

Lilith...

Demon of the Night



A Detective Louis Martelli, NYPD,
Mystery/Thriller

THEODORE JEROME COHEN



Reviewers said this about **Lilith:** *Demon of the Night*

A Detective Louis Martelli, NYPD, Mystery

"Fast paced with snappy dialogue, likeable characters, and a touch of Middle Eastern mythology, this is a book that I could really sink my teeth into."

Paige Lovitt for *Reader Views*

"With more twists and turns than a Boa constrictor, the venomous plot unfolds and transports the reader from a modern-day, high-tech crime fighting novel into the dark side of cult practices within the mind of a serial murderer fixated on revenge. *Lilith* is a trophy on any shelf."

Gary Sorkin for *Pacific Book Review*

"Given the real-life vampire cases cited in the novel, one has to wonder if this isn't another of Cohen's 'ripped-from-the-headline' stories. Why aren't Hollywood producers calling about this gem?"

Irene Watson, Author of *The Sitting Swing*
and *Rewriting Life Scripts*

"I've had a fascination with vampires ever since Italian researchers believe they found the remains of a female vampire from 16th-century Venice, buried with a brick in her mouth to prevent her feasting on plague victims. This macabre thriller will keep you on the edge of your chair to the very end."

Susan Violante, Author of *Innocent War: Behind An Immigrant's Past*

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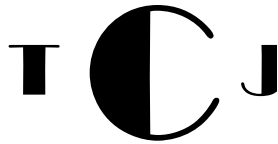
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TJC Press



TJC Press
122 Shady Brook Drive
Langhorne, PA 19047-8027 USA
215-968-0617
ted@theodore-cohen-novels.com
www.theodore-cohen-novels.com

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Shout was originally recorded by The Isley Brothers and released on September 21, 1959. The writers were Rudolph Isley, Ronald Isley, and O'Kelly Isley, Jr. The song was subsequently performed by Otis Day and the Knights, and was featured in the 1978 comedy film *National Lampoon's Animal House*. It remains extremely popular to this day in a variety of celebratory venues.

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Abbreviations

24x7	Twenty-Four by Seven (Around the Clock, Seven Days a Week)
ADA	Assistant District Attorney
AM	Ante Meridiem; Before Midday
CBC	Complete Blood Count
CDO	Collateralized Debt Obligation
CSI	Crime Scene Investigator
CSU	Crime Scene Unit
DA	District Attorney
DC	District of Columbia
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DWS	Driving While Short
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (Privacy Rule)
ID	Identification
IT	Information Technology
MO	Missouri
MP	Military Police
NJ	New Jersey
NY	New York
NYPD	New York Police Department
PC	Personal Computer
PC	Politically Correct
PM	Post Meridiem; After Midday
PP1	Police Plaza One (Police Department Headquarters, New York City)
R&R	Rest and Relaxation
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SUV	Sport Utility Vehicle
US	United States
UV	Ultraviolet
VA	US Department of Veterans Affairs
WI	Wisconsin

Acronyms

ASAP	As Soon As Possible
BOLO	Be On the Lookout (for)

Codes

10-4	Police Ten Code ('acknowledgement')
10-10	Possible Crime
10-64	Quality of Life Incident (Q: Foul Odor)

To those who, like literary historian Susan Sellers, place the current vampire myth in the 'comparative safety of nightmare fantasy.'



“There are such beings as vampires, some of us have evidence that they exist. Even had we not the proof of our own unhappy experience, the teachings and the records of the past give proof enough for sane peoples.”

Abraham ‘Bram’ Stoker
Author
Dracula (1897)



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One

New York Police Detective Louis Martelli pulled his unmarked *Crown Vic* to the curb in front of the Church of the Holy Redeemer in Lower Manhattan, blocking the funeral procession's lead vehicle and further heightening the tension among the people on the sidewalk. The funeral director, family, and mourners, puzzled by the unusual turn of events, stood there, conversing quietly. Occasionally, someone glanced nervously at the church's entrance. None, however, was allowed back into the building. Two police officers moved among them, rapidly gathering names and other information in preparation for handing their notes to the lead detective—Martelli—for follow-up.

