

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, **Love**reading will help you find new
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Nameless Dead

Written by Paul Johnston

Published by MIRA Books

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to **Love**reading.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

**THE NAMELESS
DEAD**

PAUL JOHNSTON



Prologue

Manhattan, December

Two degrees above freezing, and people's breath was rising over their heads like souls en route to another dimension. It was after 9:00 p.m. and the shops in Greenwich Village were still open, even if customers with money to spend were scarcer than beat cops near an actual crime.

Laurie Antoinette Simpson came out of the subway at Christopher Street-Sheridan Square and headed down Grove Street toward her apartment. Gasoline fumes hung in the air and burned her throat. She pulled the cashmere scarf that her mother had given her for her thirty-fourth birthday over her mouth, but that only impeded her breathing. She needed to get back to jogging. The problem was that the legal practice she had established in Harlem was swamped with civil rights cases, many of them involving immigrants. She no longer had time to produce the articles about extremist organizations that had made her name when she was still in her twenties.

‘Hey, Laurie.’

She smiled at the young man with the straggly beard, who was leaning against a wall. ‘Cousin Sam, how are you? I thought you went to Brooklyn.’

‘Nah, nothing doing over there. Too much competition.’

‘And there isn’t around here?’

He shrugged. ‘People know me. Hey, you need anything?’

‘No, thanks. You got somewhere to sleep?’

‘Yeah, I’m okay.’

‘Those clothes could do with a wash. What have you been lying in?’

Cousin Sam peered at the stains on his threadbare Levi’s as if he was seeing them for the first time. ‘I don’t know, Laurie. Maybe I—’

‘Save it,’ she said, raising a hand. ‘Come around on Sunday afternoon and I’ll wash them for you.’

‘Hey, thanks.’ He looked over her shoulder. ‘Gotta go. Customers.’

‘Don’t rip them off,’ she said, watching his skinny frame weave between the cars. Time was, she’d have preached him a sermon about the dangers of drug use, but she knew that was pointless. Keeping him clean was the best she could do, that and being thankful that he wasn’t really her cousin, with all his problems.

Shouting reached her from farther down the street. Two black youths, all Converse All-Stars and baggy denim, were being ejected from a music store. As she passed, Laurie heard the shop owner say they were lucky he wasn’t calling the cops. Between curses, the young men claimed they hadn’t done anything. She

was about to take their side when one of them pulled a switchblade.

‘Knife, Andy!’ she shouted.

The troublemakers looked around at her, giving the shop owner time to grab a baseball bat. After exchanging glances, the young men took to their heels and disappeared around the corner ahead.

‘Thanks, Laurie,’ said the overweight man with a ponytail. ‘Those assholes asked to see my Bob Marley bootlegs. I barely managed to hold on when they tried to grab ’em.’

‘Times are hard, Andy.’

‘You got that right. Got time for a drink? I have some ten-year-old Calvados.’

‘Tempting, but I’ll pass. I’m in court first thing.’

She continued down the street, keeping her eyes off the antique furniture store. She had paid the weird Frenchman who ran it plenty when she moved into her apartment. Nineteenth-century European fittings and expensive spirits had been her only weaknesses in recent years. Her mother was forever needling her to spend more on her appearance. She had such beautiful features, how did she expect to get a man if she let herself turn into an old maid? What was she doing in the Village when she could be on the Upper West Side? Her father would happily buy her a place and it was much more convenient for work, though why Laurie insisted on helping people who couldn’t pay was beyond her.

The truth was, Laurie had no interest in moving closer to her parents. Her father was a property developer with a beach house in the Hamptons and a ski lodge in Aspen, but he had never been interested in her

and would never even speak to her if her mother didn't hand him the phone.

Neither did she have any desire to find another man.

She stopped and looked up and down the street. It had been several months since Wendell had appeared to her, and over a year since she had last run after a tall black man and embarrassed herself by grabbing his arm and saying her dead lover's name. Wendell and she had been together for eight years. Sometimes she could remember every detail about him and the things they had done together, but more and more she could hardly recall his face without help. She only kept one photograph of him on the wall in her apartment because it hurt almost as much to see his sweet smile and perfect skin as it would to banish him from her mind's eye. But suddenly she felt a strong desire to see his features again and extended her stride.

