

# Divine Fury

*An Enzo Lee Mystery Thriller*

By

**Robert B. Lowe**

---

Isaiah 59:17

*“He puts on righteousness like a coat of armor and a helmet of salvation on his head. He wears clothes of vengeance. He wraps himself with fury as a coat.”*

## Chapter 1

*Montana, 2004*

THE RAGGED, HIGH-PITCHED strains of the hymn drifted through the hardwood floor of the main church sanctuary above.

“On-ward Christ-ian sol-diers, march-ing as to war...”

More than a dozen kids. All fourth graders or younger. He had watched them march in the dusk through the spring snow and up the stairs of the church. They wore snow boots, puffy pint-sized parkas and ski caps in reds, blues and pinks with tassels hanging from the earflaps and bouncing off their shoulders.

Then – silence. The muffled sound of the choir leader saying something unintelligible. Her strong soprano started the next song followed fitfully by the children as they jumped in at different spots in the first stanzas.

“Mine eyes have seen the Glo-ry of the Com-ing of the Lord...”

Walberg focused on the hardware in front of him illuminated by the flashlight lying on the portable table. Five more tables lay stacked against the wall, resting on the faded green linoleum covering the basement floor. Folding chairs were piled nearby. They awaited the next Sunday's pancake breakfast when they would be packed with God-fearing members of Christ Episcopal Church, the largest house of worship in the small town of Bliss, Montana.

It was cold in the basement and he could see wisps of his breath in the limited light of the flashlight. But it was still much warmer than outside and his fingers worked the pliers and wire cutters easily.

He had chosen an alkaline six-volt battery as the power source because he knew it would set off the detonators without any problem even in cold or wet conditions. The wire was 18-gauge, solid copper sheathed in black PVC. Strong enough to tolerate jostling but easy to work using either the pliers or his fingers. The key triggering mechanism was cannibalized from a device that worked similar to a garage door opener but with a longer range of operation. He'd picked it up in Salt Lake City the weekend before.

He stripped the insulation off the end of the wire, exposing an inch which he hooked around the second terminal of the battery using the pliers. He screwed the plastic cap down until it clamped hard on the copper wire. He was finished.

He carefully put the tools back in his jacket pocket, picked up the flashlight and inspected the table surface and the surrounding floor to make sure he'd forgotten nothing. Then, he moved to the outside door. It was sturdy metal with an automatic closing mechanism. He searched in the snow outside the door, spotted a small twig and jammed it against the frame so the door looked closed from a distance but remained unlatched.

Walberg only donned a ski cap when the thermometer dipped into the single digits. Tonight, he wore his usual dark brown cowboy hat. He'd done this since high school to distinguish himself from newcomers to the area. Walberg had been born and raised within 50 miles of Bliss and was happy if everyone knew it. Aside from three years in the U.S. Army, this had been his home his entire life. With the hat and his old, suede-leather jacket, he looked like a thin, down-on-his-luck version of the Marlboro Man

The parking lot had been plowed earlier in the day, but the few inches of fresh snow completely muffled his footsteps. In the quiet, he could hear the children clearly now, nearing the end of their song. He moved toward the far end of the lot and the singing grew faint until he could barely hear it when he reached his 1998 black Chevy Blazer.

He opened the driver's door, reached into the left cup holder in the center console and found the remote switch that he'd left there. It fit easily into the palm of his hand. Still standing outside the Blazer, he closed the car door and found the button on the remote. He stared at the

church until he found the center basement window that was just a few inches above ground level. He estimated the distance at 120 yards.

Suddenly, he noticed that the singing had stopped. He heard the children's voices again. But they weren't joining together in a Church hymn. The sound was altogether different. He recognized it as the excited chatter of young kids at the end of something. The end of class. The end of school. In this case, the end of choir practice.

"Dammit," Walberg muttered. He had expected the practice to last at least another 20 minutes. As he watched the church, he saw the main doors thrown open on the far right side of the building and the kids scamper down the stairs – a few in the front, then the main surge, and finally the stragglers who moved slowly and carefully down the steps.

Two of the children ran across the parking lot, heading directly toward him. In the front was a girl, tall for her age with long blond hair bouncing outside of her baby blue ski cap. Behind her ran a younger boy with his jacket hanging open.

