

**DELETED SCENE FROM  
BOOK 8 HARRISON LANE  
SERIES**

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GWYN BENNETT



This scene was deleted from Dark Whispers, book 8 in the Harrison Lane crime mysteries.

I would like to warn you that it is about a cat killer, and so if you think you might find that upsetting then you may not wish to read on. Rest assured that, as always, I never go into graphic detail, it's far more about how Harrison's clever mind works out the case.

I hope you enjoy this deleted scene. The next Harrison Lane book number 9 is due out in early 2024. If you'd like Amazon to remind you then you can follow me there by visiting: <https://www.amazon.com/author/gwynbennett>

With best wishes and happy reading

*Gwyn Bennett*

You can find the full series of the Harrison Lane Mysteries on Amazon and if you're in Kindle Unlimited, they're all free to read: <https://mybook.to/HarrisonLaneseries>

Have you tried the DI Claire Falle series? <https://viewbook.at/DIClaireFalle>



Harrison Lane closed the hotel room door with relief. It had been another busy day and his worries about Tanya had been niggling at the back of his mind throughout. To wind down, Harrison was going to put some music on and his earbuds in, with the hope it would distract him, but just as he was choosing which tracks to play, a message came up from Ryan asking him to call.

‘Ryan, everything OK?’

‘Well, yes and no. We’ve had another case come in and it involves the Mayor.’

‘Mayor of London?’

‘Yup, himself.’

‘What’s happened?’

‘Police think a Satanist is mutilating and sacrificing cats. It’s all over the news here. Tabloids are having a field day. Bodies keep turning up in bins or dumped in strange places. The latest victim was the Mayor’s Major Tom.’

‘Only cats?’

‘At the moment. But as you can imagine, not only are all

the felines' parents up in arms, the Met are worried it's going to escalate into not-so-furry victims. I think they're embarrassed that they can't seem to catch the killer or killers. Are you able to get back anytime soon?

Harrison sighed. He hated animal cruelty just as much as he hated people who abused other people. Animals were invariably unable to fight back, and as far as he was concerned, their abusers were cowards.

'It's difficult. Send me what you've got,' he said to Ryan. 'I'll need to see what they've done to the cats, and have they been plotted on a map? Where they're taken from and where they're found?'

'I can get that to you.'

'Give me a Google map point so I can look at the street view for them all. Any particular type of cat?'

'Nope. Anything feline seems to have fitted the bill. The other thing is they're not found straight away after going missing. For some of them it's just two or three days, but others had been gone for a few weeks or more, before being found.'

'Were they still fresh kills?'

'Mostly. Yes.'

'So they kept the cats alive somewhere beforehand.'

'Looks that way.'

'Any kind of autopsies been done on them?'

'Once the problem became serious, they did and there's a toxicology report I can get to you, too.'

'Right, guess that's my bedtime reading.'

'Sorry, boss.'

'No problem, Ryan. Everything else alright?'

'Yup, all cool, just fending off your many fans who want your services.'

'I'll be back as soon as I can.'

‘Great, but if you can get the Mayor off the Met Commissioner’s back, I think he’d be grateful.’

HARRISON WASN’T TOO BOTHERED about the political pressures of the case. All he cared about was the human and animal cost. He had a quick shower while he waited for Ryan to get everything across to him, and then sat on his bed with a mug of chamomile tea and plugged his earbuds in. He was too tired to cope with heavy rock, so he chose soothing classical music, which wouldn’t distract his brain from focusing on the cats.

As *Bach’s Air on the G String* gently soaked into his brain, Harrison opened up the folder of images from Ryan and looked at the horrendous result of a human’s sickening perversion.

The cats were all ages and size. Twelve of them. Their little bodies had been mutilated, but it wasn’t what he’d been expecting. After seeing two of them, he looked at the autopsy and toxicology reports. The cats had been anaesthetised at some point; it was found in their bloodstreams. It was hard for Harrison to see in detail, but there was something about the injuries which relayed to him a completely different story to the one that the killer wanted to be told.

*Phamie Gow’s War Song* followed Bach, each stroke of the piano keyboard giving Harrison’s tired brain an antidote to the misery his eyes were seeing. Healing and soothing. He looked at photograph after photograph of the injuries which had been inflicted on the limbs of the small felines.

Finally, he’d seen every one, and read all the reports. Each cat victim was seared onto the back of his eyelids as he

closed them and tried to leave the horror behind him, transported by *Cristofori's Dream* gently playing into his ears.

He must have slipped into sleep for a few minutes, because he woke with a lurch, his heart beating wildly. Harrison looked at the time. He'd been asleep barely twenty minutes, but he'd seen him. The man responsible for the cat murders. In his dreams his mind had been busy processing all the information he'd just read. He knew the motivation, the method, the execution. Harrison called Ryan.

'Boss.' Ryan's voice sounded almost alien after the sound of the music, which still seemed to be floating around his head.

'You're looking for a single person, almost definitely male, who lives in a flat and not a ground floor one unless it doesn't have a garden. They are either a vet or are training to be a vet. They live and work around the area. Circle all the cases because there's a definite catchment area. They're also going to be very active on social media, possibly TikTok or maybe Instagram reels, and the like where they video and photograph themselves. He's a narcissistic personality. Thinks a lot of himself. He'll be in plain sight.'

