

# SILENT PRETTY THINGS by O.J. Lovaz

## EXCERPT

He splashed cool water on his face, put on his one good suit; grabbed his keys, badge, and his Glock. In another minute he was inside his unmarked black Dodge Charger. He tossed a handful of mixed nuts in his mouth and drove away. He'd have to make a quick stop at McDonald's for a black coffee, no sugar. Jesus! What a splitting headache he had!

It was just past 1:30 a.m. when he arrived. The first odd thing that he noticed was the picnic table out on the front lawn, which looked as if the guests had left in a hell of a hurry. There were plates full of food and bottles of beer from which no more than a sip had been taken. Moreover, it was evident that no one had attempted to clean up or save any of the leftover food, and there was a whole lot of it. Pity that he couldn't nibble on the evidence. That lasagna looked amazing—sure, it would be cold now, but he'd done much worse, especially during long stakeouts. Of course, eating lasagna right before inspecting a corpse wouldn't be smart.

Officer Gutierrez greeted him at the front door. As he signed the crime-scene logbook, he sensed a faint smell of smoke. Curious. "Do you smell that?" he asked Gutierrez.

"Smell what?" His voice reeked of mediocrity.

"Smoke. Do you smell it?"

"No, not really."

"Hmm, have the rookie do a perimeter search around the house," said Wozniak, looking back and sideways at a young officer standing idly at the bottom of the stairs.