

A RONAN  
MEZINI  
MYSTERY

A man in a light blue button-down shirt is shown from the chest up, facing slightly to the right. His torso is transparent, revealing a vibrant cityscape at night. The city features several tall skyscrapers with glowing windows, a bridge with streetlights, and a multi-lane highway with long-exposure light trails from cars in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The background is a dark, textured blue.

# DEADLINE ON ARRIVAL

G R E G   S T O N E



## PRAISE FOR *DEADLINE ON ARRIVAL*

“A thrilling whodunit! I found myself turning pages late into the night, right up to its highly satisfying and humdinger of an ending. Stone's exceptional gift for storytelling and razor-sharp dialogue will make you yearn for more—and the good news is you can immediately satisfy that craving by diving into his sequel, *Dangerous Inspiration*.”

Gina Vild

Author of *The Two Most Important Days*,  
*How to Find your Purpose and Live a Happier, Healthier Life*

“I loved this book! Detective Ronan Mezini uniquely perceives the world through crossed sensory pathways. The novel blends a gripping mystery with deep explorations of justice and truth, culminating in an enticing ending that left me longing for more.”

Louise Carter

Communications Executive, Sydney, Australia

“A masterwork: The type of mystery that makes headlines—with a detective so hard-boiled you can almost taste his thoughts.”

Scott Duke Kominers

Sarofim-Rock Professor, Harvard Business School

“Greg Stone has a talent for bringing to life the characters of his beloved Boston, and one is quickly drawn into the world of journalists and detectives who push forward this fast-paced novel. Detective Manzini is a smart and entertaining narrator, and the story—built around a series of unsolved murders—grips you and keeps you reading. Stone, a former Boston journalist, has a talent for the everyday details and language that take a reader into his world.”

Carlos Alvarenga

Author of *The Rules of Persuasion*

“*Deadline on Arrival*, Greg Stone's new detective thriller, is a page turner that had me reading it non-stop from start to finish. Stone smoothly develops his plot, sense of place and vivid characters. Stylishly written with all the twists and turns of a master of the genre.”

Sonia Goldenberg

Documentary filmmaker and *New York Times* columnist

## PRAISE FOR *DANGEROUS INSPIRATION*

“Imagine a bunch of strangers, a secret which binds them, then follow the colours of perception and you’ll have the sort of *Dangerous Inspiration* Agatha Christie would have created.”

Andrea Purgatori

Journalist and author of *Four Little Oysters*

“*Dangerous Inspiration* is a ‘whodunit’ that draws its roots from a different era, but takes place firmly in today’s world. In fact, it’s a lot like its wry and amusing protagonist. This book is smart, but not pedantic. It is observant, but it doesn’t drown you in details. And it works just as well with a beer as it does with a nice cup of tea. But don’t think that means that you’ll be putting it down.”

Steve Schlozman, MD

Author of *The Zombie Autopsies*

“Gripping from the outset ... a good old whodunnit!”

Jenna Ward

Professor at Coventry University

and Director of the Art of Management & Organization

“Ronan Mezini is a hard-boiled ex-detective who likes philosophy, Shakespeare, good red wine and complicated women. He’s trying to write a book at an artist’s retreat in Vermont but gets caught up in a series of murders committed during a wild storm. Mezini likes to talk to himself, and his often hilarious soliloquies keep this whodunit moving from beginning to end.”

F. James Pensiero

Deputy Managing Editor (Retired), *The Wall Street Journal*

“Avid mystery buffs (like myself) will instantly recognize the familiar (and beloved) tropes of *Dangerous Inspiration*, a classic homage to Christie and her ilk: a group of strangers summoned to an isolated location, their psychological unveiling during the ensuing mayhem, and the final denouement which reveals all. Within this construct, and with many winks to it throughout, Greg Stone has created a memorable group of quirky characters. Events quickly unfold in this action packed story with twists and turns leading to an unexpected resolution. I thoroughly enjoyed it!”

Ina Saltz

Professor Emeritus, The City College of New York

Author and Content Creator, LinkedIn Learning

# DEADLINE ON ARRIVAL

THE PREQUEL TO *DANGEROUS INSPIRATION*

*A Ronan Mezini Mystery*

GREG STONE

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SAMPLE CHAPTER

# 1

## BLOOD AND PRESSURE

*Present Day, May*

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON in the newsroom at *The Boston Observer*, the city's leading newspaper. Sitting at her desk in the investigative unit's office, Ollie Burns heard a forceful knock on her closed door. "Come see me," editor Paul Green shouted, as he walked away. His strident voice trailed behind him. She could see him receding through the small glass window in her door.

