

What people are saying about ...

THE REAL ENEMY

“Mysterious disappearances, a dangerous legend, and the emotional meltdown of a marriage. Kathy Herman pulls it all together in a riveting story that rockets to a conclusion that will keep you on the edge of your seat.”

Lorena McCourtney, author of *Your Chariot Awaits*, an ACFW Book of the Year

“A good solid read with enough questions and twists to provide hours of entertainment. I’ll tell my friends to read this book!”

Lauraine Snelling, author of *One Perfect Day*

“Kathy Herman’s *The Real Enemy* will not disappoint. Her characters are full and flawed. Her plot moves swift and sure. Her ending is unexpected and profound. Don’t cheat yourself out of a great read. Grab this one!”

Lyn Cote, author of the Texas Star of Destiny series

“A marriage is unraveling as fast as a town. *The Real Enemy* is an emotion-packed page turner that kept me up late ... and I loved every minute!”

Roxanne Henke, author of *After Anne*

“I loved *The Real Enemy*! Kathy Herman has given us a clever mystery and fascinating characters facing real-life issues. A thoroughly satisfying read. Highly recommended.”

Gayle Roper, author of *Hide and Seek*

“Kathy Herman gives the reader a stunning read in *The Real Enemy*. The story kept me riveted to the page, and when I reached the end, I realized evil could not be muted.”

DiAnn Mills, author of *Breach of Trust*

“In *The Real Enemy*, Kathy Herman skillfully weaves together a tale of supernatural legends and mysterious disappearances with the age-old problems of infidelity and unforgiveness that only a return to faith can mend. Suspenseful and engaging!”

DeAnna Julie Dodson, author of *In Honor Bound*

“With believable characters and a plot that kept me turning the pages, *The Real Enemy* had me looking over my shoulder on more than one occasion. A must read—with the lights on!”

Diann Hunt, author of *For Better or For Worse*

“In *The Real Enemy*, Kathy Herman has made a fine art out of combining true-to-life human drama with edge-of-the-seat suspense. She gives meaning to the concept of forgiveness. This was a great read.”

Hannah Alexander, author of *A Killing Frost*

“Ms. Herman not only delivers a riveting story where the pressures of the present and shadows of the past collide, but adds a thought-provoking look at the high cost of unforgiveness.

Carol Cox, author of the *A Fair to Remember* series

“In *The Real Enemy* Kathy Herman masterfully pairs crime with family estrangement to redeem a marriage nearly destroyed by sin, in a twist that will surprise the reader.”

Eric Wiggin, author of *Blood Moon Rising*

SOPHIE TRACE TRILOGY

THE REAL
ENEMY

A NOVEL

KATHY HERMAN

THE REAL ENEMY
Published by David C. Cook
4050 Lee Vance View
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C. Cook Distribution Canada
55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

David C. Cook U.K., Kingsway Communications
Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT, England

David C. Cook and the graphic circle C logo
are registered trademarks of Cook Communications Ministries.

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes,
no part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form
without written permission from the publisher.

The Web site addresses recommended throughout this book are offered as a
resource to you. These Web sites are not intended in any way to be or imply an
endorsement on the part of David C. Cook, nor do we vouch for their content.

This story is a work of fiction. All characters and events are the product of the author's
imagination. Any resemblance to any person, living or dead, is coincidental.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International
Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible
Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

LCCN 2008942764
ISBN 978-1-4347-6786-8

© 2009 Kathy Herman

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, 7680 Goddard
Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80920 (www.alivecommunications.com)

The Team: Don Pape, Diane Noble, Amy Kiechlin, and Jaci Schneider
Cover Design: DogEared Design, Kirk DouPonce
Cover Photos: © istockphoto and Shutterstock
Interior Design: Sarah Schultz

Printed in the United States of America
First Edition 2009

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE Great Smoky Mountains and rolling hills of East Tennessee provide the stunning backdrop for this story, and I'd like to thank my friend Rachel McRae for giving my husband and me a list of "must see" places to visit as we traveled this beautiful area. Though I've made references to numerous Tennessee towns and landmarks, Sophie Trace and its legend of the red shadows exist only in my imagination.

I want to acknowledge the late LaVerne McCuiston, perhaps my most passionate supporter, who slipped into the Lord's arms during the writing of this book. I will miss her sorely and will have to save her a copy of this book and those yet to come for when we meet again on the streets of gold.

