

## No LOV for Marilyn

A prominent Houston businesswoman, Marilyn Evans, is murdered in her car. The killing at first seems to be part of a gang initiation, as LOV is spray-painted on the car – Lords of Violence. However, the police team investigating the crime quickly have doubts that a gang was involved, and suspect the killer may have intentionally tried to divert the authorities by staging the crime as a gang slaying. The police team discovers that several people had motive to kill Marilyn, and realize that to solve the crime, they had to determine who would benefit most by her death. (22 pages)

Neither my partner, Karen, or I wanted the case. We both had read this morning's *Chronicle*, and the account of the murder which was on the first page of the first section with photos. It was a big story. Huge. But not our kind of case.

Marilyn Evans -- yes, that Marilyn Evans. The one, who with her partner Corliss Brown, had built a mini publishing empire in Houston. The publishers of *Houston Now*, *Houston Monthly*, *Upscale Life*, and the *Houston Restaurant Review*. That Marilyn Evans had been murdered Thursday night at about 10:30 P.M. And it made the front page of the Friday morning newspaper. A very big story indeed.

The newspaper reported that the killing appeared to be the result of a local gang initiation. Karen and I don't like gangs and don't like investigating their crimes. Even if the victim was high society rich.

Evans & Brown Publishing, Inc. was worth over ten million dollars. Over the past few years, stories of Marilyn Evans had appeared in the Lifestyle section of the *Chronicle* many times for being at the right functions, at the right times. Evidently last night, she was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I was sitting at my desk across from Karen when our boss, Lieutenant Thomas, walked up with a frown on his face, and carrying a folder. I knew it was bad news.

Lieutenant Thomas said, “How’s my most favorite homicide team in the whole damn department doin’ this morning?”

Karen Stone cringed, not looking up.

I said, “Fine.”

The lieutenant dropped the folder on my desk and said, “Derek. Karen. You’ve got the Evans case. Make it go away fast.”

Karen Stone looked up and said, “Oh c’mon. A gang killing? Why us?”

“The victim’s special.”

I raised my eyebrows and replied, “We’re important, too.”

Lieutenant Thomas didn’t comment. He simply turned and walked away.

“Damn.”

I opened the folder, and started leafing through the report filed by the cops who were first on the scene of the crime. There were photographs. There were *always* those awful photographs. After fifteen years on the force, I still hated the photographs. Karen Stone felt the same way, but I passed them over my desk to her anyway.

One showed the dead Marilyn Evans slumped behind the wheel of her Mercedes. According to the ballistics, she was shot twice in the head by a .38 pistol. The car was in the underground parking lot of the Evans & Brown building on West Gray, and had been spray-painted in red with, “LOV # 1.”

Even though we hated gangs, Karen and I both recognized the signs of a gang slaying. We also were sure that Marilyn Evans had no connection to gangs, so the *Chronicle* report was probably accurate, that the killing was an initiation rite. The #1 may have signified the first act by a new gang member of LOV.

After reading the second page of the report, I said, “Karen, it appears there’s a gang out there that calls themselves the Lords of Violence.”

“L-O-V,” she recited. Then she stood up and said, “I’ll get one of our gang experts to bring in the leader for questioning.”

I nodded, and kept reading. But there was nothing else in the report that had any real value. Or so I thought at the time.

At three o’clock that afternoon, Karen and I were in an interrogation room sitting across the table from Hector Valenzuela, who according to the officer who brought him in, preferred to be called Stiletto. He was five feet, seven inches tall, weighed about 130 pounds, had long black hair in a pony tail, and was wearing jeans and a green leather jacket. His eyes were green. He was sixteen years old.

I said, “Hector, my name is Derek Mackey. This is my partner, Karen Stone.”

Slouched in his chair, moving nothing but his lips, he said, “My name’s Stiletto.”

We took turns calmly explaining why he had been brought in. We showed him the photographs. And we read him his Miranda rights. Karen and I had done this team presentation hundreds of times before.

