

Penguin



Readers

LEE CHILD

INTRODUCING JACK REACHER

KILLING FLOOR



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CHAPTER ONE

Arriving in Margrave

I was **arrested** in Eno's **diner** at twelve o'clock. I was eating eggs and drinking coffee—a late breakfast. I was wet and tired after a long walk in heavy rain. It was fourteen miles from the **highway** to town.

The police cars drove up fast, lights **flashing**. Two police **officers** jumped out of the first car and went to the back of the diner. Two more officers came toward the door, holding guns. There were only two old men and me in the diner. I knew that the police were here for me.

I finished my eggs and put a five-dollar **bill** under my plate. One police officer stayed near the door, pointing his gun at my head. The other came toward me, also pointing a gun.

"Hands up! Police!" he screamed as he got near me. They were doing everything right.

I got up slowly and held out my hands. The officer by the door came over and put **handcuffs** on me. He was about my age, and his **badge** said "Baker." The other **guy's** badge said "Stevenson." Then, the other officers came in from the kitchen and checked my **pockets**.

"You're under arrest for murder," said Baker. "You don't have to say anything, but anything you say . . ."

I said nothing. It was safer.

Baker walked me to the door, and Stevenson kept his

gun on me. Outside, they pushed me into the back of their car and drove into town. I looked out the window. This was Georgia, with tidy gardens, pretty buildings, a white church, and quiet roads. The sun was out now, and everything looked bright after the rain.



I was under arrest for murder in a town that I didn't know. But I wasn't worried. It was a long time since I killed anyone.

At the police station, Baker **locked** me in the **interview** room and came back with a woman officer carrying a camera and a number. Her badge said "Roscoe." She had dark hair, great eyes. I held the number and the camera flashed. She took my **fingerprints** and left the room.

After that, a fat guy with thin, dirty hair came in. "I'm Morrison, **chief** of police in Margrave," he said.

“You’re new in my town. A killer. A murderer. You’re going to **confess**. And then you’re going to **jail** for a long time.” I said nothing. Morrison stood up slowly and walked out.

Next, a tall black guy in a suit came in. He wasn’t old, but there was gray in his hair. He sat down opposite me. “I’m Detective Finlay.” I knew from his voice that he wasn’t from Georgia—Boston, maybe. “Let’s start with your name, your address, and your date of birth,” he said.

“Jack Reacher,” I said. “No address.” I told him my date of birth.

“Who was the guy with the **shaved** head?” he asked me. I didn’t answer.

“Tell me what happened,” he said. I didn’t know. I sat there without speaking.

“What is Pluribus?” Finlay asked.

“The United States **motto**?” I said. “*E Pluribus Unum*? ‘Out of many comes one.’ What’s this about?”

“You know what it’s about,” he said. “A body was found this morning at the Kliner **warehouses**, by the highway **cloverleaf**. Someone saw a man walking away, just after 8 a.m. It was you—very tall, blond hair, wearing a long black coat, no bag.”

“OK,” I said. “I walked all the way from the highway into town this morning. I’m sure that lots of people saw me. It doesn’t mean that I killed anyone.”

“You have no **ID**, no address, and no story. Why? Where are you from?”

“I don’t have an address because I don’t live anywhere.

I don't come from anywhere. My dad was a soldier. I was born in Berlin. I went to school in twenty different countries, and then I became a soldier myself. Later, I went into the **military** police. At thirty-six, I left. Right now, I'm just enjoying myself. Maybe I'll find something to do, maybe I won't."

"When did you leave the military police?" Finlay asked.

"Six months ago. In April," I said.

"Tell me about the last twenty-four hours," said Finlay.

"I got on a bus in Tampa, Florida, at midnight," I said. "I got off at the highway cloverleaf at 8 a.m. I walked into town. I had breakfast. Then you arrested me."

"Why did you come to Margrave? Do you have family here?" he asked.

"No. I have a brother in Washington. He works for the **Treasury**."

"Why Margrave then?"

"Because of Blind Blake," I told him.

"Who?"

"He was a guitar player who died here sixty years ago. My brother liked his music and wrote me about it when he was here in the spring on business."

I could see that Finlay thought this story was thin. He asked me lots more questions, about my bus ticket, the driver, the other people on the bus, and about why I wasn't working. Then, he asked, "What did you do in the military police?"

"I **investigated** murders," I told him.

CHAPTER TWO

Paul Hubble confesses

Finlay left me in the interview room and locked the door. He came back later with Baker.

“We don’t know who you killed,” Baker said. “He had no ID. White, maybe forty, very tall, shaved head. He died between 11:30 p.m. and 1 a.m. You **shot** him twice in the head. Then, you went crazy and kicked him again and again. After that, you tried to **hide** the body. The warehouse gateman found it at 8 a.m., saw you, and phoned the police.”

Finlay showed me a small corner of paper. It said “Pluribus” and there was a telephone number below it.

“Where was this?” I asked.

“In the dead man’s shoe,” Finlay replied.

“It’s **obvious** that there were three men,” I said. “One man was the killer—he’s calm, doesn’t get excited. Then there was a crazy guy, who kicked the body. Last there was someone stupid, who couldn’t hide it. Which one of these three am I? And why did I wait eight hours in the rain, before walking away?”

“I don’t know,” said Finlay.

“You need to know whose telephone number this is, right?” I said, looking at the corner of paper. “So call it.”

Finlay gave Baker a look that said, “Why didn’t we think of that?” He called the number, saying he was from the phone company.

“He’s here in Margrave,” Finlay said to Baker as he put down the phone. “Paul Hubble, 25 Beckman Drive.”

“I know him,” said Baker. “He’s a banker—a family man and a friend of Stevenson’s.”

“Bring this Hubble guy in,” Finlay ordered Baker.

Baker locked me in a police cell and went to get Paul Hubble. Through the bars of the cell I could see the office area. I sat in a corner, against the wall, and waited. I was playing a song in my head, when Roscoe appeared, holding a cup.

“Want a coffee?” she said, passing the cup through the bars.