'Nothing Satanic?' Ryan asked incredulously.

'No. It's not Satanic. When you think you've found their social media profile, send it over and let me take a look. I'll know him.'

'Right on, boss. I'll get onto it now.'



Ryan had set to work the second he'd come off the phone to Harrison. His boss sounded more than confident they would find their man, and after taking several harassed phone calls from Detective Sergeant Levi Jones, who was working on the cat case, he'd quite like to put the man out of his misery and get him off his back. He also wanted to stop the cruelty to the cats. He'd barely looked at the images before forwarding them on to Harrison, because he knew they'd give him nightmares. He'd often thought about getting himself a cat. The idea of another living thing in his flat was appealing, but somehow his flats hadn't been appropriate or it was just the wrong time in his life. Ryan settled himself at his desk and began the search for the cat killer.

He loved his new flat. He'd been extremely grateful to his boss for letting him stay at his place for a few weeks, but there was nothing like having your own space. Where Harrison's Docklands apartment had tall ceilings and was light, airy, and virtually empty, Ryan's flat was small and cluttered, just the way he liked it. He'd managed to empty

almost all of his boxes and placed his hotch potch of belongings in every available space he had. His agoraphobia lent itself to this kind of environment. He was like a beach limpet moving from one piece of clutter to another, enjoying the feeling of a physical anchor.

Harrison's flat had one huge disadvantage for someone like Ryan: the massive windows which overlooked the Thames. His boxes of belongings had been his barrier, shielding his eyes from seeing the view, but occasionally he'd seen a glimpse, or just thought about what was behind his box wall, and that had sent him scuttling to the spare room where he could take refuge.

Ryan knew that Harrison not only loved his own space, but he also hated clutter and loved his big view. They were opposites, and while his boss had been patient and understanding, he hadn't wanted to outstay his welcome.

Now, Ryan could make as much mess as he wanted and not worry about having to clear up after himself instantly. His trail of snacks had been reinstated, most of them on his desk, which contained a bank of computer screens, but some on the table near the sofa where he could just chill and forget about the world outside.

That afternoon, he'd tasked himself with emptying the last box and had already found homes for the Assassin's Creed figurines and his replica Lord of the Rings Horn of Gondor. It reminded him that he hadn't watched the films in a while and he decided it was time to have a Ringer weekend binge watching the Tolkien trilogy brought to life by Peter Jackson. He'd already started planning his food deliveries in order to ensure there was as little interruption as possible.

The next morning, Harrison went down to breakfast in the hotel restaurant. As soon as he'd sat down, he checked his emails. He knew Ryan would have been working overnight and wouldn't give up until he found what he was looking for. He didn't disappoint. Ryan gave him three names that he felt fitted the description Harrison had given him. For the first time in days, Harrison felt a surge of adrenaline, the opportunity to make a difference.

They were all men. One was a young guy, just seventeen but planning to go to veterinary college. Harrison looked at the photograph of him. His eyes lacked the confidence he was looking for, and Ryan had struggled to find much in the way of a social media presence for him. Harrison moved on to number two. This man was a divorcee, in his forties and a practicing vet. His face was on social media, but he was giving advice about fireworks and pets, or warning of the dangers of the latest illness doing the rounds in the neighbourhood. His face was kind, a reluctant social media performer who was dedicated to the animals.

The instant that Harrison looked at number three, he knew he'd found his man. There was a conceited air about him, from the way he looked at the camera to his clothes, his hair, and what he said in his posts. Paul Lever had graduated from veterinary college and moved to the area to work at one of the local practices around four months ago. He lived in a first-floor flat and he posted constantly on Instagram and TikTok, often with sick animals that he was treating. He was using their cuteness and distress for sympathy, and to show what a wonderful human being he was for curing them. Sometimes he posted shots of himself at home with his own cat. Those were the pouting, sexier poses.

The final clue that nailed it for Harrison was that he not only followed Noel Fitzpatrick, the orthopaedic-neuro veterinary surgeon known as the Super Vet, but it looked like he virtually stalked him. After just a few minutes of scrolling through his social feeds, it was clear to Harrison that Paul Lever wanted to be Noel Fitzpatrick. He wanted to be the vet that everyone adored with his own TV show.

Harrison went to pick up his phone to call Ryan and then thought better of it. He'd have been up until the early hours researching these names and it was still only eight am. Ryan and early mornings were not words that went together, a fact Harrison had witnessed first-hand when Ryan had recently stayed at his flat.

Instead, Harrison emailed and gave him Paul Lever's name. He told Ryan to give the detectives working on the case a few details which would help them with the arrest. It was satisfying knowing that the cats around Paul Lever's neighbourhood would finally be safe.

Harrison sent the email just as his plate full of breakfast arrived. He'd been a little unsure that he was up to a Full English this morning, but he discovered that the satisfaction

of having helped bring one cruel individual's killing spree to an end worked wonders for his appetite.

LATER THAT DAY, Harrison was looking through some witness statements for his current case, when his mobile rang.

