

Backstory

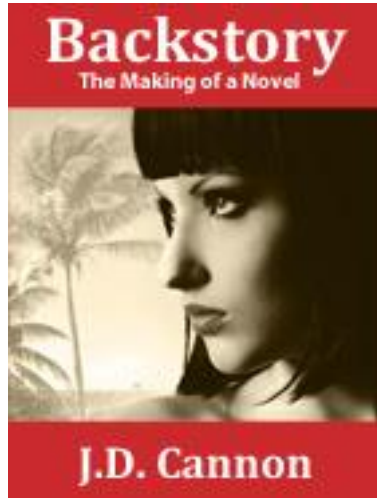
The Making of a Novel



J.D. Cannon

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Welcome to Backstory



After *Just by Chance* was published, I received a lot of questions from readers and friends. They wanted to know how I came up with the story idea, the location, and the characters, and how I turned those building blocks into a complete novel. Eventually, I found myself answering the same questions countless times in both e-mails and conversations. Now, I love to talk about writing, and I never get bored with these inquiries, but I kept thinking there had to be a better way to share what people wanted to know. My first thought was to answer these questions on my blog at www.jdcannon.com, but upon further reflection, I realized that doing so might result in duplication, since

many people ask the same questions over the course of time.

So, instead of using my blog, I decided to write this short eBook to take readers, friends, and anyone else with an interest behind the scenes and share some of the things that went into the making of *Just by Chance*. In essence, it's the backstory. I'll talk about how I came up with the idea for the story, introduce you to some of the main characters, share pictures of both actual locations and locations that inspired some of the story elements, and I'll describe my writing process. Along the way, I'll also share some snippets from the book, as well as a few deleted scenes. And the last two chapters of *Backstory* contain the opening scenes from *Just by Chance* and my soon-to-be-released novel, *Imposter*.

I hope you enjoy reading *Backstory* as much as I enjoyed writing it.

What's In a Blurb?



The “blurb” is a writer’s slang term for what you see on a book’s back cover. Technically, it’s referred to as “back cover matter,” and it’s designed to grab the interest of potential readers.

The whole idea behind the blurb is very simple. What do you do when you’re in a bookstore? Most people browse their favorite sections. For some, that may be the “new releases” section, and for others, it might be the tables that display the latest works from best-selling authors. Whatever their favorite section, people will usually browse until they see a cover that attracts their attention and then look at the title. If the cover and title look interesting, they’ll pick up the book and read the back cover blurb or the blurb on the inside of the cover flap. Then they

decide whether or not to buy the book. So the blurb, in effect, serves as a short sales pitch, and it is a very important part of the overall writing and publishing process.

Here’s the blurb for *Just by Chance*:

When high-class escort Kim Carter goes out for a night on the town with New York mobster Vincent Molini, the last thing she expects to see is his picture plastered all over the news. Molini has been murdered, and Kim was the last person he was seen with the night before. With the help of Kim’s friend Nikki—a talented computer hacker—Kim manages to skirt the police and go into hiding in the Florida Keys. But she isn’t completely under the radar . . . New York crime boss, Frank Famulari, sends a team of his cohorts to find Kim and learn the truth about Molini’s death.

What I found interesting is that the back blurb is one of the first things a potential reader sees, but it’s often the very last thing a writer writes, which was the case with me. I worked through at least three or four versions of the blurb for *Just by Chance* until I settled on the one to use.



Can I Judge Your Book by Its Cover?



I get a lot of compliments about the cover of *Just by Chance* from both readers and fellow writers, and I truly hope the book *can* be judged by its cover. Here's the cover and its backstory.

My cover artist is Damon Ra, a very talented young man who hails from South Africa. Damon came up with this cover design after reading an expanded version of the blurb. I was absolutely floored when I first saw it, and was delighted and impressed that Damon was able to capture the essence of the story in his first draft. An iteration or two later we were done. And the entire process took only a few days.

The cover contains several of the key story elements—a beautiful, exotic-looking woman, a tropical setting with beaches and palm trees, and some other rather subtle things that are part of the story. I think the cover fits the story perfectly, and I believe that the story lives up to the promise that the cover communicates. Here are a few comments from readers:

“Just by Chance is hard to put down. Well-crafted characters and a strong plot grab your attention and work together to drive you toward a surprising ending! You must read this book.”