While we talked, as most gang members do, Hector Valenzuela said nothing, acted indifferently, and even faked a yawn to let us know he was bored.

Karen summed up our introductory remarks with, “So, Hector. This little initiation makes you, as leader of your piss ant gang, responsible for the murder. If you don’t cooperate, you’ll additionally be charged with obstruction of justice.”

I had to add my two cents, and said, "As a minimum, you're looking at thirty years. Hope you brought your toothbrush."

Finally there was a reaction.

Hector -- or Stiletto -- looked at Karen and then at me. His eyes widened. To my and my partners surprise, he suddenly appeared scared.

He said, "But I didn't do nothin'."

Karen stretched the truth, and in a louder voice said, "Your gang. Your crime."

I said, "Lords of Violence. Very nice, Hector."

Leaning forward and holding the photograph up for Hector to see, Karen asked, "Who did this? Tell us now, and we'll go easy on you."

Tears actually welled in his green eyes, as he leaned forward and said, "I swear on our Virgin Mary's soul, we don't do that. We don't hurt nobody. I swear."

It was an interesting claim from a gang leader.

I asked, "Well, Hector, what exactly do the Lords of Violence do? Play bingo on Saturday nights? Have bake sales? Go to the beach and build sand castles?"

"Derek, let's go get a coke. I'm thirsty." Karen stood.

It was a tactic that often worked for us. Leave a suspect locked in the interrogation room by himself for fifteen minutes. Make him feel how alone he is. Give him time to think about his future. Maybe he'll open up when we return.

I rose, and smiled, "Don't go anywhere. We'll be back."

Karen and I left Hector to decide his own fate.

Over cokes, and a shared bag of chips, Karen and I discussed the leader of LOV. We agreed that Hector Valenzuela wasn't like the few gang leaders we'd questioned in the past. Tears in his eyes? That quickly? Swearing on "our Virgin Mary's soul? All were definitely out of character for a gang leader.

Karen said, "Maybe he *doesn't* know who did it."

I nodded. "And maybe his gang just does the victimless stuff. The graffiti, shop lifting, the occasional vandalism."

Karen laughed, "Yeah. School can be so boring."

"He *is* pretty young." I said. I looked at my watch. It had been fifteen minutes. I asked my partner, "You ready for round two?"

She was.

As we walked back into the interrogation room, Hector Valenzuela dropped to his knees, and as if praying, began his plea. "Please. You gotta believe me. We're not bad. We don't kill nobody. I swear on our Virgin Mary's soul."

Karen and I sat down, and I said, "Get back in you chair."

Another surprise. Hector said, "Yes, sir." And he obeyed.

Karen said, "Tell me about the Lords of Violence."

In detail, our suspect explained that his gang was comprised of his Latino friends at Lamar High School. That in school, there were many whites, many blacks, and only a few Latinos. So they formed a gang, just to look out for one another.

He confessed that the Lords of Violence had engaged in many applications of graffiti on warehouse walls, cars, bridge overpasses, and railroad cars. But that had been the only crimes committed. He swore it was the truth.

He reiterated, “We don’t hurt nobody. We’re outnumbered. I swear on . . .”

Karen cut him off, “I know. On our Virgin Mary’s soul.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

At four-thirty, Karen and I entered Lieutenant Thomas’ office to brief him on the progress on the Marilyn Evans case. I let Karen do most of the talking.

She said, “Lieutenant, Derek and I let Valenzuela go.”

“You did *what?*”

If she was going to go down in flames, she wasn’t going by herself, and again Karen began her next statement with my name.

“Derek and I think that maybe the murder was made to look like a gang initiation. We don’t think the Lords of Violence had anything to do with it.”

Lieutenant Thomas turned red in the face. He shouted, which he doesn’t do a lot, “You question a gang leader for an hour, and he convinces you that he’s innocent? You buy his story? What’s gotten into you both?”

I finally spoke, “What’s gotten into us, sir, is a combined twenty-eight years on the force. Valenzuela’s gang, the Lords of Violence, is more like a social club.”

