



REED FARREL
COLEMAN

THE BOARDWALK

A Gulliver Dowd
Mystery

THE BOARDWALK

REED FARREL COLEMAN



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Summary: In this murder mystery, the death of an NYPD officer leads PI Gulliver Dowd closer to the truth about his sister's murder. (RL 3.0)

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For Bea and Herb

ONE

Gulliver Dowd was waiting in his Red Hook loft for his new office furniture to arrive. He no longer lived in the loft. He kept some space for his business—Gulliver Dowd Investigations, Inc. He rented out the rest of the loft to a group of young artists. He liked artists because they could create new worlds. They could shape those worlds to match the ideas in their heads. Their work could inspire people. All Gullie inspired people to do was to point at him. To laugh. To whisper and stare.

The loft in Red Hook had once belonged to his sister, Keisha. Loyal. Loving. Fierce. A warrior. The best sister ever. She was dark-skinned. A bit heavy. Even more unwanted than Gullie. Before his parents adopted her, she had been passed from one foster home to another. The things she told him about how she was mistreated in those homes made Gullie mad. Made him feel less sorry for himself. Because of his misshapen body and his lack of height, he had been teased. Bullied. Pitied. But he had never had to put up with what Keisha had to deal with. No one had ever forced themselves on him. No one took a strap to him. No one beat him until his bones broke. All those things had been done to Keisha. Worse. Yet Keisha had overcome.

She'd made it through high school. Suffolk County Community College. The New York City Police Department Academy. That's right. Keisha had become a member

THE BOARDWALK

of the NYPD. The day she graduated was the proudest day of her life. It was the proudest day of Gulliver's too. He loved the pictures they took that day. They were so happy. The two runts nobody wanted. The dwarf and the abused black girl. Those framed photos were the only things on the walls of his new office. When Keisha was found murdered behind a building in Brooklyn, Gulliver thought he would never stop crying. It felt like his heart had been cut out.

Yet Keisha's murder had given him a new life. It had made him overcome too. When the cops couldn't find her killer, Gulliver decided he would do what they could not. He would find Keisha's killer. Bring him to justice. Avenge her murder. To that end, Gulliver had become a crack shot. A black belt in jujitsu. An expert with knives. He'd gotten his private investigator's license. He would never have believed it possible. Not any of it. He had been

laughed at for so long, he had believed he was worthless. But in Keisha's death, he found himself. He found worth. He found purpose. But he had yet to come close to finding her killer. No one had.

Gulliver had lived in the loft since Keisha's murder. He felt close to her there. It helped keep her memory alive in him. He had come to love Red Hook. Red Hook had once been the toughest place in Brooklyn. In all of New York City. That was really saying something. Those days had passed. Now it was a hip place to live. It had a Fairway Supermarket. An Ikea! Tapas bars replaced topless bars. But it was still rough around the edges. Keisha had liked that about Red Hook. Gulliver too. Gullie's girlfriend, Mia, did not like it so much. She had her reasons. So they had moved to the other side of Brooklyn. Keisha would have understood.

Gullie looked at his watch. He wasn't worried about the furniture. He knew that

THE BOARDWALK

it might not be delivered for two more hours. He was more worried about lunch. His friend Sam Patrick had promised to keep him company while he waited. To bring turkey hero sandwiches from their favorite deli. And a six-pack. Sam was an NYPD detective at the 76th Precinct. Red Hook's precinct. But neither Sam nor lunch was anywhere in sight. Gulliver was getting hungry. Impatient too. Worse, he was bored. So bored he was about to knock on the artists' door. He liked looking at their work. Just as he raised his hand to knock, the phone rang.

"Gulliver Dowd," he answered.

"Dowd. You hungry yet?" It was Sam Patrick. His voice was strained.

"Even little bellies get empty. I'm starving. Where the hell are you?"

"Sorry, Dowd, but I can't make it over today." Sam had a coughing fit. Then said, "Something's come up. Something I didn't

see coming. I've got some things to put in order." He coughed again.

"You got a chest cold?"

Sam laughed. "Something like that."

"This business you got. You want to talk about it?" Gullie asked. "I got nothing to do until the furniture gets here. Might as well yak to keep my mind off being so hungry."

"Sorry, pal. No time for that."

"Is it police business, Sam? You can tell me."

Sam coughed again. "Bigger than that. We can talk about it later."

"Later?"

"Yeah. We need to talk. Just you and me. Somewhere private."

"You can come here later," Gullie said. "Or you can come by the apartment. Mia is working a night shift at the vet clinic."

"No!" Sam shouted, coughing again. "Not anyplace near other people. Not an office. Not an apartment. Not a bar."

