

FORENSIC MYSTERY THRILLER

BLUFF CITY

BUTCHER

STEVE BRADSHAW

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PART ONE

THE SUPERIOR FORCE

[Mon-ster] — A legendary creature, combining features of an animal or human, grotesquely deviating from normal shape, behavior, or character. An unnatural person who excites horror by wickedness and cruelty.

ONE

Twenty-five years later

Steel blue eyes cut through smoke and bodies to study the hooded shadow in the darkest corner of the crowded pub. Half on a stool and nose in a beer mug, the target twitched like a cockroach under a loose brick. The faded camouflage parka tight across the belly and black Serpentine mud on the boot was confirmation. Elliott found another.

After midnight in London, three miniskirts paid bar bills and left Victoria Pub. Now, only an empty mug sat in the darkest corner. The three sloshing beers-on-heels walked the wet sidewalks up Strathearne Place and split up at Stanhope Terrace. Traveling alone, one took Brook Street to Hyde Park to her hotel. The kilometer walk went through one of several famous Royal Parks of London. He chose her—the thick trees, sparse pedestrian traffic, and long shadows presented more than enough opportunities . . .

They never linked the deaths publicly. Parts of the first body were found in 2004, floating in Serpentine Lake. Two more dead were found the same year: Kensington Gardens and Greenwich Park. The young women were raped, their necks crushed. Scotland Yard recovered three bodies each year for five years, the dead women always in one of the Royal Parks.

They had no witnesses or DNA, only a single boot print—size fourteen—in the black mud of Serpentine Lake. Five years and fifteen bodies later, the Yard turned to a forensic specialist out of Texas. Dr. Elliott Sumner named their serial killer—he had the Serpentine Strangler in his sights eleven days after his arrival.

Elliott preferred to take them at the moment of attack; they were focused on their prey and vulnerable. There were other approaches, but each came with a set of risks and could end badly—the predator escapes and more people die. And without solid forensics, a serial killer could escape through the legal system. Elliott hunted the worst of the worst, the most demented, psychopathic, double-digit killers in the world—the real monsters. His never returned to the playground.

On August 2 Detective Chief Superintendent of Scotland Yard deployed a task force into Hyde Park. Like most law enforcement professionals, he soon learned to pay close attention to the world-renowned serial killer hunter. Dr. Sumner's unparalleled success over the decade went beyond extraordinary. Of the forty-nine serial killers hunted around the world, forty were tucked in on death row, and nine were rotting in the ground.

The Scotland Yard special task force was in position hours before sunset. When Elliott walked out of Victoria Pub after midnight, he took lead role of the operation and followed the Serpentine Strangler on foot. As planned, once in the park Elliott would transmit Serpentine's position to a dozen sets of eyes with high-powered rifles and night vision. Pinpoint adjustments would be made. They would close the noose when the beast made his move.

With all plans, one variable can lead to failure. They did not anticipate losing the Serpentine Strangler at the curve on Brook—the time lag and hilly terrain provided a window of lost visibility. Now, Elliott did not know the trail the Serpentine took into the park. The dark and labyrinthine twists of paths were too great.

Elliott stood at the edge with six options. Picking the wrong one could mean death to an innocent girl and the escape of a serial killer. Elliott chose the darkest trail under the thickest

canopy. He sprinted, scanning the shadows and listening for movement.

His cell phone vibrated. *Maybe someone spotted Serpentine*, he thought. *But why use my cell? Why not the two-way?* While running he glanced at the small screen and saw—WILCOX—a call from the States. He knew why.

“Tee. Can’t talk now. In the middle of something. Will get back to . . .”

“He’s back, Elliott,” Tony Wilcox boomed.

“Hold on.” Elliott caught a break, an opening in the foliage, the moonlight and perfect timing. His girl was alive on West Carriage Road—Serpentine had not struck.

Elliott stopped behind a fat tree to minimize losses. Maybe his cover was not blown. Maybe Serpentine was holding to his *modus operandi*, setting his trap at the lake where the other bodies were found.

