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Free book **Kindred In Death (In Death, Book 29) by Par J. D. Robb**

*Présentation de l'éditeur*Lieutenant Eve Dallas scours New York City for the sadistic killer who murdered her captain's teenage daughter in this futuristic thriller from #1 New York Times bestselling author J. D. Robb. When the newly promoted captain of the NYPSPD and his wife return a day early from their vacation, they are looking forward to spending time with their bright and vivacious sixteen-year-old daughter, who stayed behind. Not even their worst nightmares could prepare them for the crime scene that awaits them instead. Deena has been brutally murdered in her bedroom, and her body shows signs of trauma that horrifies even the toughest of cops, including Lieutenant Eve Dallas, who is specifically requested by the captain to investigate. When the evidence starts to pile up, Dallas and her team think they are about to arrest their perpetrator; little do they know that someone has gone to great lengths to tease and taunt them by using a variety of identities. Overconfidence can lead to careless mistakes. But for Dallas, one mistake might be all she needs to serve justice.*From the Paperback edition.*ExtraitTable of ContentsTitle PageCopyright Page Chapter 1Chapter 2Chapter 3Chapter 4Chapter 5Chapter 6Chapter 7Chapter 8Chapter 9Chapter 10Chapter 11Chapter 12Chapter 13Chapter 14Chapter 15Chapter 16Chapter 17Chapter 18Chapter 19Chapter 20Chapter 21Chapter 22 EPILOGUETITLES BY J. D. ROBBG. P. PUTNAM'S SONS Publishers Since 1838 Published by the Penguin Group Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.) • Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England • Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd) • Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd) Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110 017, India • Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd) Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England Copyright © 2009 by Nora RobertsAll rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions. Published simultaneously in Canada Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Robb, J. D., date. Kindred in death / J. D. Robb. p. cm.ISBN: 97811011510441. Dallas, Eve (Fictitious character)—Fiction. 2. Policewomen—Fiction. 3. New York (N.Y.)—Fiction. I. Title. PS3568.O243K 813'.54—dc22 This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.While the author has made every effort to provide accurate telephone numbers and Internet addresses at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors, or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party websites or their content.Welcome, kindred glooms! Congenial horrors, hail!—JAMES THOMSON A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.—TENNYSONISHE'D DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN. OR BETTER, BECAUSE who knew if there was really good sex and lazy holiday mornings in heaven. She was alive and kicking.Well, alive anyway. A little sleepy, a whole lot satisfied, and happy the end of the Urban Wars nearly forty years before had resulted in the international Peace Day holiday.Maybe the Sunday in June had been selected arbitrarily, and certainly symbolically—and maybe remnants of that ugly period still littered the global landscape even in 2060—but she supposed people were entitled to their parades, cookouts, windy speeches, and long, drunk weekends.Personally, she was happy to have two days off in a row for any reason. Especially when a Sunday kicked off like this one.Eve Dallas, murder cop and ass-kicker, sprawled naked across her husband, who'd

just given her a nice glimpse of heaven. She figured she'd given him a good look at it, too, as he lay under her, one hand lazily stroking her butt and his heart pounding like a turbo hammer. She felt the thump on the bed that was their pudgy cat, Galahad, joining them now that the show was over. She thought: Our happy little family on a do-nothing Sunday morning. And wasn't that an amazing thing? She had a happy little family—a home, an absurdly gorgeous and fascinating man who loved her, and—it couldn't be overstated—really good sex. Not to mention the day off. She purred, nearly as enthusiastically as the cat, and nuzzled into the curve of Roarke's neck. "Good," she said. "At the very least." His arms came around her, such good arms, in an easy embrace. "And what would you like to do next?" She smiled, loving the moment, the lilt of Ireland in his voice, the brush of the cat's fur against her arm as he butted it with his head in a bid for attention. Or most likely breakfast. "Pretty much nothing." "Nothing can be arranged." She felt Roarke shift, and heard the cat's purring increase as the hands that had recently pleased her gave him a scratch. She propped herself up to look at his face. His eyes opened. God, they just killed