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A COZY
MINI
MYSTERY

Punished
By *Silence*

KARMA'S REVENGE SERIES

Punished By Silence

A Cozy Mini-Mystery

Book 2 of the Karma's Revenge Series

www.TheCozyDetective.com

Written By

Jwyan C. Johnson



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PUBLISHING

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Description

When a twin girl goes missing, an anonymous request for the *Clue Queen* herself is granted. But Detective Dedra Kare finds the obstacles of her own past in this case first! She must emotionally outrun her flashbacks as the current investigation turns into a game of *Hide-and-Seek* but on a legal field of child custody, narcissistic parenting, and a single teddy bear. But with every hidden motive playing too, is Dedra the one who's *It*?

A Stand-Alone Mystery

*This eBook functions both as a stand-alone mystery and *Book 2* in the *Karma's Revenge* series.

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And Now Book 2:

Table of Contents

[Chapter 1](#)

Hide

[Chapter 2](#)

Seek

[Chapter 3](#)

Ready or Not

[Chapter 4](#)

Come Out, Come Out

[Chapter 5](#)

Wherever You Are

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Chapter 1

Hide

The dark sky and light rain unite above Michael. But he continues to command his gas pedal to drive on through this misunderstanding at 91 miles per hour: a speed that almost compares to how fast this happened.

“I think that’s *him*,” a voice from before echoes inside Michael as he imagines being noticed again. Surveilling for clues, he reaches for the radio.

“I repeat ...this is an *Amber Alert* for Shyrel Tiera in a blue Nissan Sentra headed north on the 21 freeway. A little girl with dark brown hair, hazel green eyes, she’s seven years old! Please call us if you have *any* information.”

“Seven?” Michael asks his car radio as his daughter laughs. “Shyrel, are you *seven*?”

“No I turned *eight* today!”

“That’s what I thought!”

Shyrel smiles while holding her new teddy bear with her bruised arm.

“This is not your fault Shyrel,” Michael says. “You did the right thing by telling me this was happening in your new home, okay?”

“But Mommy told me not to tell you.”

“Well... Mommy should not have done that. Anytime somebody hurts you or your sister, you should tell me. No matter who it is!”

“Okay.”

“And don’t you worry about Kayleen. We’re gonna find a way to get your twin sister, I promise, okay?”

“Okay.”

Entering into traffic, Michael slows down his car and speeds up his heartrate. He reaches for his hat to disguise his daughter and drives on fully aware that no *Yield Sign* exists for public opinion.

Chapter 2

Seek

“Captain,” Detective Corey calls inside the precinct. “We got your call. Is this about the *Amber Alert* we just heard?”

“Yeah,” the Captain replies. “I need you and Dedra on this case. The home residence is 2121 Central Drive.”

“Central Drive?” Dedra confirms “Doesn’t that address support the other precinct’s territory addiction?”

“Believe it or not, they asked for *our* help. And I was as surprised as you guys. But no one’s surprised at an anonymous request for the *Clue Queen* here. Besides this missing child is the daughter of one of their cops.”

Dedra takes the file and reads it over.

“In fact,” the Captain adds, “all you cops drop everything! Let’s find this little girl, the daughter of one of our very own. Let’s go!”

As the cops head out, the Captain returns to his office.

“Wasn’t this your old division Dedra?” Corey asks. “Please tell me you know a shortcut.”

Corey glances at Dedra looking even harder at the case file.

“Dedra you okay? Do you know the missing girl?”

“No,” Dedra replies, “I know the parent cop! He’s my former partner. There’s gotta be more to this.”

“Dedra hold up,” Corey says jogging to keep up with her walking pace. “You actually think this case is *bigger* than a child abduction? Is that even possible?”

“With Wendal, yeah. He’s a crooked cop and a drug dealer, though I could never prove it. Just between us, Wendal is the real reason I left that precinct. Just look at this 911 transcript! The anonymous caller changed their mind in the middle of their first sentence. At first, it sounds like someone calling in a *Code Green*... like a policeman would do.”

