



RAPID READS

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A man in a blue shirt and black vest lies on a bed with a patterned quilt, his mouth covered in silver duct tape. A woman's legs, wearing a white skirt and black heels, are spread wide over him, holding a large, dark knife. The scene is dimly lit, creating a suspenseful and threatening atmosphere.

# A WOMAN SCORNE

JAMES HENEGHAN



Vancouver city councilor George Hamilton Nash has left his wife and moved into a posh West End condo. A wealthy man-about-town, Nash appears to be enjoying all the pleasures the city has to offer. When he turns up dead, with a suicide note beside the body, the police are prepared to treat it as an open and shut case. But Sebastian Casey, who covers City Hall for the *West End Clarion*, is not so sure. He knows something of Nash's reputation as a lady's man and very quickly discovers no shortage of suspects. The question is, of course, which one did it?

A former fingerprint specialist with the Vancouver Police Department, **James Heneghan** has won numerous awards for his books for young readers, including the Sheila A. Egoff Children's Literature Prize three times. His first book for the Rapid Reads series was *Fit to Kill* (2011). James lives in North Vancouver, British Columbia.

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**Summary:** When a prominent city councilor turns up dead in his posh condo, the police are content to call it suicide. But reporter Sebastian Casey thinks otherwise and sets out to prove it on his own.



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*For my family:*

*Ann, Robert, John, Leah, Margaux, Lee Michael,  
Rebecca, Hank, Ruth and Bethiah.*

*And for Lucy, as always.*

*Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned.*

— WILLIAM CONGREVE, *THE MOURNING BRIDE*

1697

## 1

Rain and blustering winds pounded the West End. Muddy pink blossoms littered the streets and clogged the drains. April was always an unpredictable month in Vancouver.

It was Sunday morning. In the luxury penthouse suite of the Roosevelt Building overlooking Stanley Park, a man and a woman were finishing breakfast. The man had eaten hardly a thing, merely pushing the food around his plate. Finally he put down his knife and fork.

"I'm moving out, Moira," he said quietly.

The woman stared. "What?"

"I've already packed a few things. I'll be gone by noon."

He was forty-four-year-old Vancouver City Councilor George Hamilton Nash. Slim from regular exercise, he had a narrow face,

brown eyes and dark hair. He was wearing his black Lacoste bathrobe and tartan slippers.

His wife, Moira, forty-three, had pale skin and gray eyes. She wore her dark hair short to the jawline. On Friday her hairdresser had taken care of the advancing gray, adding several blond highlights. She seldom wore makeup before breakfast.

High-school sweethearts, they had been married for twenty-one years.

There were no children.

“Moving out? I don’t understand,” she said. She became agitated, pushing back her chair. Her table napkin fell to the floor. “Moving where?”

“Not far. I bought a condo in the Shangri-La Hotel.”

“You’re leaving me?”

“Don’t think of it that way, Moira. I’m not leaving you. I just won’t live here anymore. My new place is less than ten blocks from here. I’ll be very close.”

“But why? I don’t get it.”

“I don’t expect you to get it, Moira, but I want to live my own life. I’ve been thinking of this for a long time. I need to be alone. I need to explore new things. New life experiences.”



“Life experiences? You’ve gone mad!”

“I knew you wouldn’t understand. Look—I’ve lived with someone all my life. First it was my parents. Then when I went to college I had roommates. Then I met you and we got married. Twenty years we’ve been together—”

“Twenty-one.”

“—and I’ve never lived alone. I’m forty-four years old, Moira. My life is half over and I’ve never known what it’s like to live alone. In complete freedom.”

“So it’s freedom you want, is it? I know what you’re up to, George. It’s all those young women at city hall. Making eyes at handsome City Councilor George Hamilton Nash. They even call you at home. Your slutty city hall clerks,” she said angrily. “Don’t try to deny it. I can pick up the phone in the bedroom and hear you talking to them from your study. I’m not stupid.”

“Spying on me. Exactly why I need to move out.”

“How can you talk of leaving?” she said, shaking her head in disbelief. “I need you here with me, George. My surgery is next week. You know that very well.” She stood and faced

him across the table. "Wait. Just wait till I can manage on my own. Until I'm back on my feet and we've had a chance to discuss everything. A few weeks at least."

He shook his head.

She started to weep. "George will never leave me, I always tell myself. George is strong. George is good. How wrong I was! Casting me off like an old sweater. How can you do this, George?" Her weeping grew in intensity.

He threw down his napkin and bounded up from the table.

"Wait!" she said. "Come back here!" She hurried after him, clawing at his back. He tried to shrug her off but she clung to him, her nails buried in his bathrobe. "You will regret this, you bastard," she screamed.

He shoved her violently, and she fell to the floor.

"You'll be sorry," she said between sobs.

He marched into his study and locked the door.

*It would be good to be rid of her, he thought. Should have left years ago. Live his own life. Do whatever he wanted. A free agent. No wet blanket of a wife*

to slow him down. His new luxury condo was on the fortieth floor. Views of the yacht club, ocean and mountains. *Alone. Sweet word. With occasional guests.* He grinned at the thought.

Moira hammered his door with her fists and then collapsed to her knees.

After a while, she got up and made her way to the bathroom. She swallowed several pills and then lay on their unmade bed, eyes closed.

She didn't hear him go.

Some time later, still in her housecoat, she paced furiously about their apartment. Eventually she crumpled into a loveseat near the high windows. She looked out. Wind and rain swept over a deserted Stanley Park. Tall cedars, firs and hemlocks swayed together in a wild spring dance.

She bent her head and sobbed into her clenched fists.

## 2

Sebastian Casey made his way home Friday evening after a light day's work. Light work suited him fine. Casey was not