In the writing of this story, I drew from several resource people, each of whom shared generously from his or her storehouse of knowledge and experience. I did my best to integrate the facts, as I understood them. If accuracy was compromised in any way, it was unintentional and strictly of my own doing. All information regarding organized crime and gangs was obtained from a broad range of newspaper articles and related Internet sites. The prototype I chose for the Sophie Trace Police Department was identical to that used in Athens, Tennessee.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Commander Carl H. Deeley of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and also Chief Wallace

Fullerton of the Marysville (California) Police Department. The combined input of these seasoned professionals enabled me to better understand the work environment, protocol, and everyday challenges of police chiefs.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to my friend Paul David Houston, former assistant district attorney, for helping me understand specific statutes and criminal charges as well as plea-bargaining options; and my professional investigator friend, Will Ray, for providing valuable input concerning evidence collected during crime scene investigations.

I'm immensely grateful to Mark and Donna Skorheim, who sent cards of encouragement and prayed faithfully and fervently that, in spite of my rigorous physical therapy schedule, I would stay on deadline. The two of you are a powerful voice of intercession!

A special word of thanks to my tenacious prayer warrior and sister, Pat Phillips, and my online prayer team: Chuck Allenbrand, Judith Depontes, Jackie Jeffries, Joanne Lambert, Adrienne McCabe, Nora Phillips, Will Ray, Carolyn Walker, and Sondra Watson for your continuous support. There's no way to measure your importance to this writing ministry.

To Susie Killough, Judi Wieghat, Pearl Anderson, LaVerne McCuiston, my friends at LifeWay Christian Store in Tyler, Texas, and Nashville, Tennessee; and my church family at Bethel Bible Church for your many prayers during the writing of this book. There were times when your prayers seemed almost tangible!

To the retailers who make my books available and to the many readers who have encouraged me with e-mails, cards, and personal testimonies about how God has used my words to challenge and inspire you. He uses you to bless me more often than you know.

To my novelist friends in ChiLibris, who allow me to tap into your collective storehouse of knowledge and experience: What a compassionate, charitable, prayerful group you are! It's an honor to be counted among you.

To my agent, Beth Jusino, and the diligent staff at Alive Communications. Your standard of excellence challenges me to keep growing as a writer. I only hope that I represent you as well as you represent me.

To Cris Doornbos, Dan Rich, and Don Pape at David C. Cook for believing in me and investing in the words I write; and to your hardworking staff for getting this book to the shelves. What could be more exciting than being collaborators "on the same page" for Him?

To my editor, Diane Noble, for insightful suggestions that intensified and tightened this story and genuine praises that enabled me to see how my writing has grown. I love working with you. You've made editing something I actually look forward to.

To my husband, Paul, who has, over the course of my fourteen novels, listened with inexhaustible interest as I've read aloud every word of each book (at least twice!). You're the only other person who has witnessed God's hand at work during the creative process. What a privilege we share!

And to my Lord and my God, who has walked with me through every valley in my spiritual journey that I might live to tell of His mercy and grace. I pray that the truth of Your Word woven into this story will come to life in the heart of every reader. How humbling it is to be the vessel!

PROLOGUE

"DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL,
BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

ROMANS 12:21

ROSA Mendez crouched behind the rubble of a razed brick building and held her breath. Had he seen her? She listened for his footsteps moving toward her, but the only distinguishable sound was the squawking of two grackles fighting over a potato chip wrapper stuck in the storm drain.

She gingerly peeked around the side of the brick pile and caught a glimpse of her cousin Eduardo bounding up the front steps of the abandoned Pentecostal church, wearing red high-tops and the Super Bowl cap she gave him for his birthday. What was drawing him to this empty old building?

She wanted to follow him inside and ask what he was doing here. If he had been the Eduardo she had idolized nearly all her life, she would have. But this new Eduardo? Her heart trembled when she thought of how he might react if he knew she was spying on him.

Deep voices resonated from inside the church. They sounded mean, but she couldn't make out what they were saying. She glanced at her watch. Surely her younger sister, Carmen, could babysit four

little girls by herself for a few more minutes. She might not have another chance to find out what Eduardo was up to.

She crept around to the side window and peered in through the broken glass. About a dozen men stood in a straight line, their arms folded across their chests, Eduardo and two others facing them. She ducked just below the windowsill, still as stone, and listened to what they were saying.

“We’re unstoppable. The question is: Are you? Few men are smart enough or tough enough to succeed at this. Ready to show us what you’ve got?”

