



THE LOST CHAPTERS OF BEYOND JUSTICE

No matter how many books I write, there are usually a couple chapters that end up getting cut from a book. With *Beyond Justice*, it took me a little bit to find my footing with the best starting place for the novel. Originally, the novel started with the following two chapters, in part to set up the fact that Hayden McCarthy is really good at her job. In the courtroom she comes alive and takes risks that run counter to her nature anywhere else.

I also turned in *Beyond Justice* beyond chubby. That meant a few things had to be cut to make the story stronger. That included the first two chapters. While these set up a really interesting case and a risky move, they weren't pivotal to the actual action in *Beyond Justice*.

Still I like these chapters and want to share them with you. I hope you enjoy this sneak peek into Hayden McCarthy and what makes her the incredible person and attorney that she is.

Be sure to stop by my website (<http://caraputman.com>) to learn more about all of my books. And if you join my newsletter, you'll be the first to know about book news and fun.

Happy reading!

Cara Putman

Chapter One

Thursday, March 30

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Mr. Quinn’s future rests in your hands.” The high ceiling of the courtroom soared above Hayden McCarthy as she paused and deliberately moved her gaze to each juror. Good, she still held their attention. After a two-day trial loaded with computer and technical specifications, that wasn’t guaranteed.

She took a confident step closer to the jury box relishing the alive feeling that flowed through her in the somber setting.

“Look at your notes. Discuss the testimony. If you do, you will agree Jordan Quinn could not have been involved with the hacking scheme.” She paused, then turned and gestured to Jordan. He sat head slightly bowed, yet gaze meeting that of the jury just as she had coached him. In his polo, sports jacket, and khaki pants, he looked like someone who could walk out of the court, into a Starbucks and ten minutes later make day trades on a computer. “In fact, we demonstrated he was not. The entire case against him was purely circumstantial.”

“Carefully consider the evidence. Is it enough? Did the Commonwealth’s attorney demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Quinn engaged in computer trespass? Did he have the malicious intent? Did the Commonwealth prove he did anything?”

The question lingered in the room like the dust motes floating in the sunlight filtering through the oversized windows that filled the outside wall.

“No.” She shook her head. “All the evidence is circumstantial.” She turned toward Jordan where he sat behind the defense table.

The jury needed to look at Jordan and really see the man she’d introduced to them. The

family man trying so hard to make a way for his growing family without the benefit of skills. The man who worked a full-time, dead-end job while taking classes at a local campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. A man who couldn't afford an attorney and needed the court to appoint her to have representation. Yet this was also a man eager to meet his baby in a few short weeks – something he couldn't do if incarcerated. She noticed a couple jurors glance past Jordan to his wife Chelsea. There was no question she would have a child soon.

He shouldn't miss the birth.

Not like her dad had missed her college graduation.

Not when the evidence against Jordan was as circumstantial as the evidence against her dad.

“The Commonwealth didn't prove Mr. Quinn knew his computer's ISP address had been hijacked. And our expert explained how easy it is for someone with the right know-how and motivation to do exactly that. Did he have the skills to redirect traffic and steal bitcoins? No.”

“Objection.” Jonathan Pearl, the Commonwealth's attorney, a grizzled old attorney with more years' experience than she'd been alive, slowly stood and placed his hands on top of the prosecution's walnut table. Throughout the trial, the man had worn a serious expression, as if overwhelmed with the responsibility the state had thrust on his shoulders. Now he looked like he needed some prune juice.

He raised his bushy eyebrows. “Counsel is moving beyond what's allowed in closing.”

Hayden waited. Let the jury think about what she'd said a bit longer. The judge didn't need to hear from her. Not when he'd been on the bench twenty years and heard more cases than she'd try in a lifetime. Besides, the result didn't really matter. The jury had heard her spin on the evidence.

“I’ll overrule.” Judge David Weston settled back at his bench, his salt-and-pepper hair testifying to his experience while his girth reflected his years sitting behind the bench rather than out in the world. He met her gaze. “You may proceed with care, Ms. McCarthy.”