Wilcox crackled back to life. “We need you in Memphis. Wade and Bates have extended a formal invitation.”

They must be scared. “I can’t deal with this right now.” Elliott moved in the darkest shadows of towering shrubs keeping eyes on the girl.

“Where are you, Elliott?”

“London. Wait!” He gripped his inline-mic. “I have a visual on our girl. She’s on West Carriage heading east to Averard by the lake. No visual on Serpentine. Hold your positions or we blow cover and lose him for sure. I’m the only one mobile. Someone tell me you have our girl in your sights—over.”

“Orca here. I have her, sir.” The youthful voice was unwavering.

Hope you’re as bad as your handle. “Good. Gentlemen, here’s how this is going down. I locate Serpentine before he reaches our girl. If you see him, give me coordinates. He is six-two, two-hundred-fifty pounds. Has a belly. Wearing a camouflage, hooded pull-over with jeans tucked in his boots. Your job is to keep him from getting near our girl . . . if I don’t get him first. I want a twenty-foot perimeter around her. Nobody gets in the circle, gentlemen. You see something, you take it out. You got that, *Orca?*”

“Not a problem, sir . . .”

Moving parallel to the sidewalk with an eye on the girl, Elliott scanned the park.

“The bastard cut the heart out of a young Beale Street musician,” Tony said. “He did something new this time, Elliott. Put the guy on public display.”

The last piece of information stopped Elliott in his tracks. And then he spotted a dark figure in the bushes kneeling at the edge of the sidewalk, his girl nearing.

I'm too far out. He ran toward them with his cell pressed to his ear. *I gotta get to her first.* “Tony, we have a problem if the victim is the work of the Butcher.”

“We need you here now, Elliott. This is going to get crazy fast.”

Elliott was a hundred yards out and closing. He kept an eye on the shadow as he approached from behind. “Tell Dr. Bates to delay the autopsy one day if he wants me. When I finish here I’ll meet you at the Peabody tomorrow night. I gotta go . . .”

Elliott approached Serpentine, but the girl would arrive first. He ran faster through the trees. *What are you holding, a metal pipe? Forensics show you beat your victims after rape, not before. Our girl will not survive a metal pipe.*

Blindsided, he came out of nowhere. Elliott went down. Pinned on his back in an iron choke-hold, he fought for his life. But the grip, perfectly positioned and pressure perfectly applied, stopped the carotid blood flow to his brain and he started to fade. Elliott was a doctor. He knew he had fourteen seconds before the dominoes would start to fall—blackout, unconsciousness, suffocation, and then death two minutes away.

He looked above the fat, slimy hands clamped around his neck—the powerful vice grip of the laid-off ironworker turned serial killer. As he slipped away, Elliott followed the camouflage arms to the hooded face of the Serpentine. He saw the sick smile and empty eyes dancing. He saw the primitive rage. Elliott looked deeper into the desolate eyes of the monster and touched pure evil. It was the frightening image he had dreamed about as an abandoned child alone in the world.

Elliott lost focus at a crucial time in the London hunt. His attention left the Serpentine Strangler as he revisited his Memphis nemesis, the one monster he hunted for a decade—it got away. If Elliott had focused on this hunt, he would have seen Orca’s fatigues tucked in his boots as he stood in the bushes with a rifle, not the overweight Serpentine holding a metal pipe. His London operation spun out of control. Elliott had broken his number one rule—he had taken his eye off the lion outside its cage. Now he would pay the ultimate price. The day Elliot feared since he was a child arrived. A real monster would drag him off to die a horrible death . . .

The Memphis Tribune

**Beale St. Entertainer Dead; Memphis Police
Bring In Specialist**

August 4, 2008

Memphis police responded to a call at Tom Lee Park around 5:30 a.m. Saturday morning. They found a man on a park bench dead with knife wounds. The twenty-six-year-old black male was later identified as Panther McGee, a visiting musician on Beale Street. McGee was found by a jogger. “He didn’t look well. I got closer to see if I could help. He was unconscious. I called 911,” said Jesse Fordham.

