

# FOOL ME TWICE

A MIKE STONEMAN SHORT STORY

KEVIN G. CHAPMAN

# **Fool Me Twice**

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**Kevin G. Chapman**

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*For Sharon*

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Detective Mike Stoneman was born as a character in a short story called “Fool Me Twice.” I wrote the story as my entry into a writing contest sponsored by the New Jersey Corporate Counsel Association, of which I am a member. The contest required the story to have a “legal” theme, including crime, and it had a 5000-word length limit. The tight word limit required me to trim down the original draft from more than 8000 words! This story is presented here at the length in which it appeared in the newsletter of the NJCCA after it won first prize in the competition, except that I have changed the dates to make the timeline consistent with the plot of *Righteous Assassin* (Mike Stoneman Thriller #1).

To keep reading the Mike Stoneman Thriller series, you can purchase *Righteous Assassin* [HERE](#). Visit me on my website at [www.KevinGChapman.com](http://www.KevinGChapman.com)

# Fool Me Twice

## (A Mike Stoneman Short Story)

### Part 1

The body was still wet when Mike Stoneman bent down to examine the dried blood clotted into the dead man's thick black hair. There was a deep gash in the scalp, and a small lump, which might have been bigger if he hadn't drowned in the swimming pool immediately after hitting his head. A splash of blood still clung to the blue concrete lip of the pool – probably where his head made contact. The deck around the pool was teeming now with uniformed police, the departing EMT crew, and at least one female journalist, who was flirting with one of the EMTs. Mike's thought was, "Who let all these people into my crime scene?"

"Officer!" Mike barked at the closest uniform. "Get these people back off the pool deck. I don't want any more shoes trampling my evidence." And when the officer hesitated, he shouted, "Now, officer! Please." He had to remind himself to say please.

"Is the M.E. here yet?" he inquired of his partner, Dave Carr, who had been elevated to Detective status only a month earlier.

"I don't think so, Mike," he responded, then quickly added, "but I'll go check" when he saw Stoneman's unhappy glare. He hurried into the house, which was crowded with neighbors, officers, reporters, and a mortician who had already arrived to

claim the body. Mike took a tour around the expansive back yard, then went into the house in search of the sole witness to the night's events.

"Is that the daughter," Mike asked Dave casually, motioning to the crowd around a plush velvet sofa on one side of the living room.

"Oh, yeah," Dave leered in response as he whipped out a small notebook. "Miss Susan Fenton. Age sixteen. Only child of Stuart and Eleanor Fenton. Mother died a little over a year ago. Ovarian Cancer. Very nasty. Father works – worked – on Wall Street. Long hours. The neighbors say the kid is pretty wild – lots of parties here in the house. She's seeing a shrink since her mother died. Pretty messed up, in other words – even before tonight."

Mike approached the sofa and told the female officer who had been keeping the assembled riff-raff away that he would take it from here. He dropped to one knee so that he was on eye-level with the daughter and introduced himself. Mike was gentle with the girl, whose red puffy eyes showed all the signs of lingering tears. She had a scuff mark and a bruise on her right cheek, and a gash under her left eye that had been patched with a Band-Aid. Mike recalled the large gold and diamond ring on the hand of the dead man by the pool. That gash could easily have been made by a backhand slap. But Mike didn't want to get ahead of himself.

Susan Fenton, through tears and choked breaths, told Mike that her father was seldom at home, particularly since her mother's death. When he *was* home, he drank a lot, and got angry with his daughter for, as she put it, "Everything." He wasn't happy that she dropped out of her expensive private school in Manhattan, or that she had friends over to the house when he wasn't home. She volunteered that she had been



seeing a psychiatrist since her mother's death and that she was on anti-depressant medication. "I guess I may need to up the dosage, huh?" she said with a grim smile. She looked into Mike's eyes at that point, hers were moist and bloodshot. Mike Stoneman was a hard ass, but it was easy to melt a little looking at this pretty and pathetic orphan.