Karen added, “Sir, we’ve interrogated hundreds of suspects. We can tell when someone’s lying, and when someone’s telling the truth.”

The lieutenant shook his head and said, “Jesus.”

Before the briefing was concluded, our boss reminded us that Marilyn Evans was an important victim. Hundreds of local businesses advertised in her magazines. Her reporters were constantly writing favorable articles about the mayor in *Houston Living*. And everyone who was socially important in Houston had appeared in multiple issues of *Upscale Life*. The lieutenant reiterated the importance of the Marilyn Evans case by saying that he'd already received over fifty telephone calls from influential people about the case, imploring him to find the killer.

I asked, "Lieutenant, did *you* know Marilyn Evans personally?"

He replied, "No, but I hear she was a real bitch."

"We've got to find out who wanted Marilyn Evans dead," Karen stated the obvious. "And we need to find him fast."

I agreed, but asked, "What makes you think it's a man?"

"Law of averages." Karen knew that men were responsible for over ninety-five percent of all murders in the U.S.

The first person we decided to call on was Marilyn's ex-husband, Jim Evans. I called his office, and he said he'd wait there until we arrived, which was just after 5:00 P.M. We met in his office.

"I haven't seen or talked to Marilyn in over two years," the ex-husband began the conversation without any emotion in his voice. He added, "I don't think she's even talked to our son in months."

I pulled a pen and index card from my inside coat pocket, and asked, "Who would want your ex-wife killed?"

Jim Evans looked surprised and said, “I thought it was some sort of gang killing.”

Karen said, “We’re not convinced of that.”

Eying my index card, Jim Evans forced a smile and said, “You’ll need more than that little card.”

He told us that Marilyn Evans was not the most popular woman in Houston. In building her publishing business, she and her partner had acquired independent magazines, and then Marilyn herself had fired the previous owners. That occurred twice. She had fired employees. She had cost many other people their jobs, including those at an advertising agency that Marilyn had said wasn’t creative enough, and those employees of a few printing companies she axed because she said they didn’t produce the quality she felt was appropriate for her magazines.

“Even though we haven’t spoken in a long time, I hear about her love life from friends.” The ex-shook his head and continued, “One recent boyfriend thought she would marry him, but she dumped him six months ago for no apparent reason. Then she had an affair with a married man, so you can write down the name of Donna Wilson on that card. She was the wife of that man, and was really pissed when she found out. She’s filed for a divorce and is very bitter, so I hear. The only person I can think of that would *not* be upset about this is her latest boyfriend. His name’s Phil Hutton. They’ve only been dating a month or so . . . not long enough for him to develop any animosity toward her . . . ”

I wrote down all the names, and had to use a second index card. Then I gave Jim Evans a serious glance and said, “I have to ask you. Part of my job. Where were you last night?”

He seemed to have expected the question, and responded, “Look. I don’t really get along . . . I mean, I didn’t get along with Marilyn since our divorce, and her death frankly doesn’t break my heart. But I didn’t kill her.” Jim Evans leaned forward and said, “Last night I was home alone. In bed by ten, and asleep a half an hour later.”

Intuition told Karen and I that Jim Evans was no murderer, just like our intuition told us Hector (Stiletto) Valenzuela was innocent of murder. Jim Evans wasn’t nervous, and he answered all of our questions without hesitation. Even so, he might be helpful in our search for the real murderer.

Karen asked, “What about your son? Does he get along with his mother?”

Sadness appeared on the face of Jim Evans. “No. They don’t have much of a relationship. Six years ago, he married a very nice girl who Marilyn didn’t approve of. She wasn’t from the right side of the tracks, according to her, and Marilyn had some other girl picked out for him. But my daughter-in-law is great, and my son, Ronnie, loves her. They live in Austin and have two kids, one three years old and one six months old. I visit them frequently. They don’t come to Houston much, and, like I said, they haven’t communicated much with Marilyn. But he wouldn’t kill her either. He’s a gentle young man.”

