

## Welcome Stephanie Plum Fans!

I'm an old retired guy who lives with his wife, Peg, in Independence, Mo.

We read a lot.

A few years ago, a friend turned us on to *Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum* series and we fell in love. We read all 14 books that were available at the time and laughed till we cried.

I had never written a book, a blog or anything of substance, but I was so fired up when I finished *Fearless Fourteen*, I had to do something.

I went into our office, sat down at my computer and pretended I was Janet. I wrote three chapters and gave them to Peg who had also read all 14 books.

I heard her laughing and thought that was a good sign. After she finished, she came to the office and said "Janet doesn't need any help. You should write a book of your own. Stop writing Stephanie Plum, develop your *OWN* characters and plot. I know you can do it."

So I did, and the Lady Justice mystery/comedy series was born.

Currently there are eleven novels in the series:

[\*Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P. City Retiree Action Patrol\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Lost Tapes\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice Gets Lei'd\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Avenging Angels\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Sting\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and Dr. Death\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Vigilante\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Watchers\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Candidate\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Book Club Murders\*](#)

[\*Lady Justice and the Cruise Ship Murders\*](#)

Following are the three Stephanie Plum Chapters that I wrote.

Please remember ---- I was sixty-six years old and this was the *FIRST THING* that I had ever written.

Hope you enjoy them!

## Chapter 1

It was Christmas time in the Burg. Shopping Malls were decked in holiday tradition; city fathers hung plastic bells from lampposts; miniature elves cavorted on front lawns; shoppers of all ages and descriptions scurried about looking for that perfect gift and, of course, petty crime was on the rise as shoplifters used the bustling crowds to mask their petty thievery, and break and enter complaints flourished as burglars relieved unhappy shoppers of their Christmas treasures from their homes and cars.

As regrettable as this crime surge may be, it's kinda good for me. I'm Stephanie Plum and I'm a bounty hunter or, as we put on loan applications, a fugitive apprehension agent. I work for my cousin Vinnie's Bond Company.

When a neer-do-well is apprehended by police, they call Vinnie to bond them out of jail until their court date. If the slacker shows up for court Vinnie's bond is returned and he collects a fee for his services. If he doesn't appear, he forfeits his bond (meaning Vinnie's money) unless he can be found and persuaded to return for a court date. That's where I come in. My job is to find the FTA (failure to appear) and persuade him or her to return to the police station to get a new court date and be rebonded out.

Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it. Right!

A few FTAs legitimately forget their court dates, but most are adamantly opposed to incarceration and will go to any extremes to avoid the lockup. I've been punched, tased, shot at, bombed and generally maimed by these fugitives and if, by chance, I happen to be successful in bringing one to justice, I am paid a percentage of the bond for my trouble.

In a way, I'm like a real estate agent or a car salesman; they only get paid when they make a sale; I only get paid when I return a scumbag to the police booking desk. Unfortunately, I'm not a real superstar bond apprehension agent. You might say I'm just a shade under mediocre and my income reflects my apprehension shortcomings.

So here we are. It's Christmas and I'm broke. I'm driving a yucky brown piece of crap car that barely passed the vehicle inspection and probably wouldn't have except my cousin Jenny's husband is a mechanic at the inspection station.

Reluctantly, I told myself that now is the time to correct my financial woes. Crime is up; FTAs are skipping their court dates at an astounding rate and best of all, most of them are just petty thieves: no rapists or murders or gangbangers. Easy Money! I probably won't even have to use my pepper spray, stun gun or cuffs and I certainly won't need my little 38 caliber pistol which mostly stays in my cookie jar.

As I pulled up to the bond office on Hamilton, I noticed that Lula was already there. Her red Firebird was parked in the prime spot in front of the office. Upon reflection, I decided not to park my heap next to her fine ride, so I drove around back and parked next to the dumpster. Appropriate! Maybe if I'm lucky the trash man will load it up and haul it away.

Lula is something! In her former life she was a ho. She had been severely beaten and almost killed by a deranged prizefighter

As luck would have it, I happened to be nearby and helped save her. Actually, it happened on my balcony, but it wasn't my fault. Since then, we have become friends. Lula now does filing in Vinnie's bond office; mostly her nails, but sometimes real files and on occasion, she is my sidekick as we seek out fugitives. Kinda like Batman and

Robin; Roy Rogers and Gabby Hays; Well actually, its more like the Two Stooges.

I entered the office through the rear door and waved to Connie, our office manager. Connie runs the place. Without her, Vinnie would be up a creek. She puts the FTA files together, searches databases for current information on the perps whereabouts, assigns the files to one of us agents and best of all, signs our checks when we actually bring someone in.