Six years since he had been taken by leukemia. Would she finally be able to look at the photo without tears? The prospect made her heart beat faster, as if she was going to meet her lover in the flesh following a long separation.

Laurie turned the key in the lock and went quickly up the stairs—there was no elevator in the converted family house. She felt the breath catch in her throat, aware that her feet were heavy on the steps. She really did need to get a fitness program organized. Filling her lungs, she opened the pair of locks and went inside. There was an unusual smell, something chemical, but she hardly noticed it, so eager was she to lay eyes on Wendell. She flicked on the light, shucking her coat

and throwing off her scarf. Then she stepped toward the dining room door, her heart hammering.

There was a wide smile on Laurie Simpson's face as she walked into the knife that killed her. The last thing she saw, and it hurt much more than the blade slicing through her abdomen, was the red swastika that had been sprayed over Wendell's face. She opened her mouth to let out a cry of anguish, but no sound came as she went to join her beloved.

One

A healthy mind in a healthy body—yeah, right. A crow cawed, then took off with a rattle of wings from the trees on my left. The sounds were immediately swallowed by the sodden vegetation and chill damp air. I came round the bend in the path and sprinted toward the timber wall. I'd been over it so often recently that I knew exactly where the hand and toeholds were. That didn't stop me getting more splinters in my fingertips. After I was over, I ran to the rope slide. That added to the abrasions on my palms. Now there was only the long stretch to the finish. My knee had started to ache from its old injuries, but I reckoned it would hold out. Since I had started doing the circuit, my body had found numerous ways to show its displeasure at being treated like a delinquent at boot camp. Which, of course, is what I was. There weren't so many twinges as there had been at the start. The winter air hadn't helped when I was given the go-ahead to use the course a couple of weeks back. It could have been worse. I'd been told that this part of Illinois could easily have had snow and been freezing cold by now.

I pressed the button on my watch—one of the few personal possessions I'd been allowed to keep—as I crossed the line in the ground. Twenty-two minutes and sixteen-point-six seconds. I bent over, hands on my knees, and tried to get my breathing under control.

'Not bad.'

I looked up. 'Close to my best time,' I said between gasps.

The tall individual in green vest and thigh-hugging shorts gave me an indulgent smile. 'Like I say, not bad.' He paused. 'For a civilian.'

'Uh-huh. What's your record, Superman?'

The soldier dropped to the ground and started doing push-ups at a frightening rate. 'You don't want to know,' he replied, his breathing still regular.

'No, seriously.'

He glanced up at me and grinned. 'How serious do you wanna get, friend?'

'However serious you like.' I knew I was asking for trouble, but life had been dull of late.

'How about this?' the soldier said, still doing rapid push-ups. 'We race the circuit and then I tell you my best time. Oh, and the loser buys a case of beer.'

I went for it. The man in green had well-toned muscles all over and his height gave him a monster stride. I took him at the start, but by the end I was about fifty yards behind, my thighs and lungs on fire.

'Make it Bud,' he said, his sculpted chest hardly rising.

'Can't,' I eventually managed to reply.

He gave me the eye. 'Ain't no can't about it.'

'Sorry,' I said, wiping my mouth. 'I'm not allowed in the canteen.'

He was unconvinced. ‘Who are you? Even the FBI can buy shit there.’

The camp was shared by the army and the Justice Department, and no doubt what he said was true. There were different rules for me, though. I pulled up the right leg of my tracksuit so he could see the tracking cuff. ‘Do I look like a Fed?’

The soldier took in the device. He looked at the stubble on my face and my less-than-perfectly-groomed hair. ‘You don’t sound like one, either. Shit, you’re that foreign prisoner we ain’t supposed to talk to.’

I extended my hand. ‘Matt Wells.’

He took the hand dubiously. ‘Where you from, Mr. Wells?’

‘Call me Matt. I’m from London, England.’

‘Is that so?’ he said, reclaiming his hand rapidly.

‘Now you know why I can’t buy that beer. Not only am I barred from the canteen, but I haven’t got any money.’

‘Aw, forget it,’ the soldier said. ‘Way I hear it, you got other things to worry about.’

‘True enough.’

