

# Look for Me (Detective D. D. Warren)

To Download this book in many format Visit :

<https://wocoentala.org/source1/cd5a5abe4b2cd360636c9ba4d6b23eec>

## THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"An utterly absorbing story about troubled families and twisted fates. You won't be able to put it down-and it will haunt you long after you turn the final page."-Shari Lapena

"A complex crime scene, a missing girl, a ticking clock: no one writes a more page-turning, gut-wrenching thriller."-Tess Gerritsen

In #1 New York Times bestselling author Lisa Gardner's latest twisty thrill ride, Detective D. D. Warren and Find Her's Flora Dane return in a race against the clock to either save a young girl's life...or bring her to justice.

The home of a family of five is now a crime scene: four of them savagely murdered, one-a sixteen-year-old girl-missing. Was she lucky to have escaped? Or is her absence evidence of something sinister? Detective D. D. Warren is on the case-but so is survivor-turned-avenger Flora Dane. Seeking different types of justice, they must make sense of the clues left behind by a young woman who, whether as victim or suspect, is silently pleading, Look for me.

Lisa Gardner is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of twenty novels, including Look for Me, Right Behind You, Find Her, Crash & Burn, Fear Nothing, Touch & Go, Catch Me, and The Neighbor, which won the International Thriller of the Year Award. She lives with her family in New England.\*\*\*This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected copy proof\*\*\*

Copyright © 2018 Lisa Gardner

### Prologue

A year later, what Sarah remembered most was waking up to the sound of giggling.

"Shhh. Not so loud! My roommates hate it when I bring boys home. Killjoys need their beauty sleep."

"So, no making noises? Like this?" A wolf howl from outside Sarah's bedroom door.

Fresh giggling. Then loud thumps as someone, probably Heidi, ran into the coffee table, the couch, the standing lamp.

"Oh well," Heidi announced. "Quiet was never gonna happen. I'm a screamer and proud of it."

A man's voice: "Knew I picked the right girl at the bar. I like screamers. Always have."

More giggling, more thumps.

Sarah groaned, rolled face down on her tiny mattress, and pulled her pillow over her head.

On the opposite side of the wall, no doubt Christy and Kelly were doing the same. Heidi Raepuro had been a last-minute addition to their apartment. A friend of a friend of a friend, qualified mostly by the fact Heidi was willing to pay extra for her own bedroom, and Sarah, Christy, and Kelly, who'd known one another since freshman year, had really wanted the three-bedroom unit. Walking distance to Boston College, bay windows, hardwood floors, crown molding. When Sarah had first walked into the space, she'd felt like a grown-up. No more minifridge, no more standing-room-only dorm room. No more bare mattress shared with two younger siblings in an overcrowded slumlord's paradise.

The long nights studying when the rest of her friends had been out partying or repeating their parents' drug-fueled mistakes had finally paid off.

Which was the other reason she'd fallen in love with the brightly lit apartment. Because after spending her entire childhood sharing, sharing, sharing, this place offered her the greatest luxury imaginable: her own room. Granted, it was barely the size of a twin mattress, more a closet than a bedroom, most likely converted by an enterprising landlord looking to charge a three-bedroom price for what was originally a two-bedroom unit, but Sarah didn't care. Tiny fit her budget. And with Christy and Kelly able to split the largest room, and silly, vapid Heidi cashing out the other main sleeping space, everyone was happy. Especially Sarah, ensconced in her minuscule slice of paradise.

Except for nights like tonight.

More crashing-then moaning. Good God, didn't Heidi ever get enough?

A curious scrape.

"Hey now." Heidi's voice, hiccupping slightly as she panted from exertion.

Sarah rolled her eyes, pulled the pillow tighter around her ears. "Wait ... I don't want ... No!"

Sarah sat up just as Heidi screamed. Loud, pitching, and ...

Do screams have a taste? Fire? Ash? Red-hot cinnamon candies, which as a little girl Sarah liked to let melt on the tip of her tongue?

Or is it more that screams have a color? Green and gold giggles, purple and blue cackles, or this? Molten white. Melt-your-eyeballs, singe-the-hair-on-your-arms, bright, bright, white? A color too brilliant for nature, searing straight to the core.

That's what Heidi screamed. Molten white.