Connie looked particularly harried this morning and I noticed the stack of file folders on her desk.

“Busy day?” I said.

“You gotta be kidding me,” she replied. “I’ve been busting my ass since 7:00 this morning trying to get these files ready to assign.”

“What have you got?” I asked

“Mostly small stuff, but there’s a lot of it. Two B&E’s, 3 shoplifters, indecent exposure, and a traffic violation.”

“Great!” I said. “Sounds like something I can handle.” She handed me a stack of files. “Don’t be shy about assigning files to me for awhile,” I said. “I am sufficiently motivated by the lack of funds in my Christmas savings account and I’ll take as many as I can get.”

“Glad to hear it,” Connie said. “Because you and Joyce are about it right now.”

There are 3 bond enforcement agents in our office: myself, Ranger, and Joyce Barnhart. Ranger was my mentor and had taught me the few apprehension techniques that I actually used. He is a Cuban hottie. Besides being an agent for Vinnie, he owns his own security company and has been doing more for himself and less for Vinnie lately. Joyce is my arch enemy. She has been since grade school. She has made my life miserable in so many ways, the worst being getting caught by me, boinking my husband shortly after our honeymoon. Too bad we work in the same company. It doesn’t do much for office morale.

“OK,” I said, “I’m off. Today is going to be a good day”.

“Hold on there a minute,” Lula said. “Don’t I even get a Howdy Do? Anyway you gonna need me if you gonna try to get through that big stack.”

“Sorry Lula, I was just so focused on work. I didn’t mean to ignore you. But don’t you have filing to do?”

“Wow, I’ve never seen you that focused,” Lula said “ You must really be broke. And besides, there ain’t no filing here that can’t wait a couple of hours. Plus, it’s my special time of the month and I’m feeling kinda cranky. It would do me some good to thump on a few of them perverts.”

“NO thumping,” I said. “These are all just petty thieves and first time offenders. It should be a piece of cake.”

“Speaking of cake,” Lula said, “ if I can’t thump nobody, maybe we can stop on the way for a bite to eat. Food always helps me get through the cramps. I could sure use one of them breakfast sandwiches, you know, the kind with the big fluffy biscuit with eggs and bacon and cheese inside. Matter of fact, I could probably use two of them.”

It did sound kinda good. I had overslept this morning and had woofed down a TastyKake and a cup of coffee as I went out the door.

“Fine by me,” I said, “let’s get rolling. My car is parked out back.”

“Hold on there girlfriend,” Lula said. “You don’t expect me to go riding around

town in that brown turd of yours, do you? In my previous profession, I was a well respected ho. I got a reputation to uphold. It's degrading to be seen in that thing. What if I see someone I know?"

"Well," I replied, "we can certainly take your pristine Firebird, as long as you don't mind our fugitives peeing or puking in your back seat."

After a long pause Lula replied, "Hmmm, maybe we should take your car. If I see someone I know, I'll just hunker down in the seat so I won't be noticed."

Sure. Making Lula's 200 pounds, bright orange hair and fluorescent green tube top unnoticed will be a cinch.

So off we went. Two professional bond apprehension agents out to save the city. But, of course, first things first, and we headed to the McDonald's drive through.

I pulled into the drive-through lane and inched my way closer to the order speakerphone. As I rolled the window down, a muffled voice came from the speaker "Mlunth drsjp?" Having been here before, I figured that was speakerease for "May I take your order?"

"Yes," I yelled into the speaker, "we'd like three breakfast biscuits with egg, bacon and cheese and two large coffees."

"Tufshk leabn," came the reply.

"Oh yeah," Lula said, "give me one of them little crispy potato cakes, too."

"Beavun yusfh," was all I heard.

I saw the amount of the bill registered on the digital readout by the speaker and it looked about right, so I pulled through to the pickup window. The window flew open. I looked up and "YIKES!" The girl at the window looked like she had lost a fight with a nail gun. Each ear was pierced three times, each hole adorned with large hoop earrings. There was a stud bar through her eyebrow, a diamond stud on her left nostril, and two studs protruding from her lower lip. When she opened her mouth to speak, her tongue flopped out sporting a stud the size of a pea.

"No wonder the girl can't talk," Lula said. "Her mouth's stapled shut."

I handed her a ten and tried not to think about the fact that the food I was about to eat had been prepared by a practitioner of self mutilation.

I pulled out of the line and out into traffic. Lula was opening the sack of goodies and distributing the food when I heard her exclaim, "Oh crap! That little bitch put sausage on my biscuit instead of bacon. I don't want no sausage. I want bacon."