'Dr Harrison Lane?'

'Yes.'

'I'm Detective Sergeant Levi Jones, working on the cat killings in London.' There was a pause as DS Jones waited for a response from Harrison. When none was forthcoming, he continued, clearly in somewhat of a hurry. 'Your technical assistant, Ryan Chapman, forwarded me on your notes about the man you believe is behind the killings. I wonder if you could just take me through how you came to work that out so quickly. I mean, are you absolutely certain it's him?'

'I am as certain as I can be without actually meeting the man or observing his behaviour first-hand. I know you'd believed that the mutilations look like the cats had been used as part of some kind of Satanic ritual, but they weren't. Whoever did it wanted us to believe that, and they were covering up what they had already done to the cats, their real purpose. The mutilations were random and not ritualistic in their application. There are indications of the true nature of their intent in the autopsy report, and if you look closely at some of the wounds, particularly relating to the limbs of the animals, then you can see they have been professionally operated on. It's not obvious on all the bodies, but there's enough. So, it stands to reason that for somebody to be operating on them in this way, they either have veterinary training and are trying to further it, or are

wanting to be a vet and are trying to train themselves.’ Harrison paused to take a sip of his tea.

DS Jones kept silent, waiting for more.

‘I then considered what kind of procedures he might be doing, which wasn’t easy as I don’t have veterinary experience, but I don’t believe these were simple operations. He used anaesthetic, that we can see in the toxicology reports, and several of the cats had limbs removed. I think he was attempting highly complex procedures which suggested he might already have some basic veterinary or at least medical knowledge. Our suspect clearly had access to medical drugs and equipment, so it stood to reason he was probably already working in a veterinary practice. That narrowed the field.’

‘We did wonder about some of their legs being missing,’ DS Jones murmured down the phone.

‘Next, I asked myself why he was trying to cover up his operations and disposing of the bodies in this way instead of just getting rid of them. The obvious answer is that he had no means of disposal to hand. The easiest way would be to bury them, so that led me to think he didn’t have an outside space of his own, so he probably lived in a flat. He wasn’t stupid enough to put the bodies in his own garbage because that could have led straight back to him, so he distributed them around the area when he could. I then thought about what kind of personality would want to do this and why. And I realised that he could be trying to emulate the TV vet, Noel Fitzpatrick. He’s known as the super vet or bionic vet and has a huge following because of the amazing orthopaedic work he does with pets. However, to inflict this kind of pain needlessly on the cats and their owners would take a certain kind of personality. I felt he was probably a narcissist, and this was all to further his own career and

almost certainly his own fame. He probably hankers after the public profile that Fitzpatrick has achieved. This would mean he was very active on social media. Then it was a question of where. The cats were snatched and dumped within a certain radius, which stood to reason to be his home turf. The rest was down to my assistant, Ryan, who took the information and searched for likely candidates in that area. He found three potentials, but I easily eliminated two of them. Paul Lever ticks every one of the boxes.'

There were a few moments of silence as DS Jones's brain caught up with Harrison's explanation.

'Wow! Excellent. That makes total sense. If they weren't used in some kind of Satanic ritual, then we were focusing on the wrong kind of offender and the wrong injuries. We'll get some surveillance on Mr Jones straight away and start making some background inquiries.'

'Focus on the start or end of his working day. He has to snatch and carry the cats somehow. I suspect he'll have a bag that he's modified and you might well catch him in the act.'

'Thank you, Dr Lane, your expertise is very much appreciated. This has given us no end of a headache, as you'll no doubt have seen from the media coverage.'

Harrison realised that he'd not so much as looked at a newspaper or heard any broadcast news since before he'd left London for the weekend away with Tanya. He didn't possess a TV and never turned the hotel one on, although he did occasionally listen to the radio and read the papers. Most of the time, though, he steered clear of them, especially if a case he was working on was making the headlines. He never wanted the sensationalist interpretations of the crime reporting to taint his thinking. Coming at the cat killings cold had been a benefit. Perhaps

if he, too, had been brainwashed into thinking that the mutilations were ritualistic and Satanic, he might have taken longer to reach the right conclusions. He'd have always got there, just maybe a bit slower.

Harrison ended the call with the very grateful DS Jones and returned his focus to solving the murder of Dax Moore, happy in the knowledge that the feline population in London would now be able to roam the streets in safety.

UNTIL NEXT TIME...

HARRISON LANE BOOK 9 out May 2024

IN THE MEANTIME, why not read the new **Saskia Monet** series? Book one is due out in the Autumn of 2023.

PLUS... coming soon a psychological thriller that you won't be able to put down. Also out Autumn 2023.

I'LL KEEP you informed of all the new releases via the newsletter but you can also let Amazon update you: <https://www.amazon.com/author/gwynbennett>



## ABOUT GWYN BENNETT

Gwyn is a writer living in Jersey, Channel Islands. Born in the UK, she moved there with her Jersey-born husband, their children, rescue dogs and geriatric goldfish. Gwyn has spent most of her career as a journalist, but is now a full time writer.

You can connect with Gwyn online:  
Website: <https://www.gwynbennett.com>



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