Under gentle questioning, she described her evening. She had been out at a party. Her father was home when she arrived – already drunk and holding a tumbler of scotch. He yelled at her, called her a "whore" and a "little tramp," and told her that she would never be half the woman her mother was. Susan had responded by telling her father to go screw himself, which made Mike smile – the girl had sass. At that point, her father grabbed her and told her to go to her room. She refused and told him to go to Hell. He slapped her across the face with the open palm of his right hand. Mike noted the red blotch on her cheek as the girl sniffed back tears. After he slapped her, she kicked him in the nuts. A good strategy for getting away from an attacker in most cases, Mike thought, but also a good way to piss somebody off if you can't immediately get away.

"What happened next?" Mike asked in as soothing and calm a voice as he could muster.

"I ran out the back door, toward the pool." Susan turned her head to look in that direction, reliving the moments. "He came after me. He was yelling. Crazy. He caught me by the hair and spun me around, then hit me again with the back of his hand." She stroked her Band-Aid with a slender finger as a single tear trickled down from the corner of her eye. "I fell by the corner of the pool and he came at me. He said he was going to kill me . . . yelled that I was worthless. When he came at me, I tried to kick him in the balls again, but I missed and caught his leg instead. He lost his balance and fell over me,

into the pool.” She paused, gasping for breath. Mike waited patiently in silence. “I ran back into the house to call 9-1-1.”

Mike smiled at her reassuringly. “Did you speak with the 9-1-1 operator?”

“Yes. I was starting to panic, but then I realized that I didn’t hear anything – no splashing or yelling or anything. I looked out toward the pool and saw him.” She closed her eyes. “Floating. He wasn’t moving at all.”

Mike reached out and patted her hand. “That’s fine, dear. Thank you. I think that’s all I need for tonight. I might need to speak to you again, though.”

“Let’s go,” he snapped at Dave. It was late. “We’ll get the 9-1-1 transcript tomorrow and check with the Medical Examiner. No point hanging around. Nothing to see here.”

\* \* \*

Three days later, Mike was back at the Fenton house to follow up. He had received the M.E.’s report and the toxicology. Cause of death was drowning. The victim was probably unconscious from the blow to the head when he hit the water. The blood work showed high alcohol content, along with Sudafed, Lipitor, and a prescription drug called Monoclodimide that Mike had never heard of. The Assistant M.E. said it was an anti-depressant.

In the medicine cabinet in the master bedroom Mike found the Sudafed, the Lipitor, and a bottle labeled Calmix, with the drug Monoclodimide listed in tiny letters under the brand name. The prescription was made out to Susan Fenton. Mike mumbled to himself, “Looks like the father decided to borrow a pill.” The M.E.’s report said the anti-depressant would have had a bad interaction with alcohol. “Pretty damned bad,” Mike

thought.

He walked the scene again, retracing the steps of the daughter and the father, according to the girl's story. He noted the place where the father's head hit the side of the pool and calculated where the daughter could have been when the guy fell over her, hit his head, and landed in the water. It checked out. It was all pretty routine. Tragic, but routine.

## **Part 2**

Eight years later, Mike had become a Senior Detective. He turned down the opportunity to apply for a promotion. He liked working cases. He did allow his Captain to talk him into teaching new detectives about crime scene protocol and interrogation technique. He found that he really liked teaching, and enjoyed it when his former students called him for advice on their cases.

Over the years, Mike had made mental notes whenever he saw her name in the papers, or heard something on the TV news. Sue Fenton, poor little orphaned daughter of Wall Street mogul Stuart Fenton, arrested for drug possession. Sue Fenton sex tape revealed. Sue Fenton to appear on an MTV reality show. Sue Fenton dating baseball star Alex Ramirez. She was a tabloid dream. Pretty, tall, and not shy about showing off her body. She lived the bright lights life. She had a boatload of money, including the proceeds of a huge life insurance policy on her father. Mike wondered if somewhere under all that makeup was the scared girl he remembered on the sofa.

He was not shocked when he found himself kneeling down next to that same swimming pool; examining another stiff. This guy was an ex-boyfriend, or so the uniforms reported.

Dirk Stegman, a punk-rocker with a long rap sheet. Drug possession, assault, disorderly conduct, and drunk driving. A woman in London had a restraining order against him. A real winner.

