

PAIGE CARTER

Deputy Sheriff

Pernicious Liaisons
Season 2, Episode 4

by:

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“Paige,” Margie’s voice came over the radio. “Respond to an industrial accident. I sent the address to your computer. Havilland is primary, but he needs a back. Apparently, the workers have started arriving and he’s having a difficult time controlling the crowd and preserving the scene.”

“Copy,” Paige pulled to the shoulder, glanced at the address and made a U-turn. “Show me enroute.”

Paige pulled into the construction zone and took in her surroundings. Havi certainly had his hands full. Her fellow deputy was doing his best to secure the area, but at least twenty men were gathered around demanding entrance. She jumped from her car, raised two fingers to her lips and let out a long, loud whistle. It worked. Every eye was now on her. “Who’s in charge here?”

Havilland pointed to a man sitting on the bottom step that led to a portable trailer. Paige assumed the structure was a temporary office of some kind they used on every construction project. She approached the man and sat down beside him. He was obviously in shock, his face was ghostly white and his rapid breathing made her wonder if he was going to pass out. “I’m Deputy Carter,” she began. “Can you do me a favor? Try something for me? Take a really big breath and hold it, count to three then slowly let it out. That’s it, now let’s do it again. One more time. Feel better?”

“Yeah,” the man let out another jagged breath. “Thanks.”

“Looks like maybe you had a bit of a shock,” Paige said sympathetically. “Long, deep breaths are better. Those short, quick ones will make you hyperventilate. Do me a favor and keep going, long deep breath in, hold it and let it out.”

They sat there for several seconds until a little color returned to the man’s face. “Can you tell me your name?”

“Billy,” he swallowed. “Uh... Billy Duncan.”

“Okay, Billy,” Paige shifted. “My friend over there said you are in charge. I’m wondering if maybe you could talk to your men. Get them to back off a bit. My guy... well, he’s just trying to do his job, but they’re making that difficult. Any chance you could help us out?”

Billy glanced up and realized the men were crowding the officer, demanding entrance into the building to start the day’s work. He glanced back at Paige, stood and made his way to Havilland’s side. “Listen up.”

Paige marveled at the instant change. Where seconds ago the crowd was angry, demanding and unruly, it was now completely silent. Eerily so.

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“I um...” Billy swallowed hard. “I found Dutch... Dutch’s body this morning. He fell, I guess. After we all left, he fell and...”

“Dutch is dead?” Someone asked in shock.

“He’s dead,” Billy lowered his head and looked sick.

Paige stepped in, patted Billy on the shoulder then faced the crowd. “I’m sure you can understand how important it is for us to preserve the scene. We need time to take a look around, determine just how Dutch died and make sure the building is safe for you to return to work. I know this is difficult, but we really need your cooperation.”

“So,” a large, hard-looking man called out. “What are you asking, lady?”

“We’re telling you to back away,” Havilland said, annoyed.

“I need everyone to gather on the other side of the office,” Billy stepped in. “I’m closing down the site for the day. Before you leave, I need an accounting of who’s here and what time you arrived.” He glanced at Paige. “I assume you’re going to need that?”

Paige nodded. “We will, thank you.”

“Once I get your info, you’re free to leave,” Billy shouted. The men were grumbling now, mostly about lost wages. “If you’d let me finish before you go off half-cocked,” Billy raised his voice over the men. “I was gonna say you’ll get a day’s pay, but keep mouthing off and I just might change my mind.”

Once again, the group became completely silent. Paige moved in next to Billy. “As you get their arrival times, would you inform the men we’re going to need to speak to each one of them individually? If they stick around, we’ll get to it this morning. If they prefer, we can stop by their homes later this afternoon.”

“I’ll tell them,” Billy nodded. “I’ll make it a condition of the day’s pay... to be available for the cops.”

“I appreciate that,” Paige made her way toward Havilland.

“Come on then,” Billy called to the men. “Meet me on the other side of the office.”

Paige and Havi suddenly found themselves alone. Havilland let out a relieved breath. “Tough guys,” he shook his head. “I was afraid I’d have to arrest half a dozen of them before this was over.”

“What do we have?”

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Havilland glanced at the yellow tape, decided it would keep the scene secure enough and made his way into the partially erected building. “Looks like the man took a nose dive from up there.” He pointed to a large metal beam about thirty feet above them. “It appears he was working on something on the upper floor. Billy said they shut down the work for the day at around seven. Said Dutch, he’s the owner of this operation. Well, he was until...” Havilland shrugged. “Dutch said there was a problem with the electrical and he needed to stay another hour or so to fix it because the inspector was due first thing this morning.”

Paige moved to the edge of an unfinished wall and glanced at the body sprawled out below them. “Medical Examiner on the way?”

“Yeah,” Havilland glanced around. “Thing is...” he hesitated.

“Thing is,” Paige realized. “You’re not entirely sure it was an industrial accident.” She shifted her focus from the body to the area the victim occupied before his untimely demise.

“Could have been,” Havi said. “But, these guys... they work in this environment every day. One guy, alone? Well, that just doesn’t make sense to me. Now, in the middle of the day when things are hoppin’? Sure, accidents can happen. Someone snags a couple two-by-fours, someone else reaches for one tool or another and they collide. Wham... one, or both, end up dead.”

Paige studied the beam directly above them. It was nearly two feet wide, at least eighteen inches. A seasoned construction guy, someone who had been in the business long enough to have his own operation, wouldn’t take a nose dive easily. She glanced down at the body, again. “Alright,” she turned and headed for the door. “I’m convinced. Let’s head down and process the body.”

“Is that a good thing or a bad thing?” Havilland asked. “That I convinced you to investigate further.”

“I guess only time will tell,” Paige exited the building and headed for their victim. As she approached the area, she spotted what could only be women’s footprints. There was a flat surface and, a couple inches back, a small round indentation. Women’s high heel shoes. She reached for her phone but paused. “Give me your phone.”

“What? Why?” Havilland objected. “You have your own phone in your hand.”

Paige sighed. “Give me the phone.” She turned and glared at her fellow cop.

Havilland sighed and held out his phone.

Paige immediately crouched, set Havilland’s phone next to the footprint and used her own phone to take several pictures.

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“Oh,” Havilland said in understanding.

“Yeah,” Paige straightened. “Oh.” She passed his phone back to him.

“What is that?”

“Women’s shoe prints,” Paige answered as she slowly made her way to the body. With her own phone, she took over two dozen photos of the man’s lifeless form lying face first in the dirt. Once she was finished with that, she retrieved several markers from her vehicle and began placing them near items that could be evidence.

Havilland stood back, watching Paige as she worked. The woman was the most thorough cop he’d ever met, but she got results. He knew the markers would make it easier for her to diagram the scene later. Something that would be essential if this ever went to trial. He was glad she was the one to respond this morning. Gage would have been argumentative, to say the least. He sighed, wondering if he’d ever get along with the big man.

Paige heard Havilland sigh and she frowned. “You’re the one that asked me to look into this. *Paige, investigate this as a homicide rather than an accident.* Have you changed your mind?”