They slowed when they got close to him. The girl veered, keeping some distance. She looked at him warily.

"Hi, Uncle Steve," she said.

"Hi," Walberg replied without emotion. "Get in the truck. I've got something to do."

He heard them start to bicker as the rear doors closed and they grabbed their seatbelts. Walberg turned his attention back to the church. It was quiet now with the children out and scattered, mostly on the other side of the building where their parents had parked.

He moved his thumb over the remote until he felt the raised button. Watching the dark basement window, he pressed the button. He saw a faint light go on inside the window. He pressed the button again, and the light went out. He waited five seconds and pressed the button a third time. The light came on again.

Walberg was satisfied. The switch worked as expected. With the right explosives, he was confident that he could plant and detonate a bomb remotely. He pulled a cloth bag out of his jacket pocket and walked back across the parking lot to retrieve the hardware from the darkness of the church basement.

## Chapter 2

*San Francisco*

*Sunday, April 18, 2004*

THREE CLANGS OF an old cable car bell that someone had rescued from a city garage decades ago signaled last call at the Masonic Pub six blocks from the entrance to Golden Gate Park. It was the signal for most of the two dozen remaining patrons scattered among the old wooden tables and bent cane chairs to settle up and head for home.

For Scott Truman, however, the triple tones meant that the most important part of his night was beginning. It was time for him to return to his blue-walled cubicle in the offices of the University of San Francisco Medical Center a few miles away.

He wasn't particularly dedicated to his job crunching health statistics at the hospital. But he was extremely committed to Sonia, his girlfriend whom he had wooed for more than a year with a single-minded purpose and perseverance that had far surpassed any other endeavor he'd undertaken in his 26 years.

Their first night together had led to a month when they'd spent virtually all of their non-working time with one another. They were so active in bed that they had to prearrange "sleeping" nights so they could catch up. She sat in his lap while they read magazines at the laundromat. They took turns spooning their choices from Mitchell's Ice Cream into each other's mouths. He feigned injuries so he could run slower and stay near her when they jogged in the park.

Then, Sonia was gone. Off to Australia on a one-year internship on some marine biology program. When she didn't call for four days, he started to panic. She had known about the internship for months. Had he been a vacation fling in reverse? A home fling?

Eventually, Sonia called and explained that she'd had trouble getting a new telephone and that her employer forbid long-distance calls for personal reasons. Truman had then made it his mission to explore all the international telephony options.

His first thought was taking advantage of an Internet-based telephone service. But Sonia wasn't exactly a high-tech savant and would be in the arms of some Aussie before that solution was pieced together. How fast were the connections Down Under, anyway? The best idea Truman had was the WATS line at work. Until anyone said anything to him, the five hours he spent on the phone with Sonia each week were free – the best price he would ever find. He had a vague fear of getting caught, but greater faith that the bureaucracy overseeing a \$90 million budget had bigger fish to fry. At least he hoped so.

Meanwhile, Truman kept having images in his mind of Sonia in her tiniest bikini snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef with some guy who was taller, stronger and more tanned than him and with a huge knife dangling from his belt. Calling in the early morning from California had the dual benefit of concealing his heavy use of the WATS line plus tying up Sonia's evening hours that could otherwise be used in ways Truman tried not to consider.

It was 3:30 am when he finally said goodnight to Sonia.

Wearing an orange USC sweatshirt and gray cargo pants, Truman made his long way through the canyon maze formed by the many cubicles at the medical center. Then, he heard the sound of something being moved...furniture, computers, a file cabinet...something. That was strange. He'd seen watchmen outside but never anyone inside the offices at this hour. And, it was the weekend.

He considered just escaping then, hopefully unseen by the person who was also in the office. But he had to walk right past where he had heard the noise. It would seem more strange if he *didn't* acknowledge whoever was there, presumably a co-worker.

He poked his head around the opening of the cubicle where he thought he'd heard the sounds. It was one of the larger ones that belonged to a senior researcher. Truman saw a guy with his head under the desk wearing blue pants and a gray jacket over a white T-shirt.