Killing one’s mother is a rare crime, but I still wanted to talk to the son at some point. I asked, “Does Ronnie inherit everything?”

“No. His mom evidently changed her will after Ronnie got married leaving everything to her grandchildren when they turn thirty-five. They didn’t even have kids at the time. Nice huh?”

It was Karen’s turn. “What about Marilyn’s partner?”

Jim Evans shook his head, and said, “Corliss is great. It’s a strange partnership. Corliss is fifteen years younger than Marilyn, but they actually make a good team . . . sort of like good cop -- bad cop. Marilyn does the dirty work; firing people, negotiating acquisitions, handling attorneys, axing advertising agencies. Doing the negative parts of running a business. She’s good at it. I think she developed a taste for it. Likes the power.

“Corliss, runs the day to day operations, works with the writers, and acts as editor for most of the articles run in the magazine. She nurtures the employees. She takes care of the human side of running the business.”

As I was writing down the name of Marilyn’s partner, Jim Evans added, “The only problem they’ve ever had is Lance Brown, Corliss’s husband. He wants his wife to spend more time at home, and has tried to convince Marilyn and Corliss to sell the company for the past four or five years. But Marilyn never would even talk about it, even though they could sell their publishing business for over ten million dollars.”

We thanked the ex-husband for his time, and for his help, and left his office. In the car, I let Karen drive as I reviewed my notes. I counted several suspects.

I said, “We’ve got a pissed off ex-boyfriend, the bitter soon-to-be ex-wife of one of Marilyn’s lovers, people she directly fired, and other people who lost their jobs because of her taste for the negative side of running a business. Her son and his wife don’t seem to like her much, and maybe her partner’s husband wanted her dead, too. I don’t think Jim Evans did it, even though his alibi is weak.”

Karen was thinking hard, and didn’t respond.

I said, “Well, where do we start?”

She remained silent as she drove down Memorial Drive back to the station, and I said nothing, knowing she would answer eventually.

As we turned into our parking lot, Karen seemed to have had an epiphany. She talked fast, “A lot a people wanted revenge. But people like those on your list don’t kill for revenge.” She smiled at me and said, “Derek, the real question is *not* who disliked Marilyn, but who would *benefit* from her death?”

I thought it was a good point. I encouraged her, “Who then?”

She said, “There’s only one person on your index card who would financially benefit.”

When we arrived our desks, it was nearly 7:00 P.M. Lieutenant Thomas was also working late, and when he saw us, he came out of his office and approached us. He was carrying another folder and looked tired.

He greeted us with, “I agree with you,” as he handed me the folder. The lieutenant said, “This is our file on the Lords of Violence. Not much there. But there are some photos that would suggest that someone is trying to blame that gang for the Evans murder. You got any suspects?”

Karen told him of our meeting with Marilyn Evans’ ex-husband, and the long list of people who were, at the least, not very fond of the victim. She didn’t tell him who we considered the prime suspect, because we didn’t have anything to base that on yet but a mutual hunch.

Lieutenant Thomas said, “Thanks for working late. This really is an important case. Even the mayor called me for a progress report. And the reporters have been camped out here most of the day. They just left thirty minutes ago.”

It was nice to be appreciated by our boss. I said, “No problem. We’ll keep at it.”

As he left, he again showed his gratitude, “Thanks again, Derek. Karen. I’m going home to get some rest. Call me if you find anything relevant.”

After the lieutenant got on the elevator, I opened the file marked, “Gang: LOV,” and Karen stood behind me as I thumbed through several photographs. Most showed the graffiti posted by the gang which included “LOV” on bridge overpasses, and on walls of buildings. In some of the graffiti words like “kills,” or “rules,” or “beware,” were added to the LOV monogram.

Karen said, “Stop. Look at that one.” And we examined one of the “LOV Kills” written on the side of the Office Max on Kirby Drive. The note attached to the photograph identified the building, its address, and building’s owner, Brown Development. She asked, “Is that Lance Brown’s building?”

