

Ten Times Guilty
by
Brenda Hill



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...about a single mother's struggle to realize her worth after a vicious attack. It's about a police sergeant seeking redemption for a crime he didn't realize he'd committed--until the victim died.

www.brendahill.com
www.authorsden.com/brendahill



REVIEWS:



'Hill mesmerizes with the horrific details of rape, self-blame and the will to live. Tracy's tale speaks for all victims who have been brutalized and fought back. It also speaks for those who suffered and died without ever seeing their attacker brought to justice. A compelling tale of pain, courage, and hope.'

Four Stars!

Romantic Time Magazine
Mystery & Suspense Reviews
January 2006

'Suspenseful...meticulous research. Brenda Hill is on my list of favorites!
A FIVE BEACON REVIEW.

Lighthouse Literary Reviews

Brenda Hill's passion for the world of writing and her experiences as an editor and proofreader have definitely worked exceptionally well together to develop her book – Ten Times Guilty. This suspense thriller is truly an outstanding novel.

The author displays her skill right from the first few sentences, which really grabbed hold of me, dragged me into the story and would not let me go. The level of suspense was consistent throughout the book and each character's inner battles were clearly portrayed. Brenda certainly deserves to sit among the ranks of best-selling writers like Nora Roberts (Carolina Moon), William Diehl (Thai Horse) and Trevanian (Shibumi)!

Lillian Brummet, Book Reviewer
Co-author of Trash Talk

Kudos to Brenda Hill for having penned one of the finest suspense novels this reader has come across in a decade. Angry, yet compassionate, edgy, and yet, eloquent, Ten Times Guilty is a beautifully written tale of hope, suffering, and ultimately, of courage. The novel grabs the reader from the start, forcing her to experience a full spectrum of emotions as she accompanies a young woman on her journey through hell, and emerges with her on the other side.

Like a master craftsman building a magnificent structure, Brenda Hill lays the foundation early on for a manuscript that sparkles, from the 'basement to the roof.' I am truly proud to have Ten Times Guilty in my personal library, sharing shelf space with the likes of Patricia Cornwell and Faye Kellerman. One can only hope this novel will be the first of many by this amazing author. In short, if you have not yet done so, do yourself a favor and buy this book. Today!

Jean Pike,
The Winds of Autumn

EXCERPT:

Bravery or *Rage*?

Tossing on the sweat-soaked cot at three in the morning, Tracy felt nothing but anger. She kept seeing Karr, leaning against the cottonwood tree in the park, arms lazily folded as he watched her. The scene repeated over and over like a warped video. He'd even flipped a cocky little salute as she shot to her feet in terror, mocking her, so sure of himself while she grabbed Ritchie and ran.

Bastard, she thought now. She grew so outraged she no longer felt afraid.

It was time to stop running.

Even with all the precautions of the shelter, he still found her. She and Ritchie would never be safe.

There was only one thing to do: she'd get a gun from Holly and meet him in the park.

This time, the odds would be in her favor.

ABOUT the AUTHOR:



Brenda Hill studied novel writing at a local community college then took the writing course from *Writer's Digest* as well as two online courses from New York. She is a graduate of The University of Iowa's summer writing sessions, belonged to an international critiquing group and edited for a small independent publisher.

She's Brainbench certified in Written English, is a freelance manuscript editor and currently teaches novel writing in Southern California.

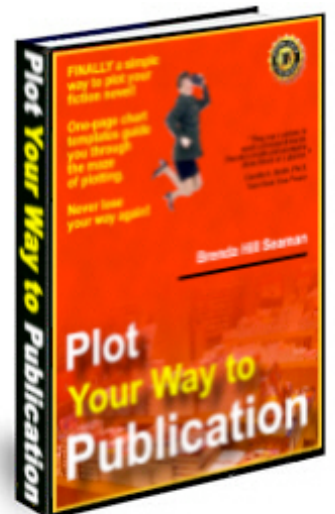
Her short stories have appeared in *True Story* and *The Talking Stick*.

www.brendahill.com

She authored *Plot Your Way to Publication*, a compact writing course with the focus on storyline development. This eBook demonstrates classic story structure from basic idea to solid storyline using scenes from *Ten Times Guilty* and specially designed one-page chart templates.

For more information visit:

<http://www.brendahill.com/plottinghelp.htm>



Ten Times Guilty

CHAPTER ONE:

He waited in the stand of poplars behind the bus shelter, his black sweats fading into shadows cast by the midnight moon. A ski mask covered his face.

At twelve-seventeen, a Denver city bus approached the residential shelter. Air brakes hissing, it rolled to a stop and Cindy Harris, a sweater draped over her blue scrubs, stepped to the pavement. Glass shards from the streetlight crunched under her feet.

She glanced at the shattered light, then to the houses lining the gloomy street. The older frame bungalows, many with porches holding swings and chaise lounges, stood dark and silent.

Where were all the people? Surely someone was still awake, but there were no lights, not even from an upstairs window. She felt like a lone astronaut landing on a stark, barren planet.

