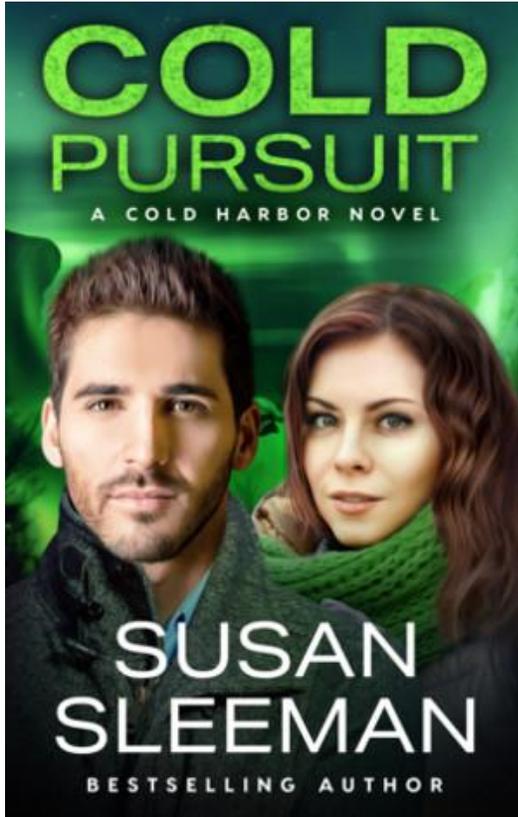


## COLD PURSUIT SNEAK PEEK



**Romantic Suspense** – Print and EBook

**Cold Harbor**– Book 6 – November/2018

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### **She's on the run...**

When Whitney Rochester's brother-in-law kills her sister, Whitney fears for the life of her niece and nephew. She can't leave them in her murderous brother-in-law's care so she goes on the run with the children to be sure they're out of his reach. Or so she thinks until a killer shows up—weapon in hand—at the ski resort where she works and targets her.

### **But he's in pursuit.**

Former Recon Marine Alex Hamilton is working an undercover investigation at the resort when a crazed man wielding a gun takes out a guy in close proximity

to Whitney. Despite not having the support of the Blackwell Tactical team, other than their forensic expert, Samantha Willis, Alex isn't about to let the shooter harm Whitney or anyone else. When a blinding snowstorm triggers avalanches in the area, it's too dangerous for the police to reach the secluded resort to stop the killer. Alex and Sam must protect everyone at the resort while they feverishly work to figure out if Whitney or the victim were the intended target. As Alex and Whitney grow close and the killer strikes again, Alex has to find and take down this madman, even if it means risking his own life.

## Chapter One

### *One Month Earlier*

Whitney's mind spun frantically. *Take the children. Run. Now. Fast. Far.*

But how, when a monster with a gun held her captive?

Looking for an escape, she shot a look around the deserted alley. Angry clouds darkened the noon sky, and heavy rain pelted down on her, icing her to the core.

Percy backed her up against the alley wall, a gun barrel jabbed into her stomach. His mouth thinned into a hard, unforgiving line. "Where are my kids, Whitney? They're mine, not yours, and I *will* have them back."

She tried to escape, but he pumped iron on a regular basis, making him strong. Crazy strong. An indestructible wall of cruelty. He glowered at her with hard brown eyes, wet strands of coal black hair falling in his face.

Her breath stilled. She tried to take another. Gasp. Couldn't manage it. The hospital Emergency Department, her place of employment, was merely a few feet away. No one would see her die right outside of their doors.

"Please," she choked out.

He sneered at her. "Just tell me where the kids are, and I'll let you live."

He was lying. *Get a grip. Do something. Save yourself.*

He shoved a corded arm against her throat, his arm crushing her throat.

She opened her mouth. Tried for a breath. Even the tiniest sip of the chilly, wet Portland air. Nothing got through. Nothing but rasping in the back of her throat.

Panic settled in, clawing its way into her core, warning of death.