I thought about having to sit through the line and talking to studface again and I said, "Sorry about that. But we gotta get moving. How about you eat your biscuit with just egg and cheese and maybe we can get a bacon cheeseburger for lunch."

"Dumb bitch," Lula murmured. "Now this sandwich reminds me of one of my customers when I was a ho. The dude was all eggs and no meat." She flopped the greasy sausage patty on a napkin on the dashboard.

Lula had finished distributing the food and placed my coffee in the one cup holder on the console. She had just taken the lid off of her cup when a black SUV swerved in front of us and hit its brakes. I jammed on my brakes to avoid running into its rear end, causing Lula's hot coffee to pour into lap

"Oh God," Lula shrieked. "I've scalded my twat and ruined my skirt. I don't believe this."

The SUV and I came to a stop. The door of the SUV flew open and Joyce

Barnhart marched up to Lula's window. Lula was frantically trying to sop up hot coffee from her private parts when Joyce banged on her window.

"You!" Lula screamed. "I shoulda known only a dumb bitch like you would pull a stunt like that."

"Pipe down fatty," Joyce sneered. "I need to talk to you," she said to me.

Oh oh! The one thing you absolutely don't want to do is call Lula fat. She can take almost any verbal abuse except that. I saw that look in her eye and I figured she was getting as hot as the coffee in her lap.

"What do you want, Joyce? We've got work to do," I said.

"That's the problem. You have work and I don't. You came into the office this morning and cherry picked all the good FTA files. I have nothing to do till Connie gets new files ready to go. Now give me half of those files and I'll be on my way."

One thing about Joyce: she always wants to look the part of the TV bounty hunter. She wears tight leather pants and an even tighter leather button front top with most of the buttons undone. I hate to admit it, but she does have a great bod. Her boobs are about two sizes bigger than mine and with the aid of a push-up bra, her ample cleavage spills out the front of the leather blouse. It was this bosom at this very moment that was inches from an infuriated Lula's face.

"You ain't getting no files, bitch," Lula roared, "but you can have this." With one quick sweep, she grabbed the greasy sausage patty off the dash and stuffed it between Joyce's cleavage.

Joyce pulled away from the window fishing between her boobs for the greasy sausage.

"Oops, We better get out of here," I said, and I shoved the car into reverse and peeled away leaving Joyce on the side of the road screaming and shaking her fist. As we drove away, I grinned at Lula. She grinned back and we did a high five.

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It was time to get to work. I checked the mirror to make sure Joyce wasn't following and pulled to the curb to look at our first file. The FTA was Winnie Taggart, a single woman with a history of shoplifting busts. I thought the next statistic had to be a misprint. It said she weighed 300 pounds. Her M O was to wear loose baggy clothing under which she would hide her pilfered merchandise. This last time she was nailed at the Piggy Wiggle she was caught with a slab of bacon tucked under each breast. "WOW!"

Winnie lived in a small apartment on the second floor of a dingy walk-up. The front door opened into a foyer with apartment doors on each side and a staircase directly in the middle led to the second floor. Lula and I decided that her being a single woman with a history of smalltime busts, she would know how the system worked and would cooperate with us. We decided that the direct approach would be best.

I got my bounty hunter gear out of the back seat; pepper spray clipped to my belt, stun gun in my pocket and cuffs looped over the back of my pants. As we walked up the sidewalk, I happened to notice a UPS truck parked a few spaces ahead of us. The driver was loading some heavy packages on a two wheeled dolly to deliver around the neighborhood. He smiled and waved and I waved back.

We entered the foyer and climbed the steps.

We stopped at the door of apartment 2-B and knocked.

“Whadda you want?” came from within.

“My name is Stephanie Plum. I’m a bond enforcement agent. Winnie, you missed your court date and I need to take you down to the station to get another court date and get re-bonded.”

“Screw you and the horse you rode in on,” she yelled. --- So much for cooperation.

I looked at Lula. We rolled our eyes and thought, “Here we go again.”

I tried the doorknob and was surprised to find it unlocked. I cautiously pushed the door open and stepped aside. On a previous bust we had been greeted with a blast from a shotgun. See, we are learning.

I peered around the corner and there was Winnie, all 300 pounds of her, sitting in a recliner with a giant size bag of Dorito chips and a diet coke. Go figure.

I entered the room with Lula right behind me.

“Listen Winnie,” I said. “You know the system. You know what’s going on. You know we have to take you back to the station. How about we just get it over with.”

“How about you take a flying leap out that window over there,” she replied with a sneer.

I could sense that this was not going well. What a surprise. “Well Winnie, here’s the thing. We’ve got to take you in. It’s our job. We can either do it the easy way or the hard way. It’s your choice.”

