

ON THE
EDGE OF
TRUST

A LOGAN POINT NOVEL

PATRICIA
BRADLEY

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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In memory of Bryan Byars, the love of my life,
and Mavis Alexander, my big sister in Christ.
Your encouragement pushed me to write the best book I could.
To God be the glory for lives well lived.

1

A ding from her phone jerked Jenny Tremont from a sound sleep on her den sofa. She hadn't been able to sleep and had come down to the den to watch her favorite Friday night show.

Her phone dinged again. The security camera. She grabbed her phone and clicked on the video but didn't see anything. Maybe an animal?

She replayed the video, looking closer. This time Jenny saw it. A shadow. And it wasn't an animal. Her sins had found her out—wasn't that what her mother always said? That her sins would be exposed.

Whoever it was hadn't gotten in the house yet. She could grab her go-bag, find the intruder's location on her cameras, and go out on the opposite side of the house.

Jenny raced for the stairs. *Wait*. The back door. She'd locked it and set the alarm . . . hadn't she? She always did, even before she had reason to fear, since Logan Point, Mississippi, was next door to Memphis. But sometimes she forgot.

Was there time to check? She couldn't risk not checking and changed direction. At the back door, her shoulders sagged. She hadn't locked it. Dumb mistake.

Jenny threw the dead bolt. Getting caught had always been a possibility—she'd even prepared for it. But she'd never really

believed it would happen. And she hadn't thought it would happen when she couldn't get to the money. She couldn't go to Zack Mitchell's house in the middle of the night—he would want to know where the money came from. *Think.*

Zack's son. Drew would bring it to her, no questions asked. Jenny's thumb hovered over the phone. But not here—that might put him in danger.

Quickly she punched in his number as she hurried to her bedroom. Once it started ringing, she laid the phone on the bed while she changed from her pajamas to a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. By the third ring, she'd yanked on a pair of Nikes and grabbed the phone again.

"Come on, Drew, answer!" she muttered under her breath.

On the fifth ring, he picked up. "'Lo?"

Thank God. "I need you to bring me something."

"Jenny? What? I can't hear you." He sounded half asleep.

"Drew!" she hissed and pressed her hand to her head. "Pay attention and don't ask any questions, just do what I ask."

"Huh?"

"Please, just listen. I have to leave town. I hid a package in that place you showed me back when your mom was sick. Get it and bring it to the house on Winslow."

The house was on her way out of town, and meeting the boy there shouldn't put him in any danger.

"I don't under—"

"Please. Drew, just do what I said. I need it now."

Silence stretched for five seconds. "Okay . . . it'll take me a little bit," he mumbled.

A board creaked outside her bedroom, and she snapped her head toward the door. Was it the old house settling? Or had the intruder found a way in without alerting her?

"Just hurry," she whispered.

Jenny disconnected and eased to the door, holding her breath

as she pressed her ear against the wood. Hearing nothing, she exhaled quietly. She was on edge. That's all it was.

Even so, she tiptoed back to her bed, where she grabbed the go-bag. As an afterthought, she silently opened the drawer on her night table, where she kept the Beretta that Zack had given her.

No gun.

It had to be there—she never kept the gun anywhere else. Jenny quietly burrowed through the drawer.

It wasn't there.

Had she accidentally put it in the lower drawer? The gun wasn't there, either.

When had she last seen the Beretta? *Think*. Jenny pressed her fingers to her temples. Maybe Zack had taken it the last time he was here, when he installed the security cameras. He wouldn't have done that without telling her.

Earlier this week, people she worked with had dropped by for her birthday, including—

Her cell phone buzzed. Drew. She punched the answer button. "What is it?"

"Where did you say to meet you?"

"The house on Winslow. I'm leaving now."

Jenny hung up, crept to the door, and stood stock-still. Her breathing and the grandfather clock ticking off the seconds at the end of the hall were the only sounds in the house. If anyone was here, they weren't moving.

She waited. An eternity passed, and she checked her watch. *Five minutes?* Time she needed to be on the road.

Jenny calculated how long it would take Drew to get to their meeting place . . . the same amount of time it would take her to drive there. Would he wait around if she was late? Probably not. Knowing Drew, he would come check on her. And that might put him in danger. She had to leave now.

Jenny cracked the door just as the grandfather clock chimed

the two o'clock hour, masking the creak of the door. Ignoring the pounding of her heart, she stepped into the hallway and looked both ways. Empty.

Encouraged, she eased to the top of the stairs. No one hid at the bottom. Treading lightly, she descended the steps. Front door or back? She'd parked her car at the back . . . and probably there was no one in the house anyway. She couldn't believe she'd let a little creak put her in such a panic. Except it hadn't been the creak. She'd seen someone's shadow—that's what set her on edge.