“Thank you.” Hayden turned back to the jury, shoulders relaxed, stance loose, smile calm, a stance she’d practiced until it felt natural. She pivoted slightly to block the jury’s view of Westwood and stepped closer to the jury box. They must believe she was secure in the knowledge they would make the right decision, even if she’d cross her fingers and pray throughout the time they deliberated.

“This case is fundamentally simple. The Commonwealth must prove each element of computer trespass for you to find Mr. Quinn guilty. It has failed to do that for one count, let alone all ten. Therefore, he must be acquitted.”

A juror shifted and another yawned. She bit back her own in response. Instead, she stepped closer.

“Your job is almost complete. Now I ask you to carefully weigh the evidence and make your decision based on the facts and whether those convince you beyond a reasonable doubt Mr. Quinn could have created, implemented, and profited from the elaborate scheme alleged by the prosecution. Has the Commonwealth met its burden?”

As she sank into her hard, wooden chair behind the austere table, Pearl bounded to his feet for rebuttal. When he finally sat down, Hayden was convinced he hadn’t done anything more than remind the jurors he liked to talk. A lot. Then the judge took almost an hour giving the jury the detailed instructions the attorneys had wrestled over the night before while tucked out of view in the judge’s paneled chambers.

After the bailiff escorted the jurors from the courtroom and the judge retired to his

chambers, Hayden allowed herself to take a deep breath and slipped her feet from the tight confines of her heels. She'd selected everything from her navy suit to the single strand of pearls and her simple yet elegant pumps to convey one simple message: *You can trust me. I won't lead you astray.*

In the four years she'd been an associate with Elliott & Johnson, it had worked more than it hadn't.

The boutique law firm's partners had noticed.

One or two had alluded to her making partner a year or two earlier than normal, something she'd welcome.

Then she could relax. She could feel more secure in a world where new law school graduates struggled to find good jobs, and those like her with one struggled to keep the jobs they had. There was always a crop of fresh, eager faces willing to work an insane number of hours and take the place of someone burned out on the dream.

Court appointed criminal cases like Jordan's didn't hurt her cause. But they didn't help either. Cases like this one reminded her why she went to law school while using her legal skills in a way that mattered.

"How did it go?" Jordan leaned toward her, voice low, as people filtered out of the courtroom. "Give it to me straight."

She paused at the concern that colored his eyes a darker shade of blue. How to give him encouragement without promising more than she could?

"We'll know when the jury comes back." That was her mantra. She could try the perfect case – impossible – and if the jury or judge didn't like her or her client, it wouldn't matter. "I'll wait here so you and Chelsea can talk."

“Thanks.”

It would be better to find a conference room and start refreshing on the case that would be tomorrow’s priority, but if she did, the sheriff’s deputy would take Jordan to a holding cell. He didn’t need that, and Chelsea should have this time with her husband. Just in case.

She shoved that last thought to the back of her mind. There was no room for doubt.

The Alexandria courtroom quieted as the last back-row observer followed the deputy prosecutor through the high paneled doors. It barely swished against the thick burgundy carpet as it closed. The room that had vibrated with activity a few minutes before, now felt abandoned as if it held its breath while it waited for the jury to deliberate and reach a verdict. Hayden’s gaze traveled across the rich mahogany woodwork that climbed the walls, anything to give her client and his wife a few minutes of privacy. As much as she could without leaving the defense table.

Her attention shifted back to the judge’s bench. The inside of the courtroom was as elegant and imposing as always, but where was the exhilaration of a job well done? She’d done everything right, but fatigue overwhelmed her as adrenaline ebbed.

Enough of that. She had plenty of work. She stacked her trial files and legal pads into a chaotic pile on the table, then shoved them into her briefcase. Elliott & Johnson had been patient while she’d toiled on the court-appointed case, but now it was time to generate billable hours for clients the firm cared about, the clients that earned her a partnership in record time. The pro bono hours only went so far with the partners. She grabbed a pen and the minutes ticked by as she drafted a to-do list to mark the transition back to her other assignments.

