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## **About the Author**

Stephen Greenleaf is the award-winning author of the John Marshall Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) Tanner series and two standalone novels.

A graduate of Carlton College in Minnesota, he received his law degree from the University of California at Berkeley and attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

# **BEYOND BLAME**

**Stephen Greenleaf**

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*For Nana*

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This is a work of fiction.

The characters and events are entirely imaginary, as is the institution entitled the Berkeley Law Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) School.

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put Beyond Blame:

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A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:8–9

The collective conscience does not allow punishment where it cannot impose blame.

*Holloway v. United States*, 148 F.2d

665 (D.C. Cir. 1945), *cert. denied*,

334 U.S. 852 (1948)

The Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) defense of diminished Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) capacity is hereby abolished. In a criminal action, as well as any juvenile court proceeding, evidence concerning an accused person's intoxication, trauma, mental illness, disease, or defect shall not be admissible to show or negate capacity to form the particular purpose, intent, motive, malice aforethought, knowledge, or other mental state required for the commission of the crime charged.

California Penal Code Section 25(a)

(Added by Initiative Measure, approved by the people, June 8, 1982)

Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries)

**ONE**

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They were elderly, in their sixties at least, and like many older couples they radiated the warmth of siblings rather than the sparks of lovers. He was tall and stiff; she was short Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) and stooped. His flesh was pasted right to bone; hers was tucked and Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) pillowed. His eyes were blue and polished; hers were brown and melted. His clothes flapped and sagged; hers stretched as smooth and taut as second skin.

She had been the first to take a seat in my office, at my invitation. He had placed the spare chair snugly at her side before he followed suit. Now they were holding hands, looking at each other, exchanging the reassurances that, after forty years of marriage, do not make use of words. I knew why they were there, but their business was so delicate and disturbing I had to wait for them to tell me.

The woman Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) had been elected speaker, but she was reluctant to begin. Her dress was blue and plain, with a pointed collar and white buttons up the front, and she fiddled with the top one until her husband nudged her arm. She nodded, placed her pocketbook on her lap, cleared her throat, and touched the tight bun she had made of her hair. There were streaks of steel through it, and doubtless through her heart as well. There would have to be, for her to have endured the past thirty days and remain as Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) ordered as she seemed.

“We are here about our daughter, Mr. Tanner,” Ingrid Renzel began, her strong voice clipped by the lingering chip of a Nordic accent.

When I didn’t say anything, she glanced quickly at her husband. He nodded his approval and squeezed her hand. Fortified, she looked at me with renewed resolve. “We have practiced what to say, so you will understand our purpose, but Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) it is difficult to know the proper words.”

“Don’t worry about the words. Just talk to me as you would Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) to each other.”

Her smile was unexpected, a bright new thing. “We speak Swedish to each other,” she said, suddenly the imp, far younger than her years.

I grinned. “Better stick to English.”

She quickly sensed that her expression was inappropriate and it vanished as suddenly as it had come, leaving her chagrined. “She was ... she *is* ... dead, Mr. Tanner. Beyond Blame: A John Marshall Tanner Mystery (John Marshall Tanner Mysteries) Murdered. Our Dianne—our daughter—was murdered in her home. In Berkeley. Last month. The twenty-first. It was a Friday. I ...” She faltered into silence, her words outracing the plan she had hoped would carry her across the day.

“I read about it in the papers,” I said to help her. “It was a terrible crime.”

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“Death ... murder ... is always terrible. But

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