He gave me a hostile look. ‘You really try to kill—’

‘Well, if you count that I was brainwashed. They’re working on getting me back to normal.’ I didn’t know how much had been made public about us. We had only been allowed newspapers in the last week, and the internet was still off limits. ‘Seems to be working. That’s why I’m allowed out here unsupervised.’

‘Apart from that thing on your ankle,’ he said, with a lopsided grin. ‘I heard about you. Your wife was involved, too, yeah?’

‘Partner. Karen’s due to give birth in the next couple of weeks.’

‘Hey, congratulations.’ He relaxed, but not much. ‘I mean, good luck when the time comes.’

‘Thanks. Everything seems to be going fine.’

‘Great.’ The soldier glanced at his watch. ‘I’d better be getting back. See you around, man.’

‘Hey,’ I called after him. ‘What about the beer?’

‘Forget it.’

‘What’s your name?’ I shouted, feeling like the kid in the playground with no friends.

‘Jerome,’ he yelled, over his shoulder. ‘Quincy Jerome.’

I watched him run off. I didn’t know his rank or unit. The troops in the camp had obviously been told to treat us like pariahs. Which, to any normal person, was nothing less than we deserved.

I went back to the apartment we’d been given, and whined.

‘Don’t worry about it,’ Karen said, her hands resting lightly on the prominent bulge in her abdomen. ‘What did you imagine would be said about us? We tried to kill the President and a member of his cabinet, remember? That was hardly going to endear us to anyone, especially not soldiers. He *is* their commander in chief.’ She grimaced. ‘Your son’s kicking like mad again. I might have known he’d be a rugby player.’

I went over and put my hand next to hers, then kissed her on the lips. There certainly was a lot of activity down below. ‘Of course, rugby league players don’t kick the ball nearly as much as those union tossers.’

‘No, you just kick the opposition.’ Although she’d

been taken into custody with me after trying to kill the justice secretary in FBI headquarters and then the President in the Washington National Cathedral a couple of months back, her stern manner was that of the detective chief superintendent in the London Metropolitan Police she technically still was. ‘That’s enough about rugby, Matt. You haven’t played for years.’

She was right. This was the first time in months that I’d even remembered the sport I played as an amateur for most of my adult life. The imminent arrival of my first male child had resulted in a revision of my priorities.

‘Haven’t you got a clinic this afternoon?’ Karen asked. Her own sessions with the psychologists and neurologists had been suspended until after the birth.

‘Oh, joy...’ In fact, the treatment was becoming less arduous. At the beginning we’d been badly affected by the drugs we were given, Karen in particular finding it difficult to eat and sleep. I’d been worried that the baby would suffer an adverse reaction, but the experts assured us that wasn’t on the cards. There had been long hours wired up to an overhead machine that reminded me of the device used by the Nazi twins back in their camp in Maine. I’d wondered if the so-called ‘reverse indoctrination’ would result in me singing the ‘Star-Spangled Banner’ and demanding a box of doughnuts for breakfast. The effects must have been more subtle, as I had now remembered a lot about myself and kept insisting on Oxford marmalade for my toast—not that I got it.

‘What are they doing?’ Karen asked. Her face was fuller than before and she looked a picture of health, her

lustrous blond hair tied back in a chiffon. ‘Still trying out triggers?’

I nodded. The Rothmann twins had programmed their subjects to go into attack mode when they heard certain words. One of them, ‘Barbarossa,’ had been the default trigger that activated a large number of people in the cathedral during a veterans’ ceremony attended by senior government members. But each subject also had personal triggers that affected only them. The one I fell prey to back then was ‘Goethe’ and the experts had succeeded in deprogramming my brain from responding to it, which was just as well as it had made me zero in on the most powerful man on the planet with murder in my heart. There might still have been other triggers lurking in my subconscious, so hours were spent each week bombarding me with words, most of them German. I had reacted to two other triggers so far—‘Landshut,’ the name of a town, and ‘zugzwang,’ a chess move—they had also been dealt with. For the FBI, the worry was that Jack Thomson, aka Heinz Rothmann, had escaped capture despite my best efforts, and he might succeed in contacting me and activating a trigger—hence no internet and no contact with the outside world.

Karen was looking dispirited. ‘They’re never going to let us out of this place.’