Each tick of the minute hand ricocheted against the paneled walls.

“It’s all right, baby.” Jordan’s soft baritone matched the soothing motion of his hand of Chelsea’s arm.

Hayden tried not to listen, but she glanced up and saw the couples' heads touching as they leaned into each other over the wooden bar that separated the gallery from the rest of the courtroom.

“What if you're wrong?” Chelsea's voice cracked and the woman shuddered.

“Then we do the next thing.”

Hayden blinked against the moisture that filled her eyes.

Wished she could close her ears to the tender words whispered back and forth.

She clutched her pen so tightly it began to bend. If she relaxed her tight control echoes of the past threatened to overwhelm her. Whispers grew louder in her mind that this innocent man could disappear into the system while she watched.

“We'll be okay.” Jordan stroked his wife's face with a feather touch, her dark curls mixing with his lighter hair.

Chelsea turned to Hayden eyes bright with moisture. “Did we do okay?” She leaned closer to the bar, hunched yet intent.

Hayden took a breath and forced a smile. “Jordan did everything I asked. Now it's up to the jury.”

Jordan rubbed his hands over his head in a quick, slashing motion. “I should have testified.”

Hayden shook her head. “I've seen a defendant's testimony backfire. It opens the door for the prosecution to ask questions, probe into your past in ways they can't otherwise. We had to keep you in front of the jurors, but off the stand.” This way his couple juvenile priors stayed out. He'd deserved the fresh start he'd made as an adult.

That hadn't kept the prosecution from introducing all kinds of circumstantial evidence

that his computer had been used in the hacking, his ISP used to launch the attack.

Hayden massaged her forehead, trying to push back the dull headache latched on her temples.

A door tucked behind the judge's raised oak bench opened. Hayden's vision tunneled as the bailiff reentered the state courtroom. The thin man resembled a scarecrow with his thin frame sheathed in navy blazer and pants while his blonde hair looked like it hadn't been combed in a week. He appeared out of place in the stately, imposing courtroom. Surely his appearance meant the judge and jury weren't far behind. An intake of breath that ended in a slow whistle returned her gaze to the man sitting next to her.

"They finally ready?"

The door at the rear of the courtroom opened, and Hayden straightened her back and squared her shoulders.

Chapter Two

Thursday, March 30

Hayden removed any wrinkle of concern from her face. As far as the jury should see, she believed they'd accepted her version of events and stood poised to free her client.

Slowly the jury filed through the door into the box, their home for two days. Hayden watched each closely, but only one met her gaze as she filed in front of the bench and then into the jury box. Even then it was a quick glance before the college student's gaze returned to her shoes. Hayden kept her expression unchanged even as all the studies that stated such a reaction wasn't good filtered through her mind.

She fixed her gaze on the judge's bench as the bailiff rose from his seat. One quick tug on his navy, off-the-rack blazer, and the man bellowed, "All rise."

Hayden nudged Jordan as she stood, smoothing her skirt that showed no wrinkles.

The judge moved to his chair like a tugboat used to parting the waters of any storm.

He settled behind the bench, then motioned to the gallery. "Be seated." Next he turned to the jury foreman, an average looking man who had looked uncomfortable from the very beginning of jury selection. "I understand the jury has reached a verdict?"

The foreman's shoulders rounded as he rose to his feet. "No, your honor."

What? Hayden gripped the table as Jordan turned to her.

"What does that mean, Hayden?" His words reached higher notes than usual.

“I’m not sure. Maybe a mistrial.” She kept her voice low, barely a whisper, and still Judge Weston turned to her with a frown.

“Something to say, counselor?”

“No, sir.”

“All right.” The judge turned back to the foreman. “So you do not have a verdict?”

“No, sir.”

Yet as the foreman said the single word, Hayden caught a ripple from a couple jurors. The single mom shifted in her seat, the schoolteacher glanced at the entrepreneur. They didn’t agree.