Martelli lifted his left leg over the driver-side door threshold, something necessitated by an old Iraqi War injury. Once out of his car, he made his way up the steps and into the sanctuary. Walking hurriedly toward the altar, he stopped briefly at a point halfway down the aisle, steadied himself on a pew, genuflected, and made the Sign of the Cross before proceeding to the casket.

“Well, well, well, if it ain't Mrs. Martelli's *wunderkind*, Master Sergeant Louis Martelli . . . war hero, Master Detective, and all-about-town *bon vivant*! The last time I saw you and Antonetti together you were chasing the Headless Horseman in Central Park. Remember? It was the

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case of the serial killer who sliced and diced that pharmaceutical executive behind the Delacourt Theater.”

Crime scene investigator Robin Peterson loved to spar with Martelli. A flirt who wore her flaming red hair long, stringy, and parted in the middle, she never let an opportunity go by to tease him.

“People at headquarters are still wondering about you two,” she chortled, referring to Martelli and Deputy Coroner Michael Antonetti, who was examining the embalmed remains of an elderly man lying in a coffin to the front of the altar. “Are you two a couple, or aren’t you? That’s the \$64,000 question.”

Martelli laughed. “Peterson, are you still knifing guys in the back on Saturday nights so you’ll get called to crime scenes and have something to do other than sit at home watching old movies? I mean, when was the last time you had a date?”

Antonetti scowled. “Come on, you two, have a little respect for the dead. This is a holy place of worship!” He was in the last stages of examining the remains in a coffin that was mounted on a mobile display cart.

Peterson resumed her work, taking pictures of the area around the casket and looking for evidence on the floor around it.

Martelli approached Antonetti. “Pardon me for asking, Michael, but what are we doing here? Obviously, the deceased is dead, he’s been embalmed, and this *was* a funeral service intended to send him on his way to the Great Beyond. Yet, here we are, some of New York’s Finest . . . one of New York City’s most skilled deputy coroners, *the* best CSI in the business—he winked at Peterson—and Manhattan’s top Detective-Investigator. You would think someone’s been shot!”

“He was.”

“Who?”

“The deceased.”

“You gotta to be kidding! When?”

“Based on what I was told, some time in the last hour or so.”

“Come on, Antonetti. The guy’s been dead for days.”

“I didn’t say he was alive when he was shot.”

“This isn’t another one of your pranks, is it?”

“Nope. I may have pulled a few mischievous tricks in my day—”

“Mischievous tricks? Is that what you call them? Like the time you put a fake severed hand covered with blood in my car’s trunk—”

Antonetti waved him off. “A childish prank to be sure, Louis. But this is the real thing. The man’s been shot . . . the bullet was fired at close range, right through the casket, by someone who apparently came to pay their respects.”

“Well, they sure had a strange way of doing it.

“Who discovered the bullet hole?”

“The funeral director, just as he was closing the casket in preparation for moving it to the hearse. That’s when he asked everyone to step outside and wait while he called the police.”

“And nobody heard anything?”

Peterson looked up. “Before you ask, Martelli, I already grabbed, bagged, and marked as evidence the video tapes from the church’s surveillance system. Maybe Dugan’ll be able to figure out what happened.”

“Thanks, Red.

“Anything else you can tell me, Michael?”

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“I may be able to say more once I get the corpse back to the morgue. But there is one more thing you should know. It has to do with something I never expected to find.”

“What’s that?”

“Someone, probably the shooter, stuffed a piece of garlic into the corpse’s mouth.”

“Garlic?”

“Yes. It’s an old Romanian ritual used to ensure a vampire doesn’t rise from the dead.”

“Oh, that’s just great! The next thing you’re gonna tell me is that the slug is made of silver!”

“Those generally are used to kill werewolves, Louis, but I guess they’d work on vampires as well.”

Two

‘**W**addaya got for me, Missy?’ Missy Dugan was a senior information technology specialist in Police Plaza One, or PP1 as the *cognoscenti* called it. She was busy reviewing the videotapes that had been recorded in the sanctuary of the Church of the Holy Redeemer on the afternoon of the funeral service.