Ollie sighed, logged out of her computer and closed the door—standard procedure at the I-Desk to foil prying eyes. As she crossed the newsroom to Paul's office, she reacted to the curious glances of her coworkers in their cubicles with an eye roll. Though the number of writers and editors had dwindled because of the downturn in the journalism business, she still felt the impact of the stares from the remaining thirty or so colleagues.

It was 4:00 PM and reporters were frantically typing, struggling to generate accurate copy with enough flair to hold the readers' interest. Many of them were mumbling to themselves, trying to craft their stories

out loud. It's a challenge to write creatively while staying within the four walls of the facts. Not an easy task, yet reporters do it several times a day.

*It was a safe bet that Paul Green would be belligerent, and probably for no reason,* Ollie thought. She reminded herself that her team had won two Pulitzers in recent years. One for a series on sexual assaults by high school guidance counselors, and another about accidents with assault rifles at gun shows—one causing the death of a child.

Ollie was about 5' 9", with long limbs. She was all vertical lines, yet her face was as round as an apple. That, coupled with ginger hair and freckles radiated innocence, an impression undercut by expressionless blue eyes.

Though most of the reporters at *The Observer* avoided Paul, Ollie enjoyed jousting with him. He ruled by intimidation, and she respected that, to a point. As deadlines approached and tensions rose, his immediate reaction was to yell. At high volume. In between sneezes, that is. He was allergic to just about everything—dust, pollen, mold—and he had never heard of the elbow cough. He snorted into his palm instead and constantly sniffled. He always kept an abundant supply of tissues in his pockets, just in case.

He claimed he was willing to listen. But whenever reporters suggested a new idea or had the audacity to disagree with him, he'd shut them down immediately. He was a Republican in a liberal business and prided himself on trying to keep the news neutral, at least within the margins of his very subjective notion of objectivity.

Paul's favorite expressions were "C'mawn," meant as a motivator, or "How can you hate life?" on the rare occasions when he was satisfied. He had been, in his day, a good police reporter. It had been a long time since he ventured out onto the street to *create* a story from scratch. It was much easier to stay inside, bark at the staff, and scare everyone into submission.

*What is it now?* Ollie wondered, as she headed to his office. Her recent story about sleazy money managers brought in more comments than a supermarket selling rotten turkeys at Thanksgiving. *What does he expect? A daily blockbuster? That jerk never did an investigative piece in his life. Ease up, girl, she said to herself. You're overheating.*

"You rang?" Ollie asked flippantly as she stood at the threshold of Paul's office, which had a glass wall overlooking the newsroom.

“Close the door and sit down,” he commanded.

“Aye, aye, Chief,” she said as she complied.

“Don’t call me Chief. Burns, do you have any idea why I called you in?”

“To offer me a raise and an extra two weeks of vacation?”

“Not funny. I want to discuss my *expectations*. Do you know what distinguishes an I-Desk story from a normal one?”

“Something you like to read,” she joked with a calculated sneer. *Jousting was the best policy with a wild animal*, she thought.

“Uncovering substantial wrongdoing. That’s what makes the I-Desk special.” He repeated, “Uncovering substantial wrongdoing. That’s what wins awards.”

“And haven’t we done that?” Ollie asked, in as neutral a manner as possible.

“Singles, doubles, no home runs, lately.” He thrust his chin forward, as he always did whenever he fell into his default mode as a bully.

Ollie wasn’t having it. “Are you kidding me? What about the article about the corrupt brokers? Remember that guy who said, ‘You have to churn and burn to earn?’ He and his team were buying and selling stocks left and right on behalf of the clients, just to generate commissions—”

“That story affected very few people, and only rich ones at that. I want something that hits everybody.”

Ollie just stared at him, the best way to counter his aggression. She even tilted her head back so her chin would stick out, mimicking his posture.

“Why the fuck are you staring at me, Burns? Do you think that’s going to calm me down?”

She got up and started to walk out.

“Sit down,” he yelled. Then, realizing he had gone too far, he added, “Please.”

Again, she complied and sat down stiffly. “Don’t bark at me like a rabid dog, Paul.”

“I’m saying,” he said with enforced calm, “that the I-Desk is famous for sledgehammer stories. And you’re supposed to be the most aggressive reporter on the team. Just make sure the next story will be the main topic of conversation all around the city.”

“That’s like telling a chef to make the most delicious meal ever. Why are you talking to *me* about this, anyway? Why not Jan?” She was referring to her boss, Jan Watkins. “This is what I’d call a ‘skip-level’ review.”

“I’ll speak to her too, don’t worry,” he said as she turned away.

