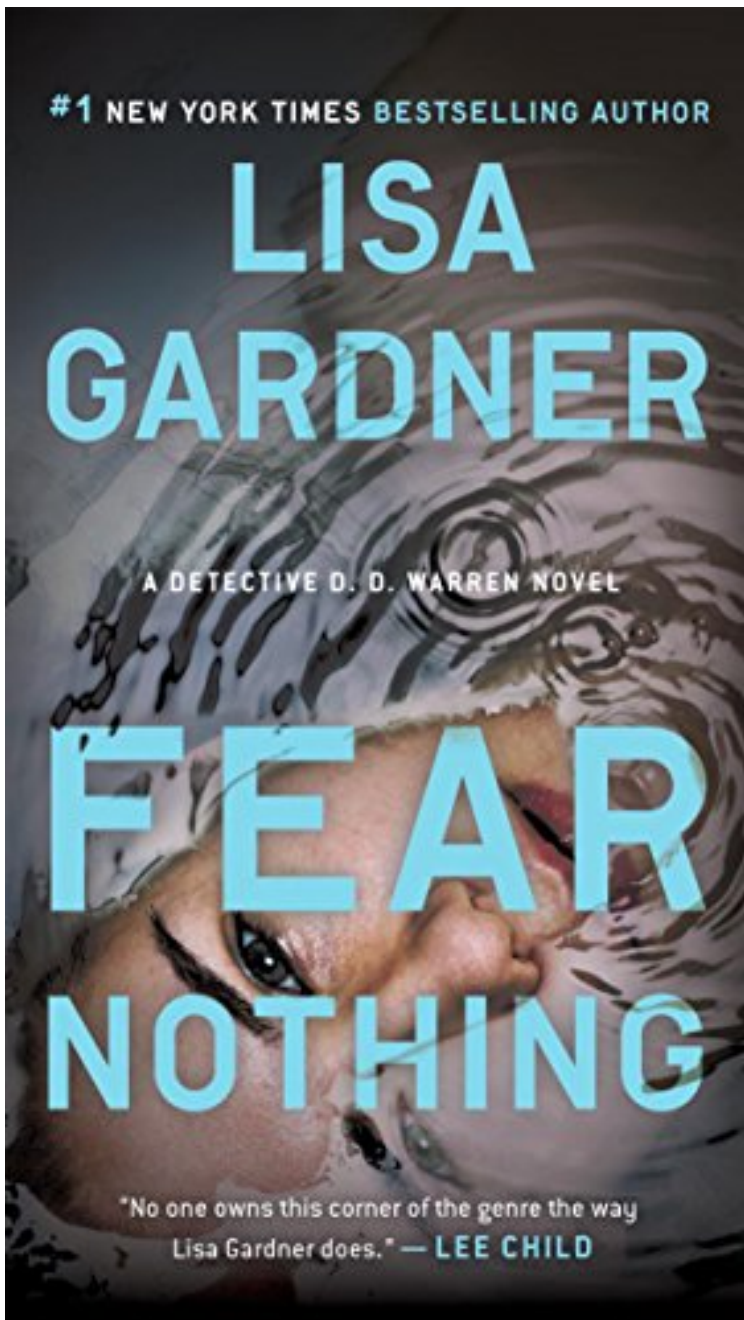


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Fear Nothing: A Detective D.D. Warren Novel



Par Lisa Gardner
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurDetective D. D. Warren must consult one killer to catch another in this taut thriller from the #1 New York Times bestselling master of psychological suspense (Associated Press). They were daughters of a monstera father who slaughtered eight prostitutes before dying himself. Dr. Adeline Glen left the nightmare behind, and now she specializes in pain management. Her sister, Shana Day, followed in her

fathers violent footsteps, first killing at age fourteen and being incarcerated for more than twenty-five years. After a brutal attack, Boston Detective D. D. Warren needs Adelines professional help to recover physically.

