

FRIDAY THE 13TH

A Marnie Reilly Mysteries Short Story



SHARI T. MITCHELL

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Meet My Characters

Marnie Reilly

The psychic psychologist is ethical, independent, tough, quirky, and loyal. She is a force of nature with a killer left hook. Tall and athletically built, her style is casual, and her straight blonde hair, with hints of strawberry, falls just below her shoulders.

Fiercely independent and guarded, Marnie believes she can take care of herself. People who know her well attribute her lone wolf attitude to the tragic deaths of her parents and a complicated sibling rift. Or it could be that people keep trying to kill her. Asking for help isn't easy, and if she lets people into her life, she expects them to be kind and honest.

She's a psychologist and dedicates her life to helping others. The trouble is, she forgets to rescue herself. Or is she just overwhelmed by how much she needs to fix?

Marnie's love life doesn't always go smoothly. She and Tom Keller shared an awkward kiss when they were in college, deciding their relationship status should remain best friends. Before readers were introduced to Marnie, and when she lived in DC, she dated a guy by the name of Ransom Elliot. Long story short, it didn't work out. The elusive Mr. Elliot visited Creekwood to help with a sticky situation, and I'm sure he'll return soon. Then there's Ken Wilder; he was a gaslighting, abusive cheater with a penchant for other people's pain—especially Marnie's. Last, but certainly not least, there's Danny Gregg—the oddly handsome detective who won Marnie's heart. Maybe he's with her for the long haul. Perhaps not. Circumstances could change.

Border Collies Tater and Dickens ensure Marnie gets daily exercise. They also keep her safe. Watch out when Tater's scruff bristles and his intelligent eyes focus on a baddy. The pawsome twosome offer comic relief by chasing ghost cats who inhabit Marnie's farmhouse. Poor Dickens. He runs into walls while in hot pursuit.

Danny Gregg

Detective Danny Gregg is an oddly handsome man with a muss of sandy brown hair and a dimpled smile, that doesn't quite complement his rugged face, lined with worry and crinkles of crow's feet.

Built to intimidate, the detective's 6'5" well-toned frame fills the interview doorway in all the right ways. Armed with a sharp wit, an astute sixth sense, and a piercing blue gaze, he is a criminal's worst nightmare.

Having lost his wife and mother to suicide, guilt looms under the surface because he couldn't save the two women he loved. Investing in relationships was low on his list of priorities—until he met Marnie Reilly while investigating the murder of her ex-lover, Ken Wilder. She annoyed the hell out of him, and he found her to be the most irritating woman he had ever met. Her kindness, independent nature, warmth, wisdom, and sassiness won him over in the end.

Danny is a firm believer in bad things happening in threes. He keeps a tally, gauging if evil is just around the corner or if he and his friends can take a breather from the chaos surrounding them.

On the surface, the detective seems to be an open book, but he has secrets clenched tightly in his big fists about his life before Creekwood. Maybe that's why he's grumpy sometimes.

Tom Keller

The clown of my Creekwood Crew, Detective Tom Keller, is my favorite. Don't worry. The others are well aware of his place in my dark heart. Why do I love him? Let me count the ways.

When he's not cracking inappropriate jokes to ease tension, he's watching his friends' backs and solving murders. Easy going and affable, he rarely loses his temper, but on the odd occasion he does, it's explosive. Injustice fuels his outbursts—even if the wrongly done-by has an alleged history of nefarious activities.

Built like a distance runner, Tom's lanky 6 feet 5.5-inch frame might give the impression he's not agile. Don't believe it. The man can move when there's a paranormal presence in the room—or a spider. He is scaredy cat, but when the pressure is on and his best friend Marnie is in danger, he'll summon courage and protect her with his life.

The sibling dynamic between Tom and my MC Marnie lends to easy dialogue, banter, and memories of a time less complicated. They've been friends since they were five, and readers often misconstrue their closeness as romantic love. Or do they? It's a mystery.