“I am.”

“So am I.”

“Eduardo?”

“Absolutely.”

“Excellent. Make sure they never get the chance to scream.” The man laughed. “Oh ... and if you get caught? We never heard of you. Rat us out to the cops, and you’re dead men. There’s no place you can hide that we can’t get to you. Any questions?”

Silence filled the room.

Rosa leaned against the side of the church, her knees about to buckle, her heart pounding like a kettledrum. What was her cousin doing with these thugs?

A few seconds later, feet shuffled across the creaky floor and it sounded as if the front door opened. She ran to the rear of the building and hid behind the overgrown shrubs near the steps, studying the guys as they crossed the street and strutted toward the railroad tracks. Their backs were to her, but Eduardo was easy to spot in his red athletic shoes.

Whatever it was they were up to, they had picked the most secluded part of town to meet. After the woolen mill closed down, blocks of old buildings on this side of Sophie Trace had been demolished and replaced with rows of corrugated metal storage facilities. This dilapidated church was about the only remnant left standing.

Rosa waited until the men disappeared, then sat on the crumbling steps, hugging herself and rocking back and forth. How could Eduardo be stupid enough to get pulled into something that might put lives in danger and get him sent to prison? Was she brave enough to confront him? Would it even do any good?

Until the past few months she could talk to him about anything. But along with his increasing indifference came a mean temper that frightened her. He had shoved her a few times when she pressed him about why he was avoiding her, and he had even started yelling at the younger cousins anytime they got on his nerves.

Rosa blinked the stinging from her eyes. What happened to the Eduardo she had looked up to for as long as she could remember? The doting cousin who taught her to swim when no one else could even coax her into the water? Who taught her to ride a bike? Not to be afraid of dogs? The math whiz who helped her make an adventure out of everything from times tables to algebra? Eduardo had always been her hero—the big brother she never had.

If only she hadn't eavesdropped. What if he was in danger? Clearly *someone* was.

Rosa's mind screamed with possibilities, and the skin on her arms turned to gooseflesh. What if they were smuggling illegals into the country? Or what if it was even worse than that? Her mind flashed back

to a recent TV documentary about slavery in the twenty-first century.

She shuddered. Was Eduardo involved in *that*? The guy who threatened him sounded capable of anything.

A train whistle startled her. She shivered. The air had turned chilly, and the sun had dropped behind the metal roofs of the storage facilities. She pulled the windbreaker out of her backpack, her hands shaking, and slipped it on, the stranger's threat replaying in her mind like a stuck CD.

Rat us out to the cops and you're dead men.

Rosa began to run and then run faster and faster, lamenting that she had shirked her babysitting responsibility and had stumbled into something she had no business knowing but couldn't ignore. She raced past the high school, vaguely aware that the clock at city hall had chimed five times, and came to a stop at the red light at Stanton and First.

She leaned over, her hands grasping her knees, and tried to catch her breath. What should she do? If she confided in her parents, they would feel obligated to tell the police. No, Eduardo was the one she needed to talk to. Maybe she could reason with him and get him to stay away from these dangerous men.

The light turned green and she darted across Stanton and raced toward Mockingbird Lane. But what if it was too late? What if Eduardo had become just like *them*? What if he was capable of hurting her—doing whatever it took to shut her up? What if he knew she had followed him and decided just to deal with her later?

Make sure they never get a chance to scream, one had said. She swallowed a sob and kept running, trying not to think about what that meant.

CHAPTER 1

“OUCH!”

Police Chief Brill Jessup yanked her hand away from the stuck desk drawer and shook it a few times, keenly aware of her broken thumbnail and the embarrassment scalding her face. She stole a glance through the blinds covering the glass wall, pretending not to notice Detective Captain Trent Norris’s amusement. She wasn’t about to ask him for help. How hard could it be to get the stupid thing open?

“Everything okay, Chief?” Trent’s voice sounded patronizing.

“Yes, just fine.”

Brill reached for the stack of Thursday’s mail in her in-box and sat back in the well-worn brown leather chair, her thumb throbbing, and her feet barely touching the floor. The desk chair was still too high, but she wasn’t going to call the maintenance engineer and have him adjust it *again*. Why draw attention to the fact that she was a foot shorter than her predecessor and utterly useless with a screwdriver? She could live with it until she was off duty and could get her husband, Kurt, to help her.