She felt her eyes bulging. Growing in their sockets.

She raised her hands in defense. Gun in her abdomen, she shouldn't try to fight him, but she had to. Her arm shot up and clawed his face—nails digging, slicing, drawing blood.

He swore, a long curse filled with venom, and backhanded her face, the strike splitting her lip. He stepped back and swiped at the blood on his hand, rain smearing it.

Her lungs unlocked, and she gulped in a sharp breath. Too much too fast, and pain sliced through her chest. Her jacket and scrubs were soaked, and she shivered, gasping for air.

A sudden glassiness in his deep eyes was even more alarming, a slick grin following. He jammed the cold barrel against her temple. "Tell me where they are. You have until the count of ten."

She would never reveal the children's location. No matter the pain he inflicted. No matter if he killed her. She was their protector now.

She didn't move except to breathe.

"Ten," he snapped, a conqueror gloating over his prey. "Nine...eight..."

She tuned him out. So much could happen in ten seconds. Like Percy—her brother-in-law—escaping from jail as he awaited trial for murdering her sister. Her sweet, loving sister, Vanessa.

*Escaped. He'd really escaped.*

Overpowered a deputy on the way to the courthouse. Now here he was to claim his kids.

And to kill Whitney, as she was the reason he'd been arrested.

“Seven...six...five.” He shifted on his feet, drawing her attention.

*I'm going to die. Right here. Here, where I can practically reach out and touch my coworkers.*

“Four.” His face tightened, reminding her of the night three weeks ago when she'd found him standing over her sister's broken body at the base of the stairs in their comfortable suburban home. A glare in his eyes. His chest heaving with anger. His face red, his hands fisted.

She'd run to her sister, checked her pulse, and when she found none, she called 911. He tried to calm her down and claim it was an accident, but Whitney knew differently and told the police as much. He'd been arrested, and as the police hauled him off, he threatened to make her pay.

And now he would.

“Three.” He grinned. He was enjoying this. The sick, sick man. No way would she ever let him find his children. Not while she was breathing—which might be only three more seconds.

“C'mon, Whitney. There's no need for you to die.” He abruptly stroked the side of her cheek.

She flinched.

“Two.” Gone was the smile, a raging inferno burning in his eyes.

He really was going to kill her. Her heart slammed against the wall of her chest.

*Please. Please. The kids need me. They can't handle another loss.*

Panic crawled up her spine. Her chest froze. Maybe her heart stopped.

He opened his mouth. She waited for the number. For *one*. For death.

A car careened around the corner and screeched to a halt by the ED door. Percy whipped around, mouth still open, that word—*one*—never uttered.

A lumberjack of a man jumped out of the vehicle. He was huge. Could overpower Percy. Not a bullet, but...

*Scream!*

She screeched with all her might. “Help!”

The driver spun, his eyes catching the scene. “You there. Leave her alone.”

Percy jerked back. His gaze darted around.

The monster-sized man came at them with big lumbering steps, bellowing and waving his hands. “Get away from her. Now. I mean it. Move.”

Emotions waged war on Percy’s face. He glanced at the gun. Lifted it.

“No!” She slammed her shoulder into him. Knocked him off kilter. He stumbled. Caught his footing.

Lumberjack man reached out to grab Percy. He slithered out from under the big beefy arms and sprinted away. Down the alley. Into the fog.

Lumberjack went after him. The sound of Percy's sharp footsteps snapped into the air. Lumberjack's solid thuds followed.

Whitney hyperventilated and fell back against the wall, rain cascading over her hair and running down her face, her mind a jumble of thoughts. She'd only known this level of terror one other time—the day she'd discovered her sister.

She wanted to drop to the rain-soaked ground, but she had to rescue the kids. She'd get to them before he could.

*No. No. You can't.* The kids needed her to get it together. Act. Move.

Where could she go?

*Think, Whitney. Think.*

Not home. No way. Percy would find her there. Take her niece and nephew.