“No,” Havilland glanced up when the improvised SUV used by the medical examiner pulled into the lot. “I wasn’t thinking about the case, I was counting my blessings. I’m grateful you responded to back me this morning.”

Paige grinned. “Oh, well...” she stood and motioned for the ME to pull forward. “You could always apologize to Gage. Tell him you regret the way you handled the situation with his sister. Appeal to him man to man. You know, explain how you thought a quick break was the best way to go.”

“Yeah,” Havilland started to walk away. “Because that would make everything just peachy. Re-opening old wounds at the same time I pray my nose isn’t broken.”

Paige grinned and took a step forward, then froze. The rays from the bright sun had hit something metal next to the body, creating a quick but bright flash that she almost missed. She made her way around the body, crouched, pulled a pen from her pocket, and slowly slid a delicate necklace forward that was wedged beneath the ground and Dutch Hagerty’s lifeless body.

“Looks like a locket,” Havilland said next to her. “Are you going to open it?”

“No,” she stood and glanced around, trying to remember where she parked her car.

Havilland pulled an evidence bag from his pocket, opened it and held it beneath the locket.

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“Boy Scout, huh?” Paige grinned as she dropped the locket into the bag. “I had no idea.”

“Nope,” Havilland sealed the bag. “I just think a cop should be prepared, too.”

“Ready for transport?” Benny Parks, the local Medical Examiner asked when he reached the body.

“You finished?” Havilland asked Paige.

“Yeah,” Paige took a step back. “Go ahead, Benny.” The two officers watched as the medical professional rolled the body onto a stretcher and wheeled it to the back of his vehicle. Within minutes the body was loaded, secured and ready for transport.

“Which one do I call when I’m done?” Benny called back.

“Me,” Havilland gave him a wave.

“Should be later this afternoon,” Benny assured him before climbing into the vehicle and making a large circle. He had just started down the long drive when a bright red sports car came flying around the corner and nearly collided with the SUV head-on.

Paige frowned and began moving that way, Havilland did the same. The ME swerved, missed the vehicle, and gave a long, annoyed honk before pulling onto the highway. The sports car continued into the parking area of the site and slowed abruptly, gravel flew several feet behind the vehicle, dust billowed and circled the tires before the tiny vehicle came to a complete stop. A woman in a designer summer dress and large sunglasses shoved open the driver’s side door and seemed to glide as she graciously extricated herself from the vehicle.

“Is there some emergency I’m not aware of?” Havilland barked.

The woman glanced over, surprised to see the two officers and frowned. “I don’t understand.”

Paige wasn’t buying it. The woman had spotted them immediately, she just wanted to pretend she hadn’t. She was thumbing her nose at the little people, making sure Paige and Havi knew they were beneath her. The designer shoes that didn’t match her too short dress didn’t escape Paige’s notice. Was this the woman who had left prints near the body? “This is a restricted area. I’m afraid you need to vacate the premises.”

“Do you know who I am?”

Havi sighed, Paige grinned. “Not a clue. But now that you mentioned it, I will need your name,” Paige insisted. If she had a quarter for every time she’d been asked that question... well, she’d be set for life. She’d already noted the plate, so if the woman balked, she’d track her down later.

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“I’m not going anywhere until I speak with my husband,” the woman turned and took several steps toward the portable trailer.

Paige glanced at Havilland who shrugged and followed the woman into the small structure. Once they were inside, he locked the door and moved behind the large desk. If this was the victim’s spouse, Mrs. Hagerty... things might get ugly fast.

Felicity Hagerty frowned. “I’d like an explanation. That is my husband’s desk. I find it highly disrespectful for you...” she pulled a strange face. “Well, for you to come in and act like you’re in charge or something.”

Paige grabbed a folding chair and positioned it to the side of the desk before casually settling in. “We are in charge.” She noticed the subtle change in the woman’s demeanor. Apparently, she didn’t like that response. “Before we discuss the situation here, at the site, I’m going to need you to tell me your name.”

Felicity flipped back her fiery red hair and huffed. “Why, I’m Mrs. Dutch Hagerty and you are trespassing.”

Havilland grinned. “We’re the police ma’am. We don’t trespass.”

“Where is my husband?” Felicity ignored him. “The inspector should be here any minute. We cannot afford this,” she brushed a hand through the air impatiently. “Whatever this is. I will not risk a delay because you want to play...”

“This isn’t a game Mrs. Hagerty,” Paige inserted, sensing her partner was about to blow. “I regret to inform you, Dutch Hagerty... your husband, well he passed away last night. I’m afraid the inspection is going to have to wait. The building is a crime scene.”

“What do you mean passed away?” Felicity focused on the man as she shifted in her chair. The tiny dress rode up, exposing a generous portion of her thigh. She batted her eyes at the male officer and subtly licked her lips. “Dutch was healthy and fit. You must be mistaken and the inspection simply cannot be delayed. You understand, don’t you?” she cooed as she pushed her chest a little higher in Havilland’s direction.

Paige blinked in shock. *Seriously?* The woman had just learned her husband was dead and her instinct was to pull a Sharon Stone? Before she could whip out a cigarette and light up, Paige decided to take over. “The inspection will be canceled.”

“Can’t you do something to fix this?” she leaned forward slightly, obviously believing if Havi got a clear view down the front of her dress he’d give her what she wanted.

“Nope,” Havilland settled back in the chair. “You know, I find it interesting that you are more concerned with a building inspection than how your husband died.”

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Felicity straightened and her eyes grew cold. How dare this... public servant reject her advances like that? "I simply do not believe you. Dutch is fine. I saw his truck in the lot. He's probably in a closet running wire or something and you made a mistake."

"I assure you, Mrs. Hagerty," Paige continued. "We have not made a mistake. We don't give notification of a man's death to his loved ones..." she paused for effect. "Lightly."

"There are questions," Havilland began. "The death is suspicious. Can you tell us, when was the last time you saw your husband?"

"You said he passed away," Felicity objected. "I assumed that meant from natural causes."

"There's nothing natural about falling over thirty feet from a second-floor beam," Havilland countered.

Felicity's hand shot to her mouth and she gasped.

Paige watched, there was something fake about Mrs. Hagerty. She couldn't say what. Her actions seemed in line with someone who had just been surprised but it didn't ring true somehow. She knew she should step in, soften the blow but she wanted to see how Havi handled the situation and it was his case.

Felicity took a shuddering breath. "Dutch was killed in an accident, then? I need to call OSHA, get the investigation started right away. They are sticklers for that kind of thing. I won't be given a huge fine because you delayed notification. And there is no reason a tragic accident has to delay the inspection."

"I said he fell from the beam," Havilland said calmly. "I didn't say it was an accident. And, it hasn't escaped my notice that you didn't answer the question. When was the last time you saw your husband?"

"What exactly are you implying, officer?"

"It's Deputy Havilland," Havi corrected. "And I'm not implying anything. We are conducting an investigation. The first step is to determine when you saw your husband last. The second step is to determine where you were last night. Feel free to take those in whatever order you prefer."

"My husband has been tragically killed and you sit here..." Felicity inhaled sharply. "You have the nerve to interrogate me?"