her, that bold, brilliant blue, those thick, dark lashes, the smile in them that was hers. Just hers. Leaning down, she took his magic mouth with hers in a deep, dreamy kiss. "Well now, that's far from nothing." "I love you." She kissed his cheeks, a little rough from the night's growth of beard. "Maybe because you're so pretty." He was, she thought as the cat interrupted by wiggling his bulk under her arm and bellying between them. The carved lips, the sorcerer's eyes, and sharp, defined bones all framed in the black silk of his hair. When you added the firm, lanky body, it made a damn perfect package. He managed to get around the cat to draw her down for another kiss, then hissed. "Why the hell doesn't he go down and pester Summerset for breakfast?" Roarke nudged away the cat, who kneaded paws and claws, painfully, over his chest. "I'll get it. I want coffee anyway." Eve rolled out of bed, walked—long, lean, naked—to the bedroom AutoChef. "You cost me another shag," Roarke muttered. Galahad's bicolored eyes glittered, perhaps in amusement, before he scrambled off the bed. Eve programmed the kibble, and since it was a holiday, a side of tuna. When the cat pounced on it like the starving, she programmed two mugs of coffee, strong and black. "I thought about going down for a workout, but sort of took care of that already." She took the first life-giving sip as she crossed back to the platform and the lake-sized bed. "I'm going to grab a shower." "I'll do the same, then I can grab you." He smiled as she handed him his coffee. "A second workout, we'll say. Very healthy. Maybe a full Irish to follow." "You're a full Irish." "I was thinking breakfast, but you can have both." Didn't she look happy, he thought, and rested—and altogether delicious. That shaggy cap of deer-hide hair mussed about her face, those big dark eyes full of fun. The little dent in her chin he adored deepened just a bit when she smiled. There was something about the moment, he thought, moments like this when they were so much in tune, that struck him as miraculous. The cop and the criminal—former—he qualified, as bloody normal as Peace Day potato salad. He studied her over the rim of his cup, through the whiff of fragrant steam. "I'm thinking you should wear that outfit more often. It's a favorite of mine." She angled her head, drank more coffee. "I'm thinking I want a really long shower." "Isn't that handy? I think I want the same." She took a last sip. "Then we'd better get started." Later, too lazy to dress, she tossed on a robe while Roarke programmed more coffee and full Irish breakfasts for two. It was all so . . . homey, she thought. The morning sun streamed in the windows of the bedroom bigger than the apartment she'd lived in two years before. Two years married next month, she thought. He'd walked into her life, and everything had changed. He'd found her; she'd found him—and all those dark places inside both of them had gotten a little smaller, a little brighter. "What do you want to do next?" she asked him. He glanced over as he loaded plates and coffee onto a tray to carry it to the sitting area. "I thought the agenda was nothing." "It can be nothing, or it can be something. I picked yesterday, and that was lots of nothing. There's probably something in the marriage rules about you getting to pick today." "Ah yes, the rules." He set the tray down. "Always a cop." Galahad padded over to eye the plates as if he hadn't eaten in days. Roarke pointed a warning finger at him, so the cat turned his head in disgust and began to wash. "My pick then, is it?" He cut into his eggs, considering. "Well, let's think. It's a lovely day in June." "Shit." His brow lifted. "You've a problem with June, or lovely days?" "No. Shit. June. Charles and Louise." Scowling, she chewed bacon. "Wedding. Here." "Yes, next Saturday evening, and as far as I know that's all under control." "Peabody said because I'm standing up for Louise—the matron of honor or whatever—I'm supposed to contact Louise every day this week to make sure she doesn't need me to do something." Eve's scowl darkened as she thought of Peabody, her partner. "That can't be right, can it? Every day? I mean, Jesus. Plus, what the hell could she need me to do?" "Errands?" She stopped eating, narrowed her eyes at him. "Errands? What do you mean by errands?" "Well now, I'm at a disadvantage having never been a bride, but best guess? Confirm details with the florist or caterer, for instance. Go shopping with her for wedding shoes or honeymoon clothes or—" "Why would you do that?" Her voice was as thoroughly aggrieved as her face. "Why would you say