Corey takes the file and reads it over as Dedra continues.

“Even weirder, Wendal doesn’t have any children.”

“He’s your *former* partner from years ago.”

“Three years ago. But this missing girl is seven years old plus her birthday, which is today.”

“That is odd.”

“Not one call yet from the mother. And these 911 details are next to nothing! This whole report is just a collection of emotionally charged terms, even before the missing child’s name!

“From ‘armed and dangerous’ to ‘proceed with caution.’”

“Someone’s trying to incite excessive force from the police, *our* police... in *our* precinct. Corey this could be an organized hit, unknowingly carried out by us, that won’t be his or his precinct’s problem! And maybe the real target is this child’s biological father?”

“It’s possible. Statistically, most kidnappings are by a non-custodial parent. But why would a father take one twin and leave the other?”

“Can you cover for me for a few minutes?” Dedra paces and ponders.

“Captain said an anonymous caller asked for me specifically. And I think I know why. Go without me. I’ll borrow a regular police car to blend in.”

“See you there.”

Chapter 3

Ready or Not

“I’m telling you everything officers,” the mother yells, “Kayleen tripped on this rug and she fell. It’s just a rug burn! How many more got’cha questions you got for me instead of Michael?”

“Michael?” Corey inquires. “Who’s Michael mam?”

“I... uh... I didn’t say Michael! I said ‘my gal.’”

“Mam,” Corey asks, “our officers are doing everything they can. But to do this, we need to find what may have provoked this incident. Now does anyone else live with you and your girls?”

“I... look I already told everything! Why are you persecuting *me*? How about doing your job?”

The mother suddenly runs outside her house, past her injured daughter. And as officers follow and plead with her compliance. Dedra enters inside the house.

“Dedra,” Corey leads here to the kitchen for updates. “No sign of Wendal or any East Precinct policeman here. Mommy Dearest is blind by choice. She said she never considered contacting the biological father because he’s in prison... for drug dealing.”

“Yeah I researched it minutes ago. His name is Michael. And he made parole recently; has been out for about 3 months now. He always claimed his innocence. Coincidentally, the cop who allegedly busted him was Wendal.”

“But what’s the motive for Wendal to set Michael up for a drug bust?”

The two look outside to notice the attractive mother still being difficult with their police.

“Oh, now I get it.” Corey says.

“Parole includes admission of guilt,” Dedra reasons. “So why would Michael admit to drug possession when he’s innocent?”

The two look inside to notice the emotionally abandoned little girl, Kayleen.

“Oh, now I get it.” Dedra says to herself.

The *Amber Alert* sounds off once again on a police device.

“Dedra we got a heads up about news reporters arriving here in about an hour.”

“Probably invited by Wendal. So this case has an hour until the political circus comes to town to give the wrong story a microphone.”

As Corey joins the policemen outside, Dedra bends down to address Kayleen. Raising her little head to the rare attention, Kayleen moves her hair and her new teddy bear from her face revealing both types of pain.

“Kayleen,” Dedra manages, “my name is Dedra Kare. I’m a detective and I wanna help you, okay?”

“Okay?”

“Is it true that you turned eight years old today?”

“Yes,” she replies.

“Well happy birthday Kayleen! That’s a really nice teddy bear you have. Was it a gift from today?”

“Yes. It’s from... my *real* Daddy!”

“From Michael? Kayleen did you see your real dad come here and get Shyrel?”

“Yes...” Kayleen replies as Dedra realizes her fresh blood trail on the carpet.

“Okay, hold on for one second Kayleen. Let me find something to stop your bleeding.”

While scanning the abandoned house for anything to treat Kayleen’s injuries, Dedra finds nothing to consider.

“Kayleen? Where does your mom keep the band-aids or towels or *anything*?”