"Not to step on Havilland's toes here, but there is another question you have failed to answer, Mrs. Dutch Hagerty. You never gave us your first name." Paige's gut was screaming now. Sure, you never could predict how a grieving spouse would react to the news their loved one was dead but Mrs. Dutch here was acting more than a little suspicious.

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“My name is Felicity Hagerty,” the woman stood. “And if you have any further questions, you can contact my lawyer.” She reached into her handbag and pulled out a business card. “Ryan will be notified if you harass me again. I doubt your boss will be pleased if he gets slapped with a lawsuit over an industrial accident.”

Paige and Havilland watched as the woman marched out the door.

“That went well,” Paige stood and smiled. “Didn’t go over too well, you know when you ignored her damsel in distress routine.”

Havilland also stood. “More like femme fatale if you ask me.”

The two of them stepped back out of the trailer and paused at the bottom of the stairs. It was a hot, dry morning, the afternoon was going to be unbearable.

Billy Duncan rushed over from the side of the building. “Mrs. Hagerty didn’t look happy. Did everything go okay in there? She demanded to know where the workers are. When I told her I sent them home, she nearly blew a gasket.”

“Billy?” Paige studied the middle-aged man. He seemed a lot better now. “We need to start interviewing everyone that works here. I’d like to start with you, if you think you’re up to it.”

“Oh, yeah,” Billy swallowed hard. “Okay.”

Several hours later, Paige was headed back to the office. They hadn’t learned much from Billy. Even less from the workers that had stayed back to be interviewed before enjoying a paid day off. Once she and Duncan Havilland had interviewed everyone at the site, they’d split the list of remaining employees and began making house calls. She had just left Cody Barnes resident, the last man on her list, and wanted to hook back up with Duncan before they decided their next move.

Paige stepped through the back door of the station, closed her eyes and took a second to just enjoy the nice, cool, air-conditioned building. When she opened her eyes, she realized Jericho was waiting in the doorway. “Sorry, what’s up?” Paige took several steps forward, pausing a few feet from her boss.

“I need you and Havilland in the conference room,” he turned and walked away.

Paige frowned, stepped into the large open office area and spotted Duncan headed her way. “We in trouble?” she asked.

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Duncan Havilland shrugged. “If I had to guess, that hot-shot attorney of the late Dutch Hagerty made a phone call.”

“Did you get anything new?” Paige asked before stepping into the large room that contained a massive oval table. Jericho Walters, Sanpete County Sheriff, was sitting at the head of the table silently waiting for the two of them to join him.

Havilland shook his head before settling into an executive chair, Paige took a seat across from him.

“I don’t like getting blindsided by a self-important, arrogant attorney,” Jericho began. “Especially before I had my morning coffee.” He held up a hand when Duncan started to speak. “But, I talked to Margie and she told me you were busy handling the investigation, so I’ll give you a pass... this time. Next time, I expect a phone call.”

“Sorry, sir,” Duncan answered. “It’s my fault. This is my case, Paige is just helping me out. I should have made notification right away.”

“No harm done,” Jericho relaxed. “Now, give me the basics. I have a feeling Mr. Ryan Wickert is not going away anytime soon. Why do you think that fall was more than an unfortunate accident?”

“At first,” Havilland began. “It was just the fall. The boss working at night, all alone and he just falls for no reason? Didn’t track for me. I’m guessing Paige agreed because once she got there we started looking at things from a criminal lens.”

“I do,” Paige affirmed. “I also found women’s footprints at the scene and a locket that I want Heidi to examine for fingerprints, particles, everything.”

“Then there’s the wife,” Havi provided. “She’s...”

“I’ve met Felicity,” Jericho interrupted. “There’s no need to go any further. Do you think she’s involved?”

“Shoe prints match the ones she was wearing this morning,” Paige offered. “I haven’t measured for size, but with your permission, I’d like to bring in an expert.”

“On shoes?” Jericho asked.

Paige smiled. “Shoes and technology. Carmen is still in town. One look at these photos and she’ll be able to tell me size, make, anything I need to know about those prints.”

“I don’t see any harm in it,” Jericho nodded. “What else?”

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“Billy Duncan,” Havi started. “He’s the foreman. Billy said there was trouble in paradise. There’s a question about ownership of the company. Billy’s not sure Felicity Hagerty is the rightful owner. He thinks Dutch created a contingency... in case of trouble.”

“What kind of trouble?” Jericho asked.

“He doesn’t know,” Paige answered. “He just knows Dutch brought him in because Billy was supposed to run the crew if the trust Dutch formed was activated for any reason.”

“And the proceeds?” Jericho wondered.

“No idea,” Duncan shrugged. “We need to figure out who the attorney was and what legal provisions are in place.”

“I got the impression this Ryan Wickert was Felicity’s personal attorney,” Jericho considered. “I’ll make a call to Tolman and see what he can tell me about the man. He may know what kind of law this Wickert fella practices.”

“Will it complicate things?” Paige asked. “Bringing in the DA before we can prove we have a case?”

Jericho grinned. “Of course.”

“Then can we wait?” Havilland asked.

“We could,” Jericho said. “But we’re not going to. I can’t risk it. The arrogant prick is bound to go to Tolman eventually. He wasn’t happy with my response this morning. The sooner we bring in James Tolman, the better. He might even be able to run interference... give you two time to prove your theory,” Jericho stood. “Now, I have a phone call to make and you need to put your heads together and bring me something I can use to convince our illustrious attorney we need to pursue this.”

“You said you’ve met Felicity Hagerty,” Paige also stood. “Are you friends?”

Jericho flashed her an annoyed scowl. “You did meet the woman, right?”

Paige smiled. “Sorry, my bad. I guess you won’t be upset then when I tell you, I think she’s responsible.”

“No,” Jericho shrugged. “But thinking and proving are two very different things.”

Once their boss had left the room, the two deputies put their heads together, trying to come up with another angle to chase. Just like Paige, Havilland’s interviews hadn’t resulted in anything significant.

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“Okay,” Paige ran a frustrated hand through her hair. “We know Dutch didn’t use his wife’s lawyer for company business. But he ran a construction company. These days’ people sue for the smallest infraction. Let’s have Margie get into that court system, the one that shows criminal and civil cases. Maybe Hagerty Construction has a docket or brief or something we can pull to see what attorney filed the paperwork on his behalf.”

“Oh, you mean that xChange program?” Havilland asked, following her into the open office area. They made a beeline for Margie’s desk.

“Yeah,” Paige stopped next to Jericho’s assistant’s desk. “That’s the one.”

“You need me to run something in xChange?” Margie asked, overhearing the last of the conversation.

“Hagerty Construction,” Havilland provided. “We need to see if we can find their attorney.”

Margie began tapping on her keyboard. Within seconds, she was motioning for the duo to come around the desk. “There were a few cases, but this one was the most recent. Last year and it says here....” She clicked on a link and an official court document appeared. “Maury Humphrey filed this paperwork. Here’s his address and number but I’m sure he’s left for the day. I’d try him first thing in the morning if it were me.”

“Thanks, Margie,” Havi smiled. “You’re awesome.”

Jericho stepped into his doorway with his cellphone pressed to his ear. “James says Wickert is a civil attorney.” He disappeared back into his office.

