

# Blind Trust

Gayle  
Farmer



*BLIND*  
*TRUST*

*GAYLE*  
*FARMER*

# **Blind Trust**

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Riding Blind

This book is dedicated to

Michelle Niehart  
thank you for your encouragement  
and support

And, of course, my darling,  
Jeff

Five Star Review  
for

**Blind Trust**

As a long-time fan of Ms. Farmer's, I looked forward to this book with real anticipation and the wait was worth it.

**Blind Trust** delivers an intriguing story of courage and bravery with an unusual heroine, a sympathetic antagonist and a cast of truly memorable support characters.

Packed with action and adventure, there's something here for everyone, whether you like a psychological novel to give you the creeps, high action to get your blood racing or a love story to touch your heart, it's here in **Blind Trust**.

Karen Ackerman  
Los Angeles, CA.



BLIND

TRUST





## *Chapter 1*

The morning started out like every other. Cathy awoke to the lightest tinkling of Chopin in the background, the soft piano notes soothing to her ear as one form of darkness exchanged itself for another. On the table next to the bed, her cell, monitor and tracking device waited. Each had a particular place in her wardrobe and it never varied. She put on the dark glasses she always wore and stretched, arms raised high overhead.

The bedside chair held her morning clothes. Donning fresh undies, she pulled a white short-sleeved shirt over her head and straightened the collar. She stepped into blue cotton shorts and pulled on her running shoes, humming with the piano. A lightweight jacket completed her ensemble. Cathy turned for the door as a cold wet nose snuffled her hand.

“Did you have a good sleep, Suzi?” Deft fingers stroked the soft golden fur that decorated the dog’s beautiful face. Cathy bent low and adjusted the harness, quickly securing the buckles and fitting the leather ends into their keepers.

The Lab did a little jig in place and whined under her breath, licking Cathy's cheek several times in rapid succession.

"Sounds like you want your run, little girl." She grasped the top of the harness and headed down the long hall, chatting to the dog. They crossed the kitchen floor to the back door and hesitated. The latch always stuck and Cathy prepared to give it a little bump with the bottom of her fist.

Instead, the door opened at her touch. She halted, the hairs on the back of her neck rising, and listened a moment. Suzi whined again, beginning to dance in anticipation.

"My imagination is in overdrive. I guess Lainie had maintenance here and forgot to mention it. Okay, okay, let's go."

Over the years since she lost her sight, Cathy noticed distinct changes in her senses. Many had sharpened perceptibly. She'd developed an oversensitivity she couldn't explain regarding a variety of things. Take sounds. It wasn't that things got louder. On the contrary, things one didn't ordinarily even hear were suddenly quite audible to her.

Another was an awareness of people in the room with her, of feeling their presence. The strangest, at least to her, was her heightened sense of smell. People smelled. Neither bad nor good, necessarily, just distinctive.

They had unique odors she hadn't noticed or at least registered before. Sometimes it was the oily smell of hair in need of a shampoo or the subtle scent of sweat hidden under a layer of cologne. Food odors clung to some people, particularly oranges and grease.

The sweet, familiar aroma of soaps and perfumes smelled different, unique on each person and she recognized the regulars in her daily life from several yards away.

For instance, she knew the doorman waited just ahead. Already the scent of cinnamon emanating from his body reached her nostrils.

Thomas Jackson opened the huge door for her, greeting her by name.

“Mornin’ Ms. Abbott, Suzi. Good ta see you ladies out an’ about. Have a good time.”

“We will, Thomas. The sea smells so salty this morning and I feel a mist. Is a storm coming in?”

“Yes, ma’am, it sure is. Clouds are gatherin’ tight, like cotton candy balls, all shades of gray with blue. Yellow tinges, too. Weird. The sky looks like a bruise. This is the kinda weather brings out the *strange* in folks. Y’all be careful, hear? Don’t stray too far, please. I’ll be watchin’ for when ya get back.”

“Oh, thank you, Thomas. I appreciate that, but I’m well protected.” She nodded at the dog. “I’m safe with Suzi.”

“Indeed, and have a good jog, Miss.”

Cathy and Suzi crossed the street and continued onto the beach. When they reached the beginning of the jogging path, as she had for the last nine years, she snapped the harness in fixed position and clucked to Suzi.

“Let’s go.”

Tucking both arms into her sides she began to jog, counting off the strides, long honey-blond hair streaming behind her, caught in the playful wind. Suzi kept pace at her left knee, strides long and comfortable.

Raucous screams pierced the air as seagulls swooped into the ocean in search of their breakfast. The distant toot of a car horn and an occasional bark were the only other sounds she heard that morning. The pounding of the surf muffled everything else.