“In the adult shelf,” Kayleen says pointing to a padlocked cabinet. “But we can’t cause Mommy and Wendal only open it to give us food sometimes... but *only* when we’re good.”

Briefly punished by silence, Dedra returns in front of Kayleen to find her cut.

“Okay Kayleen,” Dedra continues while removing her scarf, “what happened today that you remember?”

“Me and Shyrel were playing in our room. And then some men came inside with Wendal to eat the white candy.”

“White candy?”

“The kind that they eat with their noses. Wendal keeps all the white candy it in our closet. But we’re not allowed to touch it.”

“I see,” Dedra understands, still wrapping Kayleen’s hand and watching her absent mother outside. “What happened next honey?”

“Then the telephone ringed. And Wendal said *Hello...Hello?* But there was no answer! So then me and Shyrel knew it was the *secret* phone call.”

“Kayleen what’s the *secret* phone call?”

“Well...”

“You can tell me.”

“Well Daddy isn’t allowed to come and see us. But sometimes he drives by and throws some food over the fence for us because we get hungry. Whenever our telephone rings once, that’s how we know there’s more food for us near the fence. But we have to get it before Mommy and Wendal see it. So when they’re not looking, me and Shyrel pretend like we are playing hide and seek with each other, until we sneak in all the food and hide it. I don’t mean to be bad Miss Dedra. But even when Mommy and Wendal don’t give us food, I still get hungry sometimes. Shyrel said it’s not bad for us to do it. But please please don’t tell Mommy and Wendal ‘cause I’ll get in trouble.”

“I promise I won’t tell them,” Dedra assures. “Please continue Kayleen. Then what happened after the *secret* phone call?”

“When Wendal was on the phone saying ‘hello... hello,’ Shyrel whispered to me that we had to get back in our room before Wendal went back in to eat the white candy.’ I said Wendal might catch us. So she ran so fast in the room, but I wasn’t fast enough and Wendal blocked me.”

Dedra pauses as Kayleen continues.

“Shyrel ran into the backyard. And I ran the other way there. We saw 2 Teddy Bears and some more beef jerky for us to hide.”

“Wow.”

“And then we even saw Daddy at the Stop Sign. And we waived to him. But Wendal saw it from our window. So he ran past our fence and shouting at Daddy. And then Shyrel started screaming that we wanna live with Daddy.”

“Yeah.”

“And then Shyrel whispered to me ‘let’s just run away on da-counta-three. But I was scared, I didn’t want to get in trouble. Then Shyrel ran outside really fast and jumped inside Daddy’s car. And then Wendal shot a gun. He drove away really fast.”

“Sure,” Dedra reacts in a softer voice.

“Mommy hit me so hard. It was worser than any other time! And then she said I can never leave.”

“Oh my!”

“It’s not fair that I’ve been good all day but they still didn’t give me any food today.”

“You’re right honey,” Dedra manages. “It’s not fair.”

Dedra notices the mother and all the policemen coming back.

“Miss Dedra? Can you take me where Daddy and Shyrel are? It’s more safer and more fun when we’re with Daddy. He never hurts us. There’s more food and there’s even toys at his house. It was good before the judge made us go with Mommy. Can you please take me to be with Daddy and Shyrel? I wanna go. Please Dedra?”

“Kayleen... I...”

“Please Miss Dedra. I’ll give you my teddy bear.”

Punished by silence once more, Dedra stares at Kayleen and scans the outside view of the window as everyone is arriving back inside.

“Exactly how good *are* you at *hide-n-seek*?”

Chapter 4

Come Out, Come Out...

“Dedra,” another familiar professional walks inside.

“Oh, hi Doctor,” Dedra replies turning back to the conversation.

“Kayleen? This is Dr. Johnson. He’s a child psychologist who works with us.”

“Hi.”

“Hello Kayleen!” Dr. Johnson bends down. “Cool teddy bear! I wanted to make sure you’re okay. Can we talk about a few things?”