But when a new psychopath known as the Rose Killer begins a reign of terror, D. D. must also consult the insane Shanawho claims she can help catch the madman. D. D. may not be back on the job, but she is back on the hunt. Because the Rose Killer isnt just targeting lone women; hes targeting D. D. And she knows

theres only one way to take him down...Extrait***This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof.***Copyright 2014 by Lisa Gardner, Inc.Hello darkness, my old friend . . . The body was gone, but not the smell. This kind of scene, Sergeant Detective D.D. Warren knew, would hold the stench of blood for weeks, even months to come. The crime scene techs had removed the top mattress but still . . . Blood had a life of its own. Once freed from its human vessel, it could seep into dry wall, slip behind wooden trim, pool between floor boards. If the landlord ever wanted to rent this unit again, it would involve a total gut of the master bedroom. Not to mention the neighbors moving far, far away and never saying a word. Twenty-eight year old Tara Blythe used to have approximately 4.7 liters of blood pumping through her veins. Now, most of it stained this grim, shadowy space. Ive come to talk with you again . . . The call had come in shortly after nine a.m. Good friend Midge Roberts had grown concerned when Tara hadnt answered the knocks on her front door or the texts to her cell phone. Tara was the responsible kind. Didnt oversleep, didnt run off with a cute bartender, didnt come down with the flu without providing a heads up to her best bud, who picked her up promptly at seven thirty each weekday morning for their commute to a local accounting firm. Midge had contacted a few more friends. All agreed no one had heard from Tara since ten the night before. Midge gave into instinct, summoned the landlord. Who finally agreed to open the door. Then vomited all over the upstairs hall upon making the find. Midge hadnt come up the stairs. Midge had stood in the foyer of the narrow duplex, and, as shed reported to D.D.s squadmate Phil, shed known. Just known. Probably, even from that distance, shed caught the first unmistakable whiff of drying blood. Hello darkness, my old friend . . . Upon arrival, the scene had immediately struck D.D. with its marked contrasts. The young, female victim, sprawled spread eagle on her own bed, staring up at the ceiling with sightless blue eyes. Pretty features nearly peaceful, shoulder-length brown hair pooling softly upon a stark white pillow. Except then, from the neck down . . . Skin, peeled off in thin, curling ribbons. D.D. had heard of such things. At eleven this morning, she got to see them first hand. A young woman, flayed in her own bed. With a bottle of champagne on her nightstand, and a single red rose placed across her bloody abdomen. Ive come to talk with you again . . . Next to the bottle of champagne, Phil had discovered a pair of handcuffs. The kind purchased in high end sex shops and fur-lined for a willing partners comfort. Taking in the cuffs, the sparkling wine, the red rose . . . Lovers tryst gone awry, Phil had theorized. Or, given the level of violence, a jilted boyfriends final act of vengeance. Tara had broken up with some sorry sucker, and last night, sorry sucker had returned to prove once and for all who was in charge. But D.D. hadnt been on board. Yes there were handcuffs, but not on the victims wrists. Yes there was uncorked champagne, but not a single glass for drinking. Finally, sure, there was the rose, but not in a florists wrap for gifting. The scene felt too . . . deliberate to her. Not a crime of passion or a falling out between consenting adults. But a carefully staged production that involved months, years, maybe even a lifetime of careful planning and consideration. In D.D.s opinion, they werent just looking at a crime scene. They were looking at a killers deepest, darkest fantasy. And while this might be the first scene they were investigating, a homicide this heavily ritualized was probably not the last. Hello darkness, my old friend . . . D.D.s squad, the crime techs techs, the MEs office, not to mention a plethora of other investigators had spent six hours working the scene. Theyd documented, dusted, diagramed, and discussed until the sun had set, dinner commute was on, and stomachs were growling, not to mention tempers flaring. As lead detective D.D. had finally sent everyone home with orders to refresh, then regroup. Tomorrow was another day, when they could search federal databases for other homicides matching this description, while building the profiles of their victim and killer. Plenty to do, many angles to investigate. Now get some rest. Everyone had listened. Except, of course, D.D. It was nearly ten oclock now. She should be returning home. Kissing her husband hello. Checking in on her three-year old son, already tucked into bed at this late hour. Working on her own good nights sleep. But she couldnt do it. Some instinctquestion? Insight?had driven her back to this tragic space in this too quiet duplex. For most of the day, she and her fellow detectives had stood here and debated what they saw. Now, she stood with the lights out, in the middle of a blood-scented room, and waited for what she could feel. Ive come to talk with you again . . . Tara Blythe had already been dead before the killer had made his first cut. That much they could tell from the lack of anguish stamped into her pale face. The victim had died relatively easily. Then, most likely as her