“You can try and do it any damn way you want, but I ain’t going nowhere,” she said as she stuffed a handful of Doritos in her mouth.

I had noticed Lula start to bristle and I figured her time of the month was starting to kick in. “Put that bag of chips down. Quit stuffing your face and get your fat ass out of that chair,” she yelled.

“You’re one to talk,” Winnie yelled back. “Your ass ain’t so petite either.”

“What you talking about?” Lula fumed. “I just happen to be a full figured woman. You just FAT.”

I could see this was going nowhere fast. I knew we could get the cuffs on Winnie, but if she refused to get up on her own, there was no way Lula and I could lift her. As I was pondering our situation, I glanced out the window and saw the UPS driver returning to his truck with his empty dolly. A light bulb went on in my head and I made an executive decision. I whipped out my stun gun, flipped it on, walked over to Winnie and gave her the shock of her life. She slumped in her chair and the bag of Doritos fell to the floor.

“That’s a damn waste of good chips,” Lula remarked. “Now what?”

I pulled the cuffs from my pocket and tossed them to Lula. “You cuff her and I’ll be right back.”

I took the steps to the first floor two at a time. I didn’t want to miss the UPS guy. He was just getting in his truck when I waved him down.

“Pardon me, Sir,” I said. “I know this is an unusual request, but I wonder if we can borrow your dolly for just a few minutes?”

“Sorry ma’am,” he replied. “It’s against company policy. I could get fired.”

I knew it wouldn’t be easy, but I was prepared. Although most of my skills as a bounty hunter aren’t very sharp, I am a fantastic liar. I’ve found it often comes in handy.

Like now.

I reached into my back pocket and pulled out my fake badge that I had bought at the dollar store and flashed it in front of his face.

“Let me explain,” I said. “My name is Stephanie Plum and I’m a bail bond enforcement agent for the City of Trenton and I need to use your dolly in the apprehension of a fugitive.”

Sounds good doesn’t it?

“I don’t know,” he said. “I’ve never heard of anything like that before.”

“Sure you have,” I said. “You watch TV don’t you?”

“We’ll sure,” he replied. “Who doesn’t?”

“Then I’m sure you’ve seen police officers chasing a criminal and stopping a motorist to commandeer his car?”

“Yeah, I’ve seen that before,” he said.

“Well, this is the same thing only I need a dolly.”

“I---I just don’t know. This seems kinda weird” he stammered.

“I understand,” I said. “Let me clear this up for you. I’ll just call my Captain and have him give your supervisor a call and we’ll get the OK from him. What’s your supervisor’s name and number. I’m sure we can get this cleared up in the next half hour to forty five minutes.” I whipped out my cell phone.

He turned and looked at the mountain of packages yet to deliver, grimaced, did some mental calculations and said, “How long would you need to borrow it?”

“Ten minutes tops,” I replied.

“Well OK, but hurry,” he said as he unstrapped the dolly from the truck.

I pushed the dolly up the sidewalk, propped open the screen with a rock and drug the dolly to the second floor.

When I entered Winnie’s apartment, I found Winnie cuffed and Lula scarfing down Doritos.

“These are damn fine chips,” she muttered. “What we gonna do with that thing?” she asked eyeing the dolly.

“This,” I replied “is our mode of transportation for Winnie.” I laid the dolly on its back next to Winnie’s chair. “Here, help me get her onto this thing. We’ll just roll her out of the chair and on to the dolly and roll her down the stairs and out to the car.”

Easy—Right!

We huffed and puffed and pulled and then gravity took over and Winnie toppled out of the chair, but she hit the dolly and rolled off. Gravity was on our side but inertia was not. We each got next to Winnie, me at her shoulders and Lula at her butt and we pushed and pushed some more until she was finally on her back on the dolly.

“Whew,” Lula gasped. “Please don’t let me eat no more of those chips. I don’t wanna get like that.”

We then realized our next problem. Winnie wasn’t going to stay on that dolly by herself. We needed something to tie her on with.

At this point, rope was not part of my bounty hunter gear and I made a mental note to visit the local True Value. We started looking around the apartment for something to use as a tie down. I was rummaging through her drawers and pulled out a pair of black pantyhose. You can only imagine how big a pair of pantyhose has to be to fit a 300 pound woman.

“Jesus,” Lula exclaimed. “These babies are big enough seine fish!”

We took a sniff and concluded that someone already had. But they were perfect. When spread out from toe to toe there was ample material to go around Winnie and the dolly. We found two more pair and proceeded to wrap Winnie to the dolly like a mummy.

“OK, now what do we do?” Lula asked eyeing our handiwork. “You think we can move this tub of lard?”

