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an independent fiction publisher

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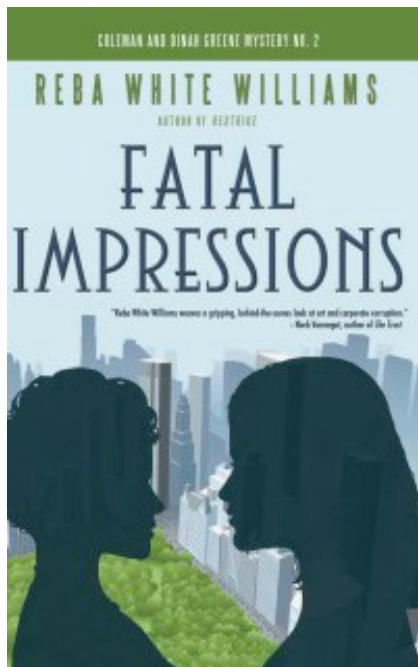
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An excerpt from Fatal Impressions



By five thirty Thursday morning, Dinah had eaten a light breakfast, dressed, and packed. At 5:45, Tom, Jonathan's driver, picked her up in the Lincoln Town Car. Tom would drive her to the DDD&W office in the Fry building, wait while she made a final check of last night's installations, then take her to the airport in time for the nine a.m. flight to Los Angeles.

They dropped Baker at his vet's for the weekend and were on their way uptown by a few minutes past six. Dinah mentally checked everything she should have done. Her suitcase and carry-on bag were in the trunk, and she was dressed in a favorite travel outfit, a navy blue pantsuit and a crisp white shirt. Her ticket was in her bag, as were her sunglasses, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and cash in small bills to buy newspapers or magazines, and for tips. She'd remove the jacket when the

plane arrived in warm LA. The New York weather was typical for March: cold, damp, and overcast. She smiled. In a few hours she'd be in sunshine, surrounded by the beautiful Bel Air gardens, enjoying a loving welcome from Jonathan. Making up after a quarrel could be fun.

At the Fry building, she took the elevator to the thirty-third floor. She paused to admire the prints in the reception area, then hurried toward the dining area. But before she reached it, she noticed the door to the anteroom of the managing director's suite was open. Hunt Frederick must be in. She'd invite him to join her for a tour.

The door to his office was ajar. Dinah called his name but got no reply. Maybe he was on the telephone and couldn't hear her? She tapped on the door and pushed it open. The carnage jumped up at her, a vision in a nightmare, and the smell was horrific—blood, urine, feces, and—oh, God—a whiff of Jungle Gardenia. The heavily carved bookshelves on the left had pulled away from the wall, and shelving and books lay all over the floor. Beneath the jumble of dark wood, red leather, and white pages splattered with blood: a body—and more blood, black against the red carpet. Blonde hair soaked in blood. A blood-stained beige platform shoe. A hand with purple painted nails.

Dinah tiptoed into the room, avoiding the blood, and touched a white wrist: no pulse, and the skin was cool. Nothing could help the poor woman.

Fighting nausea, she backed into the corridor and called 911 on her cell phone. "There's b-been a f-fatal accident," she said.