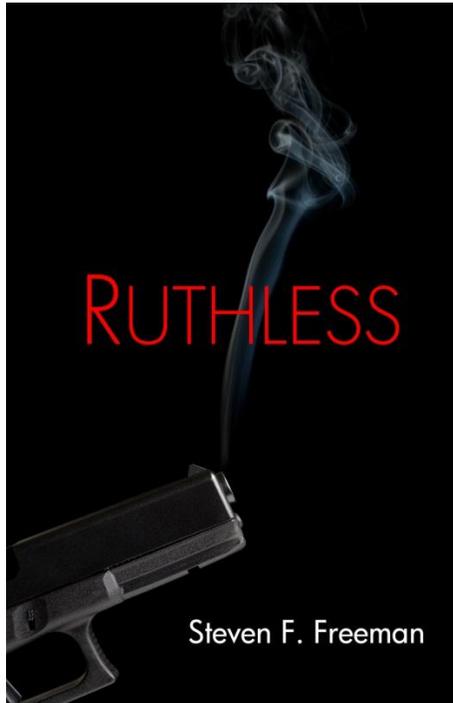


Ruthless: A Novel

A disabled ex-Army officer turned world-class cryptographer... a beautiful FBI agent... and a ruthless murderer on the loose in Atlanta.



SYNOPSIS

A heartless killer ambushes and guns down ex-mobster Jay Mancini. Days later, the killer disposes of Mancini's live-in girlfriend in cold blood. Desperate to identify the culprit behind the murders, Jay's niece Chelsea convinces work colleague and amateur detective Alton Blackwell to help investigate the seemingly run-of-the-mill professional mob hits.

Alton and his girlfriend, FBI Agent Mallory Wilson, race to sequester Chelsea away from wrathful mob gangsters intent on silencing anyone with knowledge of "family activities." But the investigation spirals out of control as a series of new events with no apparent mob connection serves to confound their efforts to identify the assassin. As Alton and Mallory struggle to make sense of scant evidence, unseen danger marches inexorably closer to them and Chelsea, who seems to lie in the vortex of the mayhem. Will Alton and Mallory unravel the mystery in time to avoid becoming the killer's next victims? And will their growing relationship survive the presence of the beautiful Chelsea Mancini?

Combining edge-of-your-seat psychological thrills with a side of romance, RUTHLESS keeps readers guessing until the final clue is revealed.

SUMMARY

In **RUTHLESS**, volume two of "The Blackwell Files" series, Alton and Mallory strive to identify the culprit behind a series of perplexing homicides, racing to unravel the mystery in time to avoid becoming the killer's next victims. But will their growing relationship survive the presence of the beautiful Chelsea Mancini, who seems to lie in the center of the chaos?

REVIEWS FOR RUTHLESS

"As always, a great read with the perfect amount of twists and turns. You've got a winner here!" **Alyssa Proffitt**

"I really enjoyed this fast paced thriller mystery so much that I read it within 24 hours. The characters were well developed, believable and well written. The plot is gripping and the fast pace makes sure that you want to carry on reading and not put it down. I strongly recommend this book and I will read more of his work." **Gary Wilkes**

"Ruthless by Steven F. Freeman is an action filled murder mystery...this page turner is sure to keep you scratching your head. Nothing is better than love, murder, deceit, and insanity to move a murder plot along. Sit back and buckle your seat belt for this one! I enjoyed this book and stayed up into the night to finish it." **OnlineBookClub.org review**

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FOR THE PRESS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thriller/mystery author Steve Freeman is a former member of the US Army's Signal Corps, a twenty-six year employee of a large American technology company, and an avid traveler who has visited five continents. *The Blackwell Files* novels draw from his firsthand knowledge of military service, the tech industry, and the diverse cultures of our world.

He currently lives near Atlanta, Georgia with his wife, daughter, and two dogs.



INTERVIEW TOPICS

- How have your life experiences influenced the novels of *The Blackwell Files*? To what extent are they autobiographical?
- What writers are most influential to your work?
- Do you anticipate future novels featuring Alton and Mallory, the two main protagonists of *The Blackwell Files* novels?
- What sets *The Blackwell Files* novels apart from other thrillers?
- How did you start writing?

FOR THE PRESS

Prologue

Chelsea's heart raced, and she strained her ears to detect any noise. *There's someone in the apartment. I locked the door. I know I locked it. Maybe I only dreamed I heard something.*

Out in the darkened living room, which lay between her bedroom and the front door, a muffled thud and curse provided an ominous confirmation of an intruder's presence. Chelsea stifled a scream. As quietly as possible, she rolled out of bed, stumbling a bit as her feet hit the carpet.

The security bars on her bedroom window precluded that route of escape. She hurried across the floor to the adjoining bathroom and locked herself in it, praying the intruder would think the apartment empty.

Several minutes elapsed without any new sounds, but Chelsea was too fearful to exit her sanctuary. She wished she had grabbed her cell phone on the way in.

Was the intruder gone? After listening a few minutes more and hearing nothing, she decided to crack the door just enough to peer into her bedroom. As she reached for the knob to unlock it, a furious pounding erupted from the other side of the door.