Margaret "Gram" Ryan

Hailing from Ireland, she is Detective Danny Gregg's maternal grandmother and the proprietor of Ryan's Diner. Like Marnie, Gram has the gift of clairvoyance, among other psychic abilities. She's a badass.

Carl Parkins

Carl is a psychiatrist, energy healer, and Marnie's business partner.

Note to the reader:

This story does not fall within the timeline of the Marnie Reilly Mysteries series.



Friday, October 13th

Marnie rolled to her side and stared out the window at the sun rising over the ridge behind her house. It was a moody sun of amber, pink, and red, casting dollops of light over paper birches and hemlock spruces. As she watched leaves dance in the fall breeze, a conversation she had with one of her clients the day before invaded her thoughts.

“If I tell you I am planning to hurt someone, you are required by law to tell the police, aren’t you?”

Jonathan La Roche steepled his long, chunky fingers on his broad chest as he lay on the couch in Marnie’s consulting room. His shoulder-length black hair needed a wash and his clothes and body wreaked of perspiration and nausea-inducing cologne. Matted gray and black whiskers nested on his chin and crept to his cheeks and neck. The stench of his breath and the flecks of food creased into the corners of his unwashed mouth prompted Marnie to cover her face with a folder. While it did little to fend off the foul odor, it shielded her sporadic gagging.

Working hard to maintain her composure, she said, “Yes, that’s right. If you plan to break the law, I have a duty of care to inform the proper authorities. Is that why you wanted to see me today? Are you planning to harm someone?”

“I see. Client confidentiality comes with conditions.” He craned his neck to see her reaction.

Moving the file from her face, she said, “Why would you want to harm someone?”

“Hypothetically, I could be driven to violent acts if someone were to divulge my innermost thoughts. You know, things that I have discussed with them in confidence.” He waved his hand and bolted upright, hammering his size 16 shoes onto the floor.

She flinched and scolded herself for allowing him to startle her. “Mr. La Roche. why don’t you tell me what’s on your mind?” She sat forward—eyebrows raised.

He pointed an accusing finger at her. “You don’t like me. How can you be my psychologist if I repulse you?”

She cocked her head, gripping her pen tightly. “Why do you believe that?”

“You judge me!” He got to his feet and paced in front of the couch.

Marnie pushed her chair back while he wasn’t looking—shortening the distance between her and the door.

“I listen to you and make a professional assessment. Is that what you consider judging?”

Reeling around, he lunged forward, placing his hands on the arms of her chair. His face inches from hers, he snarled, “You! It’s you I intend to harm!”

Shoving her chair back into the wall with a jolting thunk, he turned his back and sang, “Pop Goes the Weasel.” Wheeling back around, he took a step toward her. She leapt to her feet as her consulting room door banged open.

Carl Parkins, her practice partner, stood in the doorway—his jaw and fists clenched. “Your session is over, Mr. La Roche.”

A blue jay squawked by her screened window, jerking her from her thoughts. Glancing down at her smartwatch, a wave of nausea washed over her.

“Argh! It’s Friday the 13th!” she groaned, rolling to the other side of her bed. Tater sat at the edge, peering into her face. Dickens glanced up from his bed in the corner where he had been licking his foot. His ears perked up when Marnie looked at him.

“You two don’t know what Friday the thirteenth means, do you?” Her aquamarine eyes filled with tears as she ruffled a hand through Tater’s thick coat and kissed him on top of his head.

The Border Collies, ears up, cocked their heads and mumbled. Dickens stood, stretched out his front legs—rump in the air—then trotted to the side of the bed. Marnie scratched him under the chin, leaned over and wrapped her arms around both of the dogs.

“It means that we stay close to home, keep our fingers crossed and hope for the best.” She sat up and swung her legs off the bed. As her feet hit the floor, she saw a shadow move down the hallway outside of her bedroom. Pressing a finger to her lips, she shook her head at Tater, who grumbled and stared at the figure disappearing around the corner.