With a whine of the engine and a cloud of exhaust fumes, the bus pulled away. Cindy desperately wanted to run after it and beg the driver not to leave her alone, but she'd never get home if she stayed on the bus. And she needed to fall into her bed for at least a couple of hours sleep before she had to get back to the hospital for another sixteen-hour shift. Nurse's training had been grueling, but she hadn't known rough until several nurses called in sick and she'd had to pull three double-shifts her first week. She would get through it though; she'd be the best nurse County General ever had. Registered nurse, she thought, fingering her shiny new pin.

Straightening her shoulders, she left the shelter. At least she had only two blocks to walk. That wouldn't be so bad.

"Always call for a guard to walk you to your car," the hospital manual quoted for night personnel, "or walk in groups. Above all, think safety. If you find yourself alone, carry something for defense and walk with determination and purpose. Do not advertise yourself as a victim."

Good advice, but not so easy to follow, especially on a night like tonight. Cindy walked at a rapid clip and searched for a beacon in the blackness, a porch light, a light in a window, any proof that another human being was alive.

There was nothing. Even the slice of moon had disappeared behind black clouds.

Lightening streaked across the sky, followed by the low rumble of thunder. A sudden breeze blew Cindy's blond hair back from her oval face and she felt moisture in the air. Great. A spring storm and no umbrella. Without slowing, she pulled on her sweater and hoped she could make it home before the rain started.

From behind, she heard a faint rustling sound.

She whirled around. Nothing but a few scattered leaves on the sidewalk. That's all it was. Still, she scanned the spacious lawns between the houses and peered between the mature cottonwoods, aspens and blue spruce.

Tree branches swayed gently in the breeze. Nothing else moved.

She quickened her pace and tried not to look over her shoulder. Of all times for her old Pontiac to be in the shop. It needed new belts or some such thing. Cindy had memorized symptoms of a vast number of diseases but the mysteries under a car hood were beyond her. A few paychecks and she could trade her old clunker for that sporty little Saab with the custom red leather seats.

At the end of the block, she turned right and cut across an expanse of lawn on the corner lot. Only half a block to go. She glanced ahead to her apartment, hoping to catch a glimpse of her porch light, but it was still too far. A few more steps and there! Now she could see it through the branches of the aspen tree. She relaxed for the first time since getting off the bus. One thing for certain, she'd stop by that shop tomorrow and get one of those pepper sprays, just in case she worked late again.

From the depths of the yard on her right, she heard that rustling sound again, only louder.

The fine hair on her neck and arms prickled as if the air were electrically charged. Her heart thudded. She walked faster, almost running. Probably a cat, lots of cats in the area. Think of something good, something good. Nothing came to mind except her mother's face, beaming at Cindy's graduation, holding back tears because her daughter had accepted a job in Denver instead of returning home to Pine Bluffs, Minnesota.

Behind her, a twig snapped.

That was no cat!

Heart racing, she spun around. Her frantic gaze raked the trees, the shrubs, the black spaces between the houses. Something moved...a shadow, big, like a man.

It advanced toward her.

Cindy screamed and ran.

He grabbed her from behind and clamped his hand on her mouth. She stumbled; he yanked her against him. She flailed at him, kicking backwards and clawing with both hands.

He shifted her, just enough for his groin to rub her buttocks, then he was dragging her, kicking frantically, to the back yard of the vacant house. Next to the garage, he threw her to the ground.

She hit hard. When she caught her breath she tried to scream; nothing escaped but whimpering sounds.

He flipped her onto her back and dropped down on top of her. Grabbing her hands, he held them in one of his while the other clamped down on her mouth and nose.

Gasping for air, Cindy bucked and squirmed.

"Mmmm," he chuckled, "I like that. Keep it up." He released her hands to unbuckle his belt.

Suddenly, her hands were free! She grabbed his hair and jabbed his eyes.

He drew back and punched her in the mouth.

Cindy's world exploded into jiggers of light, then to the edge of blackness. A moment or an hour later, things began to take form.

He sat above her, watching, waiting.

Her ears rang; tears sprang to her eyes and overflowed, smearing the smudged dirt on her face. Blood ran from her lips and her teeth felt loose. She squeezed her eyes shut and turned her head.

“Look at me,” he whispered, his voice raspy. He grabbed her chin and forced her to face him. “Watch me, you little bitch. Watch just how much fun I’m having screwing you. For every time you wouldn’t talk to me, for every time you passed right by with your nose in the air.” He grabbed her hands and held them over her head. Pushing against her, he shoved himself in.

A few moments later, he withdrew and released her hands. She slapped at him, thrashing the air with weakened arms. She snagged his mask and yanked it off.

“Karr!” The night watchman at the hospital.

He hit her with his open hand. Blood covered her teeth.

“You shouldn’t a done that,” he said. “Now I have to kill you.”

“No, please, I won’t tell...please.”

Karr studied her, his eyes as cold as his voice. “You breathe a word about this, I’ll make a little trip to Pine Bluffs.”

She gasped.

“I know everything about you,” he whispered. “I got connections. Your mother, she’s not so old. I could have lots of fun with her.”

Tears rolled down Cindy’s temples. “Please, I won’t tell, I promise. Please...”

He smashed her with his fist, again and again, reducing her face to a bloody, pulpy mess.

Her hands fell to her side; her eyes rolled into her head.

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