"Hi," he said. The guy was so surprised that he bashed his head against the desk before spinning around and looking up at Truman from where he sat on the floor. Truman was glad he didn't recognize him. Maybe he could get out without giving his name or having to explain why he was there at this odd hour.

"I just heard you so I thought I'd look in on my way out," said Truman.

"Oh. Yeah. Right," said the guy. He looked around 40, maybe 20 pounds overweight, glasses, slightly disheveled. "I'm...uh...uh...I'm Oscar. Tech support. Just trying to fix some network problems."

"I see," said Truman. The guy looked a bit nerdy. Computer jock certainly fit. "Kind of a weird time, though."

"Emergency," said Oscar. "They needed it fixed now."

"Okay," said Truman. "Well, good luck." He turned away and resumed his walk toward the exit.

"Yeah," he heard behind him.

Truman was relieved. His secret – the clandestine phone calls – seemed safe. It was strange though – some guy fixing a computer at 3:30 am on a Sunday. If he were't so paranoid

about his phone calls, he might ask around about it on Monday. But the next question would be why he was in the office at the odd hour. There was no point in calling attention to himself in that way.

“Let sleeping dogs lie,” he thought to himself.

He didn't hear Oscar fumbling desperately for the cell phone in his jacket pocket as soon as Truman turned away from him or the short conversation he had with his partner waiting outside the building.

Oscar went back to replacing the Logitech mouse connected to the computer under the desk with one that was virtually identical except for the modification he'd made to it. He had installed an extra small chip inside the plastic casing. The next time someone entered their password, software stored in the modified mouse would have free run of the hospital computer network. Among other functions, it created an invisible tunnel through the network firewall. Data could flow in and out of the system and be totally invisible to the firewall and other security systems in place. Otherwise, the mouse behaved normally and would remain in place for a couple more years until it broke or was finally replaced by a newer model.

Oscar moved the PC back into place and prepared to go downstairs and out through the doors at the medical center's loading dock. Meanwhile, Scott Truman arrived at his Toyota Corolla in the hospital parking garage a block away. When he put his hand on the door handle he heard the scrape of a shoe behind him.

“Hey, Buddy,” a voice said.

Truman turned to find a handgun with an abnormally long barrel aimed at his chest. It fired three shots, silenced so they were no louder than a man tapping his finger on a table, and sent bullets tearing through his stomach, heart and liver.

### Chapter 3

ENZO LEE HAD just finished a story about a young man's third month of meditating alone in a stark Mount Tamalpias cabin, aided only by daily food deliveries left outside his door. (“*Ohmmm’ is the loneliest number that you’ll ever hear...*,” the story began.)

His phone rang and Lee picked it up to hear the voice of his city editor.

“Hey there,” she said. “Come on over here for a minute, will you?”

Lee rocked back in his chair and scanned the far side of the San Francisco News’ newsroom. Through the window of her office that overlooked the reporters whom she supervised, Lee could see the diminutive Lorraine Carr barely visible behind her desk. She was leaning away from her computer monitor, clutching her phone in one hand and waving the other at him as if she were hailing a cab in a rainstorm.

He had to laugh as he hung up his phone, hit the button that sent the meditation story to the copy desk and began the circuitous route to Carr’s office. The newsroom’s gray industrial carpet had faded from dark to a lighter sheen that now showed where the coffee-addicted news staff had splashed their cups of caffeine over the years. OSHA inspectors had trimmed the stacks of old newspapers maintained by some reporters to waist-high piles. They had only shaken their heads at the strips of brown plastic on the floor that covered the phone, data and electrical wires that crossed the newsroom.

In addition to the newspaper hoarders, there were other signs of journalists’ idiosyncrasies. One reporter had a dozen campaign bumper stickers covering the top of his desk. Another had a collection of snow globes from around the world on her file cabinet.

One hyperactive reporter with only one working eardrum had installed a disco ball atop a pole on his desk that spun when his phone rang, so he no longer had to race across the newsroom when a call came in for someone three rows away. It worked but he’d gained 12 pounds in the six months since the innovation halved his newsroom mileage.