these things to me, after I rocked your world twice in one morning? It's just mean." "And likely true under other circumstances. But knowing Louise, she has it all well in hand. And knowing you, if Louise wanted someone to shop for shoes, she'd have asked someone else to stand up for her at her wedding." "I gave the shower." At his barely smothered laugh, she drilled a finger into his arm. "It was here, and I was here, so that's like giving it. And I'm getting a dress and all that." He smiled, amused by her puzzlement—and mild fear—when it came to social rites. "What does it look like, this dress?" She stabbed into her eggs. "I don't have to know what it looks like, exactly. It's some sort of yellow—she picked out the color, and she and Leonardo put their heads together on it. The doctor and the designer. Mavis says it's mag squared." She considered her friend Mavis Freestone's particular style. "Which is kind of scary now that I think about it. Why am I thinking about it?" "I have no idea. I can say that while Mavis's taste in fashion is uniquely . . . unique, as your closest friend she understands perfectly what you like. And Leonardo knows exactly what suits you. You looked exquisite on our wedding day." "I had a black eye under the paint." "Exquisite, and absolutely you. As for etiquette by Peabody, I'd say contacting Louise wouldn't hurt, just letting her know you're willing to help out should she need it." "What if she does need it? She should've asked Peabody to do this instead of having her second in command, or in line. Whatever the thing is." "I think it's called bridal attendant." "Whatever." With an impatient hand, Eve waved the term away. "They're tight, and Peabody really gets into this . . . female thing." The insanity of it, as far as Eve was concerned. The fuss, the frills, the frenzy. "Maybe it's weird because Peabody used to date Charles, sort of, before she hooked up with McNab. And after, too." Her brow furrowed as she worked through the tangles of the dynamics. "But they never banged each other, personally or professionally." "Who Charles and McNab?" "Stop it." It got a quick laugh out of her before she thought about errands and shopping. "Peabody and Charles never got naked when Charles was a pro. Which is also weird that he was a licensed companion when he and Louise hooked up, and the whole time they're dating—and getting naked—it doesn't bother her that he's getting naked with other people, professionally. Then he quits without telling her and trains to be a therapist and buys a house and does the proposing deal." Understanding, Roarke let her run it through, fast words and jerky logic as she shoveled in eggs, potatoes, bacon. "All right, what's all this about really?" She stabbed eggs again, then put the fork down and picked up her coffee. "I don't want to screw it up for her. She's so happy, they're so happy—and this is a really big deal for her. I get that. I really do get that, and I did such a crap job on ours. The wedding thing." "I'll be the judge of that." "I did. I dumped everything on you." "I believe you had a couple of murders on your hands." "Yeah, I did. And of course you don't have anything to do but sit on your giant piles of money." He shook his head and spread a bit of jam on a triangle of toast. "We all do what we do, darling Eve. And I happen to think we do what we do very well." "I wiggled out on you, pissed you off, the night before the wedding." "Added a bit of excitement." "Then got drugged and kicked around at my own drunk girl party at a strip club before I made the collar, which was fun in retrospect. But the point is, I really didn't do the stuff, so I don't know how to do the stuff now." He gave her knee a friendly pat. For a woman of her sometimes terrifying courage, she feared the oddest things. "If there's something she needs you'll figure out how to do it. I'll tell you, when you walked toward me that day, our day, in the sunlight, you were like a flame. Bright and beautiful, and took the breath right out of me. There was only you." "And about five hundred of your close friends." "Only you." He took her hand, kissed it. "And it'll be the same for them, I wager." "I just want her to have what she wants. It makes me nervous." "And that's friendship. You'll wear some sort of yellow dress and be there for her. That will be enough." "I hope so, because I'm not tagging her every day. That's firm." She looked at her plate. "How does anyone eat a full Irish?" "Slowly and with great determination. I take it you're not determined enough." "Not nearly." "Well then, if that takes care of breakfast, I've had my thought." "On what?" "On what to do next. We should go to the beach, get ourselves some sand and surf." "I can get behind that. Jersey Shore, Hamptons?" "I was thinking more tropical." "You can't want to go all the way to the island for one day, or part of one day." Roarke's private island was a favored spot, but it was practically on the other side of the world. Even in his jet it would take at least three hours one way. "A bit far for an impulse, but there are closer. There's a spot on the Caymans that might suit, and a small villa that's available for the day." "And you