

QUINN



MICHAEL DEEZE

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Thomas Quinn Mysteries
Book Two

MICHAEL DEEZE



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Prologue

The warm rain had long since soaked through all my clothing and filled my shoes. The gravestone I was sitting on, conversely, felt cold through my soaked pants and underwear. I had smoked a couple of cigarettes too quickly, and now I sat staring at nothing, feeling the nauseating distress of nicotine and an empty stomach.

I had spent the time reflecting on my parents' and my life. Remembering all the times that should have raised questions as I was growing up, and all the times that were lost. I'd wished my siblings back and sadly wondered if it would have made any difference in my life choices.

Now it was time to go. Back to my little studio apartment above the pizza joint and my endless litany of woulda', shoulda' and coulda' that would be my life for the foreseeable future.

Movement in my peripheral vision drew my attention, and I looked up. Walking between the stones was an older gentleman carrying a large open black umbrella. As he slowly approached, he looked from one stone to another but didn't linger over any of them. As I sat watching him, he never looked up, but I could tell he was coming my way.

In no particular hurry, apparently, it was a full five minutes before he arrived. Standing behind my parents' headstone, he reached into his pocket and took out a few coins. Selecting one, he placed it on my father's side of the stone and stood there silently looking down at it for a few moments.

I said nothing, content in my sodden misery to wonder at this unforeseen development. He was well-dressed in a dark suit and tie. His black umbrella matched the black trench coat he wore. His face was not young, but was pink and healthy with very few smile lines. When he looked up, his eyes were bright, and there was no laughter behind them.

"Hello Thomas."

"Do I know you?"

“No, I don’t think so, but you will, I hope.”

“I don’t need any new friends right now.”

“I’m pretty sure that a new friend is exactly what you need right now.”

“And what makes you think that?”

“Because you don’t have very many right now. At least that right kind of friend anyway.”

“And what kind of friend would that be?”

“The kind that could help.”

“And just exactly who are you, if I might ask?” My stomach was not getting any better.

“I am the best kind of friend to have. A friend in the right place.”

“Thanks, but I’m not shopping these days.”

“I was a good friend of your father’s. He might disagree.”

“Great! Just another chapter that I haven’t read yet.”

He reached into the inside pocket of his suit coat and drew out a piece of paper. Stepping around the stone, he held it at arm’s length, handing it to me. It was a letter, handwritten, and I recognized the script. It was Harry’s handwriting.

“Harry asked me to look you up.”

“Who the hell are you?”

“My name is Frank Latoria. Harry told me you know how to keep a secret.”

Recovery

The apartment was always too quiet when I walked in, the kind of quiet that made you hear your own thoughts whether you wanted to or not. I reached under the bed and pulled out the gym bag, and with one movement, slung it up onto the table. I didn't bother opening it. I didn't need to see the money again to know it was still there — a little over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Half of what it had started out as, but still an awful lot of money in one place.

The other half had been left with two FBI agents who had ended up dead in a suburban hotel room. Dead and with enough other evidence to stop the investigation right there. It had been justice, but only if you tilted your head just right and squinted. Not the Bureau's kind. Not clean. But in spite of my guilty conscience, it worked for me. The money was mine too, somehow. Not because I wanted it, but because no one else did. That was the part that bothered me.

I had spent hours, days, even thinking about everything that had happened. The way the events had suddenly hit a wall and piled up against me, and the cost of those events. I had gone from being an FBI special agent to being unemployed and black listed for just about any other employment in my field. I had been the catalyst in the murder of three individuals, one of them probably quite innocent. I had found myself sitting in my apartment, grinding on those facts and the story behind them until I was ready to burst. Now enough time had passed, and I had started to take stock of my life. It was time to move forward before I lost what little mind I had left.

I changed clothes and headed out before I could think too hard about it. The early winter morning was still dark. There was no traffic, and very few people. It would be another hour and a half before the sun rose above the lake and morning officially started for most people. The gym was quiet, the way I like it. I didn't want

conversation. I needed to somehow release the pressure that was building deep in my core. I wanted motion. I started rowing. Long pulls, steady rhythm. The kind of movement that lets your mind wander, whether you want it to or not.

I missed the badge. I missed the containment that the FBI had offered. Not the authority — the clarity. The dictated morality. The institutional justice that told you where the line was, even when you didn't agree with it. Now the line was mine to draw. That was the part that scared me.

I rowed harder.

The Bureau had fired me “with cause.” They weren't wrong. They weren't right either. I'd made choices. Some I'd make again. Some I wouldn't. But the badge had been a compass, even when it pointed somewhere I didn't want to go. Without it, I wasn't sure which direction was north.

I switched to free weights. Bench. Deadlift. Squats until my legs shook. Every rep dragged up another thought I didn't want. The money was mine. That was the truth. But the way it came to me — the way it ended up split between two dead agents and me — that was the part that made my stomach twist. They'd been dirty. I'd proven it. Justice had been served, if you had an understanding of what real justice in the real world was. But justice shouldn't need squinting.

I hit the heavy bag next. Hard. Rhythmic. Controlled.

Harry's letter pressed against my ribs with every punch. I hadn't opened it. I wasn't sure I wanted to. Harry, it seemed, had not written unless he had needed something, and the last thing I needed was another man's unfinished business. I punched until my arms trembled.

I stepped back outside; the morning was dark and damp. I started running without thinking about it. My legs carried me through streets I barely registered. Running stripped everything down. No badge. No Bureau. No dead agents. No money. Just breath and pavement and the steady rhythm of a man trying to find the version of himself he could still live with. By the time I stopped, sweat was dripping off my chin, and my lungs burned. But for a moment — a brief, clean moment — I felt like myself again. Not fixed. Not redeemed. Just... aligned.

Back in the apartment, the gym bag waited on the table. I

unzipped it and looked at the stacks. They didn't accuse me. They didn't absolve me. They just existed. Like the truth. Like consequences. I zipped the bag shut, slung it over my shoulder, and walked it back to the gym. They rented lockers by the month. Cash only. Perfect. The attendant didn't ask questions. I paid for six months, took the key, and locked the bag away. Pulled on the locker handle twice. Pocketed the key. Safer there than in my apartment. Safer than in my head. The letter was still in my pocket. I took it out and looked at the envelope. Harry's handwriting. Sharp. Precise. Unmistakable. I wasn't afraid of the letter. Not exactly. But opening it felt like stepping onto a path I couldn't step back off of. I slid it back into my pocket. Not now. Not yet. I'd know when the moment was right. Or when I ran out of excuses. For now, the money was locked away, the letter was close, and I was somewhere in between — trying to figure out which version of myself I was supposed to be next.

About the Author

Michael Deeze writes emotionally charged, character-driven fiction that blends suspense, grit, and a deep understanding of the human condition. A lifelong observer of people and the quiet tensions that shape their lives, Deeze crafts stories where ordinary individuals collide with extraordinary circumstances, and where the truth is rarely simple.

His work is known for its rich atmosphere, sharp dialogue, and the kind of moral complexity that lingers long after the final page. Whether exploring the shadows of small-town secrets or the inner battles of flawed heroes, Deeze brings a steady hand and a storyteller's instinct to every book he writes.

Quinn continues his tradition of immersive, tightly woven narratives that challenge, provoke, and captivate. When he's not writing, Deeze can be found researching historical oddities, refining new story ideas, or enjoying the quiet moments that spark his next novel.