It pierced the thin walls, threatened to blow out the windows. It jolted Sarah, sitting bolt upright.

And completely, totally, unable to move.

This was the part she still didn't remember well. Not even a year later. The police asked her about the details, of course. Detectives, a forensic nurse, later more investigators, crime scene specialists.

All she could tell them was that the night started with green and gold giggles and ended with molten-white screams. Heidi's the whitest and brightest but also blessedly short.

Christy and Kelly. Two girls in one room. Best friends, members of the lacrosse team. Forewarned, forearmed, they fought. They hurled trophies. Was the sound of crashing metal a taste or a color? No, just a crash. Followed by screams, all kinds of colors and flavors. Fear, rage, anguish. Determination as one nailed him with a lacrosse stick. Horror as he came back with his blade.

He got Kelly right in the gut (Sarah read the report later), but Kelly got him by the ankles. She rolled herself into him, around him, a human armadillo. And he slashed and he slashed, glancing blows off her ribs, which allowed Christy time to grab the comforter from the lower bunk bed and to throw it at him, tangle up his arms.

"Sarah!" they were screaming. "Help, Sarah! Nine-one-one, nine-one-one!"

Sarah called. Another one of those things she didn't remember, but later she listened to it at her own request. A recording of her voice, trembling, barely a whisper, as she reached the dispatch center: "Help us, please help us, he's killing them. He's going to kill us all."

She left her room. It had to be done. In her tiny room, she'd be trapped, the proverbial fish in a barrel. She had to get out to open ground.

To protect herself?

To save her roommates?

She didn't know. A question to ask herself during all the sleepless nights to come.

She left her room.

She went toward her roommates' bedroom. She saw an open hand through the doorway, Kelly's splayed fingers, and without thinking Sarah grabbed it. Was she going to pull her roommate to safety? Man up and carry each and every one of them out to the hall? No time to think. Just do. So she grabbed Kelly's hand and pulled hard.

And found herself holding an arm. Just ... an arm.

Because, apparently, when a girl armadilloed herself around a mad man's ankles, sooner or later he got tired of slashing his victim and simply dismantled her instead.

Screams ahead of her, Christy, still fighting. Followed by a plea behind her.

"Sarah ..."

She didn't know which way to turn. These sounds, these sights, this night, it didn't register for her. Couldn't.

Slowly she twisted toward the voice behind her, holding Kelly's warm, wet arm tight against her chest. She found herself face-to-face with Heidi. The girl had crawled from her bedroom. The skin of her naked shoulders appeared silver in the glow of lights through the window blinds. Unmarred, untouched. But the blonde was hunched forward awkwardly, cradling her stomach, and already Sarah could pick up the whiff of perforated bowels.

More screaming from the bedroom. Not molten white. Lava red. Pure rage from a star athlete refusing to be cut down in the prime of her life.

And Sarah knew then what she had to do. She turned away from beautiful, stupid, gutted Heidi. She tightened her grip on poor Kelly's arm, and she joined the fray.

Christy, backed into a corner against the bunk bed, armed with her lacrosse stick. Madman, freed from the comforter, dancing around the body splayed at his feet, enjoying himself, taking his time.

"Excuse me," Sarah said.

He darted toward Christy. She swung her stick down. Last minute, he twirled left, jabbed the blade into the soft spot beneath her ribs. A wet, squishing sound, followed by Christy's hollow grunt. She jerked the stick back, tapped him on the side of his head. Not hard, but he retreated.

No screaming now. Just the sound of exertion. Everyone breathing hard.

"Excuse me," Sarah said again.

For the first time, the blade man stilled. He turned slightly, a frown on his blood-flecked face. Sarah stared at him. She felt as if she needed to see him. Needed to register him. Or none of this could be real. Especially not this moment, when she held out her hands and offered her friend's severed arm to the man who'd murdered her.

Dark hair. High cheekbones. Sculpted face. Exactly the kind of guy Heidi would bring home from a bar. Exactly the kind of guy who would forever be out of Sarah's league.

"You forgot this," she said, still holding out the arm. ("What?" the first officer had interrupted. "You said what?")

"I had to." Sarah tried explaining to the woman.