“Divorce maybe?” Havilland asked.

Paige considered. “Maybe, but I think Billy would have known if his boss was pursuing a divorce. He just said there was trouble and Butch was making preparations. I didn’t get the feeling anything had been filed yet if there was a divorce pending.”

“You’re right,” Havilland agreed.

“Could have been something to do with her prenup,” Margie provided.

“Are you saying there was one?” Havilland asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Margie nodded. “I don’t know Felicity Hagerty. I don’t run in the right crowds. I mean, I’m one of those lowly working people.”

Paige laughed. “Join the club.”

“But I hear things,” Margie shrugged.

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“That’s an understatement,” Havi smiled.

“When Felicity married Dutch, their prenup was the talk of the town. Dutch had been burned before, not a marriage but a partnership that had gone bad. He wanted to protect the company. The agreement is ironclad, from what I heard. And, there are rumors, nothing substantial mind you, that Mrs. High and Mighty was involved.”

“With?” Paige pressed.

“It’s a mystery,” Margie admitted. “Nobody knows. But the marriage was on the rocks and there was speculation that Dutch was working to firm up things regarding the company. I heard he was creating a trust with a secret board of directors.”

“But isn’t it a private LLC?” Havilland asked. “That doesn’t make sense with that kind of setup.”

“I don’t know anything about that,” Margie frowned. “Seems he would have needed a good lawyer to change a company’s structure though. Maybe this Maury Humphrey can shed some light.”

“Thanks again, Margie,” Havilland started to move away from the desk. “I have one more place I want to visit, then I’m going to call it a day. I’ll see the two of you in the morning.”

Paige watched as Havilland exited the building. “Has Dean checked on?”

“He has,” Margie answered as Jericho stepped from his office. “Tolman is going to do a little checking, behind the scenes. He’s not convinced this was anything more than an accident but he knows Felicity Hagerty, not on a personal level. Apparently, he’s had to endure more than one charity function where he’s dealt with her. The shoe prints, her reaction, they have him intrigued. I’ll let you know when I hear anything. In the meantime, I say we all call it a day. Go home, Paige. There’s nothing pressing that can’t wait for morning.”

Paige nodded and followed her boss out the door.

Jericho turned just before he reached his car. “Gage brought me a list this morning. Seems there were quite a few athletes that received that ring. He’s working on narrowing the list some. I’ll let you know when we have something finalized.”

“Thanks,” Paige sighed. “Seems every time we find a good lead, things around here pick up and I don’t have the time to pursue that cold case. Thanks for letting Gage help on this. I think he’s the best man for the job.”

“I agree,” Jericho nodded. “And we’ll find time. We both just need to be patient.”

“Goodnight,” Paige said before climbing into her vehicle and heading home.

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Paige pulled off the highway and followed the long drive back to the construction site. If anyone asked, she wouldn't be able to explain why she'd returned. She just needed to see the place at night. According to the ME, Dutch Hagerty died between nine and eleven the previous evening. It was five minutes after ten... well within the window. She'd just go up, take a look around and get a feel for the building... how it looked and felt when Dutch met his demise. She frowned when she spotted the beat-up old Toyota parked next to Dutch's large work truck.

Paige pulled in next to the car, jotted down the plate then shut down her car. As she stepped into the warm night, she heard a faint sound coming from inside the building. After glancing around one more time to make sure she hadn't missed anything out in the open, she made her way to the front entrance. With each step she took, the noise got louder. Paige moved forward and paused at the bottom of the staircase. It sounded like someone was crying. She slowly, silently ascended the rough steps, cautious not to make a sound.

When she reached the top, she peeked around the corner and spotted a woman sitting against a wall near the place Dutch had been just before he fell. Paige pressed her back against the wall that separated the two women and considered. She had no idea who this girl was, didn't know if she'd murdered their victim, didn't know if she had a weapon. All of the above were possible, but Paige decided none of them were probable. The woman was clearly distraught, mourning the loss of someone she cared about. Paige crouched and peered around the wall again. "Hello," she called. "I'm Deputy Carter, can I come over and talk to you?"

The woman jumped, as much as one could when they were sitting on the floor. She swallowed hard and tried to clear her throat. "Uh...okay," she finally said.

Paige stood and moved toward the emotional woman who was still crying. She stopped a few feet away and waited. The instant the woman looked up Paige began. "Can you tell me your name?"

The woman pressed the palm of her hands to her eyes, then briskly wiped away the remaining moisture. "Sandy Mitford."

"Okay," Paige crouched in front of the woman so she could see her more closely. "Can I call you Sandy?"

"Sure," the woman hiccupped. "Sorry."

"I'm guessing you knew Dutch," Paige declared. Might as well get to the point.

"Yes," the woman suddenly looked defiant.

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“Did you know him well?” Paige asked, already knowing the answer.

“Yes.”

So much for getting to the bottom of things. “Can you elaborate, please?”

Paige shifted and settled in next to the woman realizing this was going to be a long conversation.

“I went to college with Dutch,” she began. “We dated a little but mostly we were just really good friends. He graduated and came back home to take over the family business. I finished up school and moved to Denver. We lost touch, you know how it is. You always mean to hook up with your old college pals but somehow life always gets in the way.”

“I understand,” Paige nodded. “But you did get in touch?”

“No, not really,” Sandy disagreed. “I mean not on purpose. I landed a pretty good job in Denver, at an investment firm. Dutch took over the construction business. I’m surprised our paths met, but they did. Dutch came to Colorado a few years back. He heard about a large development going in and wanted to submit a bid, talk to the owners, stuff like that.”

“And you ran into each other?” Paige realized.

“We did,” Sandy nodded and brushed away fresh tears. “We were both surprised and wanted to catch up, you know. It was innocent, just a couple friends meeting for lunch.”

“But it turned into more?”

“Eventually,” Sandy admitted. “But not then. Dutch seemed a little sad, I got him to open up and he told me a little about his marriage. I was single, never been married, so I couldn’t really relate but we had been such good friends in college... Well, I guess it was just easy for us to reconnect.”

“When did the affair start?” Paige asked, knowing she was right.

“About six months ago,” Sandy sighed. “We didn’t mean for it to happen. I mean for over two years we just... well, we just remained friends. Dutch would call when he needed a break. He didn’t get the job in Denver but he did get a few smaller projects. He was in town off and on and we sort of just picked up where we left off. It was strictly platonic, I swear.”

“I believe you,” and for some reason, Paige did.

“About eight months ago, Dutch discovered his wife had been having an affair,” Sandy said softly. “He was furious at first, but then he decided it was for the best. He’d been struggling, trying to fix their relationship and nothing seemed to work. Now he knew why. She didn’t want to fix it. She had someone else.”

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“But she didn’t divorce him because of the prenup?”

“Yeah,” Sandy said a little surprised. “If she left him, she would be living the good life. That woman lived to shop. So much, sometimes Dutch worried he couldn’t pay the bill.”

“What happens now that he’s dead?” Paige asked.

“I don’t know,” Sandy admitted. “Dutch was putting things in place, you know, preparing for an ugly divorce. The first thing he had to do was prove she was cheating. He told me a couple days ago he finally had what he needed. The second step was to make sure the company was safe. He knew she’d go after that and he hoped the prenuptial agreement would be enough to save it.”