“Well sure,” I replied, “I’ve seen guys move refrigerators by themselves with one of these things. It can’t be too hard.” Right?

Lula and I each grabbed a handle and lifted with all we had.

“I better not get me a hernia over this,” Lula gasped.

We finally got her in a semi upright position with the weight balanced over the wheels, just like I’d seen the refrigerator guy do it. We wheeled her out the door to the head of the stairs and looked down.

Oh oh! Gravity and inertia again.

We eased the wheels to the edge of the first step, held on with all our strength, muttered a prayer and forward we went. WHUMP! The wheels dropped to the second step and held. So far, so good. Encouraged, we went for number two. WHUMP! Hey, this isn’t so hard. One step at a time. WHUMP! Rest, WHUMP! Rest.

We were about four steps from the bottom when all hell broke loose. We heard a dog bark. We heard a cat screech and suddenly a big yellow cat comes busting through the open door and leaps through the air landing on Winnie’s big tummy. The cat’s next leap was right between our heads. We ducked, Lula screamed and let go of her side of the dolly and gravity took over. WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP! WHUMP!

As fate would have it, just as Winnie hit the foyer floor, Joyce Barnhart walked in the door. We could see the sheer terror in her eyes as she looked up and saw 300 pounds of Winnie and 50 pounds of dolly coming straight for her.

One more WHUMP! and a bloodcurdling shriek as Winnie and Joyce collided in the doorway. Good old inertia gave Winnie the advantage of forward momentum. We hurried down the steps to find Joyce spread eagled on her back with the mummy Winnie directly on top.

“Get her off! Get her off!” Joyce screamed.

Lula and I each grabbed a handle and lifted with everything we had. We had just lifted her high enough to get the weight off of Joyce when we heard a gurgle and a rumble and Joyce looked on in horror as a stream of orange bile erupted from the depths of Winnie Taggert. A half of a bag of chips and who knows how many diet cokes covered Joyce from head to toe.

“UGH!” Lula said. “Guess I won’t be eating any Doritos for awhile.”

We finally got Winnie upright again leaving poor Joyce in shock, gagging and crying on the front step.

The poor UPS driver who had witnessed the disaster rushed up to us as we got to my car.

“I hope my dolly is OK. I need it back NOW,” he said.

“Look buster,” I replied. “If you want your dolly back help us get our fugitive into the trunk of my car.” and I popped the lid. My car may have its shortcomings, but it has a huge trunk.

As we looked at Winnie and at the trunk Lula remarked, “Good thing we took

your car. Her fat ass wouldn't of fit in my trunk."

We untied Winnie and the three of us rolled her into the trunk. WHOOSH! The shocks dropped to the springs and the back end of the car came to rest with the tailpipe touching the ground.

The poor UPS guy looked at his dolly that was covered with orange glop. "What am I gonna do with that!" he wailed.

I reached into my pocket and handed him a quarter. "There's a carwash three blocks away. Here, it's on me. The City of Trenton thanks you very much for your help."

Boy, will he have a story to tell back at the garage.

We closed the lid, jumped in the car and took off. All the way to the police station sparks shot out of rear end of my car as the tailpipe dragged along. A big brown turd, rolling down the street with sparks coming out its ass. So much for being inconspicuous. Lula hunkered a lot on the way back.

We pulled into the police lot, I parked and went into the booking desk. Carl was on duty.

"I may need a little help with this one," I said. "Any chance we can get a couple of uniforms out there?"

The officers came out. Most know me and delight in giving me a hard time. Today was no exception.

"Whatcha got in the turdmobile, Stephanie?" Murphy asked.

"A little present for you guys," I replied, and I popped the trunk.

"JESUS! What's that smell?" Murphy said as he gagged. "You bounty hunters can bring em back dead or alive. I think this ones been dead for awhile. I'm not touching that."

"I just bring 'em in," I said. "After they hit this parking lot, they're all yours."

I went back to the booking desk and picked up my body receipt. ONE DOWN!!

## Chapter 2

Encouraged by the fact that we had actually brought in an FTA the first time around, we were ready for round two.

I pulled the next file. The FTA was Wally Beaker. A single guy, 32 years old who had been picked up for indecent exposure and urinating in public. He ran a small bookkeeping office and lived in a small efficiency in the back.

“Sounds to me like we got us one of them Pee Wee Herman types,” Lula said. “Let’s go get the little pervert.”

We pulled up in front of the bookkeeping office and a sign on the door said ‘OPEN’.

“We’re in luck,” I said. “Let’s get this over with, and please, let me do the talking.”