“Okay.”

“Alright. So Kayleen how did...”

Dr. Johnson pauses to notice Dedra’s eyes tearing up. And before others notice, Dedra walks quietly outside pass everyone returning inside, toward her car.

“One quick second Kayleen. I’ll be right back, I promise okay?”

“Okay,” Kayleen replies as she watches Dr. Johnson follow Dedra.

“Dedra,” Dr. Johnson calls, “we’ve gotta get you off this case. It’s too close to your past with Wendal. And you and I both know it’s way too close to your own s...”

“Doctor I’m fine,” Dedra manages to say without her eyes. “But this little girl’s living out all the elements of narcissistic abuse: food deprivation, emotional gaslighting, and a dismissive co-dependent mother!”

“I know. It’s just that this is too familiar for you to...”

Dedra gestures Dr. Johnson closer to her police car as policemen walk by.

“This is a private conversation,” Dedra says to concerned cops nearby.

“Corey, can you take everyone inside. I just got some new information I’ll share in a minute.”

Corey ushers them all inside.

“Dedra,” Dr. Johnson offers. “I know you’re an adult and a professional on the job, but I still see you as my patient. If you’ll permit me to speak to you as your doctor now, go home! Don’t create these extra flashbacks. Corey can handle this case. And I’ll explain your dilemma to our Captain.”

“Okay but let *me* call him,” Dedra pulls out her cell phone and begins dialing. “I’ll be back.”

Dedra walks further away as Dr. Johnson returns inside for Kayleen. And a few moments pass as Dedra returns.

“Okay,” Dedra re-enters inside the home. “Dr. Johnson, the thing we talked about, I changed my mind. It will be okay. Listen everyone, Captain just called and a witness thinks they saw Kayleen’s twin sister, Shyrel. She’s in a car that’s been going in circles about an hour away from here. But first, I need to send the witness a picture of Kayleen to make sure. W...where is her twin sister? Where’s Kayleen?”

“She just ran suddenly in her room,” Corey replies. “I think the telephone ring scared her.”

“Wait... the home telephone rung in here? Who was it?”

“Beats me. It only rung once! I picked it up in time, but whoever it was just hung up.”

“Oh my... that was secret phone call! Kayleen told me earlier that’s the secret code between them when Michael is on the other side their home fence. Hurry inside her room!”

As the cops run toward Kayleen’s room, the stepmom mysteriously rushes to physically block their entrance.

“No,” the Mom insists, “I will check.”

“Move out the way Miss.” Corey says.

“Kayleen?” Dedra calls.

“You can’t go in! I have *rights* and you need a warrant.”

“Not if her safety is in jeopardy,” Dedra replies while turning to a policeman. “Kick down the door.”

“Wait...”

[BOOM]

The policemen rush inside a seemingly lonely room.

“Kayleen?” Dedra calls out. “Kayleen?”

As the cops approach a locked closet, Dedra continues to call for Kayleen,

mysteriously without the echo of the mother. In fact, Corey watches stepmom run out of the house. He only understands why after the cops break the lock on Kayleen's closet.

“She's not in here.”

“No but cocaine sure is... pounds of it!”

“You guys, follow Mommy Dearest,” Corey instructs.

“Kayleen?” Dedra continues toward the closed window. She opens it and climbs out toward the fence. “Janine?”

Dr. Johnson recognizes that new name and quickly runs after Dedra.

“Janine.” Dedra mysteriously calls out to no one as she walks aimlessly toward the fence. “I'm sorry.”

“Dedra,” Dr. Johnson approaches, “Corey's on it. Listen to me. You're too close to this case. Go home. I'll call our Captain. Blame me. But just go home now.”

As the confused policemen rotate their stares between Dedra and the closet size of cocaine, Dedra head nods to Dr. Johnson and leaves to her car as the extra search begins.