Ryan’s Diner buzzed with caffeine-induced energy as Danny and Tom tucked into their breakfasts.

“Your grandmother makes the best scrambled eggs in Creekwood.” Tom gulped his coffee while scooping up a forkful of home fries.

“Yes, she does. The bacon is perfect, too.” Danny’s blue eyes sparkled as he picked up a crispy strip with his fingers and popped it into his mouth.

“It’s strange to have a day off. I’m lookin’ forward to fishin’—away from Creekwood. I haven’t been up north to fish in a long time.” Tom pushed away his plate and puffed out his cheeks. “I am stuffed. You ready to go?” He put his hand in his pocket, pulling out a twenty-dollar bill for the tip jar because Danny’s grandmother refused to allow him or his friends to pay for their food.

“Yeah. Let’s hit the road.” Danny slid out of the booth and took his wallet out of his back pocket, pulling out a twenty. “C’mon! Let’s go before Gram catches us.”

Tossing their twenties into the jar on the counter, they made a beeline for the door.

“Where are you going in such a hurry?” Gram appeared in front of them, an order pad in her hand.

The detectives glanced at one another.

“Uh. We’re going fishing,” Danny said.

Tom nodded in agreement.

“What about Marnie?” she asked, her face lined with concern.

Both men shrugged.

Danny replied, “She’s home—she had stuff to do.”

Tom fished his phone from his pocket and glanced down at the screen. Looking up at the ceiling, he sighed. “We’re not goin’ fishin’ today. We’re goin’ to the ranch.”

His partner pulled a face. “What? Why? We’ve been waiting all week for this trip.”

“It’s Friday the thirteenth.”

“Yeah. Okay. Are you tellin’ me that Madame Séance is superstitious?” Danny laughed and glanced down at his grandmother with a grin.

Tom pursed his lips, anger flashing in his violet eyes. “Marnie’s parents both died on a Friday the thirteenth. We gotta go to the ranch.” He dropped his head to his chest with a frustrated breath. Looking up, he shook his head at his partner. “How can you not know that?”

“She never told me! If I had known...”

“Yeah. Well, you know now. Let’s go.” Tom yanked open the door and stalked out—the door slamming behind him.

Danny glanced up at the little bell ringing over the door, and then back down at Gram. “I didn’t know.”

“I knew, and I’m not a detective. You need to communicate better, Daniel. Marnie Reilly is an open book to those interested in readin’ her. I hear her ask you about your day all the time. When was the last time you asked her how she’s doin’?”

He rolled his eyes. “She’ll just say she’s fine.”

“No. That’s what your late wife always said. Marnie will tell the truth. She always does, whether it’s what you want to hear or not. Perhaps that’s why you don’t ask her.” Gram nudged him toward the door. “Go. Make sure she’s okay, ‘cause believe it or not, sometimes she isn’t.”



Marnie crept into the hallway, the timber floors cool beneath her bare feet. Tater and Dickens walked in step on either side of her—ears and scruffs up. The old pine floorboards creaked; she held her breath and paused, listening. Tater glanced up at her, waiting for a command. She gently tugged his ear, a signal that all was well. Holding up her hand, she made eye contact with both of the dogs.

“Sit. Stay,” she whispered. The dogs dropped their rumps to the floor and sat motionless, awaiting her next direction.

A shuffling in the guestroom drew their attention down the hall. The dogs tipped their heads, and she tiptoed to the door, which was a smidgen ajar. Pushing it open, a flurry of pitch blackness rushed her, and she screeched, throwing up her arms to protect herself.

Turning to the dogs, she commanded, “Scootchem!”

Tater bounded forward with a high-pitched bark, stopping short when the intruder slammed into the bedroom window with a sickening crack. The dog dropped to his belly and rested his head next to a wounded crow. Marnie joined him near the window and knelt down.

