

The First Two Pages: *The Blood Runs Cold*

By Catherine Maiorisi (Bella Books)

In every novel, the job of the first sentence, the first paragraph and, yes, the first two pages is to draw the reader into the story and convince her to keep reading. This is not easy. However, it is even more difficult when the book is part of a series and the author has to seduce two very different readers: those who have read the first book and are familiar with the characters and their world and those who come to the book cold.

Since *The Blood Runs Cold* is the second book in the NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli Mystery series, my goal was to quickly introduce Corelli, her relationship with Parker, her partner, and the circumstances of the book to new readers without doing a backstory dump that would bore both kinds of readers.

Thus, in the first two sentences of the first paragraph, readers learn that the main character is a female detective in New York City who is being ostracized. In addition to conveying all that backstory, the first sentence raises a story question for new readers. Why is Corelli being ostracized?

Being ostracized was getting old fast. At least for NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli.

The press is a significant presence in this book and the third sentence lets readers know that what happens is interesting enough that they usually show up for it. Another story question is raised. Why isn't the press there today?

And maybe for the press, since they hadn't shown up this morning.

The fourth sentence tells readers that though Corelli thinks it's old hat and the press had lost interest, her colleagues continue to ostracize her.

But from her vantage point in a car a block away from the station house, it was clear her colleagues were still in the game.

In the next four paragraphs, I introduce Detective P.J. Parker, Corelli's partner, and show the contentious nature of Corelli's relationship with Parker who is supposed to watch Corelli's back while Corelli trains her as a homicide detective. Corelli doesn't think she needs a bodyguard, but without Parker she's confined to desk duty. Parker doesn't want to work with the most hated detective in the department but working with Corelli is her only chance at homicide. I also introduce the idea of the gauntlet, which is a part of the ostracism.

She hadn't missed this while Parker was away. And she wouldn't miss being tied to her desk now that Parker was back. "I've been going in alone for the last two weeks, Parker. No

need to subject yourself to the gauntlet. You can follow later when it's safer."

"Damn you, Corelli, stop playing the martyr." Detective P.J. Parker made no attempt to hide her anger. "Watkins told me the captain escorted you in while I was away so there was no gauntlet. But I'm back and so is the gauntlet. And just because they haven't attempted to kill you up to now, doesn't mean they won't try today. So don't even think about going into that crowd or anywhere else without me."

"Kissin' my ass won't change my decision, Parker."

"Treating me like the enemy won't change mine. Besides, I'm anxious to get inside where I assume you'll let me in on your decision about my future."

The last sentence of the previous paragraph raises a story question:

what decision is Corelli making about Parker's future?

Now that the reader has seen their relationship in action, I attempt, in the next paragraph, to give the reader insight into Corelli's humanity and to make her more sympathetic than she might seem when dumping her anger on Parker. I also introduce the idea of Corelli's PTSD, the result of two tours in Iraq, a tour in Afghanistan where she watched her life-partner die, and three months undercover investigating a ring of dirty cops.

Good. Parker isn't taking my shit. That thought caught Corelli by surprise. She couldn't remember ever treating anyone the way she'd treated Parker on the Winter case. Nasty wasn't her style, yet the words slipped out before she could stop them. Parker thought she had PTSD. Could she be right?

In the last paragraphs of the first two pages we see Corelli's colleagues forming the gauntlet we learned about earlier.

As they approached, the crowd shuffled into two rows of uniforms back to back forming a gauntlet through which they had to pass to get to the station house.

And then we learn more about Corelli, how she feels about being ostracized. We also learn that while she doesn't like it, she accepts responsibility for putting herself in this situation. Hopefully readers will see her strength and her bravery.

These were her colleagues. She used to trust them to watch her back. Now she had to trust Parker to protect her from them. And, this daily ritual of humiliation had replaced their respect. She hated it, but she'd known the consequences of going undercover to expose the ring of dirty cops. Each time she approached the mouth of the funnel, she remembered the video she'd seen of a snake swallowing a cow— whole. And each time she reminded herself that unlike the cow, she came out the other end a little battered but alive. She'd faced worse things in her life. And survived.

Finally, we walk the gauntlet with Corelli and Parker. Here I use the extreme heat, the smells, the physical abuse, and the feeling of suffocating to have the reader experience the claustrophobia of the gauntlet, identify with Corelli and Parker, and continue reading.

Parker linked arms with Corelli and they plunged into the belly of the beast, elbowing the line to make space to walk side by side. With the temperature and the humidity both already in the nineties, the stench of sweating bodies, cloying colognes, scented soap, and stale booze was oppressive. And sickening. Although it would serve them right if she vomited all over them, she put a handkerchief over her nose. She stumbled over a leg. Parker steadied her. Corelli kicked the offender. Elbows smacked her arm, her stomach, her back. Only her quick

reflexes protected her face and her eyes. She punched to the right, felt Parker punching to the left. Sweat stung her eyes and lips. She gasped for air as the two lines pressed closer, intensifying the heat.

I hope I've accomplished everything I set out to do because I'm proud of this second NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli Mystery and I want readers of *A Matter of Blood* and new readers to enjoy *The Blood Runs Cold*. If you decide to give it a try, I'd love to hear what you think.

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Catherine Maiorisi lives in New York City and often writes under the watchful eye of Edgar Allan Poe in Edgar's Café near the apartment. *A Matter of Blood* and *The Blood Runs Cold* are the first two books in Catherine's series featuring NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli and her reluctant partner, Detective P.J. Parker. While fighting each other, these two tough women confront the blue wall, thwart threats to Corelli and her family, battle the media, and solve high profile murders. Three of Catherine's mystery short stories have been published in the *Murder New York Style* anthologies—"Love, Secrets, and Lies" in *Where Crime Never Sleeps*, "Murder Italian Style" in *Family Matters* and "Justice for All" in *Fresh Slices*. Catherine has also published two full-length romances: *Matters of the Heart* and *No One But You*. Her romance short stories include a standalone ebook, *Come as You Want to Be*, and stories in two anthologies: "All's Well that Ends Well" in *Conference Call* and "You Will See a Stranger" in *Happily Ever After*. Her third romance, *Ready for Love*, will be published December 2019. Catherine is president of the New York Chapter of Sisters in Crime. She is also a member of Mystery Writers of America, The Golden Crown Literary Society, Romance Writers of America, the New York Chapter of Romance Writers of America and the Authors Guild. Visit Catherine at www.catherinemaiorisi.com.