“What's going on here?” a voice enters the house. “Hey,” it continues as the cops tackle it. “Do you little cops know who I am?”

“Yeah,” Corey says. “You're Wendal. And you're also under arrest for that powdered candy store in your stepdaughters' room.”

Other officers return with the apprehended mother, also under arrest.

Chapter 5

Wherever You Are

(3 Days Later)

“Welcome back,” a news reporter says from the television screen. “We’re getting more information on the miracle reunion between a framed father and both his twin daughters. They are all confirmed to be safely across the border, beyond our jurisdiction. But the questions still linger around the 8-year-old twin, initially left behind. Exactly wow did little Kayleen outsmart her abusive mother, her drug-dealing stepdad, and every single law official *including* their clue queen: Detective Dedra Kare? We’re talking with Kayleen’s kindergarten teacher who has an idea on...”

[Knock Knock]

“Doctor Johnson?” Dedra peeks inside a familiar office at the precinct.

“Dedra,” he says turning the television off, “please come in!”

“Thanks,” Dedra says while sitting down.

“And of course,” Dr. Johnson hesitates, “I found out the same way everyone else did. The latest headlines were pretty unfair to you Dedra!”

“Yeah well that’s the media.” Dedra enters. “I’ve seen them all: *The Hide-and-Seek Princess beats the Clue Queen; Dedra Has No Comment Because She Can’t Find The Words Either!*; even Twitter has a picture of my police badge on top of a babysitter job application, all on the back of a milk carton.”

“Well of course this comes from a collective envy in this town. Dedra you’re the *Clue Queen* who has solved every puzzle without incident. And even with a stumble in this one, 2 arrests have been made, a crooked cop has been exposed, Mommy Dearest is out the picture, your past with Wendal has been avenged, and a little girl is living the better life she deserves.”

“I appreciate that Doctor.”

“How are you *really* feeling?”

“Just like I’ve been telling our Captain, my partner Corey, and everybody: I’m a little embarrassed but I’m fine. I’ll be okay. In fact, I’m only here because Captain says I can’t go back to work until I’m evaluated by you.”

Dedra lays sarcastically on couch.

“And you remember that anything you tell me in here stays confidential?”

“Sure. But I don’t know which of my emotions are missing after an 8-year-old tricks me?”

“Dedra,” Dr. Johnson smiles, “I think the *real* trick to this trick is the idea that *YOU* were tricked, isn’t it?”

Dedra looks away cautiously as he continues.

“I saw a scared little girl suddenly run to the rhythm of a single telephone ring, demanding to be left alone. She rushed into her room and just disappeared into a trail which led to Wendal’s cocaine collection. But my experience in *Child Psychology* wonders why an 8 year old would have the reflexes to lock the door and close the window behind her? Generally children that young aren’t that mindful and usually act out their emotions through tantrums and demands for comfort!”

“Really,” Dedra says silently while looking away.

“Dedra do you think an 8 year old knew the coincidence that our warrantless search of *that* room became legal as soon as she became missing?”

“It’s unlikely,” Dedra replies. “But her stepdad’s *is* a cop. And *hide-and-seek* was her diversion tactic just to eat! When you piece the possibilities together, Kayleen is obviously a genius.”

“No... I’m thinking maybe *YOU* are!”

Dedra pauses nervously and punished by silence as the doctor ponders further.

“I noticed a loss of reflex with that secret phone call. Dedra you never ordered a trace on it! Certainly it’s predictable that Michael called. But could you afford to be wrong? Was there a secret need to protect that presumption? Was there...*anyone* who knew for sure the caller was not Michael?”

Dedra remains silent with sporadic eye movement.

“Maybe that caller was the same caller who, just seconds before, incepted and canceled the *Amber Alert*?”

Dr. Johnson observes a still silent Dedra as he continues.

“And when you returned with your announcement of a witness, your body language spoke louder. You behaved like a clock, focused on timing. Coincidentally, it was perfect timing for Kayleen.”