This time Sue was not crying on the sofa. When Mike asked to speak with her, she sauntered down the long central stairway wearing a tight black cocktail dress with spaghetti straps that showed off her slender arms and shoulders as well as her knock-out breasts, which she had felt compelled to surgically enhance a few years earlier. When she entered a room, every eye in the place followed her – the women included. She glided toward Mike and threw her arms around his neck, pressing against him and bursting into tears. Mike was caught by surprise, but recovered and guided her to a chair. She was still crying, but starting to compose herself. “Oh, officer – I remember you from the night my father died. I can’t believe it’s happening again.”

“It’s Detective, actually,” Mike corrected gently. “I remember that night as well, Miss Fenton.”

“Oh, Sue, please,” she gurgled, “nobody calls me Miss Fenton.”

“OK, Sue. That’s fine. I’m Mike. Why don’t you tell me what happened tonight.”

Sue calmly narrated the earlier events. She had been out with friends in Manhattan. It was after 2:00 a.m. when she arrived home. She was alone in the house when Dirk started banging on the door. They had been an item a year before, but she had dumped him. He had not taken “no” for an answer and pursued her on and off since the breakup. He hit her a few times when they were together, which was why she left him, although there were plenty of other good reasons. She had endured violence at the hand of her father and she was not

about to take it from a boyfriend.

Dirk was in New York making a record and saw her at a nightclub. She blew him off. Mike made a mental note to check that story with the other people in her party at the club. Dirk showed up at her house and pleaded with her to take him back. She let him inside, but the more she rebuffed him, the more insistent he became. She asked him to leave, and he grabbed her and threw her on the sofa. She threw an ashtray at him, the broken shards of which were scattered against a nearby wall. He jumped on top of her and tried to kiss her, then tried to force himself on her. He pulled up her dress, but she put her knee into his groin and squirmed away.

He chased her to the kitchen where she threw a bowl at him to slow him down while she ran to a closet where she kept a baseball bat. She told him to leave but he came at her. She took a swing, but missed. He backed away, through the back door toward the pool, then lunged at her. She swung again – this time connecting solidly with his head. She dropped the bat when he fell into the pool. She went back to the kitchen and called 9-1-1.

Mike walked around the house after that, noting the Pyrex salad bowl lying on the kitchen floor. The baseball bat, an Alex Ramirez model, was on the pool deck, an ugly blood stain on the trademark. He supervised the officers who were collecting and tagging the evidence, while his gaze drifted back to Sue. A few reporters had arrived and she was holding court; smiling for the cameras. He found that he could not take his eyes off her. Eventually there was nothing more to see and he closed his book and called it a night.

Once again, he arrived back at the house three days later, having reviewed the Medical Examiner's report and the toxicology on Dirk Stegman. Sue met him at the door wearing pink low-rise sweat pants and a white t-shirt that dangled from her breasts, exposing her diamond and gold belly ring as well as the outline of her nipples. She also sported a pink sweat band framing her black ponytail. Beads of sweat danced around the hollow of her neck and on her cheeks. It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to figure that she had been working out, and looking good doing it.

She invited him into the kitchen and offered him water as she poured a tall glass for herself. He declined. He was there to tie up loose ends, and he was not happy that there were still loose ends. He was about to begin the interrogation when Sue slumped against the marble counter and started crying. Mike took a few steps toward her and she fell into his arms, still sobbing lightly.

"My life is so messed up, Mike. I'm a screw-up." She buried her head against Mike's chest. He could feel the gentle pressure of her breasts through his suit jacket.

"Now, Ms. Fenton, you have had some bad breaks, but I don't think you are a screw-up." He patted her back, feeling the moisture of her sweat on the thin fabric.

Sue looked up and smiled, wiping a tear from her eye. "Oh, come on, Mike, I told you to call me Sue." She leaned back against the counter, looking up at him through dark, wet eyes. "All the men in my life are creeps. I can't seem to hook up with anyone who's not a drug addict or a criminal. All the nice guys like you are taken."