Walking back to her desk, Ollie could feel anger simmering, rattling the lid of her control. Thanks to the new “open” design in the newsroom, which the staff hated, the partitions on the cubicles were just 18 inches higher than the desks. Not much visual privacy, and even less noise protection. *No doubt this was some consultant’s idea, designed to encourage collaboration*, she thought.

Knowing that all eyes and ears were upon her, Ollie turned around, and went back into Paul’s office. She left the door open on purpose. He was typing with his glasses down on his nose. He looked over the top of the screen as if he had been expecting her. “Once this next story runs, you should give me a fucking raise, asshole,” she shouted.

“The I-Desk should be called ‘the Bureau of Great Expectations,’” she screamed, “with this ridiculous pressure. Why don’t you try doing some reporting sometime? You probably forgot what it’s like.”

When she finally stormed out, Paul smiled.

He was as short and chubby as Ollie was tall and thin, with puffy cheeks and a generous belly that he vainly tried to conceal under baggy shirts. He usually wore battered khakis or navy chinos that hung loosely on his legs. So-called relaxed fit, no doubt. He scurried around the newsroom on the balls of his feet, as if ready to pounce at any moment. At the same time, he swung his arms like pistons.

Back at her desk, Ollie channeled her frustration into polishing the newest article. She was struggling with the copy when her phone rang. Recognizing the number, she shook her head in frustration. *This is all I need*, she said to herself. Julie Hoover, the paper’s lawyer, the bitchy queen who always played the game of stump the reporter.

“Hi, Ollie, how ya doin’?”

“Fine,” Ollie said brusquely.

Julie had a nasal voice and a New York accent that felt like acid dripping onto the eardrums. On the surface, her diction could be confused with Boston’s defiled version of English. But the differences between a New England and a New York accent were clear to those who

knew. *Maybe you had to grow up in one area and live in the other to really learn the distinction*, Ollie thought.

For instance, Julie would pronounce the word *s-t-a-r* as “sta” in a way that rhymed with “ma” or “pa”, but the *Observer’s* readers would say “staaaah” while exhaling and making the “r” disappear altogether, as in “aaaah.”

In any case, Julie was the I-Desk’s nemesis because she flaunted her veto authority and delighted in humiliating reporters as she pored over their copy in search of potentially libelous statements.

“Did you really look at the rec-uds from 500 hip surgeries?” Julie asked. *Here we go*, Ollie said to herself. *Maybe I can distract her.*

“It was actually 478,” she said, trying to stay neutral.

“Then that’s a factual error,” Julie said, pronouncing the word “err-ah”. “You shoulda caught that.”

“We can easily change it to ‘nearly 500.’” *Good move, concede something*, Ollie thought.

“It’s still a factual err-ah,” Julie insisted. “It’s wrong.”

“I know that, Julie. We can easily change it.”

“I’m not feeling confident about ya’ reporting on this.”

“What other changes do you have?”

“How do you know that 67 patients got sick?”

“We’ve been over and over this,” Ollie said. “The advocates group gave us access to the medical records and we saw—”

“Do you have signed consent forms from the patients?” Julie asked.

“We’re using the records *anonymously*. But don’t worry. The patients signed over their rights to the advocacy group. You know that. Check the release forms I sent,” Ollie was increasingly exasperated but knew that showing it would be counterproductive.

“How do you know that the salesman was actually *in* so many operating rooms?”

“Because our sources told us he was like a fixture in the OR.” And so it went, for an hour or more. At the end of the conversation, Julie said “Okay,” and Ollie knew that was her version of saying “publish it.”

When Paul read the copy (and he was always the last one to see their work), he nodded. That was a ringing endorsement. “Make the next one better,” he said.

## ALSO BY THE AUTHOR

### DANGEROUS INSPIRATION

*Book Two in the Ronan Mezini Mysteries series*  
by Greg Stone

*Synesthesia alters detective-turned-novelist Ronan Mezini's perceptions. But can it help him find the killer?*





## Appearing in a news story can be fatal.

News becomes a dangerous business for everyone involved when the people profiled in the pages of The Boston Observer start filling the morgue. Spearheading the investigation, literate Detective Ronan Mezini has a rare condition called synesthesia that commingles his senses, turning sounds into colors.

Though he feels as if he's living in a movie with special effects, his skewed perceptions lead him to a startling link between the murders and a killer on a warped mission.

Before starting his communications company, Greg Stone spent a decade as a writer for Time Inc. in New York and as a TV reporter in Minneapolis, Boston, and on PBS. He graduated from Harvard College and Columbia Journalism School. Besides the two Ronan Mezini mysteries, he has published three business books. Greg lives just outside Boston with his family and the world's cutest rescue dog.