Still punished by silence, Dedra takes a deep breath.

“And two days later, there’s a discovery across the border: a *stolen* police car.... but with no forced entry? No need for auto repairs?”

Dedra looks down with anxiety.

“But you know what Dedra? A few things I can’t quite figure out! And I’m so intrigued that I’d be willing to trade a really good detective something to fill in the blanks. But all I can offer is the reality that everything stay confidential, on *both* sides, forever. And I’m willing to do that. Do you think anyone take would that deal, Dedra?”

“Yeah,” Dedra assures and head nods in agreement. “I know *one* detective who certainly would. I would like to help you solve the puzzles in this case.”

“Alright,” Dr. Johnson head nods back. “What is your uhm... theory?”

“Well,” Dedra begins, “It was discovered that Kayleen is really good at *hide-and-seek*. And during this professional version of *hide-and-seek*, maybe ‘the system’ was ‘it’ without knowing it was. And just maybe Kayleen’s hiding place was underneath a blanket... in the back seat of my open police car.”

“And the ‘ready or not’ countdown was that secret phone ring.”

“Yeah,” Dedra confirms, “It was that and the time it took for me to explain to every officer Corey gathered inside what the secret telephone call meant. When I walked back in, I made sure to keep my car doors unlocked.”

“Okay. Go on detective.”

“And I’m only guessing that maybe we drove with sirens right through Kayleen’s unofficial search. You mentioned Shyrel’s *Amber Alert* that was mysteriously canceled. This did two things. First, it motivated Wendal to return home on a platter. Second, it eliminated the attention on Michael and Shyrel... until we found them. When that happened, let’s just suppose Michael found himself in my driver’s seat with instructions to drive both his girls across the border, where we have no jurisdiction *before* I reported it stolen... in two days!”

“You knew before... you knew.”

“Yeah.”

“And why, in this moment of *hide-and-seek*, was it necessary for your own

precinct to be ‘*It?*’”

“Because this was more than just a game,” Dedra assures. “Wendal is the governor’s son. And the politics around all of this were too unfairly powerful against these innocent children. From Wendal’s connections, to family courts, to the gullible eyes of public opinion, sometimes the best reply to a narcissistic trap is ‘game over.’”

“So... you tricked *everyone* into thinking that *you* were tricked by an 8-year-old girl?”

“It was the only way,” Dedra confirms while starring at the newspaper headlines.

The doctor stares again at the newspaper headlines.

“Are you planning on ever clearing your name?”

“Right now, I only care about clearing two innocent girls, during their childhood.”

“Well,” the satisfied doctor replies, “a deal’s a deal Detective. Thank you for your... theory. Everything discussed in here will remain confidential. Everything.”

“I really appreciate it Doctor,” Dedra responds through a slow exhale.

“But there is one thing I can’t let you get away with Dedra, or I wouldn’t be doing *my* job. You accidently referred to Kayleen as Janine. And I don’t even need my session notes to remember that Janine is your little sister’s name. Did you find out what happened?”

“No. I just believe her,” Dedra responds. “A whole lot of *bad* things happened... to her... to us. And I wasn’t there. I’m still not!”

“Well... once again, you and Janine agreed on that. Remember?”

“Yeah,” Dedra replies. “But that doesn’t make it right! Sometimes I feel so dismissive.”

“Janine is aware of everything *except* your dilemma around this agreement! I really think you should reach out to her. And of course you could always change the terms of this promise.”

“I hear you; I promise.”

“Okay. So... I’ll recommend a few days off for you, Detective. Take care of yourself.”