She wiggled out of the chair and ambled over to the window, her back to the glass wall and Trent’s curious glances, and looked out through the magnificent trees of gold and orange and crimson

that shaded the grounds around city hall. In the distance, beyond the ridge of rolling hills, the hazy outline of the Great Smoky Mountains looked almost surreal against the bluebird sky. She had always admired the grandeur of the Mississippi River when she lived in Memphis, but it couldn't compare with the heart-stopping view on the other side of the state. Outside, anyway.

She turned around and cringed at the monstrous bookcase that swallowed up the entire wall behind her desk. The other walls were dingy beige and bare, except for a few framed pencil sketches of Civil War heroes and an abundance of nail holes—glaring reminders of Chief Hennessey's passing.

Brill remembered seeing the framed portrait of the chief that hung in the main corridor of city hall at the end of a long row of portraits of the other police chiefs who had served the community of Sophie Trace. How honored she felt to be counted among them, even if she was the first "redheaded spitfire" to run the department. She smiled. Trent would probably be embarrassed if he knew she'd overheard him refer to her that way while talking with his wife on the phone. Not that he meant any disrespect. Perhaps it was even intended to be complimentary. But she wondered if he would describe her that way if she were male.

She went over to her desk, took a nail file out of her pencil cup, and began to smooth her jagged thumbnail. Hadn't she made up her mind when she accepted this position that she wasn't going to allow gender to be an issue nor was she going to overreact if someone tried to make it one? Her eighteen-year record on the Memphis police force spoke for itself. Had any detective cracked more cases than she? It was her captain who first nicknamed her Brill—short

for brilliant—and it eventually stuck. When she moved here, she planned to use her given name, but Kurt talked her out of it. She'd been known as Brill for so long that the only person who still called her Colleen was her mother.

Police Chief Brill Jessup *did* have a nice ring to it. She chuckled aloud without meaning to, recalling that when she was in the second grade, she announced to her teacher and classmates that she wanted to be a lion tamer when she grew up.

A voice came over the intercom on her phone. “Chief, line one is for you. It’s Kurt.”

“Thanks, LaTeasha.” Brill picked up the receiver and pushed the blinking button. “So how’s your day going?”

“Great,” Kurt Jessup said. “I’m in Pigeon Forge at the new store. The SpeedWay sign was put up this morning. I thought it might look lost with all the glitzy signs along the main drag, but actually it’s not hard to spot.”

“I think your little quick-copy business just turned into a chain.”

“Yeah, I’m starting to think five stores is enough unless I want to hire someone to handle HR. I’ve got all I can say grace over.”

“Good. The last thing you need is time on your hands.” Brill felt her neck muscles tighten in the dead air that followed. Had she subconsciously intended to turn the knife? She wondered if Kurt was thinking the same thing.

“What time will you be home?” she said.

“I’m not sure yet. I want to stop by the church and finalize my class notes for Sunday.”

Brill sighed under her breath. What made Kurt think he was

qualified to teach Sunday school? And didn't he care that it put pressure on her to attend? It's not as though she could opt out without raising a few eyebrows. "So you're really going through with it?"

"I told you I was. I wish you'd at least pretend to be supportive."

"Sorry. I think you're biting off too much too soon." Okay, so she *was* turning the knife. Was she supposed to pretend he was worthy?

"I guess we'll just have to agree to disagree," Kurt said. "I've put the past behind me. I want to get involved at church, and I really feel called to do this."

Called? Convenient choice of words. How was she supposed to argue with that? "Did you remember Emily has gymnastics at four?"

"It's right here on my phone. I'll get her there on time. So how're things at the station?"

Brill leaned on the side of her desk and looked down at the cars parked at the meters. "Let's see ... we investigated multiple vehicle break-ins in the employee parking lot at the tire plant. Responded to a domestic disturbance on Fifth. Racked up a few speeding violations. Made a report on a fender bender in front of the high school. Checked out a 'popping noise' on Beech Street—a possible drive-by shooting we haven't been able to confirm. Feels strange not having a big case hanging over me. The real challenge of the day has been trying to get this stubborn file drawer open. I got it open once, but I'm not sure what I did."

"Why don't you just ask Trent to show you?"

"I can figure it out by myself, Kurt."

There was that uncomfortable dead air again.

“What I *would* like help with”—she stood and turned around—“is making this office look like it’s mine.”

“I’ll help. Where do we start?”