“Did it matter that he was also having an affair?” Paige asked.

“I don’t know,” Sandy said, frustrated. “When I asked him for the details, he just said not to worry about it. He said it was his mess and he wasn’t going to drag me into it. We didn’t mean to get involved, we really didn’t. It’s just...well, I always had a crush on Dutch. He was so kind and... good, you know?”

“I didn’t actually know Dutch Hagerty, but I’m glad he was good to you,” Paige told her. “And I am truly sorry for your loss.”

“He came to Denver, for a job, about six months ago,” Sandy continued. “Dutch was so upset. He felt so alone. I hated seeing him like that and invited him to dinner. We talked all night long. He had discovered Felicity, his wife, was getting information from his former partner. Dutch and Keith had started out friends, but almost immediately problems developed. Dutch ended up buying Keith out, but it was expensive. The split was not a good one and Keith has been trying to ruin Dutch ever since.”

“Do you know Keith’s last name?”

“Uh...” Sandy hesitated. “Do you need to bring him into this?”

“I need to talk to him,” Paige said.

“Okay, it’s Keith Shavell.”

“Do you think he had anything to do with Dutch’s accident?” Paige asked.

“No,” Sandy shook her head. “But I don’t think it was an accident.”

“Why not?”

“Because I think Felicity found out about me,” Sandy admitted. “She called my phone last night, just before nine.”

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“Did you answer?”

“No,” Sandy pulled out her phone, punched a couple buttons and Felicity’s voice filled the room.

“Sandy Mitford,” Felicity said angrily. “I know who you are. I talked to those... vile college friends of yours. I know you have wanted my husband for years. Stay away from him or you will regret it.”

“Can you forward that message to my phone?” Paige asked. Havi needed to hear the message and the anger. It might explain what happened out here last night.

“Sure,” Sandy pressed a few buttons and then Paige’s phone pinged. “Am I a suspect now?”

“Technically, yes.” Paige sighed. “What can you tell me to clear your name? That message came in just before nine. What did you do after you received it?” Paige pulled out her phone. “Oh, can I record this? I’m not actually the lead investigator and I’d like him to hear your answers.”

“Okay,” Sandy said hesitantly. “When that call came in, I was with my brother.”

“His name?”

“Jerry,” Sandy sighed, knowing he was going to be brought into this now. “He’s a year older than me. He’s looking for work and just moved to town. I was going to ask Dutch if he had a job my brother could do. Maybe intern or something but Jerry agreed to come a few days too late. This is so messed up. What am I going to do without him?”

Paige didn’t know how to answer that and figured the woman didn’t really want an answer, anyway. “So Jerry is staying with you? He was there all night?”

“Yes,” Sandy nodded. “I was upset when I got that call. I didn’t know what to do. I considered calling Dutch, but I figured he already knew. He always knew things like that somehow. Anyway, Jerry talked me out of it. He wasn’t happy about the affair, but he understood. We argued a lot, he was mad at me for using my boyfriend to get him a job. It took us hours to work through it all and by the time we were finished, it was too late to call Dutch. I was going to talk to him tonight. We were supposed to meet, for dinner and he was going to tell me the plan. He said he’d put everything in motion and it was all going to work out, soon.”

“Did Dutch ever give you jewelry?”

Sandy furrowed her brows. “No, why? I mean, he probably would have but I was so uncomfortable with the affair and all. I told him we had to keep our relationship a secret until it

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was over. We never ate out, in public. I was too scared a friend or one of his employees would see us. We drove all the way to Price when we went out and he never gave me gifts.”

“Okay,” Paige wondered if that was how Felicity had found Sandy. Was the locket intended as a gift to his girlfriend? Maybe a symbol that things were moving along and they would be together soon? “Did Dutch ever talk to you about the business? Billy said Dutch was making some changes, things that would protect the company because things with Felicity were rocky.”

“No,” Sandy pulled her legs up and wrapped her arms around her knees. “We didn’t talk about that. I worked for an investment and development firm in Denver so I understood the business but we didn’t talk about that. Dutch said the business was doing well, that he was finally getting the good jobs and his company was in demand. He relied on Billy a lot, that man knows the business and Dutch trusted him. Billy was probably the only person besides me that Dutch did trust. But Dutch was a private man, he didn’t talk about himself a lot. Not the details. He talked about his dreams, mostly. He wanted to build a big house near a lake. Dutch had purchased some property just outside Palisades State Park and he wanted to build a house out there with a garden and an amazing backyard. I can still picture it, the way he described it. It was going to be our dream home.” Tears started to stream down Sandy’s face again.

Paige was starting to get a pretty good picture of the man who had met an early death. And one question kept rising to the surface. How could this man, the man Sandy was describing, the man Billy had described early that day... how had he come to marry Felicity Hagerty? “I think that’s everything for now,” Paige stood. “I may need to contact you in the future if I have more questions. And uh...” Paige glanced around. “I can’t let you stay here. I’m afraid I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”

Sandy stood. “I understand. It’s okay, I was about to leave, anyway.”

The two women made their way to the parking lot, climbed into their respective vehicles and left the area.

“I have a meeting with Maury Humphrey and need to head out,” Duncan called out the instant Paige stepped into the office. “You coming?”

“Sure,” Paige turned to head back out into the parking lot. Once they were settled inside Duncan’s vehicle Paige waited to learn where they were going.

“Humphrey’s office is located in Price,” Havilland said, pulling onto the highway. “We’ll take eighty-nine to six, should take a couple hours. Hope you didn’t have plans this morning.”

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“Not really,” Paige settled in for the ride. “But I met someone last night at the construction site.” She proceeded to tell Havilland about her encounter with Sandy. “I recorded most of it so you can listen to the conversation once we’re finished here.”

“Or you could play it now,” he suggested. “We have plenty of time. I’d like to listen to what she has to say and hash it out before we meet with Humphrey.”

The office was professional and looked expensive but not pretentious. Paige and Duncan were seated in a small conference room away from the various offices scattered around the main floor of the building. Clearly, this firm was doing well for itself.

Within minutes a well-dressed man stepped into the room. “I’m sorry I couldn’t come to you this morning,” Maury began. “I know driving all the way out here had to be inconvenient but Judge Reese rarely reschedules unless it’s a dire emergency. And, according to him, the death of a man is not an emergency, Dutch was already dead after all.”

“We understand,” Havilland held back a grin. Sounded like most judges he’d met throughout his career. Their time was valuable, everyone else... not so much.

“Anyway,” Maury settled into one of the chairs and set a file on the table. “I’m not sure how I can help.”

“First,” Paige leaned forward. “Can you tell us what kind of law you practice? And maybe who you represent?”

“Mostly corporate law,” Maury clasped his hands on the table in front of him and considered. “I had two clients, Dutch Hagerty and Hagerty Construction. Originally the company was an LLP, but when the partnership was dissolved it was restructured as an LLC with Dutch as the sole shareholder but he restructured things a bit and changed the way things run.”

“Changed it how?” Havi asked.