“Ah, geez! Poor thing. You remind me of a pet crow my father used to have.” Reaching behind her, she grabbed a pillow, removed the pillowcase, and gently scooped up the bird. Cradling it in her arms, she ran the tip of her finger over its wings, head, and tail feathers. Tater stood and peered into the cloth bundle. Dickens ambled into the room and nudged Marnie’s hand with his cold, wet snout.

“He doesn’t seem to have broken anything, and his neck doesn’t appear to be broken. Let’s take him out onto the veranda in case he wakes up. I don’t want him to fly into the window again.”

They went out into the hallway and down the stairs. At the bottom, Marnie paused and glanced down at her dogs. “How did the crow get into the house?”



“Why are you so pissed off?” Danny ran a hand through his hair, frowning at his partner.

Tom turned his attention away from the road to scowl at him. “How can you not know that about her parents? Marn’s goin’ through a rough time. She’s got a new home; a new direction for her practice; and she has a new court-appointed client who sounds insane. When was the last time you asked her how her day was?”

“Are you and Gram in cahoots?”

Frustration building, Tom slammed his hand on the steering wheel. “No! We aren’t. We notice things, so she tells us. Are you gonna ask me about the client who’s givin’ her a hard time?”

“She told me she’s got a painful client, but that’s all she said.”

“Did you push her? She probably would have told you more if you had.”

“She gets mad when I do.”

Danny’s phone rang. “Hi, Carl.” He listened for several minutes, his jaw clenching tighter with every moment that passed. “We’re on our way there now. Yeah, he’s with me. We’ll see you soon.”

“What’s wrong?” Tom flicked on the signal light to turn onto the highway.

“You better get your grill lights on and floor it. Carl just filled me in on Marnie’s court-appointed client. The guy threatened her yesterday. She made him swear not to tell us, but he got worried. He tried to call her a few minutes ago, and she didn’t answer the home phone or her mobile.”

“Call her again and keep calling until she answers.”

Switching on the lights, Tom pressed his foot down on the gas pedal. The truck’s big tires kicked up rocks, and the backend fishtailed before correcting.



Upstairs, Marnie’s mobile phone vibrated and fell to the floor from her bedside table. Tater and Dickens woofed at the thump from above as they stepped into the library with their mistress, who flipped on the overhead light. Laying the wounded crow on the blotter of her desk, Marnie pulled open a large drawer, removed a lockbox and punched in a code and it sprang open. The dog’s growls alerted her they were not alone. Glancing up, she put her hand to her mouth, stifling a scream. The hulking mass of John La Roche’s malodorous frame stood in the open doorway leading out to the veranda.

Her eyes never leaving the madman, she whispered, “Shush, Tater. Shush, Dickens. Sit. Stay.”

The Border Collies sat, their intense and intelligent eyes trained on the trespasser.

La Roche pointed a revolver at the dogs. “Remove the mongrels, Ms. Reilly, or I *will* kill them.”

She turned to her pups, making eye contact with Tater, and made a twisting motion with her hand. He tipped his head and put a paw on her knee. Pointing to the door, she gave the command, “Tater. Dickens. Out. Kitchen.” They obeyed and slunk out of the library. Marnie’s heart jumped into her throat as the click of their toenails disappeared down the hall. Turning back to the lunatic, she lifted her chin and narrowed her eyes.

“Why are you here, Mr. La Roche?”

Taking a step into the room, he ran his grubby hand across the back of a leather chair. His mouth formed a grotesque grin—the gun in his hand now pointed at Marnie. “I told you my intentions yesterday.”

Keeping him in her sights, she reached out her hand to the lockbox.

“Ah! Ah! Ah! I wouldn’t do that. I will shoot you in the heart before you can retrieve your weapon.”

Dropping her hand to her side, she glanced down at her desk. One of the crow’s eyes opened, and a wing ruffled ever so lightly. Inhaling deeply through her mouth, she looked up and saw the depth of the man’s hatred for her. His soulless black eyes judged her and his lips twitched, as if he were reciting a spell. Narrowing her eyes, she studied the man’s face—there was something familiar.

