

PRAISE FOR DEBORAH SPRINKLE

“Once again Deborah Sprinkle has created a riveting page-turner in *Death of An Imposter*. Well-defined characters and a twisty plot kept me reading past midnight to find the killer.”

— PATRICIA BRADLEY, AUTHOR OF THE LOGAN POINT SERIES, MEMPHIS COLD CASE NOVELS AND THE NATCHEZ TRACE PARK RANGER NOVELS

“Deborah Sprinkle has masterfully created a rollercoaster ride. Destination: to end a murder spree.”

— DIANN MILLS, CHRISTY AWARD WINNER, LONG WALK HOME - JUNE 2019 TYNDALE, FATAL STRIKE - SEPTEMBER 2019 TYNDALE, WHERE TOMORROW LEADS - JUNE 2020 TYNDALE, AIRBORNE - SEPTEMBER 2020 TYNDALE, DIRECTOR: BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE

“Deborah Sprinkle has knocked it out of the park with *Death of An Imposter*! Her ability to draw me immediately into the story and keep me there, made this an almost impossible book to put down. She's an author that has catapulted onto my must-read list!”

— EDIE MELSON, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE

DEATH OF AN IMPOSTER



Deborah Sprinkle

FIRST PLACE
2018 Write to Publish
Thriller/Mystery/Suspense
Blue Seal Award



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All characters are fictional, and any resemblance to real people, either fictional or historical, is purely coincidental.

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*To Les, the perfect husband for me, and to God, who brought us together
and continues to direct my steps for my good and His Glory.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

How do you thank an entire community of people adequately? I have no idea other than to say thank you fellow Christian writers. For your encouragement. For your support. For promoting my books ahead of your own. For showing the face of Christ to me and to the world. For teaching me by example how to be a better writer and a better person.

Specifically, I want to thank DiAnn Mills for her friendship, her amazing editing skills, and her counseling—not just for *Death of an Imposter* but for *Deadly Guardian* and other writings I have done.

Thanks to CW3 Larry Myers, US Army (Ret) who once again used his 30+ years of experience in criminal investigation in the Army CID, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and Criminal Investigation for the Department of Justice to help me with police procedure. I am proud to call him, and his wonderful wife, Nancy, friends.

Let me say here that I take full responsibility for any problems you may have with the actions of any of my characters. They sprang from my imagination and sometimes they proved to be a little hard to control.

And many thanks to my on-line Word Weavers group, Sandra M. Hart, Starr Ayers, Bonnie Beardsley, K. Denise Holmberg, and Linda Dinzans. All excellent writers themselves. You were the first ones to read *Death of an Imposter* and offer your praise and gentle critiques. I love you guys!



“If I weren’t such a crusty old bird, I’d have my feelings hurt.” Aunt Rose handed her nephew, Dr. Daniel O’Leary, a platter heaped with roast beef, sliced with surgical precision. “How long will you be working at our little hospital?”

“Maybe a month.” He forked a tender slab of beef onto his plate. The real answer was as long as it took to complete his real assignment. The one he couldn’t share with his aunt.

He knew when he started working for the organization it meant keeping secrets from Aunt Rose. Which hadn’t been a problem.

Until now.

He lived at one end of Ohio and she at the other. Misleading his favorite relative on a long-distance phone call was easy. But could he convince her of his lies face-to-face? More gray showed in her auburn hair, and more lines radiated across her face, but her gaze was as piercing as he remembered.

She chuckled. “I’m surprised your fancy hospital could do without you for that long. Or are you really here on some secret mission?”

Could she read minds as well? If so, he was doomed. “My hospital in Cleveland is far from fancy, Aunt Rose. You know

that. We share staff now and again with other facilities. I'm only in Pleasant Valley as long as it takes to teach them the surgical procedure." He managed a wink. "Spending time with you is just a bonus."

"You always were a smooth one." She patted his hand.

But was he smooth enough to get through the questions certain to be the evening's entertainment? Time for a diversion. "Tell me about Pleasant Valley. Do you like living here?"

"Sorry, Danny, my boy." She raised a brow. "But you'll not change the subject that easily." She poured more gravy over her meat. "What's this amazing new procedure you're here to teach our simple country doctors?" She waved her fork at him. "And don't say I wouldn't understand. I've been cutting up bodies since before you were born."

"I know that." Daniel smiled at her. "Why do you think I became a doctor?" Maybe telling her about the surgery would forestall other questions, and he could get away unscathed. Tonight at least.

He escaped her interrogation around eight and sat in his car for a moment before starting the engine. Did she suspect it was all a cover? He didn't think so. But he'd find out in the days ahead. At least he'd made it through the first trial, and it was good to see her.

Daniel navigated the unfamiliar streets of the small town and headed for the two-story house in the city the company had rented for him. He'd requested a garage, but did it have to be located in an alley?

Exhausted from all the mental sparring, he drove at a snail's pace along the narrow passageway between the garages. A scarcity of working streetlights, a new moon, and the cold drizzle that spattered his windshield left him squinting into the darkness. Eighth door on the right. Finally.

He jumped out, heaved the garage door up, and jogged back to the warmth of his car. Once he maneuvered his fire-engine red Infiniti into the small space, he shut off the engine.

Unease lifted the hairs on the back of his neck. Maybe he shouldn't have taken this assignment.

Too late now. He sighed and squeezed out of his car. Yanking the garage door down, he cringed at the squeal of metal against metal that cut through the still night. Whether the landlord paid for it or not, an automatic garage door and remote opener flew to the top of his to-do list.

Collar up and head down, he hastened across the meager back yard and took the four steps two at a time onto the covered porch, deep in shadow.

Hadn't he left the outside light on?

Footsteps sounded behind him. He whirled. A rock loomed above him. Daniel blocked the attack. But the blow sent waves of searing heat through his right arm and shoulder. He stumbled over a pot of flowers. Crashed to the porch floor. His head cracked against something hard. Pain shot through his skull with blinding whiteness. He fought to focus on his attacker.

Pale light from the kitchen window shone on the blurry figure standing over him, like a black and white TV screen with poor reception.

A fog of pain.

His attacker bent and peered at him. Daniel needed to act, but he couldn't move. Was he destined to die at the hands of a stranger? Adrenaline surged through him, and he fought the misery piercing his head. He shifted his body. Where was his gun?

The hooded figure straightened and disappeared into the nighttime gloom.

He fumbled for his phone and willed his shaking fingers to press the keys.

"911. What's your emergency?"