“Wow! Just read J.D. Cannon's, Just by Chance. It's a page-turning noir detective thriller a -splash with Florida pastels. Murders, gangsters, a hot computer nerd and cool call girl run through this novel at a fast pace as the reader tries to guess whodunit. And J.D. Cannon keeps you guessing! Read this novel if you like your detective stories witty and racy.”

“A page-turner for sure. I could not put the book down.”

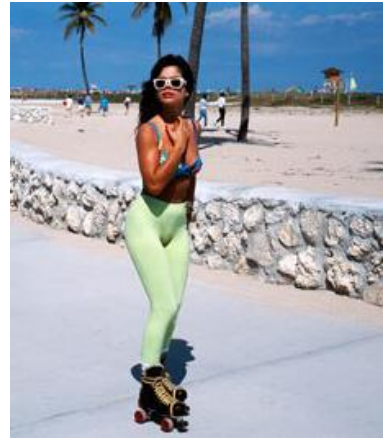
I can't wait to see what Damon comes up with for the cover of my next novel, *Imposter*, which is currently in the process of being edited.

I Was Sitting In a Bar . . .

Readers constantly ask me how I came up with the idea for *Just by Chance*, as well as its main character—an escort—and its location.



The idea came to me while I was sitting in a South Florida bar. I tend to spend a lot of time in places that are surrounded by tanned, attractive, sexy people. The women, young and old, were stunning. The men, mostly on the older side, looked healthy, wealthy, and successful. One older gentleman, in particular, caught my attention. He was sitting in a booth, engaged in a cozy *tête-à-tête* with a beautiful young woman who looked to be in her twenties. I tried to eavesdrop on their conversation—I tend to do a lot of that too—but the noise level was too loud and my efforts were thwarted. So, my imagination was called into service. *Why would this lovely young girl be out and about with such an older man?* When you see a sixty-year-old man sitting in a booth with a twenty-something beauty, father and daughter out for a night on the town is not the first thought that comes into your mind, particularly when he’s stroking her thigh. An escort out with a rich client is more like it. So that gave me the idea for a main character—a beautiful high-class escort, who, just to complicate things a bit, also happens to be married.

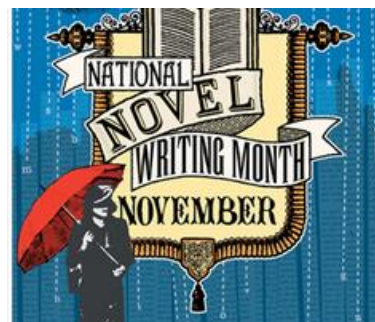


Coming up with the setting of the story was a no-brainer. I simply started with the location that spawned the idea—a sun-splashed tropical setting awash with beautiful people. Add an undercurrent of sex and I’d have the perfect backdrop for a fast-paced mystery/suspense novel. I also wanted to use locales I knew something about or have been to. I wanted a mental vision of the places where the action unfolds, which would give the story a very genuine feel. My familiarity with parts of South Florida and the Florida Keys ultimately helped give the scene locations the authenticity I was after.

So, now that I have a main character and a location, that's all there is to it, right? I wish. Where's the mystery and suspense? Where's the compelling action? Where's the story? All the really hard work was yet to be done. So I filed the idea for a possible book in the back of my mind and put it aside for a while.

Then Along Came November

Then, along came November and NaNoWriMo. NaNoWriMo stands for National Novel Writing Month. Every November, an international writing effort is launched at www.nanowrimo.org. The challenge is to write a novel in thirty days. That's quite a challenge indeed, and it's amplified by two additional criteria: the novel has to be brand new, written from scratch, and it must contain at least 50,000 words.



Yikes! Sounds like a lot, right? Well, it is. It translates into about 200 typed, double-spaced pages. To meet the challenge, one would have to write just shy of 1,700 words per day. That's about seven pages per day. Breaking it down like that made it seem less formidable, so I decided to accept the challenge. Yeah, I can write seven pages per day, except there was one little complication. It was already November 11 when I first found out about NaNoWriMo. That left only nineteen days. I would have to write eleven pages per day. That's quite a bit more. But what the heck? Even if I didn't succeed in completing 50,000 words in nineteen days, I'd still have a decent start on a novel that might not



otherwise see the light of day. I forged ahead, and a full day before the deadline I uploaded my as-yet-untitled novel to the official NaNoWriMo word counter application. I had written almost 55,000 words and had learned quite a bit about myself and what works for me and my writing process. I realized that I needed to write something every day, even if it's just a paragraph. This helped me get past writer's block. I also learned how to avoid procrastinating, even when I didn't want to write, and I was able to block out time for writing every day.