“It’s you who is judging me, Mr. La Roche. I can see it in your eyes. Why do *you* hate me? What is it about you that makes you hate someone you don’t even know?”

“Oh, I know you, Ms. Reilly. I know you too well. You play with people’s minds and then send them to mental hospitals to wither away and die. That’s what you were planning to recommend to the court, wasn’t it? You were going to tell them to lock me up for an eternity.”

With a shrug, a smirk snuck onto her face. “That is exactly what I recommended—yesterday, in fact. As soon as you left my office, I wrote a report to the court. I told them you are a sick, twisted, maniacal creature, and that you direly need soap, a shower, a razor, toothpaste, and a toothbrush. You disgust me, Mr. La Roche. As a psychologist, I would probably not say that to a client, but you trespassed. You are standing here, in my home, uninvited and unwashed. You are a foul human being! I hand-delivered the report to Judge Lawrence last night. And that is that. No matter what you do to me, your sentence is sealed.” Aquamarine eyes wide, she laughed at the ogre and waved him away. “Now, you should be on your way. Detectives Keller and Gregg will be here soon for breakfast. We have plans.”

As he took a step toward her, Marnie backed up to the bookcase behind her desk. Picking up a marble statue of St. Francis of Assisi, she heaved it at him and sidestepped to the door. The statue missed and fell to the seat of the leather couch. With the flick of his thumb, he pulled back the revolver’s hammer, and she ducked as the gun went off. Crouching, she crab-crawled to the door as a loud shriek and the flurry of ruffling feathers attacked La Roche. Throwing his hands in the air to protect himself, he dropped the gun.

Tater and Dickens appeared at the veranda door as Marnie scrambled to her feet and raced out of the library. The Border Collies bolted after her, knocking down La Roche in pursuit of their mistress. Sprinting to the kitchen, she smiled when she saw the kitchen door standing open. “Good boy, Tater! You’re a smart pup! Let’s go! We need to get to the barn!”

Snatching up her Wellingtons, Marnie hopped on one foot and then the other, pulling on the boots as they ran out the backdoor. Too terrified to look back, she focused on getting to safety—hoping the big red barn would be their sanctuary from the raving lunatic, Jonathan La Roche.



Carl Parkins kicked at a deflated tire on his blue Chevy pickup truck. “I have never had a flat in my life. Why? Today of all days!”

Scowling up the road, he threw up his hands in frustration. Then clapped his hands with excitement at the site of an approaching truck, its grill lights flashing. “Yes!” He jumped up and down, waving his arms.

Tom stopped, and Danny rolled down his window. “Get in!”

Carl reached into his truck for his briefcase, pulled open the back door of Tom’s truck, and climbed inside. “Holy crap! Am I glad to see you guys. I got a flat tire.”

Tom glanced into the rearview mirror. “Did you bring your gun?”

Carl gave a curt nod. “Of course.”



Marnie and her dogs bounded up the steps to the barn’s loft. Dropping the hatch door, she rolled two bales of hay on top of it. Her stomach lurched when she remembered La Roche had a gun. They were easy prey. He could shoot through the floorboards, harming her dogs and her. Peering through the wall of the barn, she spotted La Roche running across the pasture. She looked around the hayloft, noting a pitchfork, a tall cabinet, a large chain with a hook, and work gloves.

“What can I do with these?” She raised an eyebrow and crossed to the cabinet. The door of the cupboard stood locked with an old padlock. Retrieving the pitchfork, she stuck a tine through the hasp and yanked. The lock broke off, the door swung open to reveal two shotguns, and a shelf above the guns held boxes of birdshot.

Turning to her dogs, she said, “What do you say we have a bit of target practice?”

After loading five shells, she pushed back the sliding door of the loft and took aim. *Boom!* The ground in front of La Roche exploded. He veered left but continued running toward them.

“Let’s try that again!”