“He signed the paperwork last Friday to put a Board of Directors in place to oversee the finances, a silent controlling contingent, I guess you could say.”

“So was he merging with another corporation?” Paige asked.

“No,” Maury shook his head. “This board was comprised of limited shareholders he trusted. People who knew the business but would not have any involvement with the day-to-day operations. They were strictly money people. Dutch set it up so they made financial decisions

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and were paid a portion of the profits... it was the only solution we could come up with to deal with the problem he was facing. Because the shareholder's stake was so limited, it wouldn't have much impact on him personally but it would protect the company's interests. Like I said, the men were people he trusted, men who would not interfere with Dutch. He still had full control while he was alive and he had the first right to purchase their shares if they wanted to sell down the road."

"I know all that attorney-client privilege stuff, but we need to understand what was going on here," Havilland pressed.

"Due to the changes Dutch made," Maury began. "The provisions he put in place in case of his death, I can't go into the business dealings with you. However, I can give you a little information on the personal front. What Dutch asked me to do, protections you could say, that went into place a few weeks ago."

"Whatever you can tell us would be appreciated," Paige told him.

"Dutch was filing for divorce," Humphrey explained. "I do not practice family law, but the corporate stuff bled into the family stuff so I've been working with a man by the name of Peter Thayer. He was representing Dutch in the divorce."

"Okay," Havilland sighed. "Any idea how we get a hold of this Thayer guy?"

"Sure, I can give you his card before you go."

"We appreciate your help on that," Paige told him. "Anything else you can tell us?"

"Like I said," Maury sighed. "He created the board for the business. He didn't want most of the personal property. He had his current residence and from what I gathered, he was going to give that to Felicity in the divorce. He recently purchased a large plot of land near Palisades and he wanted to build a home he actually liked out there."

"He didn't like his family home?" Havilland asked.

"Have you seen it?" Maury asked.

"No," Paige admitted.

"Well," Maury smiled. "You are in for a treat if you ever do. In answer to your question, no. He hated it. Felicity would get the house, her sports car and all of her possessions. Furniture, clothes, jewelry. Dutch didn't want any of it."

"What about alimony?" Paige asked. "Dutch Construction seemed to be doing well."

"No," Maury said. "She was not entitled to anything when it came to the company."

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“I’ve been told there was a prenup,” Havilland pressed. “I also have reason to believe they were both having affairs. Does that play into the status of the company?”

“It does,” Maury sighed again. “I told Dutch he would not be able to keep his relationship a secret for long. He hired a private detective a few months back. He needed proof his wife was cheating for the prenup to take effect. He got his proof alright, it’s what prompted him to put all the planning in place. In regards to the company that is. I understand why he did it and under the circumstances, I’m glad he did. This whole thing is just a mess and I’m afraid it’s going to get a lot more complicated before it’s all settled.”

“Can you elaborate?” Paige asked.

“Not a lot,” Maury said sadly. “I will say this... I’m not sure Felicity married Dutch for love. I told him as much after he discovered her secret. I can’t really get into more than that, for various reason. Maybe Trent can. Trent Dunbar. He was the PI Dutch hired to look into things. Now that Dutch is dead, he might have a little more leeway to discuss the details with you. Let me get his card as well as Pete’s. Hopefully, you can sort all of this out.” Maury paused. “I’m wondering, can you tell me something?”

“Depends,” Havilland said cryptically. He hated dealing with lawyers. They didn’t want to share anything, but they expected you to share everything with them.

“I supposed I deserved that,” Maury smiled. “I’m not trying to be difficult, I’m just trying to help and not get myself disbarred in the process.”

“We understand,” Paige also smiled. “What is your question?”

“Can I assume this visit and your investigation are signs Dutch Hagerty didn’t die in an accident?”

“Do you think it was an accident?” Paige asked.

“No,” Maury said without hesitation. “I think Felicity and her lover found out what Dutch was doing and they tried to eliminate him before he finalized his plans.”

“Did they?” Havilland asked. “Did Dutch have a chance to finalize things?”

“They failed,” Maury told them. “For the most part. My job just got a lot harder, but at the end of the day, Dutch took care of everything he needed to before he passed away.” Maury left the room and returned with two business cards.

Havilland took the cards, thanked the attorney for his time and followed Paige back to the car. “I can’t decide if that was worth the trip or not.”

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“I think it was,” she settled into the passenger’s seat and held out her hand. “Give me the cards, I want to pay a visit to this Thayer guy. I think he’s our best bet. PI’s will usually talk to the cops.” Paige called the number and had a brief conversation while Havilland maneuvered through traffic to find the address. At least the guy operated out of Price and they didn’t have to drive to Provo or Salt Lake today.

“He said he has a few minutes to fill us in before he heads out,” Paige said disconnecting the call. “And he said it’s in that area, over there... across from that daycare.”

Minutes later Duncan and Paige once again, found themselves seated in a small conference room. This time, the secretary was actually friendly and had just passed out mugs of coffee when a middle-aged man stepped into the room. He wore cowboy boots, a button down western style denim shirt and faded jeans.

“Casual Thursday?” Havilland asked.

“Casual every day,” Trent settled into a chair and studied to the two lawmen. “Before you go treatin’ me like I’m some small town hick that always wanted to be a cop but couldn’t hack it, I guess I should tell you I’m retired. Did my twenty and got out. I’m selective and discrete because I’m just that good.”

“And before you go treating us like were a couple small town hicks, I guess I should tell you I left the FBI last year to see how the locals do things,” Paige provided.

“Now that we got that all cleared up,” Havilland grumbled. “Can we stop throwing around resumes and get down to business?”

“Testy partner,” Trent winked at Paige. “But he’s right, I’m on a tight schedule. You want to know about Dutch. Good guy, shame what happened.”

“You mean that he accidentally fell to his death?” Havilland tested.

“Sure,” Trent settled deeper into his chair. “If that’s the way you want to go with this. You’d be wrong, but I won’t argue. Not unless someone pays me to.”

“So,” Paige said slowly. “In your professional opinion, Dutch didn’t have an accident?”

“We both know my opinion doesn’t mean shit,” Trent shrugged. “What matters is what the two of you can prove.”

“I’d like to hear it anyway,” Paige pressed.

“If I had to guess, Felicity and Keith Shavell had a hand in it.”

“Who is Keith Shavell?” Havilland asked.

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“Felicity’s side piece,” Trent provided. “And Dutch’s old partner.”

“What, what?” Paige sat forward. “The partner he had so many problems with? The split that was ugly and nearly ruined the company?”

“That’s him,” Trent nodded. “It was nearly impossible to catch them together. Those two are careful but I managed it a few months back. Let me see, I cornered them probably eight, nine months ago. Took the pictures to Dutch. He didn’t take it well. I think it was a bigger blow than he wanted to admit. He realized his entire marriage was a sham.”

“He thought Felicity married him to get a portion of the company?” Havilland concluded. “To steal back what Keith couldn’t get on his own?”