We entered the office. It was a large room with two chairs for clients and a small divider that separated the client area from an office desk. A small bell sat on the counter with a sign that read ‘Ring bell for service’. I stepped up and gave the bell a couple of dings. No answer. I dinged it again and from somewhere in the rear of the building a wavering voice came back, “Please have a seat. I’ll be right with you.”

A few minutes passed and a small neatly dressed man appeared from the back room. Lula wasn’t far off from her Pee Wee Herman description although on second look he more resembled Mr. Peepers. Your typical CPA/bookkeeper.

“Good morning ladies,” he said. Then he grimaced, bent forward, grabbed his back and let out a low moan. After a few seconds he tried to stand upright and managed an obvious forced smile. “How may I help you today.”

“Wally Beaker?” I asked and he nodded yes. “My name is Stephanie Plum and my associate and I are bond enforcement agents. It appears that you missed your court date. We’re here to help you set a new date and get re-bonded.”

His head drooped, he sighed, and again doubled over, grabbing his back.

“Are you OK?” I asked.

“Not really,” he replied. “I’m having a bit of a medical situation. Nothing life threatening, but really uncomfortable. I’m really sorry about missing my court date. I run a respectable business here and I was just too embarrassed to go. If it gets around that was arrested for indecent exposure, my business will suffer.”

“Well it’s your own damn fault,” Lula barged in. “If you’d keep your business zipped up in your pants, you wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“See,” Wally replied, “already you have prejudged me as some kind of sexual deviant. I’m just a bookkeeper, for Chrissake. I’ve never had so much as a parking ticket. ---I’m –Ugh – Ugh, just going through a personal crisis right now.”

“Wally, let me explain how the system works,” I said. “You’re a CPA. If a client tells you he won’t pay his taxes, will the IRS just forget about it?”

He shook his head.

“Well it’s the same thing. You were arrested and given a court date which you skipped. It’s like missing an IRS audit. Get the picture? You can’t just ignore this. It will only get worse. If you don’t reschedule, the judge will issue a bench warrant for your arrest. How would you like to be sitting here with clients and have the police come and take you away in handcuffs? How would that be for business?”

He started to respond, but as he did his eyes glassed over, he bent double again, emitting a low moan.

“What in the world is wrong with you?” I asked.

“It’s kind of personal,” he replied. “I’m in the process of passing kidney stones and its really messed up my life.”

“Oh shit,” Lula said. “When I was a ho, I had a pimp who had them stones. He moaned and groaned for days. We had to pump him full of Valium to keep him from screaming. He finally passed them. It was like shooting BBs out his pecker.”

“Isn’t there something we can do to make this go away?” Wally asked. “Let me tell you what happened so you won’t think I’m a pervert. I started getting these severe pains in my back and side and I had to pee almost constantly and sometimes without warning. The doctor sent me for a CT scan that confirmed I had kidney stones. There is nothing to do but tough it out until they pass. I was leaving the doctor’s office which is downtown when my bladder started screaming at me and I knew if I didn’t relieve myself I’d be wetting myself right there on the street, so I ducked down an alley, got behind a big dumpster where no one could see me, pulled my pants down and begin to urinate. Just then a back door from one of the offices on the street opened and a girl came out with a bag of trash for the dumpster. She saw me there fully exposed, dropped the bag of trash and started screaming.”

“Well I can dig that,” Lula said. “If some Dude was standing by my trash can with his wanger in his hand, I’d scream too.”

“That’s not the worst part,” Wally moaned. “Just when she started screaming, a cop was walking by the entrance to the alley. As he ran up to us, the girl pointed to my private part, still straining to find relief. The cop tackled me, cuffed me, and stood me up. There I was with my hands behind my back and my winkie still hanging out. It was so embarrassing.”

“I think I may have a solution for you,” I said. “You’ve never been arrested and have no previous history of sexual perversion. What we have here is a case of extenuating circumstances--- actually a medical emergency.”

“That’s right,” Lula chimed in. “I’ve heard of pregnant women riding a bus and their water breaks and they go into labor. There they are with their legs all spread out and their doodah all hanging out for everyone to see, but there ain’t no one arresting her cause its, like she said, extenuating circumstances, a medical emergency.”

“Do you think that would work?” Wally asked.

“I’m sure it would,” I replied. “I would get a letter from your doctor explaining your condition. What happened that day has a logical explanation. I’ll bet the charges will be dropped. But you will have to go to court to explain. I think your clients will understand and forgive kidney stones. But now, we’ll have to take you downtown to reschedule.”

“Shall I cuff him?” Lula asked.

“Doesn’t look that dangerous to me,” I replied. “Let’s give him a break. He’s been through enough embarrassment.”