I took her hand. ‘Don’t worry, I’m doing my best to drive them crazy. Soon they’ll be paying us to leave.’

She let out a sob. ‘I never...I never imagined our son would be born in a secure facility, attended by army doctors.’

I put my arm round her shoulders. ‘It doesn’t matter where he’s born.’ I kissed her cheek. ‘All that matters is that you both come through all right and that

he's healthy.' I nudged her gently. 'Besides, you'll have a room of your own with hot and cold running midwives.'

Karen looked away. 'We tried to kill the President, Matt,' she said, her voice pitched low to elude the listening devices. 'Even if they give us a trial, we aren't going to be let off and sent home.'

She had a point. Although people from the British Embassy had visited a few times, we hadn't been allowed to see lawyers. When I complained, I was told we could either stay where we were or join the general population in separate federal prisons. I certainly wasn't going to allow our son to be born in a prison infirmary without me present, so I shut up. The fact was, we were better off being deprogrammed in the camp. Peter Sebastian, the FBI homicide chief with responsibility for us, said the Justice Department had no desire to drag us through the courts, citing not only my assistance with the authorities, but the political desire not to have a sensational trial that would overshadow the President's entire domestic agenda. But they had to be sure we no longer posed a danger, and that stage hadn't yet been reached. As usual, the British government had been completely craven and had caved in to American pressure, even though Karen was a high-ranking and decorated police officer. So much for the special relationship between the two countries.

Karen's eyes were wet. 'It isn't fair. He deserves better.'

I felt my son kick against the palm of my hand. 'Of course he does,' I said softly. 'Especially since his names are going to be Mick and Keith.'

That earned me an elbow in the gut.

‘I told you, Matt,’ Karen said, a smile playing on her lips. ‘No wrinkled Rolling Stones’ names. It’s Algernon or nothing.’

I laughed and brought my mouth close to her bulge. ‘Hey, Nothing!’ I called. ‘Stop kicking your mum!’

Her elbow made contact again before I could get away.

Later on, I went to the FBI’s version of Frankenstein’s laboratory. It smelled as bad as usual: of dubious chemical compounds, half-finished plates of food from the canteen, and apprehension, though I may have been responsible for the last.

‘Good afternoon, Mr. Wells.’

I nodded to the elderly scientist. Dr. Rivers wasn’t a bad type, but he was over-keen on formality. Despite the fact that I’d told him weeks ago to use my first name, he stuck to my surname. Maybe he thought that would reinforce my comprehension of what I really was—a British crime novelist who had got involved with more killers than was good for his health, rather than the mindless pawn of Nazi conspirators.

‘Today we will try some new triggers that the computer has thrown up, if you don’t mind.’ Rivers led me to the secure room. It had armored glass windows on all sides and the only furniture was a chair bolted to the middle of the floor. At least they weren’t chaining me to a bed anymore—that had got very tedious. Now I was free to walk around in the room.

I sat and watched as electrodes were attached to my head and body. The wires ran to a transmitter that was hooked onto the pocket of my orange jumpsuit. Then the glass door closed behind the doctor and his technician,

bolts shooting into their sockets with a loud *thunk*. My legs twitched as tedium gripped me. Things only got interesting when we came across a trigger, but that hadn't happened for a couple of weeks. I was still on edge—the experience was weirder than smoking camel dung.

'Ready, Mr. Wells?' Dr. Rivers's voice came through a speaker above the door. He had taken up his usual position behind a bank of screens.

I raised a hand.

'Matthew Wells, session number twenty-seven, December fifth, 1612 hours,' the scientist said for the recording. He paused, and then started reading out the list of words slowly.

'Faden.' He paused again, waiting to see if I metamorphosed into a psycho killer. Nothing.

'Eggenfelden.' Ditto.

'Kinski.' Zilch.

And so the list went on. I sometimes tried to guess what the unfamiliar words meant, but I'd never studied German so I remained generally clueless. It was often hard even to discern which ones were proper names.

'Alexanderplatz.'

That was easier. I had the impression there had been some important Nazi offices in the Berlin square of that name. Since I remained in control of myself, the Rothmanns obviously hadn't deemed it worthy of use.