“That was our theory,” Trent agreed. “Dutch cared for Felicity, in the beginning. The guy was one of the good ones. I keep a distance, you know how it is. This job, your job... you have to remain focused and a little aloof. But Dutch somehow got through. He worked his way in and I considered the guy a friend. At first, I couldn’t find a trace. Like I said Keith and Felicity were careful but everyone slips up and I was there to catch it. Dutch was in Denver at the time, just finishing up a strip mall or something. Anyway, they let down their guard. Had dinner in public, headed back to the house and that’s how I got them. Dutch gave me access to the security cameras. The two of them thought a private backyard meant they really had privacy. Idiots.”

“Did Felicity know she’d been caught?” Paige asked.

“Not sure,” Trent admitted. “I don’t think so, though. Like I said, Dutch took it hard. Then he headed back to Denver. Hooked up with an old friend. I think that’s when things heated up between those two. But this one, Sandy something or other... Dutch really loved her. I checked her out, too.” Trent opened a file. “Yeah, Sandy Mitford. She appears okay. Brother’s struggling - needs a job, but I don’t think they’re on the take from Felicity or Keith.”

“I ran into Sandy and I agree,” Paige provided.

“We stopped by to visit with Maury Humphrey,” Havilland continued. “The man told us next to nothing. Anything you can provide that might help?”

Trent considered. “I mostly dealt with the infidelity issue but I do know Dutch completely overhauled the structure. Of the company, I mean. He set up a board to oversee all financial dealings. Got Maury to do it up, I don’t know how much you know about Humphrey but that at least is iron clad. The company is safe. His death, well it got those two nothing they were after. Senseless really.”

“What about the personal stuff?” Paige asked.

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“No idea,” Trent said. “Not really. All I know is what he told me. Dutch said the company was safe. That this board had been set up to be isolated, a secret. Nobody in the company knows who sits on it. He checked them out, made sure they didn’t have any dealings with Keith before he hired them. All financial dealings must go through them, no exceptions.”

“And by he checked them out, you mean you did?” Havilland asked.

Trent just smiled.

“So,” Paige considered. “If nobody knows who they are, who runs the day-to-day stuff?”

“Billy Ralston,” Trent smiled. “He’s solid, I checked. Billy will be in charge of the company, run down the projects then send the request to the board. The board will vote, send Billy the approved budget and he’ll take over from there.”

“Why the secrecy?” Paige asked.

“Dutch was worried about Keith,” Trent shrugged. “Apparently, the man had infiltrated his organization once before. Dutch wanted to make sure the company was safe.”

“And who gets the profits now that he’s gone?” Havilland asked.

“They go into a trust,” Trent told them. “Billy will get a raise, but don’t for one minute think that man had anything to do with this.”

“We don’t,” Havilland assured him.

“But he doesn’t own the company?” Paige asked.

“No,” Trent hesitated.

“Who?” Havilland asked.

“Sandy,” Trent admitted. “But I honestly don’t think she even knows that yet. Like I said, I think it was the real deal. Dutch was excited to get this all resolved and move forward. He bought that property by the lake, set up the company so Sandy would be set and just wanted the whole thing behind him.”

“But does Felicity know?” Paige asked.

“Couldn’t say,” Trent stood. “Now, I need to run and I think I’ve told you more than I should have.”

“What about the property? By the lake, I mean?” Havilland asked.

“Can’t say for sure, but I’d guess all his personal belongings will go to Sandy,” Trent sighed. “That part of the deal could get ugly. I mean, Dutch filed for divorce but it wasn’t final

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before he dies. I don't know if he was able to save anything but the company. Shame, be nice if the girl could at least get the lake house."

"One last thing," Paige stood. "With Dutch gone, how does that impact things?"

"Like I said," Trent picked up the file and headed for the door. "Doesn't as far as the company goes. You'd have to ask Thayer about the divorce stuff."

The instant they were back in the parking lot, Havilland pulled out his phone.

"Who are you calling?" Paige asked.

"Margie," Havilland answered absently as he waited for his favorite assistant to pick up. "I want to know everything there is to know about Keith Shavell."

"Think there's a reason to visit Thayer?" Paige asked. "I expect he'll just give us the run-around."

"He's in Ephraim," Duncan said, once he looked at the card. "Hey Margie, I need you to run everything on a name. Hold on just a minute." He turned back to Paige. "Call Thayer and see if we can stop by on our way back to the office. I want to at least ask. You never know what he might give up. Okay, Margie, I'm back. Here's what I've got."

They didn't get much from Thayer. As suspected, he cited privilege and evaded nearly all their questions. He did answer one thing though. Sandy Mitford would receive the lake property. Dutch had Quit Claimed it over to Sandy last week. Paige was beginning to wonder if Dutch knew his life was in danger. Or maybe was he just preparing for an ugly divorce? She also wondered if buying that locket and signing over the property was how Felicity found out about the college friend turned partner. She was still deep in thought when Havilland stepped up to her desk.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Huh?" Paige looked up. "Oh, I was just wondering if Dutch knew his life was in danger. I mean, he signed the property over to his girlfriend, protected the company and after being betrayed by Keith and then Felicity... I just can't believe he'd trust Sandy the way he did unless he knew something was in the works."

Havilland dropped into her visitor's chair. "Good point. I mean he'd been burned...badly. Twice. How did he know he could trust this Sandy woman? Maybe we need to interview her again."

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“I’m not sure she can tell us much more, but I’m game. How about now?” Paige stood.

They were headed for the door when Margie stopped them. “I have something you might want to see here.”

“What did you find?” Havilland asked.

“Keith Shavell and Felicity Hagerty... formerly Loflin go way back. The two of them were arrested in a check fraud case nearly nine years ago.”

“That’s something,” Havilland moved to skim the details.

“There’s more,” Margie said, switching programs. “After Keith and Dutch had their battle over the company, Keith got into some trouble. He has five lawsuits filed against him over a subdivision project up in Spring City.”

“Could be motive,” Paige said glancing at Duncan. “Knock off Dutch, Felicity inherits everything and Keith comes in, clears out the account to settle the liens against his company and takes over Hagerty Construction. The two of them are in the clear to bring their relationship out in the open and all their troubles are gone.”

“Maybe,” Havilland glanced at Margie. “Can you connect those two more recently? Nine years is a long time. A jury is going to need more.”

“I’ll see what I can find,” Margie promised. “Go visit that Sandy woman. She might be able to help more than she realizes. And don’t worry about Jer, I’ll fill him in for you. I’m expecting a call from that snooty Wickert anytime now.”

“Don’t deal with him,” Paige paused to advice. “Send him over to Tolman. They speak the same language.”

Margie was laughing as the two deputies turned to leave.

The minute they were in the parking lot, Havilland turned to Paige. “It wasn’t a bad plan. Could have worked. It still might. We have a good theory but proving it is going to be difficult.”

“It could have worked in any other town - maybe,” Paige disagreed. “But not here. I wasn’t as suspicious as you, but I would have looked around. Once I spotted the shoe prints that was it for me. Dean, Gage, even Logan. He’s new but smart... we all would have looked closer. Now that we have, we know it’s homicide. Let’s figure out a way to prove it.” Paige didn’t have a chance to continue because her phone rang.

“The prints were made by a size eight pair of Jimmy Choo’s,” Carmen said the instant Paige said hello.

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Paige grinned. "You're sure?"