“Hang on a second,” Wally said. “I have to get a few things and lock up.” He came back a few minutes later with a set of keys in one hand and a strainer in the other.

“What the hell you gonna do with that strainer?” Lula asked.

“Until the stones pass, I have to pee through this strainer. It will catch the stone

and the doctor will send it off to be analyzed. Apparently there are several kinds of stones.”

So, Wally locked up, we all piled in the turdmobile and headed for the police station. Wally’s office was just across the river from the downtown area. It wasn’t a long bridge, but it was narrow. Just wide enough for one lane of cars each direction. We had just reached the bridge when a scream erupted from the backseat.

“OH GOD, it’s coming, I can feel it!” Wally screamed. “Quick pull over. I’ve got to get out of the car. Oh God, my pecker’s on fire! I’m gonna piss all over myself and the car if you don’t let me out.”

I quickly reviewed my options and decided my poor car had enough problems without the back seat smelling like a urinal, so I flipped on the flashers and pulled to the side of the bridge. Unfortunately there wasn’t enough room for the traffic behind me to pass, so the whole bridge full of cars came to a grinding stop. Wally jumped out of the back seat, strainer in hand and started working on his zipper.

So there we were, a big brown turd stopped in the middle of the bridge, traffic honking up a storm behind us, and Wally on the side of the road with his flinger out, pissing through a strainer.

So much for being inconspicuous.

We heard a blood curdling scream, a pause, and Wally exclaiming, “I got it, I got it. It’s out!”

Wally tucked himself back in and headed for the car proudly carrying his strainer and kidney stone. The car directly behind us suddenly laid on his horn startling Wally and the strainer fell from his hand and the precious stone rolled under the turdmobile.

“Oh no,” Wally shouted, and he was down on his hands and knees under the car retrieving his errant kidney stone.

Lula was hunkered down and I have to admit, I had hunkered some myself. We looked at each other, rolled our eyes and Lula muttered, “He outta name that damn thing Mick Jagger, cause it sure as hell is a Rolling Stone.”

Alls well that ends well. We got Wally back in the car. I called Connie at the office and had her meet us at the station to bond Wally out. Connie took Lula back to the office and I drove Wally home.

On the way back, I had a very satisfied feeling as I reflected on the days events. We had delivered two FTA’s without anyone getting shot or maimed. I had two paychecks in my pocket, and Joyce had gotten slimed with Dorito puke. It doesn’t get much better than this.

### Chapter 3

As I was driving toward home, I passed the First Baptist Church and saw numerous workman on the front lawn.

“Oh crap,” I thought. “Tonight is the opening ceremony for the live nativity scene and I’m supposed to be there with my family.”

You have to understand that in the Burg, the opening night of the nativity scene is a big deal. It’s like turning on the plaza lights in Kansas City, or lighting the mayor’s Christmas tree. It is the one singular event that officially launches the Christmas season in the Burg. EVERYONE is expected to attend the ceremony. See and be seen. Merry Christmas.

Some carpenter in years past had constructed a wooden manger consisting of a backdrop, a cradle for the baby Jesus and a small fenced area for the live animals. Life size statues of Mary, Joseph, the Angel, and three shepherds were accompanied by a live sheep and a donkey.

Obviously livestock kept penned up for a month needed care. This was provided by Moses Thacker. He was a farmer from upstate New York. He had retired and moved to the Burg to be near his family. Missing the farm life, he had volunteered to care for the animals, bringing them food and water and cleaning the stall daily.

Over the years, the Nativity scene had experienced some problems. Vandals of both the two legged and four legged kind couldn’t seem to leave it alone. City creatures of the night such as raccoons and large rats were constantly foraging in the animal’s food and once a possum was found curled up in the cradle with the Baby Jesus.

Trenton is famous for its population of taggers: that’s guys who paint things on the side of buildings and on bridge overpasses. One year the taggers painted the sheep red and green and hung a big Christmas bell from its tail.

Old Moses was up to the task. He cordoned off a huge section of lawn surrounding the Nativity and set the area with snare traps. This area came to be known as the DMZ and anyone or thing who dared to enter was found the next morning in Moses’ snares. The critters were carted off by Animal Control and the taggers were carted off to jail.

I headed toward home.

Where is home you ask?

Well, it depends. I’m sort of a nomad. I move around a lot. I rent a small, one bedroom apartment in a no frills building which I share with my hamster Rex. I stay there when I want to be alone. I also have an on again off again boyfriend, Joe Morelli. He has his own house that he inherited from his grandmother and I stay there when I don’t want to be alone. I still have a room at my parent’s house and I stay there when I’m hungry and have no money for food because Mom’s a great cook. On rare occasions, I have stayed in the apartment of Ranger, my mentor. It’s built like a fort and has all kinds of security. I mostly only stay there when someone’s trying to kill me. Fortunately, my hamster is portable, so he goes wherever I go.

