

**A  
TRIO  
OF  
TROUBLE**

Books by Michael Jenet

**FICTION**

(THE DI SCOTTE MYSTERIES)

*Trouble Comes In Threes*

*A Trio of Trouble*

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*MOTIVESTIONS - The Missing Key to Living Your Best Life*

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# A TRIO OF TROUBLE

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To Dafna, my reason and my love, always.





BOOK 1

**THE  
DOMINION  
MURDERS**



# CHAPTER 1

It was an innocent comment. “Hello honey,” a voice said, interrupting Amelia Hamza’s thoughts. Honey. The nectar of bees, a term of endearment used between people who are close. Something sweet. Little did she know, but this innocent term would be the last thing she would hear before the horror she would face later that day.

Before this interruption, Amelia Hamza, journalist for the digital newspaper Daily Coast, had been sitting alone at a table by the window. Pouring a small amount of the golden nectar into her tea, she stared out at the people darting in and out of the rain.

She turned to see who had spoken. A young man—at least younger than her—was standing with a cup in his hand and smiling down at her.

She considered him for a moment, holding the plastic tube of honey in her hand, then said, “Sorry, you’ll have to try harder than that, mate.” She glared at him before looking back down at her open laptop.

The young man, unperturbed, shrugged and walked off.

Amelia knew that most men, and a more than a few women, considered her good-looking. She was used to being approached, propositioned, and flirted with. That didn’t mean she enjoyed it. In fact, it was all a bit tiring.

It didn’t help that her luck with men had been less than stellar of late.

If she was honest with herself, the gray skies and flooding streets she saw out the window matched her mood. She was tired of it all. The slog, the long hours of work, the loneliness.

Not that she minded her job; she enjoyed it most days. Lately, however, things had been more of a grind than the exhilarating journalistic reporting that she yearned for. She knew much of that had to do with her current nonexistent personal life.

She sighed heavily and looked at her watch. Time to get moving. She had somewhere to be.

\*\*\*

In the New Forest, several miles from the café where Amelia Hamza was packing up, a lone bicyclist was braving the weather and dangerously speeding along the narrow pathways.

Jillian Scotte didn't mind the rain. In many ways, she preferred riding in the rain. There were fewer people, and she was going to work up a sweat anyway, so getting soaked didn't really bother her.

She knew her bike and her limits, and unless she hit a stray wet leaf or some such thing, there was little chance she would get hurt. It was part of the allure, pushing herself and her bike to the point of danger without encountering it.

She craved the rush, the surge of adrenaline, as much as she craved the exercise. Jillian had never been much of the gym membership kind of woman. She wanted solitude, time to think, as much as she wanted the health benefits. Running was too slow; she needed something with speed. Cycling was the perfect fit.

Her job as head of the Violent Crime Unit for the South of England was stressful at the best of times. Her first few cases had been nothing but one harrowing investigation after another.

She had a great team, though they remained one down, with Detective Sergeant Listun still on limited duty. He was finishing his physiotherapy after having had much of his shoulder blown into fragments several months ago.

Jillian rounded a corner and got up out of the saddle to speed up as she entered a long straightaway amid an almost tunnel-like section of the bike path. The narrow path, covered by overhanging trees, was not soaked, and her tires gripped the drier pavement, giving her a much-needed burst of speed.

Her breathing was coming in a steady rhythm now and her lungs were pumping full of oxygen as her legs pedaled faster and faster, shooting her like a rocket down the straightaway.

\*\*\*

Amelia struggled to see through the windshield. The weather called for rain all day.

Having few friends was nothing new for her. Her parents had left their home in Pakistan soon after Amelia was born, so although she grew up in England, she could never shake her birthplace.

In school, she had been teased mercilessly by girls who were jealous of her looks and by boys who were too immature to know how to talk to her. At the first sign of interest from one of the cliques, what few friends she had tried to make always seemed to desert her, fearing ridicule for being friends with “that Paki girl.”

University had been little better, and while she had made a few friends, they had all scattered across the globe, and she only saw them on social media.

Jinani had been one of the few friends she’d been able to make since moving south. Jinani had recently arrived from Pakistan when they had met at a local restaurant run by two expat brothers. The food was authentic and the clientele mostly immigrant.

She and Jinani had jelled almost immediately, and they quickly became friends. Life and work, for both, kept them busy—Amelia with her journalism, Jinani with her job at a large import–export firm where she was the assistant to the CEO. Still, they got together whenever they could.

Jinani had met Jonathan about a year ago and was smitten immediately. Amelia had met them both for dinner after almost three months of hearing how great he was.

He wasn’t Amelia’s type, but Jinani loved him, and he seemed to reciprocate, though he was a little too possessive for Amelia’s taste.

About a month ago, something happened that had Amelia concerned for her friend. Jinani had changed. The spark was gone from her eyes; her *joie de vivre* was no longer in her voice when they talked on the phone. No amount of coaxing could get her to divulge what happened, but Amelia knew something was wrong.

Pulling up in front of Jinani’s flat, she parked in a spot for visitors and prepared to make the dash through the rain from the car to covered safety. One way or another, she was going to find out what was wrong with her friend.

As she approached the door, she found it wasn’t completely closed. It looked like it had just been pulled to, but not actually latched. She knocked on the door, which just caused it to open further.

“Hello,” she called out. “Jin? It’s Amelia.”

No response. Stepping inside, she closed the door behind her.

“Hello,” she said again, louder this time, but the house was quiet. It had that feel about it, like when you walk into a place and know by the quiet that no one’s home, but that wasn’t right—she’d gotten a text from Jinani this morning saying she was looking forward to seeing Amelia at nine.

It was 8:59 a.m.

Amelia cautiously walked through the entryway door into the sitting room that doubled as the dining room in the small flat.

Everything was as she remembered it, if messier than the way Jinani normally kept her home. The mantle above the electric fire had a photo of her and Jonathan, smiling at what looked like someone's garden party. She looked happy. He had his arm around her, pulling her close as he, too, smiled at the camera.

Amelia called out again, but her words seemed to seep into the empty walls of the small flat.

She could see the open door to the bedroom across the room. Beyond that lay the toilet. Sighing loudly in the small space, she walked across and opened the door to the kitchen, just to be thorough.

She immediately wished she hadn't.

Blood was everywhere.

There was her friend, and equally covered in blood was Jonathan.

Amelia was not new to death and blood, not with her job. This was different. This was her friend. She could feel the bile coming up and ran to the toilet.

\*\*\*

Jillian was facing the brunt of the rain. Having just crested a small incline, she was now gliding down the other side, careful not to go too fast, but enjoying the brief respite from the climb.

Her earbuds were playing some Bach when suddenly the robotic tone of her phone changed to an incoming call.

Not just any incoming call. It was detective constable Kara Devanor's ringtone.