When I told friends and family about my accomplishment, they were very happy for me. I received compliments, such as, "You did it," or "You're done," and "When can we read it?" Yes, I did it, but I wasn't even close to being done. And in no way was the book ready for anyone but me to read, because when you write a novel, typing "the end" is just the beginning.

Meet the Fockers

Sorry, but I couldn't resist using the title from one of my favorite movies. Actually, truth be told, I couldn't think of a catchy title to introduce some of my main characters, and *Meet the Fockers* was the only thing that popped into my mind.

Meet Kim Carter. Kim is the book's main character. She's young, beautiful, exotic, and half-Asian and half-Italian. Kim is married to Doctor Kendall Carter, a psychiatrist and nouveau best-selling diet book author. Kim had hoped to make a living as an artist, but the sobering realities of life interfered with her dream, so she became a trophy wife instead, working in an art gallery and painting for fun. Oh, I almost forgot . . . she's also a very expensive, high-class escort. Now, don't judge her too harshly; there are reasons she does what she does.

Nikki van Metre, Kim's best friend, is a stunning blue-eyed blond. A computer geek bordering on genius, she's a self-employed computer security consultant. Numbed by a string of relationships gone sour, Nikki is withdrawn and untrusting when it comes to men until Detective Anthony Spinetti enters her life and she falls head-over-heels in love with him. Sorry for the cliché, but that's exactly what happens.

I'm always interested in learning about how my readers visualize my characters, so if you read the book and want to share any thoughts about that, please drop me an e-mail at jd@jdcannon.com.



Sometimes, I like to visualize my characters and write down their physical descriptions, as I did with Kim and Nikki. At other times, an actor, actress, or a role played by someone serves as the inspiration for creating a character. Such was the case for my character Kendall Carter.

As mentioned, Doctor Kendall Carter, psychiatrist and best-selling author, is Kim's husband. A self-proclaimed gourmand and lover of expensive wines, Kendall is fond of acquiring the best things that money can buy. The actor I had in mind when I created this character was David Ogden Stiers, who played Major Charles Emerson Winchester III in the television series *MASH*.

Here's a taste of Kendall:

"I'm sorry to be tardy, my dear," Kendall said, "but I decided that a quick shower was in order. As always, you have set a most handsome table."

"Thank you." Kim held up her empty glass and smiled guiltily. "I started without you."

"Well, then," Kendall said. "Let me refill it." He refilled both glasses and sat down. "May I assume that the champagne is satisfactory?"

"Yes, Kendall, it's very good."

Kendall held the champagne flute under his nose and sniffed. He took a sip, swirled the liquid around in his mouth, and sighed appreciatively. "Ah, champagne. Truly the nectar of the gods. If I could pick but one libation to survive the remainder of my life on, this would be it."

"You do have a way with words." Immediately, Kim was sorry she had said anything.

"Why thank you, dear." Kendall nodded confidently. "Brandi Peters seems to think so as well."

"Who is that?" Kim asked.

"Brandi Peters is super-agent to the elite. The best representation for the best of the best, as it were."

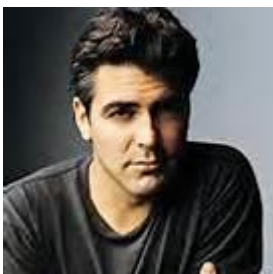
"And what about Drew Leffingwell?"

"I dismissed the imbecile. I decided that big-league representation was required, as well as deserved."

Kim debated whether ask for details or to change the subject. "Have an oyster," she said. "They look yummy."

"Ah yes, the oyster. A simple, yet noble bivalve mollusk from the family Ostreidae. The word derives, of course, from the Greek word for shell: Ostrakon."

If ever there was a man who tries to avoid using words with less than three syllables it would have to be Kendall Carter.



Anthony Spinetti is a homicide detective with the Boca Raton, Florida, police department. The best vision I can give you of the "Hollywood handsome" Spinetti is to think of a young George Clooney. Quite the ladies' man, and more than happy to play the field. But all that changes when he meets Nikki, and he's not quite sure how he feels about it.