My mind began to drift. Rivers didn't protest when that happened; in fact, he'd told me at the start of the process that it was probably better if I didn't concentrate on what was said. So I let my thoughts wander. Inevitably I found myself thinking about Karen. She was right. We might well be kept in the camp indefinitely; it might become our personal Guantanamo Bay,

Illinois-style—we'd only been told which state we were in after a week had elapsed. There had been no sign of the therapy ending. For prisoners, we were comfortable enough. We had a fairly decent apartment and wholesome food provided but were under constant surveillance, with cameras and microphones in every room. The tracking cuff had only recently been taken off Karen's swollen ankle. Given her condition, she was hardly going to make a dash for freedom—not that the high, razor-wired fences could be scaled, even by someone as fit and long-legged as Quincy Jerome.

There was only one thing to be said for our enforced stay. It meant that the woman who had sworn to kill me couldn't get to us. Sara Robbins, my former lover, had turned out to be the sister of a ruthless serial executioner who called himself the White Devil. He tried to frame me for his crimes, and, after his death, Sara took up the baton, murdering one of my closest friends and nearly doing in my ex-wife Caro and our daughter Lucy. Sara had made herself into an even more lethal executioner than her brother and it wasn't long after the attempt on the President's life that she'd sent me a message—helpfully passed on by the Feds, who were monitoring my email—saying that she was looking forward to catching up with me.

'Bismarck,' said Rivers.

'Too obvious,' I said, shaking my head.

The doctor raised his hands, a look of irritation on his thin face. 'Please don't interrupt, Mr. Wells,' he said, with a cough. 'Or make smart comments. *Krankenhaus*.'

I was tempted to recommend that he get his throat looked at in a *krankenhaus*. The word had come up in

a pub quiz years ago and I had guessed it meant ‘lunatic asylum’ rather than ‘hospital.’ That really would have been too suggestive, considering the Rothmann’s father had worked at the Auschwitz krankenhaus. I was so busy damping down a sudden flare of anger about what the Nazi bastards had done to millions of innocent people, let alone Karen and me, that the next word took me by complete surprise.

‘Fontane.’

Immediately I felt the hairs rise all over my body.

The conscious part of me seemed to disconnect and rise upward like a spirit. I watched from above as my corporeal self leapt to its feet and started roaring incomprehensibly. Running to the door, trying to break out, I felt no pain as my shoulder repeatedly crashed into the glass.

Somewhere in the distance a voice was speaking, telling me to breathe deeply and calm myself, reminding me to use the calming techniques I had been taught. With concentration, they had some effect. Eventually I returned to my body, which stopped raging and stepped back from the door. I found myself confused and gasping for breath. I kept hearing words I couldn’t understand, words barked out in a harsh voice, and I looked around desperately for a way out. I knew the idea behind these triggers was to provoke different reactions. Some drove subjects to acts of extreme violence at specific targets, others to covert intelligence gathering, or communication with superiors via phone numbers or email addresses previously inaccessible to their memory. This had been one of the violent reactions, but I didn’t have any target in mind. I also knew what would happen next. When Dr. Rivers was satisfied that my condition

had stabilized, there would be a puff of gas from a pipe in the ceiling and I would be rendered unconscious.

Before the darkness took me, I found myself wondering who or what 'Fontane' was.

DID YOU PURCHASE THIS BOOK WITHOUT A COVER?

If you did, you should be aware it is **stolen property** as it was reported *unsold and destroyed* by a retailer. Neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this book.

All the characters in this book have no existence outside the imagination of the author, and have no relation whatsoever to anyone bearing the same name or names. They are not even distantly inspired by any individual known or unknown to the author, and all the incidents are pure invention.

All Rights Reserved including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form. This edition is published by arrangement with Harlequin Enterprises II B.V./S.à.r.l. The text of this publication or any part thereof may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, storage in an information retrieval system, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the prior consent of the publisher in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

MIRA is a registered trademark of Harlequin Enterprises Limited, used under licence.

Published in Great Britain 2011
MIRA Books, Eton House, 18-24 Paradise Road,
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1SR

© Paul Johnston 2011

ISBN 978 0 7783 0460 9

59-0611

Printed in the UK
by CPI Mackays, Chatham, ME5 8TD