Except maybe there was no explaining such a thing. She'd just known she had to do something. Stop him. Interrupt. Make all those red and white screams go away. So she'd walked into the room, and she'd offered up the only thing she had: Kelly's bloody arm.)

He came for her then. Turned fully, blade dripping at his side, lips peeled back from his teeth.

She watched him advance. She didn't move. She didn't scream. She felt like a little girl, standing in the kitchen as her father picked up the boiling teakettle. "What the fuck, you stupid-ass woman? When I ask you for my money, you give me my money! I'm the one in charge here. Now do as I say, or I'll throw this whole damn pot into your bitch-ugly face. Then we'll see who's willing to take care of you after that!"

Don't look away, don't make a sound. This is what she'd learned from her mother over the years. If they're going to hurt you, make them do it while staring you in the eye.

Madman halted directly in front of her, blade at his side. She could smell the blood on his cheeks, the whiskey on his breath.

He said to her: "Scream."

As slowly, so slowly, he lifted the knife. Up, up, up.

Behind him, Christy fumbled with her lacrosse stick. Tried to move. Tried to take advantage. But the stick fell from her trembling fingers. It clattered as she slid down the wall, sank to the floor. A sigh in the distance: no more rage from the star athlete, just acceptance. So this is what it felt like to die.

"Scream," he whispered again.

Sarah stared at him, and in his gaze, she knew exactly what he was going to do. He was not her loser father. Not subject to a quick temper or drunken rages. No, the hunting knife in his hand, the blood on his face. He liked it. Felt no shame, no remorse. Heidi's screams, Christy's fight, her own silent stand-this was the most fun he'd had in years.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," she heard herself whisper, "I will fear no evil."

Then she closed her eyes and clutched this last piece of Kelly close, as with a laugh, a chortle of glee, he slashed the knife straight down toward her chest.

An explosion. Two, three, four, five. More pain, her shoulder, her chest, her throat. He'd stabbed her, she thought, as she collapsed to the ground. No, he'd shot her. But that didn't make sense . . .

A ragged sob behind her, followed by the stench of death growing ever closer. Heidi dragged herself across the hardwood floor.

Holding a small pistol, Sarah noticed now. Heidi had a gun.

"I'm sorry," Heidi whispered. She was crying, tears mixing, smearing with the blood on her cheeks. "Never . . . shoulda . . ."

"Shhh," Sarah said.

Heidi put her head on Sarah's shoulder. Sarah winced; Heidi had shot her while shooting him. But it hardly seemed to matter now. Blood pooling on her throat, blood dripping from her back, so much pain, and yet it seemed far away, abstract.

The madman was still. The molten screams had ended. Now, there was just this. A final moment.

Sarah and Heidi both placed their hands on Kelly's arm. "I'm sorry," Heidi mumbled again.

As Sarah listened to her last gurgling breath.

"I will fear no evil," she whispered in the ensuing silence. "I will fear no evil, fear no evil, fear no evil."

The police finally burst through the front door. The EMTs rushed to their rescue.

"Jesus Christ," the first cop said, coming to a halt in the middle of the apartment.

"I will fear no evil," Sarah told the woman. And, once more, offered up Kelly's severed arm.

A year later, what she remembered most was waking up to the sound of giggling.

DO SCREAMS HAVE A TASTE? Fire? Ash? Red-hot cinnamon candies, which as a little girl Sarah liked to let melt on the tip of her tongue?

"EXCUSE ME. YOU FORGOT THIS."

SOUND OF GIGGLING. MOLTEN-WHITE screams.

I WILL FEAR NO EVIL...

ONE YEAR LATER, ONE YEAR later, one year later . . .

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Hard. And then again.

Sarah bolted awake in her tiny studio apartment. Drenched in sweat, breath ragged. She lay perfectly still, ears straining. Then it came again. Knocking. Pounding. Someone demanding entrance.

Slowly, she reached for the top drawer of her nightstand. No stashed knife. She couldn't even look at a blade. No gun. She'd tried, but her hands shook too much. So a canister of pepper spray. Meant to chase off bears when hiking in the woods and available at any outdoor gear or camping store. She had the canisters stashed all over her single-room apartment, in every bag she carried.

She drew out the canister, sliding off the mattress as the knocking started again.