"I'm actually not taken," Mike replied awkwardly. "Not that I'm suggesting anything."

Sue smiled again and laughed, which gave Mike a twinge in

his chest. “Why not? A big strong cop like you? You never got married?”

“Nope. I don’t think it’s fair to a woman to put up with me, or my job.” Mike scolded himself internally for engaging in such a personal conversation with a witness. He was violating several of his own rules of interrogation.

Sue reverse-dipped herself up onto the counter top, her legs dangling down into space, but her face now closer to Mike’s eye level. “That’s better,” she cooed. “Maybe we’re not so different, you and me. We’re both lonely and don’t want to burden anyone with all the crap in our lives.” She dropped her chin toward her chest, and Mike took a step toward her, wondering if she was going to cry again. As he did, she looked up, slid her arms around his neck, and kissed him hard on the mouth. He was surprised and pulled back, but she had a good grip and slid forward along the counter top as he moved away, maintaining her lip lock.

She came up for air and Mike looked down at her – confused, surprised, and also aroused. As Mike hesitated, Sue took control of the situation. She brought up her legs, wrapped them around his waist, and launched herself off the counter top. Mike instinctively put his arms around her back, to keep her from falling, although she had a firm grip and wasn’t going anywhere. She kissed him firmly, sliding her tongue toward his and moaning softly. When she felt him returning her kisses and felt his hand pressing against the bare skin of her lower back, she released her legs, slithered down to a standing position, and looked up into Mike’s eyes. Then she unwrapped her arms from around his neck, and in a movement that surprised Mike with its quickness, pulled her sweaty t-shirt over her head, exposing her perfect breasts and milky skin, still glistening from her workout. She then slid her arms back

around Mike's neck and pulled him down toward her.

\* \* \*

"What did she say about the drugs?" Scott Cooper, Mike's current junior partner inquired when Mike sat down at his desk three hours later.

"She said she didn't know. Any word from the dead guy's family about whether he was on any anti-depressants?"

"No, but none of them were close enough to him to even know. He had a pharmacy in his hotel room – must have been a dozen different prescription bottles, along with heroin, cocaine, and pot. The guy was a junkie. You saw the toxicology – it's amazing he was able to walk into that house under his own power."

"Yeah. You're right. It's not worth worrying about."

"I can see what the guy saw in her, though. What a babe! Rich and hotter than a pistol. I would certainly comfort her in her time of need, if you know what I mean." Scott shot Mike a leering smile.

"Sure," Mike replied softly. "I know what you mean."

### **Part 3 –**

By 2018, Mike was the longest serving Detective in the City. He was still teaching his classes on investigation and interrogation, and he was a mentor to half the detectives on the force, although he had a reputation as a hard-ass instructor – predictably referred to as the Stone Man. He liked that. The Hispanic officers called him "Culo de la Piedra" (the Ass of Stone). He liked that, too. He was an expert witness



when the department needed someone to explain crime scene issues to a jury in a high-profile trial. He was called in on the toughest cases to give his opinions and advice.

Sue Fenton was never a part of his life. He never called. She never did either. But he still followed her notices in the tabloids. She had been in the news frequently in the past three months. So, Mike was not entirely surprised when Ted MacMillan slipped into the back of the classroom when Mike was teaching crime scene protocol to a new group of Detectives. Ted had taken every class Mike taught, including interrogation technique and a seminar on corruption and bribery. Mike figured that Ted was there about the death of Theodore Wainwright – shipping tycoon, philanthropist, and husband of one Susan Fenton Wainwright. Mike had been following the story. He wondered whether Sue and Theo ever made love on the kitchen counter. When class broke up, Ted stayed behind and moved up to a desk in the front row.

“Hi, Mike.”

“Good evening, Detective MacMillan.”

“Actually, it’s Assistant District Attorney MacMillan now.” Ted smiled proudly, hoping for a glimmer of congratulations from his old teacher and mentor.

“Well, that’s quite a jump, Ted.” Mike was genuinely happy for his student. “Law school at night?”

“Yep. Convenient, and cheap.”

Mike chuckled. “You liking it?”