Boom! She hit an old fence post, sending splinters into the air. When she peered out again, La Roche had vanished from sight. Below them, she heard whistling. It was a familiar tune from childhood—one she heard last night.

Round and round the cobbler’s bench

The monkey chased the weasel

The monkey thought it was all in fun

Bang! A bullet flew up through the floorboards, and the dogs leapt sideways as another round splintered the old boards, scattering loose hay. Marnie muffled a scream and motioned with her hand for her dogs to come to her when the whistling began again. As the dogs ran to her side, she rolled a spent shell casing away from them.

*Round and round the cobbler's bench
The monkey chased the weasel
The monkey thought it was all in fun*

Boom! Ammunition pierced the floor at the other end of the barn. Marnie tiptoed to the cabinet and took out a full box of shells. She rolled three together to the center of the loft as the maniac sang,

*Round and round the cobbler'th bench
The monkey chathed the weathel
The monkey thought it wath all in fun
Pop goeth the weathel!*

A chill ran up her spine, and she swallowed her fear. She stood stock-still, waiting—for what—she wasn't sure.

Grabbing hold of her dogs' collars, she pulled them as close to the eaves as she could get them. "Okay, guys. We're going to need some help. It's time for a bit of divine intervention." Marnie closed her eyes and whispered. First, she gave thanks for her gift of clairvoyance because it came in handy at times like this.



Turning in his seat, Danny said, "Okay, Captain Crystals, give us the lowdown."

Carl rolled his eyes, resigning himself to the fact that the nickname wasn't going away. He dug into his satchel for a file and opened it on his lap. "Jonathan La Roche, a 58-year-old Creekwood native. Six feet ten-inches tall; two hundred-eighty pounds. He threatened Marnie with bodily harm yesterday. That's why I can tell you everything I have about him. Judge Lawrence referred him to us—well, one of her clerks did. Ah, a Miss Annabelle LaRock."

Eyes lifting to the rearview mirror, Tom asked, "Did you say Jonathan La Roche?"

Checking the file, Carl nodded. "Yeah. It says here that the police charged him with harassment and assault. He shoved a woman in the QuickMart when she reached for the last bottle of Canada Dry ginger ale. His excuse was that he wasn't feeling well and needed the soda. Uh ... The woman sustained a minor injury—a contusion to her left shoulder. The lady pressed charges. The court ordered La Roche to see a court-appointed psychologist for anger management. It looks like Judge Lawrence's clerk sent the asshole our way. Maybe she thought he would land on my desk."

Clicking his tongue, Tom thought. "Hey, is there any history on the guy? Employment? Time served? Anything?"

"Yep. He was a kindergarten teacher here in Creekwood. Hmm ... Probably back when you and Marnie were kids. Do you remember him?" He looked up, meeting Tom's eyes.

"Yeah. I remember him. I'm surprised Marnie didn't."

Danny turned to his partner. "Why's that?"

“Back then, he was Mr. LaRock, our kindergarten teacher, and he was horrible. He picked on Marnie because she had a lisp and a slight stutter. He used to make her sing some stupid song over and over again, trying to get her to stop lisping. LaRock was cruel, and he got fired for his behavior. Marnie’s parents took exception to a teacher bullying their daughter.” Tom glanced into the mirror, meeting Carl’s eyes again.

“What was the song?” Carl asked.

“Pop Goes the Weasel.”

Putting his head into his hands, Carl groaned. “He said that to her yesterday when he shoved her chair across the room.”



Marnie, eyes closed, called out to her parents for help. “I’m breaking my rule. Sorry to bother you, but I really need you today. Do you remember Mr. LaRock? He’s trying to kill me. Do you think you could give me a hand?”