At this moment, I’m with Morelli. He’s a Trenton cop. We both have weird demanding jobs that make having a regular life and schedule almost impossible, but we’ve learned to adapt.

The only thing that's set in stone is Friday night. Joe & I are expected to have dinner at my parent's house. If we don't show, there had better be a life threatening explanation.

So tonight will be a double whammy. It's Friday, so dinner will be at 6:00 sharp and then we'll all make our way to the First Baptist Church for the Nativity ceremony.

Good times!

I went home, jumped in the shower, threw on some mascara, put a grape in Rex's cage and headed for Mom's house. Morelli was to come there directly from work. I pulled into the driveway with Mom and Grandma Mazur standing in the doorway. I sometimes wonder if they ever go anywhere else, because they're always there when I arrive.

Mom and Grandma are exact opposites. It's hard to believe they're related. Grandma is a free spirit. She would have made a great flower child. Mom, on the other hand, is wound tighter than a drum. Mom's life is ruled by what's the proper and respected way of doing things and Grandma couldn't give a rat's ass.

Dad is just Dad. Living with these polar opposites has taken its toll over the years and he has retreated into a lifestyle consisting of his meals, his newspaper and the TV. When he just can't take it anymore, he has a part time job driving a cab to get him out of the house. Occupational therapy, I guess.

Morelli came in right behind me. I was five minutes to six and all was well. We took our seats and Mom and Grandma brought in the pot roast, potatoes, green beans and slaw and we all dug in.

"Well, what's been going on around here," I asked, trying to initiate some dinner conversation.

"I baked a coffee cake yesterday," Mom said. "It was my refreshment day at the Garden Club."

Dad just grunted and dug into his mashed potatoes.

"I had a great day yesterday," Grandma chimed in. "Beulah and I went shopping in the afternoon and I bought me one of those thong things. I thought if I could wear one of those, it might make old Ernie down at the Senior Center come to life. I came home and tried it on and the damn thing got stuck in my crack. Most uncomfortable thing I ever wore. So I took it back and traded it in for a push-up bra."

I shuddered at the mental image of Grandma's saggy boobs in a push-up bra.

I heard Dad mutter, "Jesus H. Christ."

Grandma wasn't done yet. "Then last night we went to Stiva's for Edna Zarinski's viewing. It was a real hoot. Edna was a Red Hat lady and all her friends showed up in red hats. They were real pretty. I may have to get me a red hat. Scooter had baked Snickerdoodles cause they were Edna's favorite. Those boys really know how to have a wake. Them cookies were good, so Beulah and I snuck a few in our purses."

Grandma sure knows how to have fun.

Dinner finally came to an end. There were no disasters and everyone left the table still speaking to each other, so for my family, it was a success. We decided to hold dessert till later as the Nativity ceremony started promptly at 7:00. We certainly wouldn't want to be late.

We all piled into the car and headed to the First Baptist Church. We should have started earlier as a huge crowd had already gathered and was pressing against the rope to

the DMZ. No one wants to miss this event.

Even the Presbyterians showed up.

Fortunately, we have Grandma Mazur. With her many years of elbowing her way to the open casket to view the body, she has developed a technique for parting a crowd and worming through. She always gets dirty looks, but who's gonna hassle an old lady?

So Grandma did her thing, pulling all of us behind her in single file until we reached the rope barricade.

And there in all its glory was the First Baptist Church live Nativity Scene. Flood lights shone on the Holy Figures and the livestock. City Fathers were present to pontificate on the significance of the event and the Pastor of the First Baptist Church stood proudly looking on.

Suddenly a collective gasp went up from the onlookers. I craned my neck to see what had diverted everyone's attention and my eyes were immediately drawn to the donkey who was obviously a male.

It was at this most inopportune time that he had apparently become aroused and his schlong was extended so far it almost dragged the ground.

In school there was a boy who the other kids nicknamed 'Donkey Dick'. At the time, in my innocence, I thought it was an insult. Actually, I guess it was more of a compliment.

"Wow ain't that a pip," Grandma exclaimed. I wish old Ernie had one like that. I'd spend a lot more time at the Senior Center if he did. I might even wear that thong even if it does go up my crack."

Mom crossed herself and Dad just shook his head.

As if that weren't enough action for one ceremony, the sheep suddenly hunched back, bleated, and dropped a load right there in the Manger.

Little girls giggled. Boys hooted. The elders were appropriately shocked.

Happy Holidays! Christmas had officially started in the Burg.