

## A Thousand Deaths

Strange things are happening. All the way back to the chaos of Nazi Germany to the hills of California, events that are bizarre and horrifying are reported but are never really investigated sufficiently. Cattle that look ancient have died en masse in the night. Scientists who worked on experiments too secret for the government to reveal during the darkness of World War II have died, their work and notes missing. A mass suicide on a hillside in California of what looks like the largest gathering of people over one hundred years old has shocked the nation. A young pioneering doctor turned scientist is questioned for unethical research practices that she cannot explain or defend. Framed.

A notebook from a malicious source, a scientist who carried out the vilest human experimentations during one of the darkest chapters in history, is all that remains of his research. It contains the secrets to life everlasting but was hidden among obscure papers to protect its contents from falling into the wrong hands. Discarded among the remnants of a disgraced regime in dusty thrift stores that cater to its fragmented and extremist followers, that notebook was as safe as buried treasure at the bottom of the ocean. The daughter of an aging and forgotten Hollywood legend is killed in a freak accident. An old man follows the life of a little girl, stealthily directing the course of her life—to his own ends.

And then tragedy strikes. A young boy dies of Leukemia and his mother, a Pediatrician, changes the course of her life to find the cure. An impetuous switch? Maybe, or maybe the seedling of an idea had been planted long ago by a strange man that visited only once in a while and talked about how to change the world.

Research that was valid and sound suddenly becomes criminal and the scientist who was once a Pediatrician is headed for indictment. That doctor is Samantha Goldinger. Working at a state of the art laboratory, heading up research on a deadly disease that claimed the life of her own beloved son, Tommy, Samantha is plunged into a nightmare that will change her life forever. In Samantha's case, forever turns out to be, literally, forever. For what she stumbles onto is not the cure for the disease, but the cure for death.

That's just the beginning of her travail. It all really began decades earlier, with the father she never really knew, and his father and his father before him. She is given a gift, a clue, a hint at what she must find to give the world the secrets to its most everlasting desire; the fountain of youth. She must find the notes of an old scientist, must search until she finds it. She must never stop searching. The clue is given. Search in the old shops; it must be somewhere!

This gift, it comes in a little vial and is an iridescent blue, with shimmers of eternity running throughout. Those who hold the vial are transfixed by its pearlescent beauty, knowing that to partake will have dire consequences. Yet they drink, knowing all too well that the life they lived will become unending and uncontrollably repulsive. They will become nothing more than a cog in the machine that created them. Still, the lapis blue liquid, held up to the light, beckons. The possibilities are too vast to resist.

It costs Samantha everything; her family, her career, her life. There are those that would seek to destroy the cure for Cancer, Diabetes, and in particular, dreaded Leukemia, the illness that stole Samantha's young Tommy. After all, the reality is that the world economy would collapse should the cure for those diseases be distributed. Thousands of people out of work, entire industries obsolete, millions of people saved, world populations that swell, life spans that lengthen. The ripple effect is enough to mobilize armies and to make powerful men realize the

peril. Unless they can get the information and create the need, distribute the vaccines and cash in on the inevitable stock hit.

However, it's not armies that want to stop Samantha. It's quite a surprising organization that has so much at stake that they are willing to, and do, kill to stop her. It is from a source that already has the patented secrets of youth in a cream, a potion, a moisturizer, a cleanser, except that in their case, the side effects to daily usage are devastating- and everlasting!

An investigative reporter for the Los Angeles Post, former golden boy reporter and a little frayed around the edges Collin Jurssic, stumbles onto the story of Samantha Goldinger, the nice suburban doctor that apparently dies from a freak accident, a car explosion. Baffled by the circumstances of her involvement in such a thing, horrified at the trail that presents itself, he follows, going deeper and deeper into the true nature of her research. He trips over something far more dangerous; an infatuation for the phantom woman that should be dead and buried. But is she? He has his doubts about that and pursues the truth to the bitter end, and possibly to his own end.

A twisting plot line with winding roads and false starts, there is a cast of characters that propels Samantha onward into the unknown and unspeakable. From the Third Reich's obsessive drive to find the fountain of youth at the expense of all of those who oppose or stand in its way, to secret laboratories under the San Fernando Valley that harbor horrific scenes of torture for one less wrinkle, Samantha and Collin have to wade through one vague layer after another to sort it all out. At first they investigate separately; Samantha is dead, remember. Collin attended her funeral. Alone and frightened, she has to seek alliance with the one person she least wants to depend on; her father. Collin tries to catch up and keep up with the woman he knows is really

alive. But if he tells anyone he could put her life in more danger than she is already in. He follows, trying to get one step ahead of her, only to fall deeper in love with her courage, her conviction and her beauty.