Frank Famulari is the head of a New York crime family. He's normally very calm and reserved, much like Vito Corleone's character in *The Godfather*, unless, of course, you get on his bad side. Then you're in some very serious trouble, and your best hope for survival is to run for the hills. When I think about

which famous actor would be a good fit for this character, Anthony Quinn is the first one who comes to mind.

In addition to the handful of characters I've introduced here, there are a quite a few more that appear in the book. Each one is colorful and unique in his or her own way, and each one brings a special dimension to the story.

Location, Location, Location

Don't worry, I'm not going to lecture on the fundamental principles of real estate investing. I'm going to talk about scene locations. Many readers ask me about the locations in *Just by Chance* and whether they're real or fictional. My answer is "yes" and "no." Let me explain.



Even though I write fiction, I'm a big believer in the authenticity of locations because I think it can enhance a story. And, for me, it often makes a story easier to write. Having said that, I think that names of places like restaurants, stores, and so forth are okay to fictionalize, and can also help a writer avoid unwanted legal ramifications.

When it comes to story locales in general, I have some pretty strong feelings. In my mind, it's okay to fictionalize some aspects of locations, but I believe there should at least be a strong dose of what I like to call "geographical integrity." Not all writers agree with me on this, and not all writers practice this, but I'm a stickler for geographical integrity. You may be wondering what I mean by geographical integrity, so let me explain. Let's suppose that a scene takes place in New York's Manhattan, the Big Apple, where streets run east and west, and avenues run north and south, forming a nice well-behaved grid. In such a setting, I think it is a huge faux pas for a writer to write something like, "He turned west onto Park Avenue," as it violates the notion of geographical integrity. I also think geographical integrity adds a dash of authenticity to an otherwise fictional story, particularly for those readers who are familiar with a book's locale. I wasn't going to mention this, but I



came across a sentence like this in a best-seller not too long ago.

So, to finally answer the question of whether my locations are real or fictional, the answer is that they are, for the most part, real. I have visited the majority of the locations that appear in my stories and they all have geographic integrity. I sometimes change the names of restaurants, hotels, and neighborhoods even though they are places

I've actually been to. I will sometimes use an actual street, house, room, or building as the backdrop for a scene.

Some of the images that accompany this chapter were used to develop the vision for particular scenes in *Just by Chance*. The causeway photograph leads to a place in the Florida Keys where Kim and Nikki hide from the police and the mafia. The sunset photo was actually taken by me at a hotel in the Florida Keys. The hotel in Miami Beach is the setting for several important scenes in the book. And the Boca Raton home with a beautiful pool was used to model Kim's home.



A Bit of the Bubbly

No, I'm not going to write about champagne. Champagne is for drinking, not writing about. The "bubbly" I'm talking about here has to do with the "bubbling up" of ideas that get incorporated into a story, the creative process that I accidentally discovered and used when writing *Just by Chance*. And it's the process that I now use for all my fiction writing.

A number of years ago, I visited the website of one of my favorite authors and was thrilled to find an article he had posted about his writing process. When I learned that he wrote out his novels longhand and then had someone transcribe them, I was stunned. I couldn't believe that in this day and age of sophisticated computing devices someone would take such a primitive, slow, and old-fashioned approach to writing.

Well, guess what? My own writing process starts out with a handwritten approach. Not just the jotting down of ideas, but the actual scenes. I write out each scene in the book longhand, a couple of scenes at a time. Now, I must tell you that I struggled with this approach for a long, long time. Being somewhat of a techie by nature and by training, I've always had access to the latest advances in technology, but I was reluctant to use them. And I couldn't figure out why.

I'm certainly comfortable with computers and know how to use them, and I can even type at a decent clip thanks to the typing class I took way back in high school. And I truly admire people who can whip out their laptop or tablet and take notes during meetings or lectures, or just start writing chapters of their book. Not me, though. I just didn't find it a natural or effective way to work. It felt too linear and confining. So, I struggled to try and get more techno-centric, but without success. Oh, the guilt. What was wrong with me? How come everyone else could bang merrily away on their keyboards, but I couldn't? I had to go through dozens of yellow pads, trying to decipher my scribbled handwriting and margin notes, following swooping arrows that encircled paragraphs destined to be inserted in various places in the twenty-or-so pages I had handwritten.



