**Grave Deceit**

**Chapter 1**

The bullet tore a hole through Dean Lewis’s shoulder. His arm went limp. Blood splattered the path in front of him. He ran through it. The second shot grounded him as it pierced the back of his thigh. In his head he was still running. He pulled himself forward with his uninjured arm, leaving a snail slime of red behind him. He rolled onto his back, looked upwards. A couple of birds took off near him. Clouds scattered. Nature running for cover while he lay exposed on a grotty Dublin estate. He hadn’t expected the pain to be this excruciating and prayed he hadn’t shit himself.

A vortex of silence spun around him as everything slowed. Then a repetitive dull thud sounded nearby, like a heartbeat. Or was it something else? A football against a wall? Cheers for a score between improvised goal posts; stuff he did as a child.

Two young fellas, one with dyed blonde hair standing on the juts at the back wheel of his mate’s bicycle, appeared in his line of sight. They’d been in his shadow as he carried out his collections. There was no trusting them little fuckers.

He opened his mouth to roar but nothing came out. Probably better off. Talk made shreds of reputations. Those young thugs seeing him in this state. A player like him, owing them favours for coming to his aide. No way was that going to happen. They took off after he eyed them.

Every person he’d killed flashed into his mind as the balaclava clad gunman stood over him. The hand trembled as he aimed the pistol at Dean’s forehead.

Dean’s mind raced. He tried to remember what day it was. What date would be recorded on his death cert? He listened for the arrival of his crew. They were never far, but no sign of them now when he needed them most. Useless bastards.

Any minute the pain would stop.

Dean looked beyond the silencer, into the shooter’s eyes, fixing him with a stare. Defiant. Concealing his confusion, his fear.

A loud bang cracked the air. The weapon landed on the ground beside him. Dean lunged for it, pointed and fired. The kickback nearly cost him the other shoulder. Fuck. He’d missed.

Another explosion nearly split his ear drum. Sirens neared. Rain began to piss down on him. His leg and shoulder throbbed. The pain grew intense. The rawness of his mouth made him want to vomit and swallow at the same time. He spat. The saliva stayed on his lips. He tried to move them, say something, but they were stiff and painful, as if they were stitched closed.

Strange voices surrounded him. Fuss. White noise. Then everything went quiet.

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Pressure around Danielle Lewis’s elbow gripped tight as her body was shoved into the rear of the car that cut in front of the cab at the head of the taxi rank. She twisted to look through the rear window. Maybe the aggressive horn-honking taxi man would help a lone woman bundled into a motor outside the arrivals lounge of Dublin Airport? But why should he get involved?

Her eyes darted from left to right. The car sped to the exit. For once, every traffic light on green. No chance to throw herself from the car. Would her legs even work? They felt weak, useless.

The dark leather interior closed in; her head spun. Her throat tightened. She pressed her palms onto the seat as her body swayed in response to the driver circling the roundabout. Twice. Checking to see if they were being followed.

The old Danielle would have swanned out of Dublin airport all high heels and attitude, but this new revamped version, runners and leisure wear - although expensive - would give her the traction to leg it at the first opportunity.

Her eyes stayed fixed on the driver as she slid closer to the door and tried the handle. He glanced at her via the rear-view mirror, pursed his lips, shook his head and tutted.

‘Do you know who I am?’ she asked.

Silence.

‘I am a Lewis. Do you know what that means?’

Silence.