

# Serving Life

Written by Lori Anne King

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## Sample Pages - Chapter One

Candace gazed out the passenger window of Miranda's car. Her body was tight; fists and teeth clenched. Her hands were shaking and her breathing was shallow and quick. She couldn't stop thinking about the look on that jerk's face when he was granted parole. He was free to have a life, a life that her sister would never have, thanks to him. He'd done such terrible things and she couldn't believe her prayers weren't answered. She was angry and she was also afraid.

"I just don't understand how they could release him," she said.

"Sometimes we don't know why things happen in life," Miranda said looking ahead as she drove, "but there has to be a reason, there just has to be."

Candace shook her head, "I don't get it. I never will."

She'd been optimistic at the beginning of the hearing earlier that day. However, as the process unfolded, she'd felt her hopes slip away. She sat in silence and recalled what had just happened.

Frank had sat in that hearing room with an air of confidence, playing the game that she'd dreaded would buy his freedom. The pin striped suit couldn't disguise the snake that slithered beneath it. She was repulsed by the sight of him, and when he'd looked at her, her skin crawled with the memories of his hands on her.

*And why does he keep looking at my shoes?* She'd thought as she'd pulled her feet back under her chair in the boardroom.

She was jarred from Frank's stare when her father said, "I've got a terrible feeling in my gut."

Candace's mother patted his hand as if she shared the same feeling. Candace noticed that her parents had not been able to look at Frank. They huddled together as if their unity would set things right. None of their lives had ever been the same since the tragedy and now they were being dragged through the whole nightmare again.

There was a chance that Frank could fool the Board Members and get out.

*He sure is a smooth one, and clever too,* Candace thought. She was well aware of his manipulating ways having experienced them first hand.

*That's what makes him so dangerous.*

Her mother was fidgeting beside her then leant over and said, "What's wrong with this justice system? He's a killer. He should rot in jail... he should rot in hell."

"Mom, it's okay. You and I both know they'll never let him out," Candace whispered. "Just take a deep breath. It'll be okay."

Her parents' statement would be their chance to convince the Board Members. Miranda had been a blessing to their family and used her expertise as a Crown Attorney to help them prepare for it. Candace only hoped it would be powerful enough to make a difference.

The insides of her stomach tightened as she listened to her father's words. It made the pain of losing Sarah hurt even more.

"We beg you to deny Frank Rathburn's request for parole. He was convicted of killing my daughter, Sarah Douglas, and no amount of time in prison will ever

rehabilitate him. Our loss is so great and our pain is too deep to explain in words. We have suffered dearly. Our lives have been hell and we will never be the same. Frank Rathburn took a precious life from us with his deliberate and planned murder of our Sarah. He held a pillow over her head,” he choked back a sob, “and killed her...He’s a threat to society. He is a threat to all women. He will reoffend. He will kill again.”

Candace’s mother stood beside him holding up a photo for the Board Members to see and said, “This is our beautiful Sarah. Frank Rathburn killed her. He knew exactly what he was doing. Please do the right thing and keep him behind bars. No one’s daughter will be safe if you set him free.”

The Chairperson respectfully waited for them to return to their seats and said, “I understand how difficult that was for you. Thank you.” She looked towards Frank, “Mr. Rathburn, do you or your counsel have any closing comments?”

Candace was relieved when the creep said no, but then his lawyer spoke up and yapped on for at least fifteen minutes. All this bull about Frank being an upstanding member of the prison community, blah, blah, blah. She was thankful when he finally stopped talking and even more so when the hearing was recessed.

Candace sunk into the couch in the waiting room and refused to think about the outcome. Her parents were pacing and chatting amongst themselves and Miranda was on her blackberry. They waited and waited.

*Come on, let’s get this over with. This place gives me the creeps,* she thought as she drummed her fingers on the armrest.

When they were called back into the hearing room, Candace immediately knew the outcome. Regardless, she sat between her parents, clasped hands with them and prayed one last time.

The Chairperson started by saying, “Due to Mr. Rathburn’s exceptional behavior, his commitment to rehabilitation and his solid release plan,” but was interrupted by Sarah’s mother who sobbed, “Oh my God. No!”

Candace put her arm around her mother, bracing her for what was to come. Her mother cried uncontrollably.

The Chairperson waited until she quieted down and continued, “As I was saying, due to Mr. Rathburn’s exceptional behavior in prison, his commitment to rehabilitation and his solid release plan, Frank Rathburn is granted parole.”

Candace watched in disbelief. She wished she could wipe that smug look off of his face. That was it. It was over. Frank was being released. The Chairperson said something about how sorry she was for Sarah and her family, but she obviously didn’t feel sorry enough. She’d unleashed a killer.

*How could she ever live with herself?* Candace thought.

The hearing was concluded and Frank was being lead out of the room. He looked back at Candace with those dark, evil eyes that had no soul hidden behind them, and winked at her.

Her heart pounded against her ribs and her face heated up. “Get me outta here, quick,” she’d said to Miranda as she’d linked arms with her.

That moment would stay in her mind forever. And regardless of how far she and Miranda had driven away from the penitentiary, Candace could still feel his eyes on her. They had been in the car for well over two hours and the closer they got to Toronto, the more she wanted to lock herself away in her condo.

The thought of him being out of prison freaked Candace out and she kept repeating, “I can’t believe it. I can’t believe it.”

Miranda patted her knee and told her, “Maybe he’ll do something stupid and end up back in prison.”

“Thanks. That makes me feel so much better, not!” The thought may have disturbed her, but it also planted a seed.

They arrived at her condo and Miranda stayed until Candace finally convinced her it would be okay to leave.

“Call me if you need anything,” she said “any time day or night. I’m here for you.” Miranda closed the door and made sure that Candace locked it behind her.

Candace was alone to face the reality of what had transpired that day and was grateful for Miranda’s friendship. Miranda had been around their home during her University years with Sarah and had become one of the family. Now both Candace and Miranda shared the same love for Sarah and disgust for Frank Rathburn.

Candace contemplated what Miranda had said about the possibility of Frank messing up and going back to prison. Maybe there was a way to make that happen.

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