

Something Wicked

Los Angeles Times



Police Investigate Crime Scene



L.A. Carver Strikes Again

Police Search For Leads

Serial Killer Eludes Police Killing Spree Continues

Police investigators scrambled for clues yesterday that might help provide leads

Los Angeles (AP) — Police investigators scrambled for clues yesterday that might help provide leads in the search for a serial killer who has struck again in Los Angeles. The police are looking for a man who has killed at least five women in the past few months. The police are looking for a man who has killed at least five women in the past few months. The police are looking for a man who has killed at least five women in the past few months.



Gayle Farmer

*Something
Wicked*

by

Gayle Farmer

SOMETHING WICKED

Omega Publications
Palm Springs, California

Copyright © Gayle Farmer 2012

All rights reserved. This book or parts thereof may not be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-9850350-2-0

Visit Gayle's website at
www.gaylefarmer.com

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Cover design and page layout by
Omega Publications
www.omegapublications.net

Other books
by
Gayle Farmer

**Sessions & Browning
Mystery and Detective Series**

Secret Lives
Lethal Intent
Firestorm
Cold Fusion
Blind Trust

The Doubletree Kids Series

Follow Your Dreams
Couples
All In The Game
High Hurdles
Riding High
Riding Blind

Anthologies

Mosaic

This book is dedicated to my
talented editing team

and

to Jeff,
who never fails me

Reviews

I've been reading Ms. Farmer since I found a copy of *Secret Lives* on a friend's coffee table. Her novels are original, entertaining and downright scary and her newest novel, *Something Wicked*, really delivers. Farmer's known for her snappy, realistic dialogue, and convincing characters and she's at her best here with a truly creepy tale of a psychotic killer known as the LA Carver. And then, there's Frankie.

Guaranteed to please.

K. Ackerman, Los Angeles

Intense and disturbing is the only way to describe this up close and personal look into the mind of a serial killer. The characters are so real and the descriptions of the Los Angeles area are accurately portrayed. I could not put it down.

J.W., Denver

*Something
Wicked*

Chapter 1

Santa Monica was more than just the pier, the beach, or even the ocean. Throngs of tourists from all over the world took in the shops, the amusements, reveling in the fabulous sunny weather. It was the epitome of the Southern California lifestyle. Majestic mountains stood in the distance like sentinels guarding the fantasy world that was the sprawling megalopolis of Los Angeles.

The beautiful people lay out on the warm, soft sand, gathered to toast their gorgeous skin and give glory to el Sol, while others paraded on the bike path, showing off their perfect, super-fit bodies. Some were there strictly and only to be seen. Aspiring actors and models of both sexes paraded their wares with the hope of being discovered.

Some came to see what others wanted to show, hoping in vain to spot someone famous. They thought of themselves as people watchers, but inside, they knew what they were. Voyeurs, who lived their lives vicariously, never venturing out into the real world, content to be bystanders, true ghouls. Cameras

GAYLE FARMER

in hand, they waited. The sexual predators, of course, were there in force, ever on the lookout for farm-fresh faces to bulk up the ever-dwindling supply.

And then there were those who hunted for the sport of it, who chose their prey from among the many selections displayed before them, never satisfied, always hungry for more and forever on the prowl.

Route 66 ended right there at the bottom of the pier. Sunset Strip in all its dubious glory was just up the boulevard, not too far from the ultra-rich and upscale Beverly Hills. Then there were the other Hills, Hollywood and Bel Air, home to stars of movie, rap and rock fame, the financial high rollers, the slick willies. They all coveted their slice of the tasty LA pie, where the living was easy and the marks lined up around the block.

And finally there was the incredible lure the ocean held for most people. The salty smell of the pounding surf and the sounds the rippling wind made in the tall palm trees, the raucous cries of noisy seagulls diving for fish, and the sandpipers that scurried just ahead of the waves in search of morsels hiding beneath the sand.

Tiny white sailboats drifted on the horizon, full of wind and mystery. Speedboats sped across the face of the sea, skiers jumping their wakes while single-engine planes throbbed overhead, pulling advertising banners across the vivid blue sky.

The *feelers* focused on the warm breeze and salty smell of azure blue seas, the kiss of the sun on their skin, a shiver when the offshore wind blew

SOMETHING WICKED

through their hair. Sweet smelling flowers like purple sage, jasmine, Colitas and Elysium dominated the usual garden offerings of roses and gardenias.

For others it was the visual overload, a veritable smorgasbord of hedonism and the latest in everything that money could buy. Clothing, hairstyles and jewelry. Tattoos, convertibles, motorcycles, yachts, surfboards. Mansions hanging off the cliffs, private tennis courts and golf courses, everywhere the ostentatious display of wealth. It seemed like *everyone* owned a Maserati or a Rolls. It was a hard place to be a regular working class stiff, let alone poor.

The visitors strolled along the pathway, cameras snapping, shopping bags dangling from their wrists, pointing here and there, dodging the vendors and the roller skaters. The aroma of French fries, grilling meats and suntan oil competed with the salty sea air.