After a minute on the computer, we determined that it was.

“Maybe that’s where he got the idea. He probably wouldn’t have known that the Lords of Violence aren’t all that violent.”

Karen retrieved the folder on the Marilyn Evans murder, and pulled out the photo of the crime scene. She said, “Compare this photo to those photos from the LOV file.”

We both immediately noticed the same thing. The L in LOV appeared to be similar in all of the photos from the gang file, but the L in LOV spray-painted on Marilyn

Evans' car was decidedly different. The letter L in all of the gang file photos were all straight, while the letter L on Marilyn Evans' car began with a loop at the top.

Karen said, "I wonder how Lance Brown signs his name."

We had something to go on, but not enough to get a warrant. I said, "We need to find out if Lance Brown bought any red spray paint recently, and if he owns a .38.

At 10:00 A.M. Saturday morning, Karen parked our car in front of Buffalo Hardware, considered an institution as far as hardware stores go in Houston. It was an old-fashioned hardware store with cluttered aisles, where shoppers could find every basic hardware product and many unique items not found at other such stores. Its sales staff was also old-fashioned – knowledgeable, helpful, and courteous. Lance and Corliss Brown lived in River Oaks, a very swanky neighborhood, and this store was the closest place Lance could have purchased a can of red spray paint. We had also listed other hardware stores to check, but were hoping that Lance Brown would have come here for what he needed.

We walked in, and I immediately went to the section of the store that had all kinds of paints for sale. I found a can of red spray paint, and by the time I returned to the counter at the front of the store, Karen had gathered the manager and three employees there for our interview.

I showed the paint can, and asked, "Anyone remember a customer buying a can of red spray paint in the past few days?"

Karen produced a photograph of Lance Brown that she had downloaded earlier this morning from a business article printed in the *Houston Chronicle* last year. She asked, "Maybe this man?"

One of employees said, "Oh, Mr. Brown. Yeah, he was in here last week and bought one of those," and he pointed to the can I was holding. He added, "He said he was going to paint some cabinets in his garage."

We confirmed that Lance Brown was believed to have bought red spray paint, and that he had paid cash. \$7.95. We thanked the staff and were feeling very lucky that our first stop this morning had proven to be fruitful.

As we got back in our car, Karen said what I knew to be true, "It's still not enough." Buying paint is not a crime.

I called my office and asked a sergeant there to look up gun registrations to determine if Lance Brown owned a registered gun, and if in fact, he owned a .38 pistol. I was put on hold, and waited as we drove toward our next interview. We wanted to talk with the latest boyfriend of Marilyn Evans, who, other than the murderer, may have been the last person to see her alive.

One minute later, the sergeant took me off hold and said, "Lance Brown owns three registered guns. A Remington deer rifle, a Winchester 12-gauge shotgun, and a Smith and Wesson .38."

I thanked the sergeant, and nodded to Karen. Then I said, "We're getting closer, but still don't have enough for an iron-clad case, something Lieutenant Thomas would want."

She agreed.

At 10:30 A.M., we arrived at the town home of Phil Hutton. It was located on Vanderbilt Avenue in another upscale neighborhood, West University. I rang the doorbell.

A man in his twenties answered. He was wearing boxer shorts, and looked like he had just gotten out of bed. When he saw Karen, he moved behind the door to conceal himself, and said, “Yes?”

I was confused, not expecting to find a young man living here. I showed my badge, introduced Karen and myself, and asked, “Is your dad here?”

The young man, peering from behind the door replied, “My dad? He died when I was ten years old.”

Karen, being a lot wiser than I asked, “Are you Phil Hutton?”

He said, “Yes, ma’am.”

I thought to myself, *Marilyn Evans was quite a woman.*

We waited outside while Marilyn’s latest boyfriend threw on some jeans and a T-shirt. Then we were invited in and found the young man to be a perfect gentleman. He’d inherited a fortune and was involved in “investments,” as he put it.

He said that he and Marilyn were having a late dinner at Fleming’s Steak House on Thursday night when she received a text message on her cell phone from her partner.

