



DANGER on ICE

QUICKREADS

JANET LORIMER



“*Can you keep a secret?*”

Ken Hudson knew the voice was just in his head. He'd heard it before. Those words were left over from a nightmare he'd lived through six months ago. But for some reason the voice always surprised him—no matter how often it came back to haunt him.

Now, sitting across the desk from Dr. Grayson, Ken tried very hard to hide his discomfort. He certainly would never admit that he was hearing things.

The voice taunted him at the strangest times. Sometimes it whispered to him in bad dreams. Sometimes it echoed in his mind while he was awake. The words stuck like

a sour odor that stays in your nose for a very long time.

Dr. Grayson looked up from Ken's résumé. "I see that you did a stint in the Marine Corps," he said as he raised one eyebrow and smiled.

Ken hated the man's smile. It was so *smug*. He swallowed back his irritation. "Yeah. I served for four years," he said.

"You were one of those famous 'few good men,' eh?" Sarcasm dripped from Grayson's words.

Ken's mouth tightened. "I like to think so, sir. We had a job to do and we were well-trained to do it."

Even Grayson couldn't miss the ice in Ken's tone. The older man's smile quickly faded, and he turned back to reading the résumé. "Then you worked for the police department—but you quit a month ago. Why?"

Ken paused for a moment to gather his thoughts. "There was—an incident. I—uh—I'd rather not go into the details. I just felt I needed to move on. That's why

I applied for this job.”

Grayson gazed at Ken with open curiosity. He could see that the ex-cop had no intention of supplying those details. But Grayson couldn't stop digging. “Okay, tell me this,” Grayson went on. “Did you lose your nerve? Would you be afraid to—”

Ken couldn't stop himself. He shot out of his chair and leaned close to Grayson's face. His eyes were narrow and his upper lip was drawn back. “Look, Dr. Grayson—I'm not afraid of anything. I assure you I can do the job! You want a security guard—I'm your man. You've got my references. If you don't believe me, why don't you talk to the people who know me?”

Grayson took a deep breath and leaned back in his chair. He gazed thoughtfully at Ken. “Very well,” he said after a moment. “You do have good credentials, Hudson. And you're right, we need a man right away. Would you mind working the night shift?”

Ken shook his head.

“Then I guess you've got the job,” Grayson

said. “My secretary will give you some forms to fill out. Oh, and she’ll issue you a uniform.” He stood up as if to dismiss Ken.

“Good enough,” Ken said with a forced smile. He thought about shaking Grayson’s hand, but changed his mind. Grayson was smooth, well-dressed, and well-educated. But something about the man made Ken’s skin crawl.



“One more thing,” Grayson said, shuffling a stack of papers. Ken raised an eyebrow in question. “Are you licensed to carry a weapon?”

“I’ll need a gun?” Ken asked.

Grayson looked uncomfortable. His glance didn’t quite meet Ken’s. “Uh—yes. Since you were a police officer, I thought—” his voice trailed away.

Ken nodded. “I’m licensed. Why?”

Grayson looked nervous now. He seemed to be choosing his words carefully. “Our company—CryoTech—is involved in some

top-secret work. I suppose you know what it is we do?”

“Not exactly. Technology of some kind, but—” Ken shrugged. He felt a little silly not being able to answer.

Grayson smiled. “A *cutting-edge* technology,” he said proudly. “We’re researching cryonics.” Ken hoped he didn’t look as ignorant as he felt. Grayson motioned for him to sit down again. “Cryonics is about hope, Mr. Hudson. It’s about the future. It’s about offering people a chance at a new life.”

Grayson stood and began to pace behind his desk. “Imagine that you come down with a fatal disease. You know that medical science is close to finding the cure—but you may not live long enough to reap the benefits. What if you could be frozen at the time of your death—and be kept that way? Then, when the cure was available, you could be brought back to life and treated.” Grayson beamed. “You’d have a new life, Mr. Hudson!”

Ken stared at Grayson. He’d never heard of anything so weird.

Grayson saw the disbelief in Ken's eyes. The scientist's smile broadened. "Cryonics is not as crazy as you might think. There was the case of a child who fell through the ice on a frozen lake. When he was rescued, he showed no signs of life. Yet he was successfully thawed out and brought back to life—with no bad side effects. And he's a grown man now! What do you think of that?"

Ken took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He didn't know what to say.

"We have been able to lower the body temperature of laboratory mice until there were no signs of life at all. Then we thawed them out and brought them back to life."

Ken's skin broke out in a cold sweat. "So that's what you do here?" he asked. "You freeze living people—"

"No!" Grayson exclaimed. The question had clearly upset him. "That would be against the law—freezing someone who is still alive! We begin our special freezing process at the moment of death. Then the bodies are stored here for the future."

Ken felt extremely uncomfortable. He stared at Grayson in horror.

“You mean this place—”

“Yes, that’s right,” Grayson said cheerfully. “It’s a storage facility. The building is full of bodies, all frozen. Our clients pay us a lot of money to care for their frozen bodies until the time comes for them to be thawed out.”

“And have you done that?” Ken asked. “Have you successfully brought even *one* of these dead people back to life? Does your technology work?”

Grayson’s face turned red, and he looked away. “Not yet—but there’s no reason to assume it won’t. That’s why I say that CryoTech is all about hope!”

“Ah!” Ken nodded. He had begun to think that Grayson was just a nut case. On the other hand, the suit the scientist was wearing had cost a small fortune, and his office décor was elegant. Grayson had said it himself: People paid a lot of money for hope. “If this guy is crazy, he’s crazy like a fox,” Ken thought.

“I still don’t understand why I need to carry a weapon,” Ken said.

Grayson smiled coldly. “We’re not the only company that does this kind of work, Mr. Hudson. We have secrets to protect from the competition.”

The very idea of protecting dead people made Ken shudder.



Ken pulled up the collar of his jacket as he left the building. The sun was shining, but heaps of dirty snow were piled up in the shadows. The air was bitterly cold. Ken’s breath rose in steamy plumes. He didn’t know which was colder—the inside of the CryoTech facility or the chill air outside.

When he got to his car, he looked back just once. The shiny black building rose against a cold gray sky. CryoTech wasn’t in a great location. It was close to the docks, next to the city’s slums. By day, the area was dangerous enough. By night it would be even worse. Ken shivered as he climbed into his car. He was

glad he'd be carrying a gun.

Ken knew he should go straight home. He needed to get some sleep before his shift started at midnight. Grayson had told him he'd be working with one other guard—Maggie Atkins. She'd be showing him the ropes.

Back in his apartment, Ken fixed himself a bowl of hot chili. He switched on the TV to catch some news while he ate. Halfway through his mid-afternoon lunch, the phone started ringing.

“Hey, buddy—you hear the news?” Ken recognized the gruff voice of his old partner, Nick Foley.

“Hey, Nick,” Ken replied. “How’s it going? What’s up?”

“Leviathan,” Foley said. “He’s dead.”

Ken froze. His enemy was *dead*? He couldn't believe it. “What happened?”

“Apparently he was killed last week,” Nick said. “But it took the director of the prison mental hospital a few days to let us know. It seems a fight broke out among the inmates.