A man in his early forties sat at the end table in the taco shack that perched precariously on the edge of the pier. He had an unobstructed view and gazed at the beach, fascinated as always by the beautiful women before him. He pretended they competed for his attention and that they dressed so provocatively, wore what little they did, in hopes of catching his eye.

The majority of the girls wore thong bikinis, baring themselves for all to see and leaving nothing to the imagination. Their long hair blew in the wind

GAYLE FARMER

like unfurled flags, waving behind them as they walked from blanket to water's edge and back.

Dennis glanced at his watch again, raised his hand to the waitress, and pointed at the table, making circular motions to indicate he wanted another beer and another six-pack of tacos.

He squirmed in a vain attempt to get comfortable, huge body oozing around the wooden chair, enveloping it. Dennis glanced at the street, teeming with tourists, then past it to the amusement area. His grotesque mouth made a hole in his face and ripples of skin separated his lips into what might pass for a smile. His eyes disappeared in fat pockets, their color and size lost in lard. Deep and ongoing acne scarred his face, which resembled a moonscape, complete with lumps and craters. His hair was buzzed, giving him the bald look.

An icy, cold mug replaced the empty warm one.

“The tacos will be right out,” said the waitress as she cleared away the mess he'd made from the first order, piling soiled paper wrappers and napkins on her tray. Half-used hot sauce packets, oozing red, left lazy little trails on the table. She gave them a disconsolate flick with a dirty rag and turned away.

Dennis took several swallows of beer and allowed his gaze to return to the women on the beach. Like colorful butterflies, they floated on the breeze.

The tacos arrived and he picked one, lifted it to his mouth and took a huge bite. He poured salt on the wrapper, dipped his finger in it and scooped up a

SOMETHING WICKED

lump. It melted in his mouth, mingling well with the spicy hot sauce.

Chewing vigorously, he watched the beach and the surfers, eyeing one woman in particular. She drew him in, enthralled him, demanding his attention. He could not take his eyes off her and the flaming red hair swirling around her shoulders. Mesmerized, he watched as she rose from her blanket, long legs gleaming with oil, firm young flesh bronzed and fit. She strolled to the water's edge with a *look at me* attitude, displaying her slender body to all who would notice.

She waded into the surf, paused a moment and dove under an oncoming wave. Dennis moved his chair so he could watch her, lifted another taco and consumed it in three huge bites. Grotesque cheeks puffed out like a chipmunk on steroids, he chewed and watched and drank his beer, eyes fastened on the next prize.

He ate the last of the tacos just as the girl came out of the ocean, wringing seawater from her long hair as she headed to her blanket. She settled down again and began to apply another coat of oil to her skin. Finished, she turned her perfect face to the sky in an attitude of worship and leaned back on her elbows.

Dennis imagined she might have a few freckles on her nose, perhaps a light sprinkling on her cheeks. He shifted in his chair and focused on her every move, stalking her like the hunter he was, hidden in tall grass, scoping out his prey. When she began to roll up her towel and blanket, he finished the

beer, threw a twenty on the table and plopped his empty glass on it. Dennis pulled himself to his feet with a grunt and pretended to stretch. He watched her make her way to the top of the beach and hesitated. She could be heading for the parking lot or she might be coming out to the pier for a bite to eat at one of the many restaurants that lined the sand. He waited. She walked toward the parking lot, a swing in her step, long hair waving about her shoulders.

As he picked up his pace, a peculiar swishing sound accompanied him. His massive thighs, gelatinous in texture and always raw, rubbed against each other, wrinkling his pants. He rounded the corner just in time to see her get into a bright yellow Mazda Miata. She backed out of the slot and hesitated, as though giving him the chance to read the license. He snickered.

LAKATY.

A personalized plate. They were all easy to trace, but this was a piece of cake. He pulled his cell from his pocket and started dialing. He watched her turn onto 66 and merge into traffic. She was his. Now or later, but soon. Very soon. He headed for a blue Lexus sedan.

* * *

Over the years, *ELLA's* restaurant developed a reputation around Hollywood for being one of *the* upscale places to dine. Every concierge in town recommended it without hesitation and the name came up often in the society columns. Not only did it

SOMETHING WICKED

possess a five-star chef, capable of running the biggest and the best, the wait staff personified excellent service.

Whether out of town guest or weekly regular, the second time you dined there, you were greeted by name. It was just one of the many things that set *ELLA's* apart from the rest of the local eateries.

The lounge boasted a classic rock theme, with posters encased in oak showcasing everyone who was anyone in the world of seventies rock. Most of the posters were personally autographed. The unique bar, shaped like a guitar, had graced the cover of more than one local magazine, often featured along with the photogenic and identical faces of the owners, Ella Sessions and her twin sister, Terry Browning.

Deep brown upholstered booths lined the walls and tables for two and four dotted the room. Dead center, the dance floor of white oak invited guests to get up and move with the music. The state-of-the-art jukebox and the latest Bose sound system provided classic hits and at night, *ELLA's* rivaled the hottest spots in town, providing somewhere for the over-forty crowd to gather and enjoy talented musicians who played what they called music.

