

## One Touch from Heaven

Lincoln Cafferky (2023)

Life can be such a paradoxical thing. It's both frustrating and beautiful, full of joy and sorrow. Everyone up here in the afterlife wishes they could go back just to say goodbye one more time. That is my sorrow and my longing. I wish I had time to say goodbye, but that was not my fate. Until I can find justice and discover my life's purpose, I feel I'm stuck in limbo and unable to enjoy the paradise which awaits me. With my grandma's guidance, surely I can bring some peace to my grieving family who are mourning my untimely and unjust death. My name is Hannah Steed, and I am dead.

Losing a child is the worst hand to be dealt to a parent in life. Yet here I stand, a grieving father burying my first-born daughter—darling Hannah. Only 11 years ago I was cradling my precious baby girl in my arms for the first time. Hannah blessed Julie and I when she chose us to be her parents. We were in awe of her, along with her younger brother and sister, for making our family complete. Life is cruel and unjust. Even as a senior constable in the police force, I couldn't protect my little angel. I'll never forgive the drunken, lunatic driver who cruelly took the life of our darling Hannah and sped off without a care. If it's the last thing I do I will avenge her.

Trying to bring normality back to the family after losing Hannah is a living nightmare. Grief cuts deep into the heart like a knife. Two weeks on, I still cannot fathom a life without her.

As I tuck the twins into bed and bravely respond to their questions about their big sister and her passing, a shiver suddenly overwhelms my body like an electric shock. I'm conscious of a ghostly presence swaddling my body in a tight embrace.

Alarmed, yet comforted, I sit quietly and know in my heart Hannah is near, and when we talk about her, we keep her memory and spirit alive.

Later, dosed with sleeping pills, I settle down for the night, closely cradled to my grieving wife, who has barely managed to get out of bed since Hannah's death. Memories haunt our minds as we drift off to sleep.

While the darkness of night still blankets the sky, I awake feeling desperate, confused, and gasping for breath. I scurry to the desk to write something down. I am startled by Julie's voice.

'What in God's name are you doing, Michael?'

'I must get this down before it disappears from my mind. She was right here, Julie, and she was telling me something, I just know it. It's numbers and letters ... but I'm not sure what it all means.'

Exhausted and cold, Julie replied, 'Come back to bed, honey. I don't need this right now.'

The heavenly morning sun burnt everything it touched. Hannah joyously declared, 'He heard me, Grandma, it worked, he heard me.'

'I told you so, dear. When they open their hearts and minds, and you make your presence felt, anything and everything is possible. But remain quiet, my dear—God does not like us interfering with what is meant to be.'

'I promise to be discreet, Gran, but I'm so close now, and Mum and Dad deserve peace and closure from my passing. I'm aching to tell them I love them. And that I'm sorry.'

Lights flashing and the deafening sound of sirens wailing are all just too much, and I pull away from the scene, en route to home. With two weeks left of bereavement light duties, I am happy to avoid heavy police work.

However, an overwhelming urge to turn the car takes over. I swerve, and barely miss a railing on the side of the road. Immediately, I am distracted by an old, beaten, blue Ford recklessly speeding down the adjacent highway and weaving through busy traffic. Curiously, I feel a connection to that car and the numberplate. Without hesitation, I log the plate into the car's MDT located on the dash and it comes up with a 'Joshua Morris' as the owner of the blue Ford. His record is clean and has no outstanding fines but the feeling deep inside the pit of my stomach tells me to follow. With Tyres screeching and sliding, I Lock the car into reverse, sound the siren and floor it down the highway. Radioing in for backup, I am quickly told there are no cars available. Reaching speeds well above the safe limit, I'm feeling frantic.

With my mind racing I realise I've lost him. Frustration hits home and the drive home is a mission.

Pulling into my driveway, I notice that Julie has arrived home early and is making a special dinner for the family to celebrate what would have been Hannah's twelfth birthday. Forcing a smile on my face, I greet my family with love and enthusiasm.

Back at the station the next day, I'm trying to block out all the rapid noise and movement as I stare again at the police file about Hannah's hit and run. Eyewitnesses at the scene reported that an old Ford hit Hannah. No new leads or information has been released and no numberplate was ever recorded.

I feel an overwhelming sense to follow up with the owner of the car I logged yesterday—Mr Joshua Morris. I am not supposed to interfere with Hannah's police investigation, but with no current leads or arrests in the pipeline, I decide to follow my gut instinct.

While grabbing my police jacket and car keys, I feel a rustle of paper in my pocket. Unfolding the crumbled square, I notice a jumble of numbers and letters scrawled over the page. It hits me—it is the same as the numberplate.

What is Hannah trying to tell me? With anger building in my stomach, I head out to seek answers.

'Knock, knock. It's the police.'

'Hello. Can I help you, officer?'

'I would like to speak to you about your vehicle.'

'Yeah, what about it?'

'Well, is it yours? Do you own that blue ford vehicle in the driveway there?'

'I picked it up like six days ago off Marketplace for around nine grand. I talked him down a couple of thousand dollars after I noticed the dent in the front bumper. The guy just let me drive away with it on the spot. Why, is there something wrong with it?'

‘Gran, they’re close. I can feel a sense of closure blanketing me. They need to be safe, but I just need tell them one more thing, and then hopefully I get to enjoy this heavenly paradise.’

‘All right, mate, I’m going to need you to bring yourself and your car to the station. It was involved in a hit-and-run on 46th Avenue.’

In the station, armed with new information, I jump on the computer and discover that the previous owner of the vehicle is named ‘Rob Waltz’. His list of crimes including DUI’s, dangerous driving, and car theft, left a bad taste in my mouth. His home address was just a couple of blocks away from where the hit-and-run occurred.

Suited up, and with backup on its way, we speed off to the location on Scott Street. Sweat dripping down my forehead and feeling nauseous I can barely keep focused on the road. This may be the killer of my daughter.

Pulling in, I notice faded blood stains on the driveway. All the lights are turned on—the perpetrator is home. With Hannah forefront in my mind and armed with the knowledge that this man could possibly be the suspect we are looking for; we surround the house and block all exits.

I bang on the door. ‘This is the police!’

‘What now, Gran?’

‘It’s time now, my darling, to watch over and protect our loved ones. They will know we are around by the little signs we can leave them.’

‘Thank you, Gran. I’m finally feeling peace about my fate. I promise to watch lovingly over my family for all their time. Until we meet again.’