Phil said, “Marilyn said there was some kind of emergency. Something wrong with magazine proofs from one of their printing suppliers, and that her partner wanted to meet her at her office immediately. Marilyn said she had to go.”

Karen asked, “Did she have her own car at the restaurant? Or did you take her home first?”

“I should’ve gone with her. Maybe she wouldn’t have been attacked by that gang if I’d been there.” Phil Hutton looked sad. He had liked his relationship with an older woman, and being with Marilyn Evans, for just a month, had been exciting for him. He continued, “She had her own car. We always met for our dates. That’s the way she wanted it.”

Before leaving, I said, “Phil, don’t beat yourself up about not going with her that night. Your being with Marilyn that night would not have saved her.” I sincerely believed that.

As we left, Karen said, “That’s interesting about the text message from her partner. Derek, do you think Corliss Brown was in on it?”

We telephoned the Brown home, and Corliss Brown said she would meet us there. She said her husband, Lance, was playing golf at the country club and would be home around 1:00 P.M. Karen and I preferred to question Corliss by herself, so we told her we’d be there in fifteen minutes.

On the way, Karen called headquarters and asked someone to find Marilyn Evan’s cell phone and to analyze it for calls received on Thursday night. By the time we arrived at the Brown home, we had the answer we were looking for. Marilyn Evans *had* received a text message at ten o’clock, just like her young boyfriend had reported. The call had been made from the Corliss Brown’s cellular telephone. The Brown’s home was located

on Inwood Drive, and was befitting a couple of successful business owners. Ten thousand square feet, two-story colonial, with beautiful landscaping.

As we approached the front door, Karen said, “The text message came from Corliss Brown’s phone, but it *could* have been sent by her husband.” She smiled and asked, “Are you ready for a little hard ball?”

I was.

Corliss answered the door wearing tights and a sweatshirt. She’d just finished her mid-morning yoga exercises, and invited us in offering us coffee or something else to drink. We entered but declined any refreshments. She led us into her study, where we sat, her on the sofa, Karen and I opposite her in chairs.

I began, “We’re sorry about the loss of your partner. I’m sure it came as a total shock to you.” Both Karen and I stared at our host, evaluating her facial expression and body language trying to decipher whether the murder of her partner *had* been a shock to her.

She nodded and said, “It *was* a shock. So tragic. And very scary that a gang would come to our building and do something like that.”

I asked, “Do you know why Marilyn was there? Did she often work late hours?” Even though I knew why Marilyn had gone to her office on Thursday night, I wanted to hear what Corliss would say.

“I have no idea. I thought she was having dinner with Phil Hutton.”

Karen said, “We talked with Mr. Hutton. He said Marilyn had some emergency to take care of.”

Corliss looked surprised, “She sometimes drops by the office at night to pick up work to take home, but I don’t know about any emergencies Thursday night. She would have called me.”

To me, Corliss appeared to be telling what she believed to be the truth. So I began the hard ball and leaned forward and asked, “Where were you and your husband at 10:30 Thursday night?”

That got her attention. She looked anxious for the first time during our conversation. Corliss Brown crossed her legs, and said, “I was at the printer’s doing a press check. We have a magazine coming out this week. I was there from eight until midnight.”

“And your husband?”

“He was here. Watching television probably.”

Karen asked, “Did you have your cell phone with you?”

Corliss thought, “I can’t remember. I may have left it at home.”

Karen and I were thinking the same thing. That Corliss might not know about her husband’s possible involvement in the murder of her partner.

Without a search warrant, we needed permission to look around. I said, “Why would your husband send Marilyn a text message, pretending it was from you, and telling her to meet you at your office?”

The shocked expression convinced us she was innocent.

Karen stood and said, “Your husband went to the Buffalo Hardware store last week and bought a can of red spray paint.”

I added, “And he has a registered gun that is the same caliber that was used to kill Marilyn Evans.”

Corliss now had tears in her eyes.