Hayden stood slowly. “Your honor, could we have a roll call? Record their votes?”

The Commonwealth’s attorney snorted and leaned back in his chair. “Remind me where you graduated from law school? I don’t want to hire anyone from there.”

Judge Weston removed his glasses and pinched the bridge of his bulbous nose. “Of course there will be a roll call.” He replaced his glasses and took turns glaring at Hayden and Mr. Weston. “If you’ll allow me to run my courtroom, Ms. McCarthy.”

“Yes sir.” She sank into the chair. If she was right, the vote would reveal the jury was closer to a verdict than the foreman indicated.

“Does the jury need more time?”

The jury had already taken hours. What more did they need? Poll the jury. That’s all the judge had to do.

“Your honor, there is nothing that can be done to reach a verdict.”

The judge turned to the second juror. “Do you believe you can reach a verdict?”

“Yes, sir.” The college student’s words were muted yet clear.

The foreman sputtered a protest. Yet one after another as the judge polled each juror, the rest disagreed with the foreman.

The schoolteacher leaned forward when it was her turn. “The only one who’s hung, your honor, is the foreman.” Several nodded agreement. “If I can get a classroom of rowdy 7 year-olds to cooperate, the twelve of us can certainly do our duty.”

“Thank you.” The judge motioned the attorneys forward. Jordan looked at Hayden with a panicked expression and all she could do was shrug as she hurried to the bench. “What would y’all like me to do? I can declare a mistrial due to the foreman’s instance there’s a hung jury. Or we can send them back to select a different foreman and see what happens when the alternate replaces him. Thoughts?”

Pearl puffed out his chest, and slipped his thumbs beneath the suspenders hooked to his suit pants. “Your Honor, this is highly irregular.”

“I know that, Jonathan. I don’t need pontification, just your decision.”

“I’d like to replace the foreman.” Hayden cleared her throat and put force behind her words. “We’ve already had the trial, there’s no need to go to the expense and delay of another.”

Mr. Weston shook his head. “Are you sure about that, little girl?”

Hayden forced her face into a smile. Let him underestimate her. He wouldn’t be the first. “It would be the best use of the court’s and state’s resources. My client’s wife is expecting to deliver their first child in the next several weeks. I know they would like to have this behind them.” She paused, prayed she made the right call. “Let’s see if the jury can select a new foreman.”

“Objections?” When Pearl had none, the judge jotted some notes on the legal pad in front of him. “All right. We’ll see what they can do.”

“Your honor, may my client remain in the courtroom with his wife?”

Pearl huffed, but said nothing. The judge must have taken it as acceptance, because he turned to the bailiff. “John, I’ll allow the defendant to continue to wait here so long as his counsel is in this room or the hallway immediately outside.”

“Yes, Judge.”

Hayden smiled. “Thank you.”

As Hayden returned to the defense table, the judge focused on the jury. “Ladies and gentleman, counsel have agreed to give you another opportunity. If you need to elect a new foreman, you are free to do so. Please report back your status in two hours. Are there any questions?” When there were none, he sent them back to the jury room. “We’ll see what they accomplish now.”

After the courtroom emptied, Hayden turned to Jordan. “The judge agreed to let you stay in here. I’m stepping into the hall to check in with the office.”

After alerting the deputy to where she’d be, Hayden left the courtroom and set her attaché case next to a bench even more uncomfortable than the ones in the courtroom. One glance at the hard surface, and she opted to pace in a corner as she ran through her messages. Her shoes tapped a steady beat against the stone floor as she called the paralegal she shared with four other associates at Elliott & Johnson. The firm might rake in the big verdicts, but the largesse didn’t flow to staff for the young attorneys.

“Do you have a verdict?” Leigh’s voice was low and steady, much like her personality. The perfect person to nanny young attorneys.

“Not yet.” Hayden sighed and sank onto a bench. She leaned her head against the cool, stone wall. “That’s why I’m still here.”