know this because?" "I've looked into acquiring it," he said easily. "So we could fly down, get there in under an hour, check it out, enjoy the sun and surf and drink some foolish cocktails. End the day with a walk along the beach in the moonlight." She found herself smiling. "How small a villa?" "Small enough to serve as a nice impulse holiday spot for us, and roomy enough to allow us to travel down with a few friends if we've a mind to." "You'd already had this thought." "I had, yes, and put it in the if-and-when department. If you'd like it, we can make this the when." "I can be dressed and toss whatever I'd need for the day in a bag in under ten minutes." She leaped up, bolted toward her dresser. "Bag's packed," he told her. "For both of us. In

case."She glanced back at him. "You never miss a trick." "It's rare to have a Sunday off with my wife. I like making the most of it."She tossed the robe to pull on a simple white tank, then grabbed out a pair of khaki shorts. "We've had a good start on making the most. This should cap it off."Even as she stepped into the shorts, the communicator on her dresser signaled. "Crap. Damn it. Shit!" Her stomach dropped as she read the display. Her glance at Roarke was full of regret and apology. "It's Whitney."He watched the cop take over, face, posture, as she picked up the communicator to respond to her commander. And he thought, Ah well. "Yes, sir." "Lieutenant, I'm sorry to interrupt your holiday." Whitney's wide face filled the tiny screen, and on it rode a stress that had the muscles tightening at the back of her neck. "It's no problem, Commander." "I realize you're off the roll, but there's a situation. I need you to report to Five-forty-one Central Park South. I'm on scene now." "You're on scene, sir?" Bad, she thought, big and bad for the commander to be on scene. "Affirmative. The victim is Deena MacMasters, age sixteen. Her body was discovered earlier this morning by her parents when they returned home from a weekend away. Dallas, the victim's father is Captain Jonah MacMasters."It took her a moment. "Illegals. I know of Lieutenant MacMasters. He's been promoted?" "Two weeks ago. MacMasters has specifically requested you as primary. I would like to grant that request." "I'll contact Detective Peabody immediately." "I'll take care of that. I'd like you here asap." "Then I'm on my way." "Thank you."She disengaged the communicator, turned to Roarke. "I'm sorry." "Don't." He crossed to her, tapped his fingertip on the shallow dent in her chin. "A man's lost his child, and that's a great deal more important than a bit of beach. You know him?" "Not really. He contacted me after I took Casto down." She thought of the wrong cop who'd gone after her at her wedding eve party. "MacMasters wasn't his LT, but he wanted to give me a nod for closing that case, and taking down a bad cop. I appreciated it. He's got a rep," she continued as she changed the holiday shorts for work trousers. "A good, solid rep. I hadn't heard about his promotion, but I'm not surprised by it."She tidied her choppy cap of hair by raking her fingers through it. "He's got about twenty years on the job. Maybe twenty-five. I hear he draws a hard line and sticks to it, makes sure those serving under him do the same. He closes cases." "Sounds like someone else I know."She pulled a shirt out of the closet. "Maybe." "Whitney didn't tell you how the girl was killed." "He wants and needs me to come in without any preconceptions. He didn't say it was homicide. That's for me and the ME to determine."She picked up her weapon harness, strapped it on. Pocketed her communicator, her 'link, hooked on her restraints. She didn't bother to frown when Roarke offered her the summer-weight jacket he'd selected out of her closet to go over her sidearm. "Whitney's being there means one of two things," she told him. "It's hinky, or they're personal friends. Maybe both." "For him to be on scene . . ." "Yeah." She sat to pull on the boots she preferred for work. "A cop's kid. I don't know when I'll get back." "Not an issue."She stopped, looked at him, thought about bags packed just in case, and walks in the tropical moonlight. "You could fly down, check this villa out." "I've work enough I can see to here to keep me busy." He laid his hands on her shoulders when she rose, laid his lips on hers. "Get in touch when you have a better handle on the situation." "I will. See you then." "Take care, Lieutenant."She jogged downstairs, barely breaking stride when Summerset, Roarke's man of just about everything and the pebble in her shoe, materialized in the foyer. "I was under the assumption you were off duty until tomorrow." "There's a dead body, which unfortunately isn't yours." Then she paused at the door. "Talk him into doing something that's not work. Just because I have to . . ." She shrugged, and walked out to meet death. Few cops could afford to live in a