

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE FURY*

SHANE GERICKE

BLOWN AWAY

"Visceral and unforgettable."

- Gayle Lynds





BLOWN AWAY

Praise for *Blown Away*

"A labyrinth of rich suspense, *Blown Away* by Shane Gericke explodes across the page in a nerve-tingling tale of cops and a baffling serial killer. Fascinating, intense, the novel is utterly gripping. Shane Gericke writes with the clear eye of a hard-nosed reporter and the sweet soul of an artist. The power of *Blown Away* is visceral and unforgettable - you won't want to miss this gem." - Gayle Lynds

"Blast off! Shane Gericke's *Blown Away* is a rambunctious, devious novel full of chutzpah, high energy and surprises. Forget roller coaster; this one reads like a rocket." - John Lutz

"The ultimate 'game' of cat and mouse." - Alex Kava

"Shane Gericke's smart and suspenseful book will keep you turning the pages . . . then get you up in the morning, hiding your board games away. A remarkably strong first novel; I can't wait for the next!" - Deborah Blum

"Move over, Elmore Leonard, there's a new sheriff in town! Real cops, terrific action, a twisted plot that will keep you awake at night and a tough gal detective who makes it all happen. More please!" - Roy Huntington, *American Cop* magazine

"As a veteran cop who's also female, I approach such thrillers with a jaded eye. But *Blown Away* didn't let me down! It's one of the rare books where the female lead isn't only a cop, she's smart, savvy, and tough, too. We need more of this!" - Suzanne Huntington, San Diego Police Department

"Watch out, VI. Warshawski, there's a new detective in town.

Shane Gericke's new thriller will keep you on the edge of your seat as some sharp cops take on a serial killer with a huge ego and deadly grudge. Here's the beach book for the summer." - Howard Wolinsky

"A quickening series of savage clues suck rookie cop Emily Thompson and her fellow law enforcement officers into a grisly guessing game - a game whose rules only the twisted killer knows. With insightful grace, Shane Gericke weaves vivid characters and nonstop action into a compelling page-turner. He emerges as a rising star of the police thriller genre." - Peter Haugen

"Shane Gericke's first novel is a fast-moving police procedural of the highest order. From the chilling opening chapter to the stunning conclusion, Gericke weaves a tale of a police hunt for a serial killer in which the cops and the criminal are compelling and realistic." - Tim West, Sun Newspapers

"*Blown Away* tightens the plot around detective Emily Thompson like a terrifying noose. From the opening pages, Shane Gericke's characters race to stop serial killings that are based on a pattern both diabolical and seemingly innocent. The quiet Midwestern city of Naperville has never before seen a police thriller like this one." - Thomas Frisbie

Other Books by Shane Gericke

The Fury

Cut to the Bone

Torn Apart

For Jerrle, who brings out the best in everyone

PROLOGUE

"911, where is your emergency?" Bertha Pruitt repeated.

No reply.

"Come on, caller, talk to me. This is Boston 911 - oh Jesus!" The howl on the other end was so loud that several operators snapped their heads her way. Bertha waved them off. "Talk to me, caller, please!" she said. "Where is your-"

"Actually, Boston," a silky male voice interrupted, "the proper question is, 'What is your emergency?' not 'Where is your emergency?' Understand?" His tone turned to disgust. "Or maybe you're just too stupid to understand my rules. Not uncommon with inferiors."

Bertha's computer display started whirling and blipping like a slot machine. "Just what I need," she muttered as numbers and street names danced and disappeared. "A caller ID crash." She punched the alert button and watched Trout Lips, the shift supervisor, run for a headset. Normally, the E911 software displayed the caller's location till the dispatcher finished sending cops, fire, Con Ed, or other personnel. Now the location changed every time she blinked - downtown Boston, Southie, Amherst, Cape Cod, downtown again, a nonexistent address in Boston Harbor. She shook her head. She'd have to keep the loony talking till the techs fixed the problem, or the loony gave it up. Normally, she enjoyed playing Beat the Techs. Today, 911 calls were stacked thanks to the nor'easter slamming the coast. Which meant she'd wind up pulling another shift. She

blew out her breath. She'd been looking forward to spending Christmas with her husband, five daughters, three sons-in-law, and eleven grandchildren. The first time in ages the entire family was home for the holidays . . .

Enough whining.

"Sir, I'm sorry if I sound stupid," Bertha began in her most sincere voice. "I'm just trying to help. What was that scream? Do you have an emergency to tell me about?" No reply. "Or did you call me just to talk, see if we can figure things out?"

"I don't have an emergency, Boston. But a friend of mine certainly does."

"A friend of mine," Bertha repeated. Mirroring the caller's words often speeded the process. "Is that who screamed? Your friend?"

"Yes."

"Does your friend need my help?"

"He needs somebody's, Boston."

"OK, then," Bertha said. "Where do I send my ambulance so I can help-"

"It won't work, Boston," the caller interrupted.

Damn. "Work? What won't work, sir?" Bertha said, all innocence.

"You want my address. So you can stop the screaming. It won't work." The man coughed. "Here's the thing, Boston. My friend is a police officer. He's badly hurt. He might die." A low chuckle. "Correction, he will die. Because in a few minutes, I'm going to saw out his heart."

She shuddered. In twenty-seven years of dispatching, she'd never heard anything more cold. "Sir, you don't mean that," she said, knuckles whitening. No answer. "Are you still there?"

"Still here. Still mean it."