



Book One in the Kaitlyn
Willis Mystery Series
By Leslie J. Hall

Friday, September 15, 2017 – 4pm

Bright red blood oozed from a wound in his head while more blood spurted from the gaping hole on his left calf.

“Sir! Sir!” John Tsai said in a tight, tense voice, as he bent his long legs into a crouch. “Are you okay?”

No response.

“He’s unconscious. Check to see if he’s breathing,” I ordered.

John lowered his head so his face was next to the victim’s mouth. “Nothing.”

I pressed two fingers against the rubbery skin on the victim’s neck. No pulse. I shook my head.

“Let’s start CPR,” John said, kneeling down on the pavement beside the body.

I turned to the huddle of impatient faces gathered around us. “Make sure someone’s called 911 and go find the AED.” As I spoke, I pointed toward City Hall where, inside the main door, a defibrillator was attached to a wall.

“And one of you put pressure on that wound.” The spurting blood from the calf hit the long sleeve of my white t-shirt and spread into a dark red stain. Shit!

I swiped the back of my gloved hand across my brow, pushing renegade strands of long blond hair out of my face. Next time I went to an emergency, I’d bring a hair band. And a clean shirt.

Our Public Works receptionist, Cheryl Erickson, crouched next to us. Huge pink peace signs dangled from her ears. She slapped a gauze pad over the spurting blood. “Eeeew!” she squealed. She looked a little green but held firm.

John leaned over the body readying his arms and hands for chest compressions.

Dreary dark clouds swirled overhead like a washing machine filled with dirt. Great. Any moment it would start to rain. “I am not doing the breaths. No way.”

“You’ve got a mask! Use it.” John sounded a little panicked.

“No. I did it last time. Move over. I’m doing the compressions.”

John didn’t move. “You suck at compressions. I’m a guy. I’m bigger. I’ll do it.”

I glared back. John often hogged the spotlight, trying to one-up everyone, and I was sick of it.

“Team one, your patient is dying.” Jeff, our barrel-chested firefighter first-aid instructor tapped his watch. “Over 30 seconds without breathing.”

Frowning at John, I knelt over the resuscitation dummy and slapped a plastic mouth guard over its face.

John pushed down the chest with the heel of his hand. A rhythmic popping noise accompanied his counting, “One and two and three and…”

I jabbed my fingers under the dummy’s head and cranked its chin back. When John said, “twenty-nine and thirty,” I stuck my mouth on the plastic and blew. Nothing. The dummy’s chest didn’t move.

“Pinch the nose,” Jeff, Mr. Patience, suggested.

“Oh, yeah.” I pinched the nose while holding the chin. I felt like an idiot. My knees ached from kneeling on concrete. Leaning my back in an awkward and painful position and giving the whole class a view of my butt, I blew into the dummy’s mouth twice. Its rubber chest raised and John started in again.

“Okay. That’s good.” Jeff said.

John and I scrambled to our feet. I brushed the debris off the knees of my jeans and shook my sleeve trying to dislodge the fake blood. No luck. I was marked. The rest of the class of city employees stepped back and gathered around Jeff.

“They did pretty well,” Jeff said. “What did you notice?”

Grant Russell eagerly raised his hand and spoke, “Kaitlyn killed the guy while she complained about not wanting to do the breathing, then did it wrong.”

Thanks for pointing that out, Nimrod. I glared at Grant, an overweight nerd who worked in Public Works doing data entry and other computer stuff but fancied himself a field worker.

Usually I made a point to get along with my co-workers, but today I found it a challenge. My mood was as sour as the expired milk in my fridge.

The Mayor of the City of Cedar Grove decided all city employees needed to re-certify in first aid. The Mayor based his wise decision on direction from the real power, the City Manager, Mitcham Iles. So came the mandate--get trained or find a new job.

I had no problem listening to the presentation, looking at gory pictures, and discussing scenarios, but I found the hands-on practice--in the Cedar Grove City Hall parking lot--corny and humiliating.

“Team One did very well. Always make sure the wound is taken care of before you start compressions. It’s a lot of work if you’re just pushing blood out his leg,” Jeff said. “However, if Seattle has the 8.5 earthquake that’s been predicted for years, you could have several people with multiple injuries from fallen debris. You’ll have to make choices on who to handle first—or at all.”

“What would you do if the victim has big boobs?” asked Marcus Trask, another co-worker, as he ogled me like he wanted to open up my shirt and start compressing my chest.

“Push ‘em out of the way,” Jeff said not taking the bait.

I reflexively crossed my arms over my D-times-three-sized chest (in reality there is a G in my bra size). Suddenly self-conscious, my face grew hot. I glared back at Marcus. *You wish, creep.*

“Who can remind us what triage means?” Jeff said.

And on it went. Thankfully, we ran out of time before Team One had to run another scenario, so No more mouth-to-mouth on dummies today. And I wouldn’t have to put my butt or anything else on display, something I avoided. I threw away my gloves, packed up my things. I know this was important training and I prayed I’d never have to do it on a live person.

I enjoy my job working for the City of Cedar Grove, a medium sized city north of the metropolis that is Seattle. I spend my days driving around in a city truck talking to citizens. I’m a CEO--Code Enforcement Officer. Being youngish (37 and holding), a woman, and a well-endowed blond isn’t what most people picture when they think of code enforcement. Most of the time, I like the work. I put up with the riff raff like Marcus and Grant (the allure of government benefits, I guess. If I was in HR, I’d be more discerning in who I hired).

Sharon Stone patted my shoulder as we walked past City Hall, a long two-story former strip mall, toward the Public Works building. “Ignore them guys, Kaitlyn,” she said. “That’s the only way to survive.” Sharon is no relation to the actress and no resemblance either. She’s a large black woman with a deep voice who sang perfect alto. Rows and rows of beautiful rust colored braids covered her head.

I picked discouragingly at the stain on my shirt, uncomfortable being on display. And that stain would be a bitch to get out no matter what Jeff said. *Grouchy-pants!* I was just uncomfortable with being on display.

“And don’t worry about that either. I’m sure fake blood comes out in a cold rinse.”

“Thanks, Sharon. Sorry I’m in a crabby mood.”

“It wasn’t so bad.”

Sharon is about the kindest person I know; the one I go to when I feel beat up because she puts a smile on my face on the worst day. She’s the one you wanted with you on a job when an angry homeowner decided they didn’t like your last posted notice. She was big and tough and didn’t take crap from anyone. Probably came from having ten siblings and five kids of her own.

“You weren’t the one with your butt up in the air,” I said.

“Nobody’s wantin’ to see my ass,” she replied. “I just had to whack that little rubber baby on the back. Shit, in my old neighborhood that was called child abuse.”

“It still is if the kid isn’t choking.”

She chuckled.