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For Linda Grey and Clare Ferraro

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[Acknowledgments](#)

[Teaser](#)

[Praise for \*Silent Witness\*](#)

[Also by Richard North Patterson](#)

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**PROLOGUE**

Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2)

TONY LORD

**THE PRESENT**

Gina Belfante murdered her husband at one-fifteen on a Tuesday morning. By Tuesday afternoon she had lied to the police; by Thursday, the police and the medical examiner had concluded that Donald Belfante, who had been shot to death while sleeping in his own bed, had not been killed by an intruder. The police did not find the prenuptial agreement—giving Gina a pittance should the Belfantes ever divorce—until Monday. The next day, after they charged Gina Belfante with murder, the lawyer she had consulted about a divorce posted bail and referred her to Anthony Lord.

Although San Francisco was a small city, and the wealthy society in which the Belfantes moved was smaller yet, Tony Lord did not know her. But, inevitably, Gina knew Tony Lord; she had seen him at the Oscars, she told him brightly, on the night that his exquisite wife, Stacey Tarrant, won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. Sitting behind his desk, Tony let Gina chatter nervously, without appearing to watch her as closely as Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) he did. Finally, he asked a few questions; it was several hours later—well after Gina Belfante had tearfully admitted putting a Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) bullet through her husband's brain—that Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) Tony learned she was a battered wife and had doctors' records to prove it. That, he decided, would be his defense.

It Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) was not simple. Given that Donald Belfante had died without waking, it was hard to argue Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) that Gina had felt in imminent danger of violence. The prenuptial agreement made matters worse yet—in terms of money, it rewarded murder and punished divorce. There were almost no witnesses: like many abusive husbands, Donald Belfante had usually beaten his wife's body, often in ways both sadistic and intimate, while leaving her face unmarred; like many abused wives, Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) Gina Belfante had lied to everyone save her doctor. And a society woman who stood to inherit twenty-five million dollars would not strike most jurors as so helpless that she had shot her sleeping husband in fear and Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) desperation. His only choice, Tony knew, was to put her late husband on trial.

Donald Belfante had been a large man; like many entrepreneurs who retained absolute power over his own creation—in this case, a company that made computer disk drives—he was charming, egotistical, sensitive to slight, and a bully. If Gina was to be believed, he beat her often, and at random: he had beaten her four hours before his death, and had she not killed him when he stirred awake, he would have beaten her right then. It Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) did not take much to anger Donald Belfante, and he enjoyed Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) his anger; Gina lived in Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) fear of each new beating, and of

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that final day—vivid in Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) her imagination—when he would go too far and kill her. The prenuptial agreement, she insisted in tears, was not an incentive: Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) it was the symbol of his unfathomable rage at the idea that she might leave him. Should she ever try, Donald Silent Witness (Tony Lord Book 2) Belfante had promised his wife, he would find and kill her; her belief that this would happen was both reasonable and heartfelt.

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