But it was still time for hard ball. Karen said, “And we know your husband wanted you to sell your company, and that the only thing standing in the way was your partner.”

Her response was predictable. Corliss said, “Oh my God.” She looked as white as a ghost, and asked, “It wasn’t a *gang* killing?”

“No ma’am.”

Corliss repeated, “Oh my God.”

Karen sat down. Hard ball was over. She said, “Mrs. Brown, I’m so sorry . . . we’re both sorry. But it appears that you and your husband were the only ones who would financially benefit from the death of your partner. We believe your husband got the idea when the Lords of Violence vandalized one of his buildings a few months ago.”

Corliss shook her head, and said, “I remember that. At the time, Lance said it was lucky that nobody had been hurt . . .that it was just some graffiti.”

I said, “This is a real mess, Mrs. Brown. You mind if we look around?”

By her submissive demeanor, Corliss conveyed that she believed her husband had indeed been responsible for the murder of her business partner. Her response was perfect. Perhaps because she was in a state of shock. She didn’t ask to talk to an attorney, or that we should wait until her husband returned from his golf game. She looked at her watch.

Corliss said, “What are you looking for? He’ll be home in fifteen minutes or so.”

Karen said, "We'd like to find his .38 pistol. We'd like to see if that can of spray paint is still here."

I added, "And if we could see anything with his signature."

We didn't find the paint. We looked in the garage. We looked in the master bedroom and closet for the gun but couldn't find that either. Corliss said that her husband may keep his gun in the glove compartment in his car, something both Karen and I were concerned about. Corliss led us into the home office, and from a file, provided us with cancelled checks signed by her husband.

A quick inspection of the checks showed that Lance Brown started his signature with a looped letter L, just like the L painted on Marilyn Evans' car. Lance Brown may be a very smart man. He probably ditched the half-used can of spray paint in a dumpster somewhere. But he never considered that the way he spelled the initials LOV on Marilyn's car would be a stupid mistake. We had our man.

I telephoned Lieutenant Thomas with the news, and asked him to send back up. It was nearly 1:00 P.M.

As we waited near the front door, watching out the window for the return of Lance Brown, Corliss said, "It's true that Marilyn didn't want to sell the company, but I didn't want to sell it either. He didn't know that. I just told Lance that selling the company was impossible so he wouldn't be mad at me. I like working. I really love what I do."

Before either Karen or I could respond, a man driving a red Thunderbird convertible drove into the driveway. Lance Brown. Wearing a golf shirt, cap, and khakis. He parked.

The back-up officers hadn't arrived, and I knew it would be best to wait for Lance Brown to leave his car and enter his home before we arrested him. It would be an unpleasant surprise for him. If the .38 was in the glove compartment, I wanted him as far from his car as possible. That would be the wise tactic.

Lance got out of his car, but didn't close the front door. He stood next to his Thunderbird and looked to the street and saw a car he didn't recognize. The one that had brought me and Karen to his home. He evidently had some intuition of his own, and he suddenly appeared to be nervous.

Karen and I were anxious too, but content to wait another minute. Neither of us had any warning as to what his wife was about to do. As long as I've been a cop, I can never predict what people will do when they're under stress or in a state of shock.

Corliss burst out the front door and took a few steps toward her husband, stopped and shouted, "What have you done?" How could you?"

So much for the surprise.

As I feared, Lance Brown leapt back into his car, and with his right hand reached into the glove compartment.

By the time Lance Brown had his .38 in his hand, Karen and I were on the front lawn with our guns out of their holsters, aimed at him.

I yelled, "Don't try it."

Karen yelled, "Drop the weapon."

Lance Brown did neither. Instead, he raised his right arm and aimed his gun, the Smith and Wesson .38, at me.

Before I could pull the trigger, a shot rang out. Then another.

Lance Brown fell backward, disappearing on the driveway behind his Thunderbird.

Over the past several years, Karen Stone had earned several marksman medals. That's just one of the reasons I think she's such a great partner. And today it's the only reason she still has *me* as her partner.