She had to leave. Now. Jenny tiptoed down the hall to the dark kitchen. She should've put alarms on her doors, but she'd thought the cameras were enough. An intruder could've gotten in before she locked the back door and be hunkered down behind the island. Or under the table. Impossible to tell in the dark. Did she dare risk turning on the light? Even though she'd almost convinced herself no one was in the house, the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end.

Jenny hesitated. If someone was in the house, they would expect her to go out the back door to her car. She backed away and hurried to the den with its sliding doors. It wasn't much farther to her car, anyway.

If only she had the Beretta. Jenny knelt and removed the security bar from the track. The steel bar felt good in her hand. At least she had a weapon now.

Light flooded the room. Jenny whirled around, and her eyes widened. The intruder stood just inside the door to the den. "What do you want?"

"You know why I'm here."

Jenny tried to swallow, but her tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. "I-I don't know what you're talking about."

Cold eyes stared at her. "Come on, Jenny—I'm tired of paying you."

"What you're giving me is only a fraction of what you've stashed away." She needed the money to help her dad start over.

“Wrong answer. I’m tired of you holding that data drive over my head.”

“You should’ve thought of that before you got your hands dirty with drug money.”

“That’s rich, coming from you. You were the one snooping on my computer.”

And found an encrypted account on the computer that she’d hacked into. “I thought you were embezzling, not putting dirty money in an offshore account.”

Jenny hadn’t shared the file with anyone since she didn’t know who else was involved in the scheme. A gun raised level to Jenny’s chest.

She gasped. It was the Beretta Zack had loaned her. “How did you get my gun?”

“That part was easy—like most people, you are so predictable. A key under the flowerpot on the front porch—although I didn’t need it since you conveniently left your door unlocked. As for the gun . . .” The intruder shrugged. “It was where I expected it to be. Why couldn’t you have been that predictable with the data drive? Hand it over.”

“I don’t have it.” Jenny gripped the cold steel bar. She wasn’t a fool. If she gave up the drive’s location, she’d be dead. Jenny tightened her hand around the bar and edged closer to her intruder. She’d never tried to kill anyone before, but there was a first time for everything.

“Where is it?” Impatience rang in the voice.

She didn’t have much time. “I . . . I mailed it to Victoria Mitchell two weeks ago.”

No! She’d just put a bull’s-eye on Victoria with words that weren’t even true. But they were believable—everyone knew she was close to the Mitchell family. She would just have to survive to keep Victoria safe.

The intruder fixed her with an intense gaze and seemed to be

considering the possibility that what she'd said was true. Jenny was almost within striking distance. "But we can work this out. Just turn around and leave. We'll pretend this never happened."

"Not without the drive."

And that would seal her death. Jenny swung the bar, knocking the gun to the floor. She scrambled to reach it first.

2

What was going on with Jenny? Drew had never heard his mom's friend scared like that. And when had she put something in his secret hiding place? He'd forgotten he'd even shown it to her.

Drew checked his phone: 2:00 a.m. He hoped his dad was asleep. Jenny had said to come as soon as he could and to bring the package she'd hidden. It'd be hard to explain what he was doing if his dad caught him.

Drew grabbed the jeans he'd dropped to the floor a few hours ago and pulled them on, then tugged a T-shirt over his head. As an afterthought, he slipped on a hoodie—even though it was mid-May, nights had been cool this week. His grandfather said something about it being blackberry winter, whatever that was.

He had no idea what Jenny could've hidden, but it couldn't be bigger than his backpack, so he grabbed it. The house his grandparents had lived in until his dad bought it after Drew's grandmother died was old, like nearly a hundred years old. He walked lightly to his closet and knelt, pushing aside a pile of dirty shirts.

His aunt Tori had shown him the hiding place when he was a kid, and he'd never told anyone else about it except Jenny. After his mom got sick, Jenny had practically moved in to take care of her, and after she died, Jenny had been there for him. Not like his dad, who cared more about drinking than about how Drew felt.

Even now she came every couple of weeks to make sure he had clean clothes to wear to school.

Jenny understood him, and he'd told her a lot of things, like about the secret compartment and how he figured it had been used to hide money a long time ago. She'd thought it was cool.

Quietly, he opened his pocketknife and slid it between the boards, triggering the spring on the hidden compartment. His eyes rounded. "Whoa," he muttered.

Inside the compartment was money.

Where had it come from? *Duh*. Jenny put it there, but where had she gotten so much money? Questions whirled through Drew's mind. He bit his bottom lip, hesitating until he remembered she said to hurry. He stuffed the bundles in his backpack. He would ask her when he handed it over.

Drew picked up the last bundle and flipped through it. So many hundreds. Money that would go a long way toward the medical bills from his mom's cancer. Drew figured that the stress of those bills was one reason his dad drank so much.