single-family residence on the verdant edges of Central Park. Then again, few cops—well, none other than herself—lived in a freaking castle-mansion estate in Manhattan. Curious about how MacMasters managed his digs, she did a quick run on him as she navigated the light holiday morning traffic. MacMasters, Captain Jonah, her dash comp told her, born March 22, 2009, Providence, Rhode Island. Parents Walter and Marybeth nee Hastings. Educated Stonebridge Academy, further education Yale, graduated 2030. Married Franklin, Carol 2040, one offspring, female, Deena, born November 23, 2043. Joined NYPSD September 15, 2037. Commendations and honors include—"Skip that. Finances. Where's the money come from?" Working . . . Current worth approximately eight million, six hundred thousand. Inherited a portion of grandfather's estate. MacMasters, Jonah, died natural causes June 6, 2032, founder Mac Kitchen and Bath, based in Providence. Company's current worth—"Good enough. Asked and answered." Family money, she thought. Yale educated. Ends up an Illegals cop in New York. Interesting. One spouse and a twenty-year marriage, commendations and honors on the job. Promoted to captain. It all said what she already knew of him. Solid. Now this solid cop she barely knew had specifically requested her as primary in the investigation of his only child's death. Why was that? she wondered. She'd ask. When she reached the address she pulled in behind a black-and-white. As she engaged her On Duty light, she took a survey of the house. Nice digs, she thought, and got out to retrieve her field kit. And, though she was in danger of overusing the word, it struck her as solid. Pre-Urban Wars

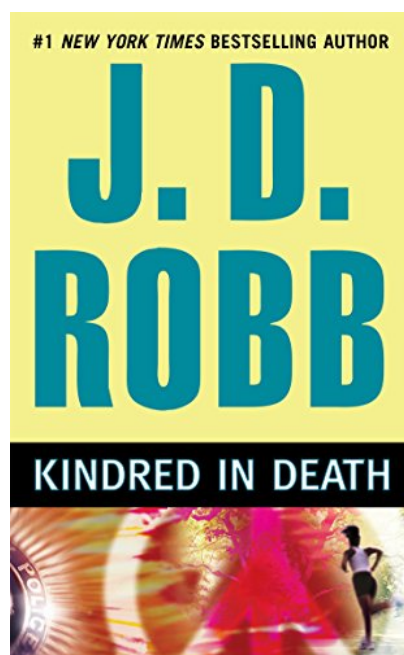
construction, nicely rehabbed so it maintained its character, showed a few scars. It looked dignified, she thought, the rosy brick, the creamy trim, the long windows—currently shielded with privacy screens, every one. Pots of colorful flowers stood guard on either side of the short flight of stone steps, a pretty touch she supposed. But she was more interested, as she stepped over and crossed the sidewalk, in the security. Full cameras, view screen, thumb pad, and she'd bet voice-activated locks with a coded bypass. A cop, and particularly one with good scratch, would be sure to fully protect his home and everything—everyone in it. And still his teenage daughter was dead inside. You could never cover all the bases. She took her badge out of her pocket to flash the uniform at the door, then hooked it to her waistband. "They're waiting for you inside, Lieutenant." "Are you first on scene?" "No, sir. First on scene's inside, along with the commander and the captain and his wife. My partner and I were called in by the commander. My partner's on the rear." "Okay. My partner will be arriving shortly. Peabody, Detective." "I've been apprised, Lieutenant. I'll pass her through." Not a rookie, Eve thought as she waited for him to pass her in. The uniform was both seasoned and tough. Had Whitney called him in, or the captain? She glanced to the left, to the right, and imagined people in the neighboring houses who were awake and at home keeping watch, but too polite—or too intimidated—to come out and play obvious lookie-loos. She stepped in to a cool, wide foyer with a central staircase. Flowers on the table, she noted, very fresh. Only a day, maybe two old. A little bowl that held some sort of colored mints. Everything in soft, warm colors. No clutter, but a pair of glossy purple sandals—one under, one beside a high-backed chair. Whitney stepped out of a doorway to the left. He filled it, she thought, with the bulk of his body. His dark face was lined with concern, and she caught the glint of sorrow in his eyes. And still his voice was neutral when he spoke. Years of being a cop held him straight. "Lieutenant, we're in here. If you'd take a moment before going up to the scene." "Yes, sir." "Before you do, I'll thank you for agreeing to take this case." When she hesitated, he nearly smiled. "If I didn't put it to you as your choice, I should have." "There's no question, Commander. The captain wants me, he's got me." With a nod, he stepped back to lead her into the room. There was a little jolt, she could admit it, when she saw Mrs. Whitney. The commander's wife tended to intimidate her with her starched manner, cool delivery, and blue blood. But at the moment, she appeared to be fully focused on comforting the woman beside her on a small sofa in a pretty parlor. Carol MacMasters, Eve concluded, a small, dark-haired beauty to contrast Anna Whitney's blonde elegance. In her drenched black eyes, Eve read both devastation and confusion. Her slight shoulders shivered as if she sat naked in ice. MacMasters rose as she came in. She judged him at about six-four, and lean to the point of gangly. His casual dress of jeans and T-shirt coincided with returning from a brief