“Sure – I’m liking it a lot, except that it sometimes put me at odds with some of my old colleagues on the force.”

“Aren’t we all on the same team?”

“Sure, Mike. Most of the time.” Ted looked down at the desk as he summoned the courage to continue the interview.

“I find that I’m encountering a few loose ends in my investigation concerning the death in a case you might have heard about – Theodore Wainwright.”

Mike had no reaction. “Anything I can help with?”

“Well, that’s the thing. I think you can, but not by giving me advice; by filling in a few blanks for me.”

“I’ll do what I can,” Mike replied smoothly.

“You probably heard that Wainwright died in a car crash out on Long Island. He was having some problems with his wife – a lady you may remember as Susan Fenton.” He paused, waiting for a reaction. He didn’t get any. “I ran Mrs. Fenton Wainwright through the computer and she came up as a witness in two prior deaths. I pulled the files for both cases. They were pretty clean. Thorough reports, for the most part.”

“Do you have any reason to suspect foul play in Mr. Wainwright’s death?”

“Well, the reason that I’m involved is that we have filed charges against Mrs. Wainwright. There’s evidence that she and the deceased had a series of arguments in the weeks leading up to the car crash. She had run up substantial charges on her credit cards. She also may have been unfaithful to him. He threatened to divorce her, and since she signed a pre-nup, that would leave her with nothing. So, as you can imagine, she was the primary suspect.”

“That makes sense. What evidence implicates her?”

“It is mostly circumstantial. He was an excellent driver and had traversed that road a hundred times. He was well known for not drinking – only wine and only in moderation with meals. The road was dry and clear of other cars. There were no skid marks or indication that he tried to stop before crashing through a guard rail and plunging down an embankment. This suggests that he probably lost

consciousness before he went off the road.”

“Heart attack?” Mike suggested.

“Nope. He was in tip top shape. The M.E. found no evidence of disease, stroke, or other organic explanation.”

“What did the toxicology show?” Mike inquired.

“Low levels of alcohol, consistent with a few glasses of wine, a blood pressure medication that he was known to be taking, and one other substance that was a little bit odd.”

“Monoclodimide?” Mike offered.

“Bingo.”

Mike sat down in a desk next to Ted. “And you found the file from the death of her father, and noted that the toxicology report on his body showed the same drug.”

“Yes. Quite a coincidence, since the drug is rarely prescribed.”

“The daughter, Sue, was taking it. Prescribed by her shrink for her depression following the death of her mother. Cancer.”

“Yes, I saw that. It makes some sense there – that the father might have taken one of the daughter’s pills.”

“We found the bottle with the prescription in the medicine cabinet in the father’s bathroom.”

“You remember that?”

“Yeah, I remember.”

“Well,” Ted rose from behind the half-desk and walked toward the blackboard, “the thing is, we looked at the file for the death of the girl’s boyfriend, just to see whether there was anything in that toxicology report.”

“You mean, to see whether there was any Monoclodimide in his system at the time of his death?” Mike offered.

“Right,” Ted turned to face Mike. “I saw that there was no mention of that in the report on the boyfriend’s death. I

figured that if there were, it would be a significant coincidence that you would have noted.”

Mike sat in silence for a full minute. Ted stood still and said nothing. “That’s good,” Mike said. “Never fill the silence. Let the witness break the gridlock and volunteer the next point. Good technique.”

“I learned from the best.” Ted smiled. “The problem is that the toxicology report is missing from the case file.”

“Well, it is an old file, Ted. Things get lost or misplaced over the years. That’s not a shocker.”

“True,” Ted agreed, and then paused. He turned back around toward the blackboard, reaching out to rub off a smudge of chalk. Another of Stoneman’s rules of interrogation was to always look the witness in the eye when you ask a question. You can learn a lot from someone’s eyes. This time, Ted was violating the rule on purpose. “I was wondering if you might have any memory of what was in that tox report?”

Stoneman began speaking almost immediately, not needing to think very hard about the answer. “Blood alcohol level was .024, over double the legal driving limit. He also had traces of opiates, cocaine, methaqualone, oxycodone, and Monoclodimide.”