It now was 7 in the morning on the day after the funeral had been scheduled to take place. Martelli had just come from his morning workout in Brooklyn’s Dominant Fitness & Health Club. Weightlifting mixed with a strenuous aerobics program was the only way he could keep his 6-foot, 2-inch, 190-pound body from succumbing to the unhealthy food he often was forced to eat on the job.

“Antonetti sent the slug to Ballistics. I have the results. As you might expect, it’s copper-clad, not silver. I hope the garlic works, or we’re in a heap of trouble!” She laughed.

“I wish Antonetti would keep his big mouth shut!”

“Well, it’s not every day that someone puts a slug into a vampire, Lou.”

Martelli scowled. “I could have told you it wasn’t silver. It’s too soft for use in ammunition. Unless you had a hard cast with low silver content, firing a silver bullet could really damage your firearm.

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“So, were you able to match the slug to anything in the FBI’s ballistics’ database?”

“Yes. But it’s not going to help you.”

“I can’t tell you how thrilled that makes me!” The exasperated look on his face was obvious.

“Well, I can tell you this . . . it was fired from a 9mm handgun. “And—” She paused for impact. “The weapon was used to commit another murder a year ago, a murder that still hasn’t been solved.”

Martelli’s eyes opened wide.

“Which case is that?”

“It’s the Hayes shooting. Here, I pulled the file for you.”

She took a folder from her workbench and handed it to him.

While Martelli leafed through the folder, Dugan filled him in. “The guy was found on the Upper West Side, face-down in Riverside Park near 103rd Street. You may not remember it because it was handled by the guys in the 24th Precinct. It didn’t make much of a splash in the papers at the time because of some sex scandal involving a presidential candidate.”

“They call that news?”

Martelli leafed through the file.

“Hmmm...one shot through the heart, close range. Looks pretty straightforward. The responding officer wrote it up as a robbery gone bad.”

He set the file down and turned back to her. “I know it’s early, but have you had a chance to review the videotapes from the church?”

“Of course, my liege. Some of us work while guys like you lounge around in a gym half the day, flexing your muscles and ogling the chicks!”

“Hey! I didn’t have to come to work for this. If I wanted abuse, I would have stayed home!”

“Watch this.” Missy swung her chair around and tapped several commands into her computer’s keyboard. Instantly, one of several monitors lit up with the video taken by a camera that looked down on the altar from a vantage point near the ceiling of the sanctuary.

“The time is around 12:13 PM. What you’re looking at is a shot of the funeral director and one of his men wheeling the casket in for the service, which probably was supposed to start around 1 PM.”

“Okay, I see that.”

“There . . . the casket’s in position.” Missy pointed at the monitor. “And here comes a man with a cart containing flowers.”

“Right,” agreed Martelli. “And now the other two men are opening the casket, making final adjustments to the lining and the corpse’s hands, straightening out the lining around the deceased’s shoes—by the way, never look down there, Missy . . . it’s where the viscera bag is stored—and so forth. Nothing appears to be out of the ordinary.”

“I agree . . . looks like business as usual.”

Martelli and Dugan watched the screen in silence as the men went about their work.

Finally, Missy spoke. “Okay, looks like everything’s ready. See? The men are leaving the sanctuary.”

The date-time display on the screen showed a time of 12:34 pm.

“They’re probably going outside to grab a sandwich or smoke, Lou. Note that no one is in the camera’s field of view. I checked all of the other cameras as well. There’s not a person in the sanctuary at this time. But then—”

“Wait! What’s that in the corner, Missy?”

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Missy started to laugh. “That, my friend, is the shooter.”

The screen showed someone who appeared to be a man entering the large, raised platform that stretched across the front of the church and upon which the altar stood. Dressed in a long priest’s robe and wearing a black, low-crowned, wide-brimmed ecclesiastical hat, he emerged slowly from behind the curtains at the far, left back of the platform, as one viewed the sanctuary from the rear. After looking around to ensure no one was in the sanctuary, he walked down the stairs, and at the bottom, turned left and quickly made his way toward the casket.