holiday. His hair, dark like his wife's, had a tight curl and remained full and thick around a lean face with deep cheek grooves that may have been dimples in his youth. His eyes, a pale, almost misty green, met hers levelly. In them she saw grief and shock, and anger. He moved to her, held out a hand. "Thank you. Lieutenant . . ." He seemed to run out of words. "Captain, I'm very sorry, very sorry for your loss." "She's the one?" Carol struggled up even as tears spilled down her cheeks. "You're Lieutenant Dallas?" "Yes, ma'am. Mrs. MacMasters—" "Jonah said it had to be you. You're the best there is. You'll find out who . . . how . . . But she'll still be gone. My baby will still be gone. She's upstairs. She's up there, and I can't be with her." Her voice pitched from raw grief toward hysteria. "They won't let me go be with her. She's dead. Our Deena's dead." "Here now, Carol, you have to let the lieutenant do what she can." Mrs. Whitney stood up to drape an arm around Carol. "Can't I just sit with her? Can't I just—" "Soon." Mrs. Whitney crooned it. "Soon. I'll stay with you now. The lieutenant is going to take good care of Deena. She'll take good care." "I'm going to take you up," Whitney said. "Anna." Mrs. Whitney nodded. Starched and intimidating, Eve thought, but she would handle a grieving mother and a devastated father. "You need to stay down here, Jonah. I'll be down shortly. Lieutenant." "You're friends with the victim's parents off the job?" Eve asked. "Yes. Anna and Carol serve on some committees together, and often spend time with each other. We socialize. I brought my wife as a friend of the victim's mother." "Yes, sir. I believe she'll be a great help in that area." "This is hard, Dallas." His voice leaden, he started up the steps. "We've known Deena since she was a little girl. I can tell you she was the light of their hearts. A bright, lovely girl." "The house has excellent security from my eyeball of it. Do you know if it was activated when the MacMasters returned this morning?" "The locks were. Jonah found the cameras had been deactivated, and the discs for the last two days removed. He touched nothing," Whitney added, turning left at the top of the stairs.

"Allowed Carol to touch nothing—but the girl. And he prevented his wife from moving the body or disturbing the scene. I'm sure we can all understand there were a few moments of shock." "Yes, sir." It was awkward, she thought, and uncomfortable to be thrust in the position of interviewing her commander. "Do you know what time they returned home this morning?" "At eight-thirty-two, precisely. I took the liberty of checking the lock log, and it confirmed Jonah's statement to me. I'll give you a copy of the statement from

my home 'link log. He contacted me immediately, requesting you, and requesting my presence if possible. I didn't seal the scene—her bedroom. But it is secure.” He gestured, stood back. “I think it best if I go down, let you proceed. When your partner arrives, I'll send her directly up.” “Yes, sir.” He nodded again, then sighed as he looked at the open bedroom door. “Dallas . . . It's very hard.” She waited until he'd turned away, started down the stairs. Alone, she stepped to the doorway and looked at the young, dead Deena MacMasters.² “RECORD ON. DALLAS, LIEUTENANT EVE, AT scene, MacMasters, Deena, victim.” She scanned the room first as she took Seal-It from her field kit to coat her hands and boots. A large space, bright and airy with triple windows—privacy screen activated—along the park-view wall. A padded bench, mounded with colorful pillows, curved under the glass. Posters of popular musicians, actors, personalities covered walls done in a dreamy violet. A little clutch tightened Eve's stomach as she studied one of her friend, Mavis Freestone, blue hair swirling, arms lifted in triumph, titled *Motherhood Rocks!* On it, she saw Mavis's big, bold handwriting. *YO, DEENA, YOU ROCK, TOO! MAVIS FREESTONE* Had Deena pushed the poster at Mavis at some concert or event, and Mavis—laughing, bubbling—signed it with Deena's purple pen? Noise, lights, color, Eve imagined, and life. And a thrilling memory for a sixteen-year-old girl who couldn't have known she would have so little time to treasure it. A portion of the room was designed for studying and schoolwork with a glossy white desk, shelves, a high-end comp and com center, disc files—all ordered and tidy. A second area, suited for lounging, probably hanging out with girlfriends, also sat tidy and apparently undisturbed with plump cushions, soft throws, a scatter of stuffed animals likely collected throughout childhood. A hairbrush and hand mirror, a few colored bottles, a bowl of seashells, and a trio of framed photos stood on a dresser in the same glossy white as the desk. Thick, boldly colored rugs flashed over a gleaming wood floor. The one nearest the bed, she noted, skewed out of alignment. He'd knocked