

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE FURY*

SHANE GERICKE



CUT TO THE BONE

"An A-grade thriller."

- Lee Child





CUT TO THE BONE

Praise for *Cut to the Bone*

"One of those scary rides through criminality that can melt away a fifteen-hour flight. The scenarios (trust me on this) will haunt you for weeks." - John J. Nance

"Shane Gericke is the real deal, and *Cut to the Bone* is an A-grade thriller." - Lee Child

"A frightening thrill ride, with beautifully drawn characters, sharply observed detail, and exceptional writing. This is a damn fine book." - Douglas Preston

"A hell of a good read. It keeps you guessing, when you're not ducking for cover." - Robert Fate

"Tough cops, realistic gun-play, and a genuine bad, bad guy. A page-turner to the end!" - Roy Huntington, *American Cop*

"Fast, furious, and full of heart, *Cut* crackles from the opening page." - Zoë Sharp

"Emily Thompson's the kind of cop I could be good friends with. I want to drink beer with her, go shopping together and maybe raid a drug house and chase a few felons . . . she's awesome!" - Sergeant Elizabeth Brantner Smith, Naperville Police

"*CSI* meets *Law & Order*! When the Executioner throws the switch on Old Sparky, you'll practically taste the burn." - Kathleen Antrim

"In a word: Wow! Gericke's established himself as a bestselling author. Read *Cut to the Bone* and find out why." - Julie Hyzy

"A dynamic, edge-of-your-seat thriller. His heroine, Emily Thompson, is tough, gritty, and likeable." - Bruce Cook

Other Books by Shane Gericke

The Fury

Blown Away

Torn Apart

For Jerrle, who turns thunderstorms into blue skies

PROLOGUE

11:58 a.m.

The blue velvet curtains drew back like it was movie night, allowing Johnny Sanders to stare through the bulletproof window.

Twelve sets of eyes stared back.

The eyes of the people who'd come to watch him die.

Sanders half-smiled in acknowledgment.

Some returned it. Others looked away. One skinny guy flinched, like Sanders had snaked through the glass and tickled him.

Sanders thought that hilarious. He was strapped to a quarter-ton chair, which was bolted to the floor, which was anchored to reinforced concrete.

He wasn't tickling anyone.

He was waiting. For the end.

Which would come in, oh, a minute and a half.

He tried to relax by taking deep breaths. No good - the air stank of quicklime and paste wax. The former from the fresh-cured concrete that formed the execution center's floors, ceilings, walls, and corridors. The latter from the chair itself.

He traced his fingers along its wide oak arms.

Slippery as drool.

The paste wax, he figured. Humidity. Restless fingers of the condemned, rubbing the wood like a rosary. . . .

Sanders shivered, suddenly chilled. He wondered why. The execution center's furnace was pumping heat like the devil opened a hole in the earth.

Maybe I'm getting sick, he thought. Hope I don't catch my death of a cold.

The little joke made him smile.

He glanced at the official clock over the curtains.

The smile faded.

He wasn't sick, he knew.

He was scared.

He shouldn't be. But he was.

Go figure.

"Gonna work this time?" the official executioner asked the electrician.

"Damn well better," the electrician said.

"I hear ya. Did you replace the power cable?"

The electrician slapped the control panel. "New, just like this. I triple-checked every connection. Polished the electrodes. Replaced the switches. Rebuilt the buzzer box." He shook his head. "This time she sings like the fat lady."

"She doesn't," the executioner warned, "Covington sticks us both in the thing."

Sanders worked his teeth into the heavy mouth guard. Like the doctor said, it'd be stupid to crack his molars if clemency came through during the burn.