He glanced into the backpack. If Jenny was hiding this money . . . was it even legal? And there was so much here that Jenny probably wouldn't even miss one bundle . . . Drew stared at the money in his hand a little longer.

It wasn't his, no matter where it came from. And what she'd done for his mom when she was dying . . . he owed Jenny a debt he'd never be able to repay. He stuffed the last bundle into the backpack. The last thing he picked up was a small box with a string tied around it. The contents rattled when he shook it.

Hurry.

Drew laid the box on top of the money and zipped the bag, then checked the time again. A little after two. Time to go.

He eased down the stairs, hoping not to awaken his dad, but when he passed the den, he frowned. His dad's snores usually raised the roof, but now only silence came from the room. Drew

tiptoed into the den far enough to see that his dad's recliner was empty.

No wonder it was so quiet. Drew checked his parents' bedroom, not really expecting to find him—his dad hadn't slept in the bedroom since Drew's mom died. A sigh escaped his lips. He knew where he was. McKay's, the local watering hole for drunks that didn't close until two.

So much for his dad's promise to quit drinking. Drew slammed out of the house, climbed into his pickup, and peeled out of the drive. He would be eighteen next year, and he wasn't staying here one day past it. He was going to be like his aunt Tori—leave and never come back except for short visits.

Ten minutes later, he parked in front of the vacant house on Winslow. Drew had expected Jenny's car to be in the drive. Where was she?

Maybe she'd parked somewhere else and walked over. Drew grabbed the backpack and climbed out of his truck. He jogged to the back door and entered the house, using the key she'd given him when she hired him to clean the windows. Jenny had been looking after the house while the owners were out of the country and had hired him to do odd jobs like the windows and mowing the yard.

"Jenny, it's me," he called out. "You here?"

Silence answered him. He tried to phone her, but it went to voicemail. He hung up without leaving a message.

Drew paced the darkened kitchen, waiting for her to show. Maybe he'd gotten it wrong—why would she ask to meet him here? He *had* been sound asleep when she called. Or maybe something happened to her car. He ran to his truck and hesitated. Her house was only a few streets over. He could leave a note on his windshield and run over there. That way if she came after he left, she'd see the note and wait.

When Drew reached Jenny's house, he paused at the back door. The lights were out. It looked like she'd already left, except her car was still in the drive. Something weird was going on.

Drew tried the door. Locked. He used his key to unlock it, stepped inside, and turned on the light. She wasn't in the kitchen.

"Jenny?" he called softly.

No answer. Maybe she was in the den—that was where she stayed most of the time. In the den, he flipped on the light switch, but nothing happened. Oh yeah, sometimes it didn't work—his dad was supposed to fix it, but as usual he hadn't gotten around to it.

Drew crossed the room to the lamp by the sofa. A coppery odor filled his nose, just like when he'd field-dressed a deer back in the winter.

Goosebumps raised on his arms. Something wasn't right. He fumbled for the lamp switch, and light filled the room. Drew's breath froze in his chest.

Jenny lay on the floor in front of the sliding doors, with blood pooling under her body.

No . . . Shaking his head, he squeezed his eyes shut. Maybe he was seeing things. Drew opened his eyes again, but nothing had changed. His gaze fastened on the gun beside her body, and his gut tightened.

His dad once had a Beretta just like that . . .

Drew knew his dad had a thing for Jenny but that she didn't feel the same way. Had his dad—

He jerked his head toward the street at the sound of approaching sirens. Someone had called the cops. They would think he killed her. Or worse, if the gun was his dad's, they would think *he'd* killed her.

Drew grabbed the gun and stuck it in his belt, then turned and bolted out the way he'd come. He sprinted through the same yards he'd crossed earlier. Had to get as far from the house as possible. When he reached the street his truck was parked on, he dashed across.

A horn blared, and he looked to his right. Oncoming lights flashed in his eyes. Tires screeched as the car skidded toward him.

At the last second, he jumped sideways, and the car barely missed him. The driver lowered his window. “Are you crazy?”

He’d heard that voice before. Drew ducked his head and kept running. *Have to get out of here. Have to find my dad. Ask him if the gun is his . . .*

He reached his truck and jerked the door open, practically falling inside as he shed the backpack. His hand shook so hard, the key missed the ignition the first time. Once he was rolling, he pointed the truck toward home.

Someone had killed Jenny. Was it his dad? No. Even drunk, his dad could never do anything like that. But if the gun was his, the police would never believe he was innocent.

So who did it? Drew gripped the steering wheel. What was he going to do with the money in the backpack? And the gun? The questions chased through his head in a never-ending circle. He needed help.

Tori. He’d call his aunt—she solved crimes, she’d know what to do. Then he shook his head.

No way—Tori would make him take the money and the gun to the police.