“Hiya,” Lee said, as he arrived at Carr’s office and sat down in the chair across from her. Six months earlier, the News had promoted Carr from her job covering the high-tech businesses in Silicon Valley to the city editor’s job. Her predecessor, Ray Pilmann, had been promoted to Assistant Managing Editor. The change had rescued Lee from nearly constant conflict with Pilmann.

“Hi, yourself,” replied Carr, giving him her radiant smile. Her black hair was mostly in a small loose bun in the back with some on the sides hanging down, a little below her chin. It was a planned tousled look. Lee wasn’t sure what hairstyle to expect from Carr when he arrived in

the mornings. Curled and tinged red one day. Fluffed the next. Moussed and combed straight back on the third.

Carr was attractive with high cheekbones, a heart-shaped face and smile dimples that reached her eyes. Her black hair and dark eyebrows contrasted with her pale complexion. Her lower lip – colored a deep red today – had just a touch of extra thickness, enough to suggest a pout on the way.

“I’ve got one for you,” she said. Carr handed a pink telephone message slip to him. He studied it for a minute. It was in Carr’s handwriting and indicated it was a message from Duffy, the News’ police reporter.

“Body found. Toyota in Dogpatch,” the note read.

“Can’t Duffy cover this?” said Lee. “He’s working today, right?”

“He’s up to his neck,” said Carr. “Murder-suicide in the Sunset. And a wife killed her husband in the Richmond. C’mon, Enzo. I know it’s not your usual fluff stuff. I need some help here. Please.”

Lee hesitated.

Although he’d been a highly regarded investigative reporter early in his career on the East Coast, Lee was happy with the niche of light, frothy features that he had carved out for himself at the News. He gave the editors a stream of fun, readable stories they showcased on the front page and he left the job behind when he walked out the door every evening.

He enjoyed having less stress in his life and not having to worry that a mistake might make the world cave in on him. Pilmann, the previous city editor, hadn’t understood that and constantly hammered him to take on whatever businessman or politician Pilmann had decided to take an ax to that day.

During his seventeen years in the news business, the traditional passive-aggressive relationship that reporters have with editors had served Lee pretty well. He knew that the more prickly the interactions, the less likely an editor was to assign you a story you didn’t want. It was human nature, taking the path of least resistance.

On the other hand, Lee liked Carr. They had worked a few stories together when she was a reporter. Plus, she was young, idealistic and determined to pull the News up a few rungs in the journalism world through smarts and energy. Lee had seen the fever before and guessed the outcome. It was hard to inject new life into a newsroom accustomed to mediocrity and carrying as much dead weight as the News. But he didn’t want to be part of the baggage Carr had to bear.

“Okay,” he finally said. “Dogpatch, huh?”

\* \* \*

The Dogpatch neighborhood hugs the eastern edge of San Francisco and is surprisingly close to the city's downtown. Once, a working waterfront bustled only a couple of blocks away. But that stretch of the San Francisco Bay shoreline was abandoned decades ago for parts of the waterfront that could better accommodate huge modern ships. Now, rotted pilings litter the shoreline.

The blue Toyota Corolla had been abandoned on Terry A. Francois Street, not far from a waterside bar and restaurant known simply as The Ramp. Lee knew it as an out-of-the-way spot frequented by locals where you could sit outside on a warm sunny day. He'd shared a few pitchers of beer there on lazy Saturdays with old high school friends still sweaty from a game of pick-up basketball. It was a perfect place to have a burger, watch the gulls dive amid the pilings and catch up with each other's lives.

A cluster of police cars and an ambulance sat with lights still flashing and blocked half of the two-lane road. Lee drove past in his Spyder and parked 50 yards farther down the street. He dug around in the glove box until he found an old yellow press pass laminated in plastic. He hoped it would give him a slightly more exalted status than his small notebook and pen.

He was a lean six-footer a few months shy of 40. Chinese on his mother's side and Italian-Scottish on his father's, Lee's mixed heritage made him difficult to pigeonhole ethnically. He was regularly mistaken as being Hawaiian, Filipino...even Mexican and Persian. His short-cropped black hair was graying steadily on the sides.

It was chilly so Lee threw a navy windbreaker over his light blue golf shirt, black jeans and brown leather Rockports.