Then one day I figured it out. I did some research and learned a bit about how the human brain works. It turns out that when we write things out longhand, and when we write using a keyboard, different areas of the brain are stimulated. When we write longhand, more of the creative areas of our brain come into play, and we are better able to think in terms of phrases, ideas, and concepts. When we use a keyboard, we tend to think more in terms of individual characters and words and less in terms of the bigger picture. Once I learned this, the guilt and frustration immediately disappeared, and I no longer had any problems pulling out a yellow pad and letting the creative me get down to work.

I think up a few scenes and jot down some notes about characters, location, timeframe, and plot. I do this for two or three scenes at a time. I find it difficult to plan out much more than that, preferring that my characters lead me into what should come next. Then, I draft each scene on a lined pad. This starts out as a pretty linear process, but quickly changes. By the time I'm halfway through a scene, something that should be added between the first two paragraphs bubbles up in my mind, so I stop the linear flow of the scene, write notes in the margins, scribble out chunks of text, then circle them and draw arrows to indicate where things need to be moved and inserted. Sometimes I'll create entirely new scenes that are placed between the ones I planned out. All in all, this tends to be a pretty non-linear process, and I could never work this way using a word processor. The biggest downsides to this approach are that it's not very "green" and it produces piles of yellow pads scattered about my office, which can make it hard to find pieces of the story.

Once I've drafted a few scenes longhand, I crank up my word processor and start typing, editing each scene as I go. At this point, I'm ready to submit the scenes to my critique group. As an aside, if you are a writer, the best advice I can give you is to find yourself a critique group. The feedback they can provide is invaluable. After meeting with my critique group, I make additional notes on yellow pads and review their feedback, which will ultimately be incorporated into the book's first draft.

And that's when the real work starts.

The End Is Just the Beginning

Every writer I know has two favorite words they look forward to writing. Can you guess what they are? I won't keep you in suspense. They are as follows:

THE END

The last two words of every novel. It's very difficult for me to describe my feelings whenever I write these two words. If I had to pick a single word, it might be "relief," or maybe "satisfaction." I'm not really sure if those would be the best word choices, but they were the only ones that came to mind when I wrote this. And, the more I think about it, the more I think that maybe a single word doesn't do the job at all. Some of the feeling is good and some not so much. The thing is, whatever it is I'm feeling when I write those two words is fleeting. It only lasts for a half hour at most, but I savor each of those minutes. Because for a writer—at least this writer—the end is just the beginning.

After having toiled for months or years on a story, I only have a first draft. And that first draft may be a piece of crap. After spending untold hours getting to the first draft, I'm faced with the challenge of starting at page one and re-writing—and often re-writing again—until I have something that's good enough to show to my editor.

I'll usually put the first draft away for at least a week. Then, I'll go back to it and incorporate the feedback I've gotten from my critique group, as well as other things I pick up as I re-read the manuscript. More often than not, I'll add more scenes to fill in some holes and to make the scene transitions smoother. The initial draft of *Just by Chance* was almost 55,000 words. By the time I finished the second draft, it had grown to 74,000 words, an increase of almost 40 percent.

I re-read the first draft, editing again as I go, and produce a second draft. At this point, it's ready to send to my editor, and that's when the real work begins. My editor, Allison Itterly, is a very talented young woman, and she does an incredible job of whipping my story into shape. Characters may be cut out, scenes may be thrown away, and the entire story may be taken apart and put back together again. The result is always far better than what I started with. *Just by Chance* started out with three main characters—two escorts and their straight lawyer friend—and it ended with one escort as the main character and her computer geek best friend. The lawyer disappeared altogether. And the word count

for the published version decreased to just more than 50,000 words. That's a lot of trimming down. But to quote a line from one of my favorite Harry Chapin songs, "That's just how it goes."

Murder Your Children

That got your attention, right? Before you get too upset, you need to know that it's just a phrase writers use. Actually, the original phrase, by William Faulkner, is "In writing, you must murder your darlings." But I like my version better. Our "children" are the scenes and characters we create, and the words and sentences we write. The "murder" part of the phrase has to do with cutting things out of the story: words, sentences, characters, and entire scenes. Now, the problem is that writers usually love their children, sometimes with an umbilical cord attachment since they are our creations. And it's often hard to let go.

These so-called "murders" are usually initiated by our editor or our critique group, people who are of the firm opinion that these children don't add anything of value to the story. And they're usually right. So, just like deleted bits of a movie that end up on the cutting-room floor, our beloved children bite the dust. I couldn't help myself . . . I just had to sneak a pair of clichés into that sentence.