it or skidded against it, or she had. A pair of panties—simple, white, unadorned, lay near the rug. “He stripped off her underwear,” Eve said aloud, “tossed them aside.” The nightstands beside the bed held fancy, frilly lamps with tasseled shades. Again, one of the shades sat crooked on its base. A bump by an arm or elbow. Everything else around the bed itself showed a delight in order and precision, a love of pretty, girlish things. A young sixteen, to Eve's mind, but maybe she was projecting. At sixteen she'd been counting the days until legal adulthood and escape from the foster system. There had been no pink, no frills, no fuzzy teddy bears beloved since childhood in her world. And still, she felt this was the room of a girl still firmly in childhood, just barely approaching the woman she might have been. One who had died living a woman's worst fear. In the center of the pretty, cheerful room, the bed held vicious violence. The tangle of pink and white sheets ruined with rusted blood-stains wound around the body's legs like rope. He'd used them to bind her feet to the footboard, to keep her legs open for him. She'd fought—the bruises and raw marks on her ankles, her thighs where her purple skirt was rucked showed she'd fought, showed he'd raped her violently. At the side of the bed, Eve leaned in, angled down to peer at the police restraints binding the victim's hands behind her back. “Cop cuffs. Vic is a cop's daughter. Evidence of struggle in bruising and lacerations on wrists. She didn't go easy. No signs of mutilation. Some bruising on the face indicates physical blows, bruising on neck indicates manual strangulation.” She eased open the victim's mouth, used her penlight and magnifier. “Some threads and fabric in her teeth, on her tongue, blood on her lips, teeth. She bit her lip, deeply. Some blood and possibly saliva on pillowcase. Looks like he used it to smother her. Clothes are askew but not removed, some tearing at the shoulders of the shirt, buttons missing. He pulled at them,” she continued as she worked her way down the body. “Pulled them out of his way, but he wasn't interested overmuch in the rapist's foreplay.” With care and deliberation, even as her mouth went dry and the back of her head pounded, she examined the damage caused by violent rape. “Torture—choke, smother, rape, choke, smother, rape. Vaginally and anally. Repeatedly by the amount of bruising and tearing.” She felt her breath hitch as her lungs tried to shut down, and forced air out. In. Out again. “Blood from vaginal area indicates victim might have been a virgin. ME to confirm.” She had to straighten up, had to take a few more calming breaths. She couldn't afford to switch off the record and settle herself, couldn't afford to let the record show how much her hands wanted to shake, how much her stomach wanted to roil. She knew what it was to be helpless like this, abused like this, terrified like this. “At this time it appears the security was engaged. Cameras were subsequently turned off, and all discs removed from premises. There is no visible sign of break-in—Crime Scene Unit to confirm. She opened the door; she let him in. Cop's kid. She knew him, trusted him. Face-to-face rape and murder. He knew her, wanted to see her face. Personal, very personal.” Calmer, she got out her gauges to determine time of death. “TOD three-twenty-six. Primary determines rape-homicide to be confirmed by ME. Dr. Morris is requested if available.” “Dallas.” It showed Eve how deep into the moment—and into the past—she'd gone—too deep to hear her partner's approach. She schooled her face to neutral lines and turned to where Peabody stood in the doorway. “The kid died

hard," Eve said. "Fought hard, died hard. No tissue under her nails that I can find, but plenty of trace from the sheets. It looks like he held the pillow over her face, she bit it and her own lip. As it's most likely multiple rapes, he may have gotten off on the struggle. Choked her, too. We should be able to get his handspan from the bruising." "I kind of knew her." Instinctively Eve stepped over, blocking Peabody's view of the body, forcing her partner to look at her instead. "How?" Sorrow, simple and sincere, shone in Peabody's dark brown eyes. "When I was a rookie, we did this kind of public service thing in schools." Peabody cleared her throat, pressed her lips together. "She was my liaison, like a student guide. A really sweet, smart kid. I guess she was about eleven or twelve. I was new to New York, too, and she gave me some tips on where to shop and stuff. And, ah, last year she did a report on Free-Agers for school." Peabody paused, busied herself sealing up. "She got in touch, and I helped her out with some background and personal anecdotes." "Is this going to be a problem for you?" "No." On a breath, Peabody pushed her dark hair back from her face, threading her fingers once through the sassy flip she