Memphis Police Homicide Detective Tony Wilcox said McGee was the victim of a knifing that occurred at another location. They believe he was left at Tom Lee Park moments before being discovered. “Aspects of this homicide are concerning and must be carefully assessed. We will bring in another forensic specialist to assist,” said Wilcox.

In an unusual move, Shelby County Medical Examiner, Dr. Henderson Bates, delayed the McGee inquest to Monday morning. “This homicide case has unusual characteristics. We believe bringing in a specialist will enhance efforts to reach a successful conclusion,” Bates said. “This is not the first time I have used consultants and it probably will not be my last.” When asked to explain, the ME had no further comments on an active investigation.

Sources close to the Panther McGee investigation say the Memphis PD hired Dr. Elliott Sumner, the noted Forensic Pathologist and a serial killer specialist. Once a medical examiner in Texas, he formed the Sumner Forensic Institute (SFI) and provides special services to law enforcement and government

agencies, the private sector, and others around the world.

Scotland Yard credits Sumner for the August 3rd apprehension of the Serpentine Strangler alleged to have raped and killed fifteen women over a five-year period in the Royal Parks of London. The accomplishment achieves an unparalleled milestone for the sleuth of international acclaim as this is the fiftieth serial killer he has brought to justice.

FBI Behavior Sciences Unit estimates as many as 400 serial killers in the world and 80% in the United States. Sumner's stated mission is to remove these dangerous criminals from society by employing advanced forensic technology and investigation techniques with sustained pursuit.

Dr. Sumner was recognized in March by the International Forensic Science Society and World Law Enforcement Academy for his special contributions in the field and academics. Sumner is traveling and unavailable for comment. Anyone with information is asked to call the Memphis police crime line: 888-CANHELP. All calls are confidential.

The Bell Trilogy

The Bell Trilogy is a story about a family of great wealth with a dream that turns into a nightmare. Elliott Sumner, a world-renowned forensic pathologist, struggles to rectify his abandoned beginnings and unusual gifts when unexpected paths cross. The serial killer hunter meets the genius psychopath of Memphis urban legend and discovers a secret to life people will kill for. He must protect the greatest evolutionary leap for mankind.

BLUFF CITY BUTCHER – Book One begins with Elliott’s chilling, forensic pursuit of a genius, psychopathic serial killer. The heart-pounding hunt for a real monster uncovers a century old mystery and a sinister plan with profound world implications.

THE SKIES ROARED – Book Two enters the unfathomable realms of wealth and power, where a secret society seizes control of a genetic breakthrough. Stealth armies on an evil mission and an unstoppable killer lure forensic sleuth Elliott Sumner to a horrific blood trail that crosses three continents. While hunting the deadly force and navigating startling twists, Elliott must find answers to an utterly plausible threat to mankind.

BLOOD LIONS – Book Three is the masterful conclusion to the Bell family nightmare. Shocking pieces of the ill-fated puzzle fall into place. Elliott Sumner and his unlikely allies must secure, formulate, and disseminate the Medino biogenic compound or the greatest evolutionary leap for mankind is lost. Sinister forces seek control, waging a secret war. In the end, Elliott must embrace a monster, and call upon his special gifts to prevail.

For more information on The Bell Trilogy books, visit author website at
www.SteveBradshawAuthor.com



STEVE BRADSHAW is a forensic field agent and biotech entrepreneur writing his unique brand of mystery/thrillers. Steve's training and experience investigating thousands of unexplained deaths for the medical examiner's office, and as the founder-President/CEO of an innovative biomedical device company enables him to put his readers on the front row in the fascinating worlds of fringe science, modern forensics, and the chilling pursuit of real monsters.

Steve enjoys sharing his experiences and perspectives as a forensic investigator, President/CEO, and mystery/thriller author. Visit his website and join **MEMBER GUEST** so you can interact with the author, get insider information and updates, arrange for an author visit, and to be the first in line for new releases.

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