Here's a scene from *Just by Chance* that I absolutely loved. I think it's filled with tension and drama, and



I can see it acted out in vivid color in my mind. But my editor made me kill that kiddie because it didn't add anything essential to the story. Warning: the language in this scene is very raw, but very real. Mob guys do talk like this.

The setting sun reflected off the windows of Ristorante Sorrentino as Girardi pushed through the mahogany doors and entered the reception area.

"Buono sera, señor. One for dinner?" asked the maître'd.

Girardi shook his head. "Where's the bar?"

"Right this way." The man pointed him to the back of the restaurant.

Gallo was seated at the end of the empty bar facing the entrance. His ever-present bodyguards sat at a table behind him. Gallo nodded as Girardi approached.

"Have a seat," Gallo said.

Girardi slipped into a barstool next to Gallo.

"Been a long time, Dino," Gallo said. "I'd ask what you're doin' down in these parts, but I think I already know."

Girardi just nodded.

"Shame what happened to Vinny," Gallo said.

Girardi looked at him. "Yeah, it was."

"Have a drink." Gallo signaled the bartender.

Girardi ordered a San Pellegrino with ice and lime, and tried to get a read on Gallo's body language.

"So," Gallo said, "you know who did Vinny?"

"We know."

"Is it taken care of?"

"Not yet," Girardi said. "But soon."

"Mind if I ask who?"

Girardi gave Gallo a cold stare, but said nothing.

Gallo sipped his drink and looked at Girardi. He was tense. "That's what this visit is about?"

Girardi slowly shook his head.

"Somethin' else?"

"Yeah," Girardi said. "Something else. You and Vinny?"

"Me and Vinny what?" Gallo responded.

"He gave you something."

"Whaddya talkin' about?" Gallo tried to sound innocent. "He gave me what?"

Girardi drank his mineral water.

"C'mon, Dino," Gallo said. "Everyone knows what I do. And everyone knows Frank doesn't want any part of that."

"Look," Girardi said, "I don't have time for any bullshit. Vinny gave you at least five large last week."

Gallo turned a little pale. He drained his scotch and signaled for another. He sipped, trying to buy time.

Girardi pushed Gallo's drink out of reach with the back of his hand. "Vinny told me," he said.

Gallo scoffed. "Frank all of a sudden gets with the times? I thought he was old school."

"Frank doesn't know," Girardi said. "Yet." He emptied the bottle of mineral water into his glass. "He's going to want it back . . . with interest."

"Some balls."

"Look, I'm just going to say this once," Girardi said, looking coldly at Gallo. "Whatever deal you and Vinny had was between you two. And you know how this business works. Vinny kicks up to me, I kick up to Frank. Same as you do down here, right?"

Gallo nodded.

"So, I need to get the five large back, plus two. The rest I don't give a fuck about." Girardi didn't know

the details, but he figured he was leaving more money on the table than what was agreed to in Vinny's deal. A peace offering of sorts.

"You're fuckin' crazy."

"I think it's best for everyone if Frank doesn't find out about this. I'm sure nobody wants him to bring a beef down here," Girardi said. "Why don't you make this go away, Fats, and do the right thing."

Gallo worked his drink.

"I'm going back to New York tomorrow afternoon." Girardi got up to leave. He patted Gallo on the back. "I'll expect to hear from you."

Yeah, I really loved that scene, but my editor was right. It didn't really add anything to the story, so it had to go. It was deleted, but a writer's scene can often be revived and reused in another novel. Most writers don't permanently throw their babies away; they keep them filed away on their computer and hope for a possible rebirth in a future novel. And that's exactly what's going to happen to this one.

Another deleted scene from *Just by Chance* occurs in a clothing-optional bar in Key West, Florida. And, just in case you're wondering, this place really exists. I know, because I went there myself. I deleted this one before my editor got to see it. Anthony Spinetti and a girlfriend named Cara are the two characters.

She pointed him toward a staircase and led the way up three flights of stairs to the rooftop. At the top landing, a large sign warned that neither photographs nor sexual contact was permitted, and that cell phones would be confiscated if used to take pictures.