A slight breeze rose in the hayloft, whirling chaff and dust into the air. Tater and Dickens whimpered, tilted their heads, and smiled at the figures in the center of the room. Tater leaned on his mistress’s leg and tapped her knee with his paw. Opening her eyes, Marnie watched in horror as Jonathan La Roche climbed up a rope and reached through the door at the other end of the loft. Pulling himself into the barn, he retrieved his pistol from his pocket, aiming it at her. Glancing at her parents with fear in her eyes, she saw love in theirs. Marnie’s father, Colin Reilly, raised his arms to the sky and called, “Osiris!”



Tom pulled up the truck outside of Marnie’s home, and the men rushed inside, calling her name.

Danny raced through the kitchen to the stairs and stomped up the steps three at a time.

“Marn!” Tom called out, jogging into the library.

Carl walked into the living room, glanced around the room, and went to the library to find Tom standing beside the couch holding the statue. The patron saint of animals was a gift he had given her from Tater and Dickens on Mother’s Day.

Danny called out from upstairs. “She’s in the barn! I saw her move in front of the hayloft door! She’s upstairs!” He jumped down the stairs, twisting his ankle at the bottom. “Argh!”

Tom and Carl met him at the kitchen door and they sprinted across the pasture to the big red barn.

“Marn!” Tom called up. “We’ll be there in a sec!”

Danny limped up the stairs and pushed on the door, but it wouldn’t move.

“Come help me,” he shouted.

Tom and Carl ran up the steps, and the three of them pushed with all of their might.

“There’s a rope around the other side of the barn. We can climb up it.” Danny limped to the far door, the other men following.

Tom glanced up and then pointed to a wall of tools. “I’ll climb up. You two see if you can get the loft door open with that pry bar over there.”

Danny nodded. “Good plan.”



“Osiris!” Colin Reilly called again—a crow came back in reply.

Gun still aimed at Marnie’s chest, Jonathan La Roche took another step toward her. As sunlight streamed through the open loft door, a shadow broke through the sunbeams. The crow swooped over Marnie’s head, forcing her and the dogs to dive to the floorboards as a bullet shot over them. Osiris flew into the face of the madman, throwing him off balance. La Roche grabbed at the air and toppled out the door with a fear-filled scream. Tom growled an expletive a second before the lunatic’s body hit the ground with the sickening, dull thud of death.

Marnie got to her feet and turned to her parents. “How can that be, Osiris? How can he still be alive?”

Her mother and father grinned. “He’s not, but neither are we,” said her mother.

“We have to go now. We’ll see you soon,” said her father.

Marnie looked at him with horror. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Her mother giggled. “Geez, Colin, don’t scare the girl.” Turning to her daughter, she smiled. “Don’t worry, darling. We’ll come to see you. You won’t be coming to us for a very long time.”

Marnie sighed with relief. “Well, that’s good to know.” Her eyes filled with tears, and as she opened her mouth to speak again, her parents were gone.

“Marnie! Are you okay? We can’t get through the door!” Danny called up from below.

She rolled the hay bales off the door and lifted it. “I’m fine. Nothing a bit of divine intervention can’t handle.” She reached out her hand to Danny, her arms wrapping him in a tight hug when he reached the top step.

He pulled a face. “You’re fine. Really? We just heard a gunshot, and you’re telling me you’re fine.”

“Okay. I’m not. I’m a mess.” She leaned closer and embraced him. Wrapping his arms around her, he squeezed her tight and kissed the top of her head.

Tater and Dickens trotted over and rested against Danny’s leg.

Carl stepped into the loft and looked around. “Where’s Tom?”

“Hey, Marn!” Tom called out from the opposite end of the loft, where he was swinging through the door from the rope. Pointing out the window, he said, “Whew! I’m glad the ridgepole is long. I nearly got wiped out! You know there’s a dead guy down there, right?”

-The End-

Also by Shari T. Mitchell

Marnie Reilly Mysteries Series

[Divine Guidance, Book 1](#)

[Torn Veil, Book 2](#)

[Fatal Vow, Book 3](#)

Marnie Reilly Mysteries Novellas and Short Stories

The Island

Christmas Eve in Creekwood

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