wore. "No. She was a nice kid, and I liked her. A lot. I want to find out who did this to her. I want in on taking the son of a bitch down." "Start by checking the security, the electronics through the house. Look for any signs of break-in." Big house, Eve thought. It would take a while, long enough to put Peabody into cop mode. "We need all 'links checked, all logs copied. I need the sweepers, but I want it designated Code Yellow. This isn't a media blackout, we can't go there with a cop involved, but I don't want the juice poured out either. I want Morris unless he's not able." "He's back?" "Scheduled to be back from leave tomorrow. If he's in town and willing, I want him." Peabody nodded, pulled out her communicator. "Given it's a cop's kid, I think we want Feeney." "You think right, and go ahead and tag your bony-assed cohab. Feeney's going to need McNab on this anyway, so let's get our EDD team up and running now." "He's on standby. When Whitney contacted me, I asked him to wait for my signal. If you're ready to roll her, I'll give you a hand." Eve heard the message under the words. I need to do this. Need to prove I can. Eve stepped back, turned to the body. "He didn't remove her clothing. Tore it some, pulled it out of the way. Another indication it wasn't sexual, and that it wasn't about humiliation so much as punishment, violence, or causing pain. He didn't care about stripping her, about exposing her. On three," she said and counted out so they rolled the body facedown together. "God." Peabody breathed in, breathed out. "That blood's not just from rape. I think . . . she was a virgin. And those are cop restraints. Using them, keeping her hands bound behind her back? He's making a point, don't you think with the first, and causing her more pain with the second. Look at the way they dug into her wrists, pushed into them from the weight of her body. He could have cuffed her to the headboard. Bad enough." "It's about pain," Eve said shortly. "Pain gives the inflictor more control over the victim. Do you know anything about her friends? Boyfriends, men?" "No, not really. When I was helping her with the report, I asked about boyfriends, the way you do." As she spoke Peabody began to scan and study the room. Coming back, Eve judged, sliding back into cop mode. "She got flushy and said she didn't date much since she was concentrating on her schoolwork. Ah, she was really into music and theater, but she wanted to study philosophy and alternate cultures. Talked about joining the Peace Corps or Education For All after college." Shy, Eve thought, using Peabody's impressions to help her form a picture of the dead. Idealistic, serious about education. *Revue de presse* "Robb combines sex, horrific crime, forensics and technological wizardry for another winner sure to please her many fans."—Publishers Weekly "The emotional quotient is high in this chapter of the long-running and truly excellent *In Death* series. One key to its longevity is that each succeeding book adds new layers of complexity to Eve, Roarke and the rest of Robb's supporting players. Robb's ability to take readers from emotional highs to lows and insert a clever mystery is why this series never gets old."—RT Book sMore Praise for the *In Death* series "Robb is a virtuoso."—Seattle Post-Intelligencer "It's Law Order: SVU—in the future."—Entertainment Weekly "J. D. Robb's *In Death* novels are can't-miss pleasures."—#1 New York Times bestselling author Harlan Coben "Anchored by terrific characters, sudden twists that spin the whole narrative on a dime, and a thrills-to-chills ration that will raise the neck hairs of even the most jaded reader, the J. D. Robb books are the epitome of great popular fiction."—New

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Détails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #218736 dans eBooksPublié le: 2009-10-14Sorti le: 2009-11-03Format: Ebook Kindle | File size: 68.Mb

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5 internautes sur 5 ont trouvé ce commentaire utile.
Pas le meilleur, mais quand même...
Par Anne
Lors d'un de ces rares week-ends de repos, Eve Dallas est appelée sur une scène de crime qui la touche doublement : le viol d'une innocente jeune fille qui se trouve être la fille d'un capitaine de la brigade anti-drogue. S'agit-il d'une attaque visant la jeune fille personnellement, ou serait-ce une vengeance contre le père? On retrouve dans ce 30ème opus tous les ingrédients qui font le succès de la série (interactions entre les différents personnages, répliques humoristiques)...L'auteur s'est peut-être un peu trop attardée sur les détails répétitifs de l'enquête (le porte à porte, l'observation des dossiers, etc.)mais quand on est attaché au personnage principal, on ne peut pas le laisser tomber comme ça! Quand même, il serait temps que la série trouve une fin...

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