“With a coat of fresh paint—something cheery. These walls are disgustingly drab, and I doubt they’ve been painted since Chief Hennessey was sworn in. I could use a few plants in here too—something *alive* to offset the abundance of dead oak. I’ll bet if we cut this conference table and chairs into firewood, there’d be enough to burn ’til the next century. We could burn this old desk chair while we’re at it.”

Kurt laughed. “So how do you *really* feel about your new office?”

Brill smiled in spite of herself. “Oh, you know how I am. When the walls look grotty, I feel grotty. I’m sure once it’s brightened up, I can make do with what’s here. But I would appreciate your lowering the desk chair a notch. I’ll tell you one thing, I doubt there’s a prettier view of the Smokies anywhere in town.”

“I think you’re right. It shouldn’t take more than the weekend to do the job—unless you actually want that big bookcase moved. In that case, you’ll have to wait ’til I can round up some young bucks to help.”

“Forget it, you’d need a forklift.” Brill scanned the rows of books that rose almost to the ceiling. “Let’s just paint around it. I’ll weed out some of the books and put a few family photographs on the shelves. At least there’s plenty of light in here.”

“It’ll look more professional after we hang your diplomas and award certificates,” Kurt said. “So, are you starting to feel settled?”

“I’m comfortable with my position, though it still feels strange being called ‘Chief.’”

“Especially with a Cherokee reservation just across the border.”

“Very funny, Kurt.”

“Sorry, bad joke.”

“Not to mention politically incorrect. You read the literature the chamber of commerce gave us. You know how Sophie Trace got its name. There’s a rich Cherokee history in this region.”

“And some bad blood that wasn’t mentioned in the brochures. Wait’ll you hear what I found out at the barbershop this morning.”

Brill smirked. “And they say *women* are gossips.”

“This wasn’t gossip. There’s a legend. Some people actually believe that the spirits of the Cherokee who were driven off this land have come back to get even with the descendents of white people who settled here.”

“That’s about the craziest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“They refer to the spirits as red shadows. I kept my mouth shut and just listened to the barber and a couple old duffers bat the legend back and forth. Apparently there have been a number of bizarre unsolved crimes over the years, including an ax murder in 2006—seven people were found dismembered.”

“Up in the foothills, not in Sophie Trace,” she said. “And the victims were shot first. I read the case file. The sheriff, along with the FBI, ATF, and DEA determined it was drug related. The victims were tied to a Venezuelan drug cartel. It was likely a territorial issue.”

“Try telling that to my barber and his cronies. They’re convinced it was the work of red shadows—also last week’s seven-car pileup on I-40.”

Brill rolled her eyes. “We arrested a drunk driver at the scene with a blood alcohol level three times the legal limit. Come on, Kurt.

Those guys were pulling your leg. You're new in town, and they were having some fun."

"I don't think so. You should've heard them."

Brill, a grin tugging at her cheeks, got up and closed the blinds on the glass wall. "Well, you can tell the keepers of the legend down at the barbershop that I'll gladly get an arrest warrant for whichever red shadow or shadows poured a fifth of Jack Daniels down our drunk driver's throat. But I'll need names and addresses." She chortled into the receiver.

"I knew you'd find it entertaining. At least a little folklore will keep the case interesting."

"At the barbershop, maybe. Not here. The guilty party is already behind bars. Case closed."

"And now you're sitting around twiddling your thumbs?"

"I've got a stack of paperwork to keep me busy." Brill put the nail file back in the pencil cup. "Actually it's nice not to be stressed out for a change."

"I know. I'm just concerned this job isn't going to be challenging enough."

"Well, we both know I didn't pursue this position for the *challenge*." The words cut, and she knew it. Let him bleed a little.

There was a long pause, and she could hear Kurt's shallow breaths in the silence. Finally he said, "Maybe after dinner, we can go over to that big home-improvement center. You can choose the paint for your office." His tone was even and nondefensive.

"I'm leaning toward deep yellow." She let her gaze glide around the room. "Maybe a shade of mustard that won't make it look like a nursery."

“You pick the color, and I’ll do the painting. You’ll have a fresh new look on Monday morning. How’s that sound?”

It sounded great. But was she *using* Kurt by taking advantage of his willingness to please her, especially when she had no intention of letting him back into her heart or her bed? Probably. But wasn’t it better than shutting him out altogether? For Emily’s sake she could pretend to love him. But she could never forgive him—not ever.

“Brill, you still there?”

“Yeah, I’m here. Okay, sounds like a plan.” *But if you think being nice to me is going to change anything, think again.*