

## In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

### Chapter 1

People were of two minds about Reginald (Call me Reg) Montgomery. They either hated him or thought he was the best thing to happen to this town in years. He never spoke when a shout would do, and never shouted when a bellow would do even better. Slighter men had been heard to complain that a slap on the back from Reg could send them head first across the room. And as for the women, most of them had learned to take a step backwards, out of hugging range, at Reg's approach. His suits were too loud, his face red and dotted with beads of sweat regardless of the temperature, and his handshake too strong.

But he made a point of shopping at the local stores, rather than the Wal-Mart in Nelson, eating out regularly, usually at family-owned restaurants, and tipping well. Ellie, his wife, had her hair done at Maggie's Salon on Front Street, bought her clothes from Joanie's Ladies Wear and contributed generously, in time as well as money, to the hospital and the seniors' centre.

Reg and Ellie had only been in town for a few months, but in that time he had managed to make a few friends and a good number of enemies.

And, apparently, one person who hated him enough to kill him.

Constable Molly Smith had eaten curried tofu for supper. In retrospect that was a mistake: spicy bile rose up into her

## In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

throat and she swallowed heavily, trying to keep the food in her stomach, where it belonged.

She had seen plenty of traffic injuries, including fatalities. After the first few times, she'd learned to control her stomach and let her mind throw up a shield behind which she could hide from some of the ugliness that was the human body exposed to violent, unexpected death. But she'd never seen anyone who appeared to have been killed by another human being, and for some reason that made it harder for her protective armor to settle into place.

Reg Montgomery lay in the alley; urine stained his beige slacks and blood and brains stained the pavement. He was lying on his back, facing the long twilight of a gentle summer's evening. Smith turned away and fingered the radio at her shoulder.

"Go ahead, Officer."

She pressed her hand to her chest, and took a single, deep breath. "I'm..." The word came out as a frightened squeal, and she coughed once to clear her throat. "Smith here. I'm in the alley behind Alphonse's Bakery on Front Street. That's just west of Elm. I have a Code 5, suspicious circumstances, and need assistance."

"Someone will be there shortly, Constable Smith."

## In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

A small animal rustled in the green garbage bags behind the convenience store beside the bakery. She rested her hand on the butt of the Glock at her side and cast the light from her flashlight around the bags. Her nerve endings tingled. If a rat ran out of the shadows, she'd scream. But the garbage fell still.

The scent of the day's baking lingered around the edges of the alley, blending with the odors of garlic, caramelized onions, and cooking spices from the restaurant on the other side of the bakery. Lights were on in the kitchen, the blinds only partly drawn, and Smith could see the cooks working - a flurry of barely-controlled chaos. It was coming up to nine o'clock, on a Thursday night in the middle of tourist season. *Feuilles de Menthe*, the popular French restaurant, would be in full service frenzy.

The kitchen windows were open and the clatter of crockery, shouted orders, and bursts of laughter poured from the restaurant along with light and the smell of good food cooking. The rest of the alley was quiet.

Smith realized that she was gripping her gun, and forced her fingers to relax. She wiped her palms on the seat of her trousers, and told herself she had nothing to fear. If the person responsible for Montgomery's death had been lingering in the alley, he'd have jumped her before she radioed for help.

## In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

She looked up. It was a two-story building, bakery on the street, probably an apartment above. The upper windows were closed, curtains drawn. If he'd fallen, if it had been an accident, he wouldn't have closed the window behind him. Suicide? No one wanting to kill himself would try a two story drop, would he? More likely to end up with a broken leg than dead. At a quick glance Smith could see nothing that might have been used as a weapon, and she knew better than to start poking around before the detectives and scene of the crime officers arrived.

It had to be murder. There hadn't been a murder in Trafalgar since she'd joined the police. The average annual murder rate of Trafalgar, British Columbia, was zero.

She stuffed her hands in her pockets to keep them from touching anything, and dropped to her haunches to take a good look at the remains of Reginald Montgomery. She'd seen him around town, glad-handing everyone in sight - you'd have thought he was running for mayor. He'd made a point of being friendly with the entire Trafalgar City Police. She'd heard that he was angling for a place on the police board when an opening next came up. In life, Montgomery hadn't been an attractive man: a belly that made him look nine months pregnant, thin, badly cut grey hair, a bulbous nose that testified to copious quantities of liquor. In death, now that he was no longer trying his hail-

In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

fellow-well-met routine, his face had taken on a repose that almost suited him.

Proud of herself for keeping her stomach contents in place, Smith dared not look too closely at the seepage from the man's skull: just close enough to see that the blood was still wet, glistening in the poor light from the back of the restaurant.

She started at the blast of a siren, straightened up, and pulled her hands out of her pockets. Headlights flooded the alley; heavy doors slammed. Paramedics unloaded their stretcher and pushed it towards her. A bulky figure passed in front of the ambulance lights.

"Smith," Chief Constable Paul Keller said, "what have you got here?" His clothes smelled, as always, as if they'd been hanging in a tobacco barn when it caught fire.

"It's Reginald Montgomery, sir. Of Grizzly Resort?" Her voice squeaked as it always did when she was nervous.

"I was having dinner with my wife and daughter when the dispatcher called. Said you told her suspicious circumstances?"

*Oh, God. Let it be so. If I've dragged the CC away from his dinner en famille because Montgomery tripped over his shoelace I'll be finished.*

"Looks that way, sir," she said.

"Definitely dead," one of the paramedics said, "visible grey matter."

In The Shadow of the Glacier/Vicki Delany

The Chief Constable stepped forward to have a closer look.

The investigating detectives wouldn't be short of suspects. There were two camps in Trafalgar - every one in town over the age of two either belonged to the group that hated Reg Montgomery, or the one that loved him.

Smith pushed aside the thought that her mother could be counted prominently among the haters and tried to look as if she knew what she should be doing now.