He obviously didn't know which daycare she'd selected for nine-year-old Isaiah and three-year-old Zoey. She had to get to them. A plan forming in her mind, she scrambled around until she found her purse on the wet asphalt where she'd dropped it when he'd grabbed her. She snatched up the strap and ran for the parking garage. This could be the last time she ever saw this place since she started her nursing career eight years ago. She couldn't even let them know she wouldn't return.

She would have to cut all ties. Even with her parents.

She found her little Honda in the garage. Fumbled for the keys. Dropped them on the concrete. Scrambled to locate them and get the car open. Inside, she raced the engine and pointed it toward the nearest ATM. She couldn't go home for anything and would need to take out as much cash as possible to survive until she could figure out how to get more. Change her identity. The kids' identities too. And get a job. She couldn't continue to work as a nurse. It would be too easy for him to find her that way.

How in the world would she support the three of them?

A wave of hysteria bubbled up inside.

How had her life come to this? Nearly dying. Planning to assume a new identity. Running with two young kids to...where? She started hyperventilating again. She wasn't strong enough for this.

"Help me, God!" she cried out.

*Calm down. Freaking out won't help anyone.*

Yes, she had to stay calm. For Isaiah and Zoey.

"Call 911," she said to the car's infotainment system.

The dispatcher answered, and she quickly recounted the attack, swiping at her tears, her voice catching, stopping and swallowing hard too many times to count, but she got out her story. All of it. Every necessary word.

"I've dispatched an officer to the scene," the serene dispatcher said, her voice soothing, almost entrancing. "He'll be with you soon."

“I’m not at the hospital. I left. I have to go now. Find him. Please. Arrest him. He wants to take the kids. I can’t let him.” She ended the call and had the system dial her mother.

“Percy escaped from jail,” she blurted out. “Tried to kill me.”

A gasp filtered through the phone. “No. Oh no. It can’t be true. Are you okay? Where are you?”

“It’s true, and I’m fine,” Whitney replied, barely able to believe it herself as she recalled the attack. “I’m on my way to the daycare to pick up the kids. Then I’m taking off. Not sure where I’ll go, but I can’t tell you or he might try to get it out of you.”

“You think he’ll come here?”

Whitney hated hearing the frantic fear in her mother’s voice, but there was good reason to be afraid and hopefully it would help keep her parents safe. “Yes, and I think you and Dad should get out of town for a while, too. Try not to leave a trail that he can follow.”

“Oh, dear...no...oh my.”

“Go *now*, Mom. After me, you’re his next target.”

“Yes. We’ll go. I love you, sweetie.”

Tears came full force now. Whitney could barely see to drive. “I love you, too, Mom. I’ll keep watching the news and call you the minute he’s back in custody.”

She ended the conversation on that positive note. She had to believe law enforcement would find him and arrest him again.

She instructed her car to dial the daycare center. The phone rang. Once. Twice. Three times.

“C’mon. C’mon.” She slammed a fist into the wheel.

One more ring and the director’s cheery greeting rang out.

“It’s Whitney Rochester.” She tried to sound calm, but panic edged through her tone.

“Isaiah and Zoey. Are they okay?”

“Fine, why?”

“My brother-in-law has escaped from jail.” When she’d registered the kids, she told them all about Percy as the staff had to understand the potential danger. “He knows nothing about your place, but I wanted to alert you and tell you I’m on my way to pick up the kids.”

“We should call the police.”

“My next call,” she said. “I’m ten minutes out. Hide them if you have to, but make sure they’re safe. Please. Please. Don’t let anything happen to them.”

“You know we’ll do our best.” Her sincerity was comforting, but what could a petite little woman of bird-sized proportions do against the anger-driven Percy should he show up?

Whitney floored the gas, the tires spinning and spitting over the rain-slicked road and prayed that their best was good enough to keep the precious children out of a rampaging killer’s hands.

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