They'd covered most of their allotted distance without passing another jogger. As Cathy came abreast of the turnoff to the street front and prepared to turn for home, she heard a slight scuffle in the sand behind her, a muffled yelp and then nothing. She stopped abruptly, turning toward the sound.

“Suzi?”

When the dog did not whine in response or nudge her with a cold nose, slow, creeping terror began to overtake her. For one horrible moment, she feared she'd lose control of her bladder.

“Suzi?” She raised her voice and cupped her lips. “*Suzi!*”

Full-blown panic flooded her body. The impossible had happened. As inexplicable, as bizarre as it sounded, the dog was gone. Someone took her. Cathy knew it with certainty. It was the only explanation. Suzi would never have left her alone. Someone must have followed them and grabbed the dog right off the pathway.

Shaking fingers reached into her pocket and pulled out her cell phone. She hit the speed dial and waited, her stomach churning while tears of fright slid down her cheeks.

“Lainie? Someone stole Suz ... Lainie?” It took her a moment to realize that she'd reached voice mail.

*She must be in the shower. Could she have already left for work?*

Cathy checked her watch. Eight on the button. Lainie left for work at eight. *Damn!*

Disconnecting, she hit the third button.

“Good morning, Casa Del Mar Shores. How may I direct your call?”

“This is Cathy Abbott, Sonia. I’m on the beach, not too far off our walkway and a stranger just stole Suzi.” Her teeth began to chatter. “Can you please send someone to get me right away? I think I might be turned around and I don’t want to move.”

“Yes, Ms. Abbott. We’ll send someone directly. Just stay where you are.”

“Please hurry. I’m scared to death.”

“I’ll stay on the phone with you, Ms. Abbott. Javier is on the way across the street as I speak....”

“Ms. Abbott,” a familiar voice called in the distance, drawing closer to Cathy’s side. “It’s Javier. I’m going to take your arm. Are you okay?”

Cathy extended both hands.

“Oh, yes, I’m okay, but I have to get home. I need to call Lainie. We have to find Suzi!” Her voice rose as she slipped her arm into the crook of the man’s elbow, her other hand plucking at his sleeve.

“But first, look around. Do you see her anywhere at all? Up by the seawall? How about down the path?”

“No, ma’am, I don’t see her around anywhere. I’m so sorry, but no one is here. It’s really deserted this morning, must be the mist. Ms. Morgan already left for work. Are you ready to go back to the condo?”

“Yes, and please hurry.”

\* \* \*

“Well, that was a complete waste of time,” Cathy said when Lainie returned from showing the police officers to the door. “You know as well as I do that report is going absolutely nowhere. Sorry I had to drag you home from work.”

“Good Lord, don’t be silly, and talk about disinterested? They got the obligatory report out of the way and that’ll be the last we ever hear from them.”

“I put in a call to the Foundation, alerted them about Suzi, so they’ll be watching for the microchip, plus they’re putting out a reward poster for her, so maybe we’ll get her back soon. She has her ID on the harness as well as her collar, so we’ll hear soon, don’t you think?”

Lainie’s head bobbed up and down, dark hair swinging against her cheek in a blue-black arc. “Absolutely. It’s been several hours. I’m surprised we haven’t heard already. By the way, did the Foundation say how long it’ll be before they can get a replacement? Y’know, just while Suzi’s gone? I mean, you can’t get along without a guide dog, can you?”

“Well, not to any extent. I can’t go out alone, but if Mrs. Adams can come in early every morning, that should get the day started and then I can work on the lanai until it’s time for her to go. As for a new dog, it’ll take months. I’m at the end of the line.”

Lainie gritted her teeth, causing them to squeak. “It just makes me insane. Who the hell would steal a guide dog? Talk about a lowdown cur of a person.”

“Hopefully someone who wants a reward for her return.” Cathy swallowed convulsively several times, trying to maintain her composure.

When they hadn’t heard a word by dinner time, Lainie called their friend Ella Sessions, hoping against

hope she might have an answer. Her husband, Jim, owned a farm with his friend, Rudy Clark, where they bred and trained Dobermans for security purposes. They were disparate fields, but in a small world, it might be enough of a connection for him to know about guide dogs. It was an impossible long-shot, but one she figured she couldn't ignore.

The long-shot paid off in the form of Kip, a young female Doberman who'd flunked every form of security training with flying colors. Without an aggressive bone in her body, she proved worthless to Rudy, who promptly turned her over to his assistant, Steve.

With his past history of training Labradors as Seeing Eye dogs, Steve gave Kip a try. It was that or sell her as a child's pet.

She turned out to be as successful at guiding as any Lab he'd ever worked with, quickly reading the nuances of voices, hints of fear or confusion. She turned her joy and devotion toward her handler, never taking her eyes from him as they worked together.

Steve was virtually ready to offer her to a placement service when Lainie's call came in. They would later consider it destiny, but not in the beginning.