Ted closed his eyes, then turned around. Now he wanted to see Mike’s face. “You know, I would not have doubted you if you said that you couldn’t remember the details of a toxicology report you read one time more than ten years ago.”

Mike took in a deep breath, and then blew it out slowly, his shoulders slumping with the exhale, as if he were blowing the weight of the world away. “Well, I thought, under the circumstances, it might be important.”

“It would be, if we had that tox report.”

“Have you considered the possibility that the tox report

might have been misfiled. Perhaps mixed in with another case file that was being worked on at the same time. That kind of thing happens, you know, all the time.” Mike looked straight at Ted with eyes that now showed steely resolve. “I recall another homicide investigation around that same time where the victim was a drug overdose. No indication of homicide. No prosecution. The case was closed up pretty fast and I’m sure nobody has looked at it since. The victim’s name was Thelma Peterson. You should check that file, Ted. Just in case.”

Ted wrote down the name, then asked his last question, hoping that he didn’t already know the answer. “What did Sue Fenton have to say when you asked her about the Monoclodimide in the boyfriend’s system?”

“She didn’t say anything; because I never asked her.” Mike stood up and started to pace the front of the room, as if he were teaching the class again. “The dead boyfriend was a thug. He had a long criminal record and was known to be abusive toward her. He had stalked her and come to her house late at night. She admitted to hitting him in the head with a baseball bat, but it was judged to be in self-defense. The guy was a scumbag. Why should we have dragged her into an investigation based on the guy having one more type of drug in his system? He had cocaine, heroin, and several other drugs in his system. What did it matter?”

“It matters because if she slipped him some Monoclodimide, maybe in a glass of whiskey, she would have expected an adverse reaction, allowing her to bang him in the head and push him into the pool.”

“And if she did, would anyone have cared?”

“If she did, then she premeditated the killing, slipped him a drug, and bashed in his head with a baseball bat.”

Mike continued pacing. “And, having gotten away with

murder once before – or maybe twice – when it was time to get rid of her rich husband, she could have slipped him the same drug along with his dinner wine, hoping that it would create a reaction, render him unconscious while driving, and perhaps create an accident that might result in his death? That’s a pretty big stretch.”

“True,” Ted agreed, “it’s a big stretch. Except that she was supposed to be in that car with him, but they had an argument just as she was getting into the car and she sent him on his way alone at the last minute. And it turns out that she had not had a prescription for the stuff – Calmix – in ten years, but two weeks before her husband’s death, she started seeing a new shrink and specifically requested that he give her a prescription for the Calmix, so she had a conveniently available supply at the time of the death.”

Mike slumped back down into one of the empty desks. “I had no experience to help me deal with Sue Fenton. She was sixteen the first time. Sure, she was a mature sixteen, but she was still just a scared kid, crying and traumatized. She had lost her mother to cancer and her father was a hard-driving business guy who was never there for her. I made an assumption, based on my experience, that this little girl could not have drugged and murdered her father.

“And when I saw her the night the boyfriend took his dive into that pool, all I could see was that scared sixteen-year-old whose life had been so messed up since her father’s death. And as much as I knew that she might have done more than she was saying that night, I was convinced that the victim was a creep and deserved what he got. I gave her a pass and called it justifiable homicide. I was her jury and I let it pass.”

Ted turned away and walked back toward the classroom door, then stopped. “I can tell you this, Mike. Theo

Wainwright was not a scumbag. He was by all accounts a good citizen, a guy who gave a lot to charity, and a straight shooter. He had four kids with his first wife, who died of a heart attack five years ago. He had six grandkids. He coached a basketball team at the local YMCA. He didn't deserve to die."

"Ted," Mike spoke up before MacMillan could exit the room. "You do whatever it takes. If you need me to, I'll testify."

"I'll try to avoid that, Mike. You don't deserve to have to go through that."

"That's where you're wrong, Ted. It's exactly what I deserve."

[END]

To keep reading the Mike Stoneman Thriller series, you can purchase *Righteous Assassin* [HERE](#). Visit me on my website at [www.KevinGChapman.com](http://www.KevinGChapman.com)