A caustic and egocentric mother that was once a glamorous if wanton movie star, a father that she never knew, that was a double agent during the war, a bitter and selfish sister, and a neglectful ex husband are the people that Samantha finds easy to walk away from. Deemed the black sheep due to her questionable lineage in an era of strict Hollywood ethics, Samantha grew up feeling inferior, unloved, unwanted and unequal to her more accepted siblings. Raped by her sister's husband, she is considered relentless and incredible in an attempt to gain favor. Even her lover cheated on her, leaving Samantha asking, is that all there is? Her son dead, her marriage over, her house a beautiful empty shell, all add up to a life too mundane to care about. Samantha is finished trying to be the good housewife, the dutiful mother and daughter trying to be the real person she should have been allowed to become. People know who she is; the daughter of a legendary if eccentric mother. Considered a spoiled girl given every advantage, she is not taken seriously. People don't see what's inside her, the intense passion and the potential for truth. That only appears to others as misdirection and self aggrandizement; a fluke. It's not until she stands on a hilltop listening to the wind and her own heart that she acknowledges her life is a sham, that it has to change no matter what. She leaves her medical practice to do research. Finding a job was all too easy and she seamlessly slips into the role presented to her. Maybe that was a bit too easy? She dismisses it as just thinking too much.

She has nothing to lose. Her colleagues have their own agenda. Samantha only sees a tiny glimpse of what she senses; that there's so much more to their treachery yet she really has no reason to suspect foul play. She only sees that their characters and motives are questionable in an

industry that is normally teeming with intelligence, altruism and genuine philanthropy. She gets caught up in their politics, becomes a scapegoat when she gets close enough to what they want that they snatch it out from under her. Her paranoia might be warranted.

Her adversaries are many, who is there to trust? Her research was supposed to be innocuous and straightforward; look for the cure for Leukemia. Follow the trail. Trial and error. Experiment and fail. Try again. Look here, search there, and analyze data, trial and trial again. After five years, that's not what happens because much like the ADHD children she helped as a young physician, Samantha gets distracted. She is given a gift from her wayward father, Lawrence Chesterfield, who has been quietly steering her destiny for decades. He holds the clues to the true nature of his, and now her, legacy. This gift, was it a coincidence or what it planned? Was it a gift or a curse? Did those around her know that she was being led down a road of destruction in the hopes of finding the pure formula that would not distort or mutate? Did they manipulate her to do their bidding? Who was friend, who was foe? It is muddled; the lines between propriety and quest are thinned. After all, if the source of the original research had blood on his hands, yet the cure could save millions, was it worth using it or was she obliged to dismiss it knowing that she might be discarding the very information that could save millions of little boys like her own Tommy? Was it worth one death, ten deaths, or, as the title suggests, a thousand deaths, to find the cures?

Lawrence has the original formula, the last of its kind in its pure unadulterated state. It is her father who was the keeper of the secrets, handed down from generation to generation. He is indestructible, yet he knows that the protection he has is tenuous; his power and wealth. He also knows that there will come a time when his enemies will not be stopped, that they have become audacious and careless. They unleashed a mutated form of the formula on an unsuspecting

public, a form that has revolting side effects. Why? Because it had built in longevity; the more one used the more one needed. The more one bought, the more the company profited. It was a vicious cycle that had nothing whatever to do with night creams. The more people that used it, loved it, needed it and begged for more, the more people they had for their own experimentation. Full circle in the course of scientific ethics. How far will they go? They will go to extremes that only the insane would ponder and only the strongest of us will venture to find out.

All those who come in contact with this unsavory group pays the ultimate price for their vanity, a price that is so horrid that Samantha sets out to destroy them and all they stand for and have built over the last century. Lawrence knows they must be stopped. He uses Samantha's dedication as a means to an end, knowing that her bottom line is that she was eventually do the right thing. What he doesn't know is that backed against a wall, cornered and threatened, Samantha does the only logical thing she can do to prevent the formula from getting into the wrong hands.

In the end Samantha and Collin find each other and a love deeper than even they knew was possible. However, the cost of their love is their youth, beauty and all they held dear.

In the end, Lawrence comes through. It's a statement about our culture and the value of beauty versus the value of scientific research, about ethics and advancements for mankind versus the corporate greed that urges them ever forward toward a healthier bottom line. Without preaching, but rather by illuminating a glaring spotlight on one possible if drastic scenario, A Thousand Deaths is a sad tale of horrific proportions.

Finally, in the end, Samantha and Collin learn that possibly, just possibly, the real truth underlying all the glitz and glamour is that youth and beauty will never be as valuable as real

love. It will never replace the genuine honorable intentions of thousands who have died for mankind instead of for profit.