a minute, touching nothing.

He deadpanned, “Boys, I don’t think this guy’s gonna make it.” Eddie made a note that the body still had a wristwatch, a black sports model, on the left wrist.

“White male,” McCabe said. “Severe trauma, face and head.”

That was police understatement. Something had smashed this guy’s nose to pulp. The lower lip was split. The cheeks were beaten to the bone. Maybe he jumped off a building, or stumbled drunk into a passing truck—or maybe this was a homicide.

Eddie’s little canal story had become page-one news.

Where the hell are you, Danny?

He paged Nowlin again.

McCabe stepped aside to let the police photographer take some more shots. Eddie looked again to the woman on the roof. There was only the sky.

The photographer finished his work. McCabe stepped back to the body. He ran his hands inside the coat and checked the breast pockets. “No wallet,” he said. He patted the front trouser pockets. Nothing. Suddenly his arm recoiled. “Christ!” he yelled.

Eddie jumped back on reflex.

McCabe reached in the coat and yanked out a small black box. “I felt something moving,” he said. “His goddam pager is going off.”

A breath of Fear chilled Eddie’s neck. He had met Fear—or, more accurately, invented her—when he was ten years old, and his curiosity had gotten him trapped in an abandoned well rumored to have been filled with bones. He had never been more terrified. During that night, his fear took on a personality. It became Fear, a leggy redhead with flaming red nails and lips—part biker-chick, part vampire. At the same time sexy and frightening.

McCabe wiped a thumb over the pager’s tiny digital screen and frowned. He looked at Eddie. Fear nuzzled up from behind and pressed her icicle tits to Eddie’s back.

“Hey Ed,” McCabe said. “On this guy’s beeper, ain’t this your number?” He double-checked the digits recorded on the pager. “You want this stiff to call your cell phone?”