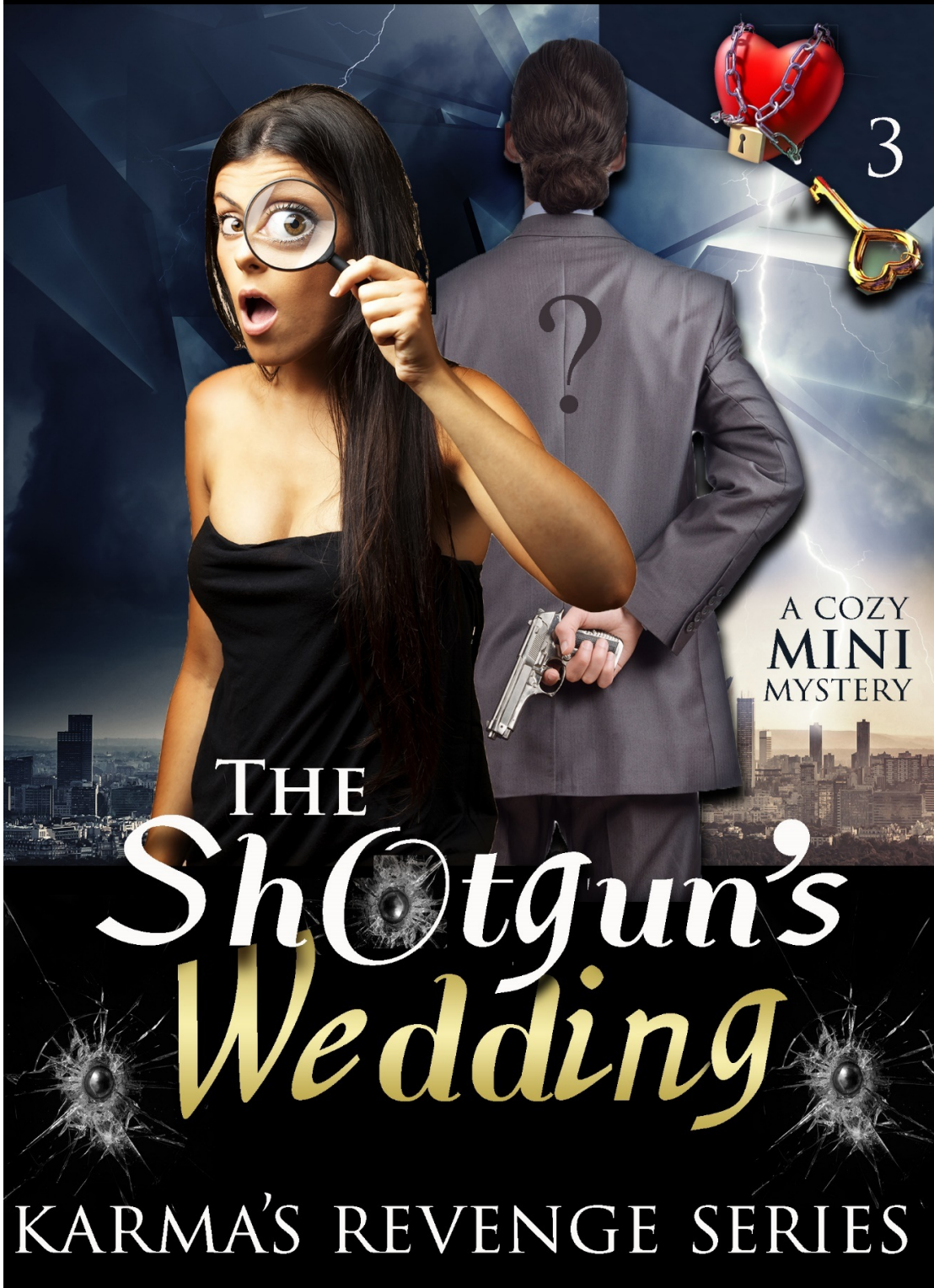
As Dedra arrives back home, she notices a package at her door. She opens it up to realize a teddy bear with a note attached:

*She wanted you to have hers, Detective Kare.
She named it Kare Bear.
Thanks for everything, Detective.*

The End

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3

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