“I can’t see his face, Missy! Where the hell did he come from?”

“I checked some of our surveillance cameras on the streets around the church. One caught a shot of him walking into the small cemetery behind the building and entering through the service entrance. But that’s about all I can tell you. Now, watch closely.”

The shooter stopped at the casket, turned to see if anyone was watching, took something out of his pocket and placed it into the corpse’s mouth.

“That must have been the garlic, Lou.”

“Right, and now he’s screwing the silencer onto the gun barrel.”

“I see that.”

They watched as the shooter pushed the silencer against the side of the casket and pulled the trigger.

Martelli shook his head. “Bada-bing bada-boom, right through the casket into the corpse.”

They continued watching intently as the shooter retraced his footsteps across the sanctuary floor, climbed the stairs to the platform, and continued through the curtains to make his

escape, most probably using the same service entrance through which he had entered.

“Were you able to track him on his way off the church’s property?”

“Not very far. We don’t have a lot of cameras in that area. And to make things worse, at some point he probably shed the priest’s garb and either stuck it in a bag or dumped it.”

“Okay, go back and grab the best screen shot of the shooter you can get and e-mail it to CSU.”

“10-4.”

Martelli reached for the phone on Dugan’s workbench and dialed the Department’s Crime Scene Unit.

“NYPD CSU, Sergeant Reynolds.”

“Reynolds, this is Martelli of the First.”

“Hey, Lou, long time no see. How are you and the family?”

“Good, Adam. And you and yours?”

“Great. How can I help you?”

“We had a shooting yesterday at a church in the First. Some guy pumped a round into a corpse.”

“I know. What the hell is that all about?”

“Beats the shit out of me.”

“Man, it’s getting weird out there, Lou.”

“Tell me about it. Listen, Dugan is e-mailing you a screen shot of the shooter. It’s not great, but it’s the best we have. The perp—and we’re assuming it’s a man—disguised himself as a priest. He was dressed in a long robe and wore a black, low-crowned, wide-brimmed ecclesiastical hat.”

“Okay.”

“Could you send a CSU team back to the church to search for additional evidence? Perhaps your people’ll be able to lift a print or two from the inside and outside knobs of the door at the service entrance. Or, in showing the screen shot to

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people in the neighborhood, maybe they'll find someone who can tell them in which direction he walked. In the best of all worlds, we might even get a better description of the person or an ID, but I doubt it."

"I'll take care of it, Lou. Are you considering putting out a BOLO for the guy?"

"No. We don't have enough information to go on yet. And the guy isn't going to be walking around in that get-up, that's for sure. All we need is for our people to be questioning every man of the cloth they encounter on the street, and we'll have the Catholic Church all over us. If that happens, you know the media . . . they'll blow the whole thing way out of proportion."

"Like they do everything else."

"Right. That would make our job even more difficult than it already is."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. Used to be you could trust them, but today, most are just out to make a quick name for themselves. Anyway, I'll send a unit to the church now."

"Thanks, Adam. I owe you!"

"Don't mention it, Lou."

Martelli returned the handset to its cradle and turned his attention back to Dugan.

"Okay, Missy, did Antonetti have anything else to say?"

"Yeah, he said to tell you to stop at the Korean grocer's on your way home tonight, buy some garlic, and hang it around your neck. He said you can't be too careful these days, especially when there might be vampires prowling Gotham City at night."

"Well isn't he just a barrel of laughs! Listen, NYPD needs this case like a hole in the head . . . chasing what someone wants the Department to think is the 'killer' of vampires, werewolves, and other forms of lowlife."

Missy could barely stifle a grin. “Don’t you mean ‘no-life,’ Martelli?”

Despite himself, Martelli had to laugh. “Give me a break, will ya?”

“What else did the ‘court jester’ have to say?”

“Actually, he said he wanted to see you this morning after you’re done here. Even though there had been a cursory autopsy performed on the deceased at the time of his death, something important turned up.”

“What was it?”

“He wouldn’t tell me . . . he just said he wanted to see you when we finished here.”