

THE BRAND DEMAND - synopsis

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The story begins with GALEN REED meeting a shamed clergyman who's paying him money to keep his secrets.

We learn that Galen is professional blackmailer. Driven by political motivation, taking the role of Robin Hood in a corrupt modern America, he targets hypocrites and those opposing progress as he sees it. He has a code of nonviolent financial activism and has assembled a crew of like-minded individuals to help him. Their tactics have been effective and lucrative.

Galen's newest target is ROBERT BRAND, son-in-law of ZACHARY CARSON. Carson is local wealthy celebrity who owns a string of car dealerships and AM radio hate-talk shows. His politics are outspoken and disgusting to Galen, but he's too well connected and powerful to go at directly without exposure. Galen decides to strike at Carson indirectly through his adulterous son-in-law.

Galen has to move fast. Brand is careless with his infidelities and it's only a matter of time before his wife ALICE finds out. In preparation, Galen breaks into Brand's house for some reconnaissance and is nearly discovered by Brand's daughter-in-law from a previous marriage BONNIE FLETCHER while he's rifling Brand's safe.

Unable to delay any longer, Galen makes "The Demand" – the blackmail pitch. As he arrives at the Brand house, he is formally introduced to Bonnie who's having a terrible argument with Alice. Galen is attracted to Bonnie. Galen shows Brand the evidence of his infidelity and explains to him how he's to get the money and deliver it.

The day of the money delivery, Brand is a no-show. Fearful but undeterred, Galen calls Brand's house, talks to Bonnie and learns that Brand has disappeared. Over the phone he hears Alice attack Bonnie and being nearby, her rushes to help but her. At the house Galen is attacked by one of Carson's henchmen and then arrested. He's questioned by the FBI and, strangely, Homeland Security.

Galen orders his crew to go underground but invites the now homeless Bonnie stay

with him. He learns how Brand ruined Bonnie's mother in Idaho. Bonnie is in Utah to get the money Brand promised them before her mother died.

To save himself, Galen needs to know what happened to Brand. With a growing affection for Bonnie he enlists her help and confides in her his strange occupation.

Zachary Carson sends for Galen to find out what he knows about his missing son-in-law. Galen surmises however, that he's more interested in his stock position and a potential insider trading deal he'd making with a foreign power. He is threatened but Galen is pleased to finally find leverage over Carson that he'll be able to use if he ever gets out from under official scrutiny.

Brand has connections with a gangster called VENETTI in Park City. Galen and Bonnie go there to have a romantic get away and to investigate. There, they are accosted by Venetti and his goons, barely escaping without serious injury.

Brand's car is discovered in the desert with signs of foul play.

Galen and Bonnie go to Moab Utah to investigate the mining claims Galen saw in Brand's safe. After a visit to the land office, they are nearly killed when someone rams their car off a ledge.

The couple investigate the mines in person. They find one has been recently dynamited shut and another one contains radioactive waste from a New Jersey plant. They realize the mines are being used to illegally hide nuclear waste.

Before they can act on their discovery, DAVE, a ranger involved in the plot waylays them and brings them to the mine where they find Brand. Brand faked his death to keep from sharing money with Venetti. He's selling nuclear waste to terrorist groups who'll use it to make dirty bombs. He drugs Dave and Bonnie but Galen avoids it. As Brand is preparing to bury them alive in the mine with the waste, Galen, against his earlier ideals, deliberately shoots Brand and kills him.

Galen makes off with Brand's ill-gotten money and alerts the authorities to the plot. Bonnie survives the poisoning and Dave takes responsibility for killing Brand. Galen is off the hook. The book ends with Bonnie and Galen gathering the crew for another demand on another creep.