Chef Guy Gadius ruled the kitchen with an iron fist minus the velvet glove. He had a flair for the dramatic that at times could be quite funny, especially when his English got the better of him. Normally he spoke like a native American, but it often suited his needs to do otherwise and when the tyrant emerged, heaven help the back staff.

A slender woman in her mid-thirties stood before him, nodding solemnly as he raved on. She twirled a large emerald engagement ring around her finger and struggled hard not to laugh. That would be the last straw. Chef would *not* be laughed at and she was about to have hysterics. Ella drew a deep breath and coughed.

“This is a most grave and dire situation and I trust you will give my words serious weight.” His eyes popped open and he peered down at her, catching the expression in her vivid blue eyes. “Do not toy with me, Madam! If I do not get another sous chef in here, and quick, I quit. This time I mean it. I cannot work under such tensions.” He pressed the back of his hand against his forehead and sighed. “You expect perfection, and I give it, no? How does perfection 'appen without proper staff? It doesn't.” He readjusted his tall white hat and glared at her. “And yet I give it, oui? So, when, Madam? When will you produce my sous chef? Guy Gadius does not wait much longer.” He continued to whine.

Ella heard the familiar steps coming down the corridor and turned to see Terry, several brown shopping bags hanging off her arms, a crate of raspberries balanced against her chest. “Oh, here, Sis, let me help you. Looks like you could use a pack mule.” With that, she burst out laughing. Those little ripples of suppressed glee had grown to monster size and demanded immediate release, refusing to remain in her throat any longer.

Terry had arrived in the nick of time or so it seemed. She cast a quizzical look at Ella, shrugged,

SOMETHING WICKED

and surrendered several bags. They hurried to the kitchen, plopped berries and bags on the counter and headed for the door.

Ella turned to Chef and nodded gravely. "I've got an ad running and interviews this afternoon. Please hang in there, Chef. I'm working on it."

Arm in arm, the twins left the kitchen and walked down the hall to the back office, closing the door behind them.

"What the heck was that all about? Chef looked really upset."

Ella grinned. "You rescued me just in time. He was about to do his version of Camille. When he puts his hand across his forehead like that, it's all I can do not to howl. As if that's not bad enough, you know how he gets when he starts talking about himself in the third person. Truly strange."

"You'll be howling out the other side of your mouth if he ever quits. He's irreplaceable, I think."

"So does he, but you're right. We have to beef up the back kitchen a bit. I have some folks coming in to interview, one looks really good. Cross fingers." Ella glanced at her watch. "Three minutes to blastoff. Let the games begin."

They walked into the busy staff room, greeting the servers by name. Terry handed out stacks of numbered checks and assigned teams and stations while Ella walked to the front door, unlocked it and flipped on the lights for the neon sign.

GAYLE FARMER

Although the lunch crowd had thinned out, several tables in the dining room and half a dozen in the lounge remained occupied by folks sipping cocktails and finishing a leisurely lunch.

Ella smiled at the woman sitting across the desk from her and introduced herself. This was her prime candidate for sous chef and so far, things looked very good.

“Allison Cramer. Nice to meet you,” the woman replied with a smile, shaking Ella’s extended hand.

“Everything looks good on the resume, thanks for mailing it in early. I checked your references and your experience, both excellent, by the way.” Ella closed the file and nodded. “Things here are a little different from Henri’s. Crowd’s a little younger, for one thing and service can be a tad faster, but like Henri’s, half of our guests are regulars, especially lunch. With Henri’s closing, we’re picking up lots of lost customers. We have our crazy days if we’ve booked a reception or large party, but most of the work is strong and steady. We have a temperamental chef, but what’s new, huh? Your salary requirements are a bit higher than I’d planned to start out, but I can adjust. I have three more gals coming in....”

There was a crash in the kitchen, followed by a stream of what had to be French expletives. Chef charged out of the kitchen and down the hall like Attila the Hun, a red-faced and equally agitated busboy right behind him. They skidded to a stop at the door to Ella’s office, apparently unaware she had

SOMETHING WICKED

an interview in process. Chef took one look at Allison, turned on his heels and glared at the busboy.

“*Back!* Back to the kitchen, I say. Insolent pup! Do not open your mouth for fear I’m slicing off your tongue! You impudent clown. Back to the sink.”

Herding him back to the kitchen like a sheep dog, Chef paused and gave Ella a look she could not mistake.

Ella turned to Allison. “When can you start? Please say now.”

Allison grinned. “Wow, he’s something else. Okay, where do I get my uniforms?” She rose and then turned toward Ella, distracted. “Of course, I didn’t bring my knives with me to the interview, but if you have extra...”

“Fear not. Chef is well prepared. He could arm a small nation if they’re into hand-to-hand combat.”

“Now that’s encouraging to say the least.”

“Well, I’m speaking metaphorically, of course. He has no criminal record.”

“The day is young.”

Sounds of their laughter echoed down the hall reaching the kitchen.

Chef chuckled under his breath. “Oui, I have my sous chef.”