They pushed through the steel door and entered the large rectangular space. A long wooden tiki bar with two dozen stools sat along the far wall. About twenty people were seated at the bar, some fully clothed, some completely nude, and a few in-between. Small wooden tables and chairs were scattered around the periphery of the rooftop, and a disk jockey, naked except for a few gold chains and sunglasses, swayed to the music at the short end of the space, while ten couples of various shapes, sizes, and sexual pairings, danced. At a small booth in one corner, a topless woman was getting her body painted as her male companion looked on.

"Are you going to be able to handle this, big boy?" she teased.

"No problem. Who'd have thought there'd be a place like this, huh?"

"Only in Key West, I guess."

They took a seat at the bar, and Spinetti did his best not to stare at the exposed body parts. A topless twenty-something bartender came toward them and smiled.

"Hi, folks, how're you doing tonight?"



“Just fine,” Cara bubbled.

“Great. I’m Jenna.” The bartender smiled. “What can I get you?”

“Bombay Sapphire and tonic for me,” Spinetti said, making a conscious effort to look her in the eyes instead of the boobs.

“Same,” Cara said.

“Coming right up. This your first time here?”

They both nodded and smiled.

“Welcome then. Did you see the rules outside?”

They nodded again.

“Just to let you know, people here are pretty cool. Someone might ask you to dance, but it’s not a pick-up place. We are clothing optional, so whatever you’re comfortable with is up to you. We get the occasional lookie-loos, but we can pick them out real easy, and we triple the drink prices for them so they don’t last too long.”

“Thanks, Jenna,” Cara said with a smile.

“Enjoy,” Jenna said, as she went off to fill their drink order.

Cara looked at Spinetti and smiled. “So, big boy, are you gonna go native?”

I had less trouble deleting that scene than I did the earlier one. It truly didn’t add much to the story, except for a three-letter word ending in “x.” This scene too, will likely be reincarnated in another book, perhaps with a change in the characters. Oh yeah . . . if you’re interested in the name of that bar, just drop me an e-mail at jd@jdcannon.com and I’ll be happy to share it with you.

Sneak Peek

Here's the opening scene for *Just by Chance*. It's also somewhere on my website, but rather than have you go searching around for it, I thought I'd put it right here.

Vincent Molini pushed open the glass doors of the Catch-22 and entered the popular Boca Raton nightspot. It was halfway through happy hour and the place was packed. The shiver that flashed down his spine told him he was taking a risk . . . a big risk. But it was too late to back out now.

Molini's eyes swept over the patrons bellied-up to the bar. He found the man he was looking for standing at the far end with his back to the wall glancing at the bar's entrance between sips of single malt scotch. Dominick "Fats" Gallo, all two hundred and eighty pounds of him, was dressed in a white short-sleeved shirt and white slacks. Three chunky gold rings on each hand and a couple of heavy gold chains around his neck completed the wardrobe.

They made eye contact, and Molini headed in Gallo's direction, holding the briefcase tightly at his side. As he walked through the twenty-to-fifty-something crowd, Molini looked around to see who might have accompanied Gallo. Molini knew that Gallo never traveled alone, particularly when money was involved. He spotted two bodyguards sitting at a table just behind the rotund mobster.

"How you doin'?" Molini said, nodding.

"I'm good," Gallo said, putting his glass down and returning the nod. "You want a drink?"

"Whatever you're having," Molini placed the briefcase between the brass foot rail and the bar.

Gallo flagged the bartender and ordered a round. He drained his glass and tapped the briefcase with his foot. "That a full boat?"

"Yeah. Five large," Molini said, "like we agreed."

"You're making a good investment."

"It better be."

"What the fuck?" Gallo said, annoyed. "You're gonna double your money in three weeks. That's better than you do now."



"We'll see," Molini said. "Nobody can know about this." He stared at Gallo.

"Hey, I know how Frank feels about certain investments," Gallo said, smiling.

Gallo was referring to Molini's boss, Frank Famulari, who preferred that his money be invested within his own New York family, and who was adamant that his people stay away from the drug trade.

"I'm not fuckin' around here," Molini said. "If Frank finds out about this . . ."

"Trust me," Gallo said, slapping Molini on the shoulder. "C'mon, let's have a drink."

Molini was nervous, but he had already committed. Gallo was expanding his cocaine operation and was offering to double Molini's investment in a matter of weeks. But, if Gallo crossed him, Molini would have a hard time explaining how he lost the money.

"A' salut, to our health," Gallo said, clinking Molini's glass.

"Cent'anni, may we live to a hundred."