heart emitted a final few pumps, the killer had delivered his first downward slash across her right flank. Meaning murder hadn't been about the victim's pain, but about. . . Presentation? Staging? The ritual itself? A killer with a compulsion to skin. Maybe started with small animals or family pets, then, when that still wasn't enough, the fantasy refused to abate. . . The ME would check for hesitation marks, if determining jagged edges was even possible given the mounds of thin, curling skin. Check for vaginal bruising, swab for semen.

But once again, D.D. had nagging sense of discomfort. Those elements were the things a criminal investigator could see. And deep inside, D.D. already suspected that was the wrong track. Indulging, in fact, in exactly what the killer wanted them to do. Why stage things just so, if not to manipulate your audience into seeing exactly what you wanted them to see? Then it came to her. The thought she had in the back of her head. The first and foremost question worth pursuing and the reason she now stood in the dark, her vision deliberately obscured: Why set a scene? A sound. The duplex's front door, easing carefully open? A creak of the stair riser as a heavy foot found the first step? The groan of a floorboard just down the hall? A sound. She heard a sound and that quickly, Sergeant Detective D.D. Warren realized something she should've figured out fifteen minutes ago. That song, the tune she'd been humming by Simon and Garfunkel without really even being aware of it. . . That song wasn't coming from solely inside her head. Someone else was singing it, too. Softly. Outside the bedroom. From elsewhere in the dead woman's apartment. Hello darkness, my old friend. . . D.D.'s hand shot to her sidearm, unsnapping the shoulder holster, drawing her Sig Sauer. She whirled, dropping into a crouch as her gaze scanned the shadows for sign of an intruder. No shifts in the blackness, no shadows settling into the shape of a human form. But then, she heard it again. I've come to talk to you again. . . Quickly, she crept from the bedroom into the darkened hall, leading with her weapon. The narrow corridor didn't offer any overhead lights. Just more shadows caused by the light from neighbors' apartments casting through the duplex's uncovered windows. A wash of lighter and darker shades of gray dancing across the hardwood floor. But she knew this house, D.D. reminded herself, easing carefully forward. She'd already tread this hall, judiciously avoiding the pools of vomit, while noticing every pertinent detail. . . She reached the top of the stair case, still looking side to side, then peering down, into the pool of inky black that marked the landing below. The humming had disappeared. Worse than the singing was the total silence. Then suddenly, a voice, whispering in the same lilting tone: Detective D.D. Warren, my old friend. . . D.D. halted. Her gaze ping-ponged reflexively, trying to determine the location of the voice as it continued, slow and mocking: I've come to talk with you again. . . She got it then. Felt her own blood turn to ice as the full implication sank in. Why do you stage a scene? Because you're looking for an audience. Or maybe, one audience member in particular. Detective D.D. Warren. Darkness, my old friend. Still holding her drawn Sig Sauer, she reached belatedly for her cell. Just as a fresh noise registered directly behind her.

She spun. Eyes widening. But where, how. . . The hulking figure, looming out of the shadows: Hello, Detective. . . Instinctively, D.D. stepped back. Except she'd forgotten about the top of the staircase. Her left foot, searching for traction, found only open space. . . No! Her cell, clattering down. Her Sig Sauer, coming up. Trying belatedly to lean forward, regain her balance. And then. . . The shadow moving. Herself falling.

Just like that. Down, down, down. At the last second, D.D. squeezed the trigger. An instinctive act of self-preservation. Boom, boom, boom. Though even she knew, it was too little, too late. Her head connected with the hard wood landing. A crack. A shooting pain. And then the sound of silence. . .

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