



The Departed

By Shiloh Walker

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From the national bestselling author of *The Missing* comes an all-new novel of romantic suspense about a man who's haunted by regret and consumed by desire...

A LIFELONG OBSESSION

FBI Special Agent Taylor Jones has made it his mission to save those in harm's way by any means necessary—including employing psychic agents like Desiree "Dez" Lincoln, who can communicate with the disembodied spirits of the dead. Taylor is haunted by his own ghost, his kid sister, gone missing at age six. For a quarter of a century he has been tortured by her loss and the mystery of her disappearance.

A NIGHT'S INDISCRETION

When Dez is seriously wounded, Taylor can no longer hide his feelings for her. Getting involved could spell disaster for both of them—not to mention those who rely on them for help—but once Dez lays her hands on him, he can't resist the fierce attraction. But after giving in to his desires, Taylor pulls back, and Dez strikes out on her own.

AN INESCAPABLE PASSION

Responding to the call of another anguished spirit, Dez is led to Taylor's old hometown. As the two are forced to come together to save a girl in peril, Dez may be able to help Taylor finally find the answers he's been looking for...

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Editorial Review

Review

"*The Departed* is a shockingly seductive psychological thriller..." Smexy Books

From the Inside Flap

If Dez would just work to keep him at arm's length, the way everybody else did, maybe it would be easier not to be so obsessed with her. So desperate for a touch, a taste . . . a night.

A lifetime, even.

Stop it.

She glanced over her shoulder at him and said, "Julie won't be here until after her shift at the clinic is over. So if you're really determined that I'm not to be alone, either you call me another babysitter or you make yourself at home."

Then she sauntered off into the depths of the house.

Taylor found himself watching the way her ass swayed back and forth and wishing, really wishing, he had the strength to call her another "babysitter," as she called it. But he also knew there was no way in hell he was going to miss out on spending a little bit of time with her. Away from work. Out of that damned hospital.

Here. In her home. Where he could assure himself she was safe, alive.

Whole.

Staring into the refrigerator, Dez found herself contemplating the bottle of wine. It was too damn early, she knew. Plus, she was still a little off-kilter from the pain meds and she knew she'd be popping another shortly.

But still. Every once in a while, liquid courage did help things a bit and she needed something to help loosen her tongue because she couldn't seem to figure out the right way to go and talk to Taylor and tell him something very, very simple.

Thanks for saving my life.

"Are you hungry?"

She jumped, startled. Turning around, she stared at him and then she gaped, a little dismayed at the sight of him. He'd taken his jacket off. He'd loosened his tie.

Hell--it was almost like he was . . . naked. At least for Taylor Jones. Those suits of his were like armor, she'd always thought.

"Are you okay?"

Jerking her eyes away from his chest, she stared at him and stammered out . . . something. She didn't know what.

"Maybe you should sit down. You look flushed."

No, I look hot. As in turned on, she thought irritably. All because my fucking boss undid the top two buttons on his pristine white dress shirt and loosened that damn tie.

And the jacket. Mustn't forget the jacket he'd taken off.

Swallowing, she turned around and grabbed a can of Diet Coke from the fridge. Over her shoulder, she said, "I'm just thirsty. Tired. Nobody ever gets any rest in a hospital, you ever noticed that?"

"I've never had to stay in one," he said. "But plenty of my people have."

There was a weight in his voice.

Slowly, she turned and studied him.

That heavy, strange weight she'd heard in his voice was echoed in his eyes, she realized. It didn't show in his face--no, very little was ever revealed on that face of his, but those eyes . . . somewhere, just behind a rigid, steely curtain, she sensed a great deal of chaos. Pain. Guilt.

She remembered how many times she'd heard that he was at the hospital because one of them had gone down. This was the first time for her--she was rarely ever in a place where there was any action going on. But her best friend, Taige, had been hurt a few times and she knew, vividly, that Taylor liked to haunt hospital halls.

No, he didn't show much emotion to the world. But he felt it, she realized. He felt a great deal.

And suddenly, those words were a lot easier to find.

"You saved my life," she said softly, setting her drink down and crossing her arms over her chest. "I haven't said thank you for that."

"You don't need to. I never should have let you put yourself in that position."

Dez arched a brow. Oh, yeah, there was emotion. She was nowhere near the emotional bloodhound some of her colleagues were, but psychics, most of them, had similar natures and she could pick up the vibes well enough.

What she didn't understand was why she hadn't ever picked these up from him before.

Unless he was just having a harder time keeping it all hidden . . .

Pushing off the counter, she circled the island to stand in front of him. "There was a girl inside that

house, Taylor. He would have killed her."

"We don't know that."

"Don't we?" Reaching down, she caught his hand and said, "Come on."

For just a second, he resisted.

She had no idea why she'd grabbed his hand. She was surprised as hell that she'd done it.

She was equally stunned when his fingers, long, cool, and elegant, closed around hers. She led him to the bathroom and left him standing by the counter as she faced the mirror. "This damn tape itches like crazy," she said. "I kept telling that nurse to find some paper tape. I think she liked ignoring me."

"You shouldn't be exposing that yet," he said, his voice gruff.

Dez rolled her eyes and made a face at him in the mirror. "Yes, Daddy."

Something flashed in the depths of his steely blue eyes--something hot--something that made her knees do the weirdest damn thing. Swallowing, she tore her eyes away from him and focused on her reflection, watching as she peeled the bandage away and revealed the neat surgical scar on her throat.

Dumping the bandages in the trash, she turned to face him. Bracing her hips against the marble countertop, Dez angled her chin up, let him stare.

He did. For long, long seconds. Then he turned on his heel and stalked out.

About the Author

Shiloh Walker is the national bestselling author of many novels, including *Hunting the Hunter*, *Hunter's Salvation*, and *Hunters: Heart and Soul*.

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