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You can buy *Just by Chance* at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Also available in paperback at [CreateSpace](https://www.createspace.com)

Another Sneak Peek

As an added bonus, here's the opening scene from my new novel, tentatively titled *Imposter*. In this novel, Detective Anthony Spinetti, who first appeared in *Just by Chance*, is the main character. Please enjoy.

The naked body was lying facedown in the grass. Limp arms stretched out in front of her, and her legs were slightly parted. Long, thick blonde hair was pulled into a tight ponytail and draped over her right shoulder. Her blue eye stared at the parking lot to the left. The other eye, barely visible, peeked out from a dark pool of blood, partially dried brown by the warm tropical air and searing morning sun. Her mouth was open, the now-silent cry for help having gone unanswered.

Standing a few feet from the body, Detective Anthony Spinetti took in the layout of Silver Pond Park. The four-acre patch of asphalt and grass was dotted with a half dozen picnic areas, each ringed with a semicircle of smooth gray banyan trees and neatly trimmed Bermuda grass. An idyllic landscape marred by the yellow crime-scene tape hanging motionless in the morning heat and the gruesome scene in front of him.

Spinetti lowered his six-foot-two-inch frame into a crouch and rested his forearms on his knees. Perspiration turned the back of his silk shirt a dark green as he studied the body. The victim was slim, probably in her mid-twenties, and five foot seven by his estimate. Circling the body from a safe distance, he resumed his crouch several times, being careful to scan the surrounding turf for any visible evidence.



"Sorry I'm late."

Spinetti peered over the top of his Oakleys and watched his partner, Kyra King, approach. "Rough night?"

"Fuck off," she snapped, her lips curled.

"Nice talk. And so early in the morning. Abrams must be rubbing off on you," he said, referring to their boss, Detective Captain Stan Abrams.

Spinetti had meant for his remarks to be light-hearted, but Kyra's twisted face and extended middle finger clearly indicated a different interpretation. He held up a hand to halt both her approach and any further retort on her part.

Kyra stopped in her tracks. With her hands on the hips of her five-foot-four almost-boyish body, she stared at him through black sunglasses. She glanced at the corpse then quickly turned her attention back to Spinetti. "So, what have we got?"

“Looks as if both carotid arteries have been cut with something very sharp,” Spinetti said, standing. “She probably bled out and died in minutes. We’ll let the M.E. make the official call, but I’d guess it happened sometime late last night or very early this morning.”

“Jesus” Kyra said. Her face paled.

Spinetti looked at his partner of two months, and this was her first homicide victim. She had been a stuntwoman in a former life until a three-story fall gone bad resulted in a broken leg and put an end to that career. Today she was dressed in black—black T-shirt, black jeans, black sunglasses, and black wig. She was fond of wearing wigs, from jet-black to platinum blond and everything in-between, including candy-apple red and blazing orange. In the short time he had known her, Spinetti noticed that her behavior often changed with her hair color, and black usually correlated with dark, moody, and short-fused.

“Doesn’t wearing black make you hot?” he asked, wiping his forehead with the back of a hand.

“I don’t sweat,” she snapped.

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Imposter is currently in the process of being edited. If you’re interested, please join my fan list if you haven’t done so already, and I’ll send you an e-mail when *Imposter* is available.

About the Author



After several decades of working as an engineer and management consultant, J.D. Cannon decided to exercise the right side of his brain and try to make up stuff by writing fiction.

The idea of writing came to him in 2004 while he was sitting in a Florida bar eavesdropping on conversations taking place around him. He made up things about the people he was watching—their names, occupations, their most private secrets—and shared these stories with his wife. After listening and laughing for what must have been an hour, she looked at him and said, “You should write a book.” And so it started.

J.D.’s writing is focused on the suspense and mystery genres. It’s fast-paced and full of interesting characters and storylines, guaranteed to keep you engrossed and entertained. If you like best-selling authors like James Patterson, David Baldacci, Lee Child, Daniel Silva, and Nelson DeMille, you’ll love J.D.’s stories.

J.D. loves to hear from his readers and always responds to their inquiries, so please feel free to drop him an e-mail at jd@jdcannon.com, follow him on Twitter @jdcannonwrites, visit his Facebook page www.facebook.com/jdcannonwrites, or drop by his blog at www.jdcannon.com. Leave him a comment or sign up for his e-mail list to receive exclusive announcements and freebies.