

Untitled by Laurie Wood

Chapter 1

3:45 p.m. July 7, 2015

Provincial Biker Enforcement Unit

Toronto, Canada

Any day is a bad day for a cop to die.

The crime scene photos showed a close-up of the victim's gaping left temple. In one picture his hair was matted with blood and bits of bone and brain.

The crimson splatter bloomed on the wall beside him. His remaining blue eye stared straight ahead. Poker chips, playing cards, and beer bottles were strewn across the table. "Bobby-D" Delaney never saw the hit coming.

Detective-Sergeant Leanne Crane gripped the photos so hard she wrinkled their edges. Her first week back at work after a shooting suspension, and here was her mentor, sprawled on his beat up kitchen table with one side of his head blown off. The coffee she'd just drunk clawed its way back up the back of her throat. She shut her eyes and sought solace in her yoga. Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth. Again. Repeat. She buried her face in the pictures and struggled not to let out her sobs.

Detective-Sergeant Bobby Delaney had been her first handler when she'd gone undercover in the Drug Enforcement Section of the Provincial Police.

She'd never had a real friendship with a man before, but Bobby had been like a brother to her. And now here he was, dead in his apartment kitchen with his brain splashed all over the wall.

Editor's Critique:

This is an attention-grabbing first page with a strong first line. The characterization of both Leanne and Bobby in these few paragraphs is well done—we already know quite a bit about the presumed heroine in a short space. I like that she's reacting to what has happened instead of just describing it; it gives an active feel to the narrative. This author has a strong voice, and I'm intrigued to know more.

I don't think the date stamp (date, time, location) is necessary here, though its use would ultimately depend on whether or not its importance is established later in the manuscript. In general (at least in our series books) we don't use these. I would also caution the author on the use of such gruesome details, especially right up front. Some series line are more open to this than others, so just make sure you know what's acceptable for the line you're targeting. For example, I suspect Carina Press would be fine with this content, but Love Inspired Suspense would not be.