THE BOARDWALK

“Okay, Sam. Whatever you say.”

“Dowd, I wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important.” Now it sounded like Sam Patrick was choking back tears.

“I said I would meet you, but I need to have an idea what this is about.”

“Just take my word for it, Dowd. It’s important. You need to hear what I’ve got to say.”

“But about what?”

There was silence on Sam’s end of the line. Dowd could almost hear Sam thinking. Gulliver didn’t like guessing games. He didn’t like surprises.

“I’m hanging up now,” Gulliver said.

“Don’t, Dowd! Please, don’t!” He coughed some more.

“You’re worrying me, Sam. Tell me what’s going on. I can help.”

“No, you can’t. Not with this.”

Gulliver really was worried now. “With what?”

“Promise me you’ll meet me. Then I’ll tell you.”

“I give up. Okay. I promise to meet you.”

Sam asked, “You know Plumb Beach?”

“Sure I do,” Gullie said. “Off the Belt Parkway between Knapp Street and Flatbush Avenue.”

“Meet me in the parking lot at eight.”

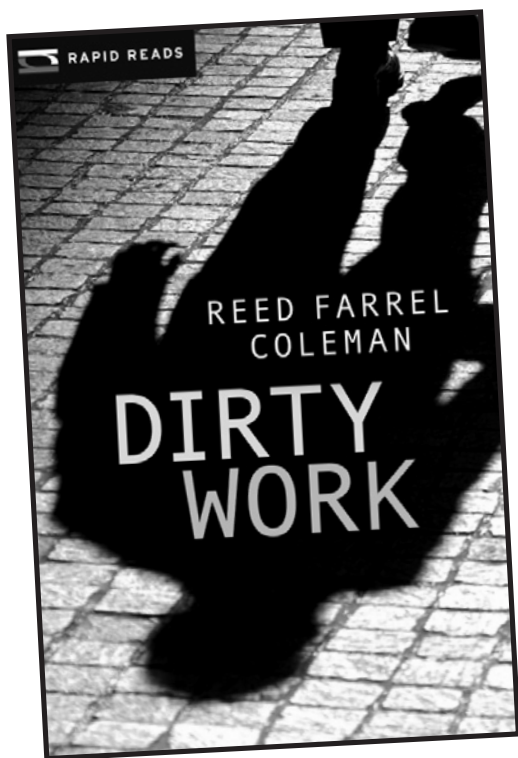
“Plumb Beach parking lot. Eight,” Gullie repeated. “Now tell me what this is about.”

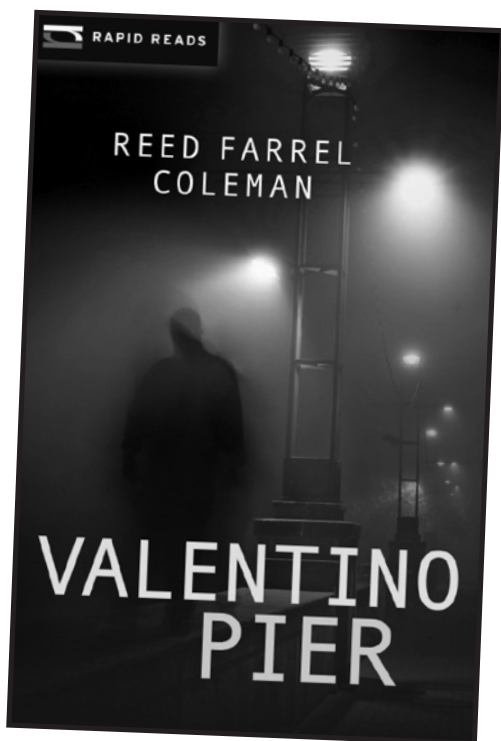
Sam coughed. Cleared his throat. Then said one word. “Keisha.”

Gulliver shouted into the phone for Sam not to hang up. But Sam Patrick was already gone.

Called a “hard-boiled poet” by National Public Radio’s Maureen Corrigan and the “noir poet laureate” in the Huffington Post, **REED FARREL COLEMAN** is the author of twenty-one novels and novellas. He has been signed to do the next four books in Robert B. Parker’s Jesse Stone series and by Putnam to begin a new series of his own. He is a three-time recipient of the Shamus Award and a three-time Edgar Award nominee in three different categories. He has also won the Audie, Macavity, Barry, and Anthony awards. He lives with his family on Long Island. For more information, visit www.reedcoleman.com.

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"Gulliver Dowd swaggers into the crime fiction world and takes his place with the great investigators. Smart, vulnerable, wounded, heartbreakingly hopeful, I just adore his company."

—*Louise Penny*