She stank. Could smell the reek of her own sweat and terror. Night after night after night.

Screams did have a color. It was the only thing she truly understood anymore. Screams had a color, and she was now intimately familiar with all the shades of despair.

"I will fear no evil," Sarah told herself as she put her eye to the peep<sup>2</sup> hole and gazed into the dimly lit hall.

A lone woman. Late twenties, early thirties maybe. Dressed casually in jeans and a sweatshirt, she looked like someone Sarah should know. Had maybe met once upon a time. Then again, two A.M. was a strange time for a social call.

"It's okay," the woman spoke up, no doubt sensing Sarah's gaze on her. She held up both hands, as if to prove she was unarmed. "I won't hurt you."

"Who are you?"

"Honestly? You're gonna have to open up to find out. That's part of the deal. I'm here to help you, but you gotta take the first step."

"I will fear no evil," Sarah said, clutching her bear spray tightly.

"That's stupid," said the woman. "World is full of evil. Fear is what keeps us safe."

"Who are you?"

"Someone who's not going to stand here forever. Make your choice, Sarah. Hide behind platitudes or make the world a better place."

Sarah hesitated. But then, her fingers landed on the first bolt lock. Then the second. The third. There was something about this woman. Not what she said so much as the way she stood.



Christy, she found herself thinking. The woman stood like Christy had, once upon a time. A challenger, ready to take on the world.

Slowly, very slowly, Sarah eased open the door until she stood face-to-face with her unexpected guest.

"Nice pepper spray," the woman commented. She strode into Sarah's tiny apartment. Rotated a full circle, looking all around. Nodded once to herself, as if all was what she expected.

She turned, faced Sarah directly, and stuck out a hand.

"My name is Flora Dane," she announced. "A year ago, you survived. Now I'm gonna teach you how to live again."

#### Other Books

Before She Disappeared, \*From the #1 global bestselling author of WHEN YOU SEE ME\*  
\*TV SERIES RIGHTS OPTIONED BY E ONE IN THE FRANKIE ELKIN SERIES WITH HILARY SWANK TO STAR AND CO-PRODUCE\*

..... 'I just read Before She Disappeared in a day and a half. It was that gripping. Highly recommended!' SHARI LAPENA 'Sharply-written, tension-filled yarn full of twists readers are unlikely to see coming.' DAILY MAIL 'Lisa Gardner has always been one of my favourite writers, and this time she truly hits it out of the park.' TESS GERRITSEN 'To read Lisa Gardner is to put yourself in the hands of a master storyteller. In BEFORE SHE DISAPPEARED, she gives us a crackling mystery, gritty atmosphere and an unforgettable heroine.' RILEY SAGER

..... A gripping thriller featuring an ordinary woman who will stop at nothing to find the missing people that the rest of the world has forgotten. Frankie Elkin is an average middle-aged woman with more regrets than belongings who spends her life doing what no one else will: searching for missing people the world has stopped looking for. When the police have given up, when the public no longer remembers, when the media has never paid attention, Frankie starts looking. A new case brings Frankie to Mattapan, a Boston neighborhood with a rough reputation. She is searching for Angelique Badeau, a Haitian teenager who vanished from her high school months earlier. Resistance from the Boston PD and the victim's wary family tells Frankie she's on her own. And she soon learns she's asking questions someone doesn't want answered. But Frankie will stop at nothing to discover the truth, even if it means the next person to go missing will be her ...

..... Readers love Lisa Gardner's brilliant thrillers: 'A fabulous read with amazing, interesting, complex characters and I was absolutely hooked, from start to finish.' 'Once again Lisa Gardner delivers as one of my favourite crime thriller authors, she creates a complex and magnetic character in Frankie.' 'Frankie is a wonderful character, full of grit and personality, and I love her inner monologues so much! I really hope we will get to see more of her in the future!' 'An entertaining and engaging thriller with a great central protagonist that I think many of Gardner's fans and other crime and thriller readers will love.'

..... 'Harlan Coben 'No one owns this corner of the crime genre the way Lisa Gardner does' Lee Child 'Lisa Gardner is at the top of her game' Kathy Reichs .....

READERS LOVE BEFORE SHE DISAPPEARED ... \*\*\*\*\* 'I'm shaken, slowly ..."