“Your calendar is clear through today, but Mr. Campbell wanted me to make sure you’d attend tomorrow morning’s cases and coffee.”

Hayden groaned. “Any idea why?”

“Nothing from the office scuttlebutt. Sounds like the regular meeting. You’ll be here?”

“I hope so.” A beep interrupted the call, and Hayden glanced at the screen. Her mom? “I’ve got another call coming in. See you in the morning.” She pushed a button and waited for the beep. Did she have the energy for this call? “Mom? Is everything okay?”

“I wasn’t sure I’d get through with your trial. Is it over?”

“Not yet. We’re waiting for the jury.” The silence felt heavy with the memories of another time they’d waited together for a jury to return with its verdict. A time when her mother hadn’t supported her father, not with the unwavering belief Hayden still had in him.

“Your father asked me to call. He hasn’t heard from you.” Her mom sighed, a sound heavy with meaning. In the background a teakettle whistled its shrill tune.

“You talked to Dad?”

“Yes. You aren’t the only one who cares about him.”

Hayden rubbed her forehead as she bit back a protest. “I’ve had this trial.”

“I know.”

Their five-minute a week touch base call kept her mom current on key details. Hayden envied other women their wonderful relationships with their mothers. It just hadn’t happened for her.

“I explained that to your farther, but he’s had a rough week. You know how it is.”

Not really. As much as she wanted to see her father freed, she hated visiting him in jail. Despised seeing the once proud CFO of a major company trapped and caged. It was easier to

claim she was too busy. First law school, now a demanding job. He said he understood. As the silence stretched, she cleared her throat. “What does he need?”

“His parole hearing got moved up a year thanks to some classes he took. He needs your help to make sure he’s released.”

The word settled like a weight on her shoulders highlighting the times she’d meant to investigate her father’s case, look for ways to exonerate him. But she never found the time. She needed to correct that before she went to see him. “Mom...” Words failed her.

“Call him. Update him on your life. Let him know you remember him.”

The courtroom door opened, and the bailiff stuck his head out. “We have a verdict.”

Hayden pasted a smile in place. “Thank you.” She grabbed her case from the bench.

“Look, Mom, the jury just came back. I’ve got to get in the courtroom.”

“Think about it.”

“I will. I promise.” As she hung up, she wanted to believe justice had won this time, but sour memories from her father’s trial pushed against her hopes.

As soon as she settled at the defense table, the jury filed into place. This time the schoolteacher took the role of forewoman.

Judge Weston waved those few waiting in the courtroom to remain seated as he marched to his bench. “Do we have a verdict?”

The schoolteacher cleared her throat and straightened her floral cardigan as she stood.

“We do.”

“And your verdict?”

“Not guilty on all counts.” Nothing changed as the judge walked her through the required statements and formalities.

The moment it was over, Chelsea squealed behind her and lunged toward Jordan. He turned toward Hayden, jaw slack and eyes wide. “We did it?”

Hayden nodded, tears filming her vision. “We did.”

Judge Weston banged his gavel against the bench. “I will have order.”

Hayden turned so she could grab Chelsea’s hand. She squeezed it, mouthed “Congratulations,” and then motioned her to sit.

Bouncing slightly against the rough bench, Chelsea complied. A wide smile stretched her cheeks and her eyes danced with light. “He’s coming home!”

Judge Weston banged his gavel again, but the skin around his eyes crimped. “Mr. Quinn, the deputy will take you back to process your release.”

Hayden barely heard more, as the judge’s voice morphed into one like Charlie Brown’s teacher. All the long nights and extra hours poured into this case’s trial preparation had paid off. She slowly exhaled and then bit her lip to keep the smile from exploding onto her face. As far as the judge, jury, and prosecutor should know, this was the outcome she had expected from the very moment she walked in the courtroom.

“Thank you, Hayden.” Jordan’s voice wavered as the deputy moved to his side.

For that one moment she knew her efforts had been enough. And now an accused man would walk into freedom.