As he neared the Toyota and the cluster of police cars, Lee noticed a black woman wearing a dark gray suit with a white dress shirt open at the neck. Her hair was in a profusion of braids that reached her shoulders. She wore tinted glasses and seemed to be running the show.

"Hey, Bobbie," Lee said. He was glad that Det. Bobbie Connors was working the case. Unlike the few reporters who routinely covered the cop beat, Lee didn't have extensive contacts among the San Francisco police. But he and Connors had helped each other on a difficult case a couple of years earlier. He'd come to enjoy her outsized personality and the fact that she never seemed to hide behind her status as a cop. They'd since shared a couple of beers together.

Lee would have given Connors a 'hello' squeeze but for all the other cops around. He knew some cops hated reporters and wasn't sure how a show of familiarity would play with her peers.

“Enzo,” said Connors. “What are you doing here? Changing beats?”

“Naw,” said Lee. “Not likely. Just helping out. I guess there was a lot of action last night, huh? Duffy’s pretty jammed.”

“Yeah,” said Connors. “Just one of those nights. Full moon or something. Look, why don’t you stay out of the way and let me finish up a couple things here. I’ll catch you up then.”

“Sure,” said Lee. He walked a little farther past the cluster of cars. He slowed when he passed the Toyota. The back doors were opened and he peeked inside. He saw the form of a body lying in the back seat, the bottom half covered by a brown blanket. He could see the brown hair on the top of the head and an orange sweatshirt heavily stained with blood. It was a mess.

As he waited for Connors, Lee stood on the shoulder of the road that looked out east toward the bay. He sucked in the ocean air and gazed over the water. The Bay Bridge ran out to his left. The office buildings of downtown Oakland stood in the haze across the bay. A big freighter in dry dock a half-mile away blocked his view on the right.

After 20 minutes Lee saw Connors walking toward him, her black pumps crunching on the gravel along the side of the street. When she reached him, Connors put one arm around his waist and gave him a big hug.

“Forgot to do this earlier,” she said.

Lee wrapped his arm around her shoulders and returned the hug. Connors didn’t seem too concerned what the other cops at the scene might think. But then, Lee knew Connors had often marched to her own drummer during her 20 years in the department. Not only had she stepped on toes during her quick rise through the ranks, Connors had also been the first lesbian cop to walk in full uniform many years earlier in the city’s annual Pride Parade, celebrating the city’s gay and lesbian culture. This had mortified some of her superiors. She had remained an out-of-the closet activist ever since then.

They walked up the street, enjoying the ocean breeze.

“There’s not a lot to tell right now,” Connors began. “Kid’s name is Scott Truman. He was 26. He’s got ID as an employee for the USF Medical Center. We’ll try to confirm that.”

“He was shot, obviously,” prompted Lee.

“Multiple gunshots to the chest,” she said. “Witnesses say the car was there all day Sunday. So, we think he was killed Saturday night or early Sunday and moved here before the morning.”

“Moved?” said Lee. “Then, where was he killed?”

“Don’t know just yet,” said Connors. “Got to find his friends, family. See what he was doing this weekend. When we figure out where this went down, that will tell us a lot more.”

“Okay. Thanks for the head start, Bobbie,” said Lee. “This saves me a lot of time compared to waiting around for everything to filter up through your PR department. They’re doing their job. It just takes forever.”

“No problem,” said Connors. “Who knows? If the past is any guide, you might turn up something that will help me.”

“Uhhh. Sure. I guess it’s possible,” said Lee. “But I wouldn’t count on it. I think I’m happy to let you guys deal with this one.”

“Well, there was one more thing you might find interesting,” she said. “Just a small thing.”

“Okay,” said Lee. “What is it?”

“Well, whoever put him in the car was wearing gloves,” she said. “You saw all the blood. It’s all over. The seats. Steering wheel. But no real prints. Just smudges. The kind left by gloves. You know. Like the ones they use in hospitals or that *wæ* use for that matter.”

“Okay. So, maybe not your garden-variety street crime then,” said Lee.

“Uh...no,” said Connors. She chuckled. “I would say definitely negative on that. I don’t know many guys on the street packin’ latex.”