"Is the Pope Catholic?" Carmen asked, offended.

"Of course, you're sure," Paige said. "I'm sorry for doubting your amazing ability as a shoe whisperer."

"You're forgiven," Carmen said. "Look for a pair that has a scuff on the pad of the left shoe. It will probably be invisible from the top, but once you turn it over you can't miss it. You're dealing with a construction case, so my guess is she stepped on a tool of some kind. Something that gouged a piece out. May have been that night, but something that small would be impossible to find. The damage wouldn't stop her from wearing them but it leaves a distinct mark."

"You're my hero," Paige said gleefully.

"Tell me something I don't know," Carmen joked. "Now, I got to get back to my real job. Nathan needs some Intel... like yesterday. Out."

"Good news?" Duncan asked as he climbed into his vehicle and waited for Paige to join him.

"I told you Carmen would come through for us," Paige clipped in the seatbelt. "The prints around Dutch's body were made by size eight Jimmy Choo stiletto."

"It is impossible for you to know that," Havilland argued.

"It's impossible for me, yes. For Carmen, the amazing shoe genius? She probably had the answer in five seconds." Paige considered. "Now we just need to figure out what sizes shoe Felicity wears."

"Good luck with that," Havilland frowned. "It's not like she's going to tell us."

"Sure she will," Paige decided. "After we're done with Sandy, let's pay a visit to the Hagerty residence. I need to see what all the fuss is about, anyway."

Havi grinned. "Yeah, I was a little curious about that, too."

"Okay," Paige glanced up at the modest home. "Let's go see what Sandy Mitford knows."

Sandy opened the door a crack and peeked out. When she spotted Paige, she slowly pushed it wider and stepped aside so the police officers could come inside. "It's too hot to stand out on the porch," she explained as she moved into a modest living room.

"We won't take much of your time," Paige assured her. "We just a few additional questions. This is Deputy Duncan Havilland."

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“Hello,” Sandy held out her hand in greeting.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Havi said. “I’m sorry for the interruption. I can see you are having a difficult time. You have my condolences.”

“Thank you,” Sandy settled into a chair, leaving the couch for Paige and Havi.

Once they were settled Havilland took the lead. “Well, first let’s just get this out of the way. Do you own an expensive pair of stilettos?”

Paige snorted then covered her mouth with her fist. “What he means to ask is if you own a pair of Jimmy Choo’s.”

“Oh, heaven’s no,” Sandy shook her head. “I don’t think I’ve ever paid more than forty dollars for a pair of shoes.”

Havilland frowned.

“Mark that as a no,” Paige pointed at his notepad.

Havilland scowled at Paige then made a notation on his pad. “Okay.” He glanced around and spotted elaborate figurine of a hawk on the mantel. “Paige asked you about gifts from Dutch and you said he never gave you gifts. Did that just mean jewelry or any kind of gift? I notice that hawk on the mantel and can only imagine how much that would set you back.”

Paige rolled her eyes at her friend’s delivery but it was a legitimate question.

“No,” Sandy crossed her ankles. “Dutch never gave me presents. I don’t know how expensive that particular piece was. It was a gift from my mother. She gave it to me just after my father passed away because we both loved hawks and she thought it would be a nice reminder now that I live so far away.”

“Thank you,” Havilland inwardly felt sorry for the woman. First her father, now the man she loved. “Paige shared that message with me, the one Felicity left you. I’m wondering if you know how she discovered you. How did she know about you and Dutch?”

“I don’t know,” Sandy frowned. “I’m not even sure she knew, exactly. I mean she knew he spent time with me but the rest... uh, well our relationship, I’m not sure she did know about that.”

“She sounded pretty angry,” Paige pressed. “Could she have hired a detective?”

“I suppose,” Sandy shrugged. “I mean we hadn’t been seeing each other, not like that, for very long. After Denver, I felt guilty and Dutch had so many things to take care of. I mean, to end his marriage and all. Then he had to protect the business from Keith.”

“So, you knew about Keith and Felicity?” Paige asked.

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“Yeah,” Sandy looked down at her hands. “I should have said something earlier but Dutch was so upset about it. I mean, he had so many problems when Keith embezzled from the company and the partnership ended. Then to find out his wife was a fraud, too. Dutch was embarrassed. I think he was more ashamed than hurt by it all.”

“Why don’t you tell us what you know about the embezzlement,” Havilland prompted. “I wasn’t aware that was the reason for the split.”

“Oh,” Sandy looked up and frowned. “I thought everyone knew that. Well, Dutch said he caught Keith in the act. When he confronted him, Keith tried to justify it. Said he had more expenses than Dutch and he should get a bigger piece of the pie. They argued, Dutch refused to budge because they needed those funds for their next project. They were still in debt over the equipment they’d purchased and Dutch felt they needed a large slush fund to keep their head above water. Keith wanted more, said he had creditors he had to satisfy and leaving the money in the bank did nothing to help him get out from under his debt.”

“I understand the partnership was dissolved but do you know anything about the details? And were there ever any charges filed against Keith?” Paige asked.

“Um...” Sandy turned and focused out the window. After a few seconds, she stood. “I have something that might help,” within seconds she had disappeared down the hallway and into a back room.

“What do you think she has?” Havilland asked.

“No idea,” Paige shrugged. “But from what we’ve learned, Dutch really loved her. He planned to have a life with her. Maybe he gave her some kind of record book or something.”

Sandy returned carrying a box. Havilland jumped to his feet and hurried down the hall to help.

“Thank you,” Sandy said as she settled back onto the chair. “Um, well... Dutch said he didn’t trust to leave these at home after he found out about Felicity and Keith. I got the impression she didn’t know where they were before that. It was like he was worried she was searching the house while he was away.”

“Did he say that?” Paige asked.

“Not in so many words,” Sandy sighed. “Like I told you before, Dutch was private and I think he wanted to protect me from all this. Anyway, he said this was what he gathered on Keith but he didn’t use it. His lawyers wanted to, but he just wanted the man out of his life. He wanted to focus on moving forward, building the company, and forgetting the man he thought was a friend.”

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“Sounds reasonable,” Havilland lifted the lid and glanced inside. He wasn’t surprised at the large volume of paperwork he saw. He’d just handled the box and knew the thing had to be full.

“Have you gone through this?” Paige asked.

“No,” Sandy said immediately.

“Why not?” Havilland asked.

“Because it’s not mine,” Sandy said as if the answer was obvious. “I’m only giving them to you now because something in there might help. If you suspect Felicity or Keith are involved in Dutch’s death, they are both in this together. I was thinking it might be about Keith’s debt. He got money when they dissolved the agreement. But back then they had a lot of debt and very little cash. Dutch bought him out, but Keith always claimed he got cheated. The court decided Keith either had to accept part of the debt or all he got was half the money in the bank. It couldn’t have been enough to satisfy his bad dealings. Plus, he went off and tried to start a business of his own. His customers were angry and the work was awful.”

“Dutch told you that?” Havilland asked.

“No,” Sandy gave a little smile. “Dutch wouldn’t talk much about Keith. I worked in the business, well on the fringes anyway. I heard things. Keith’s reputation is shot. He has to be badly in debt and can’t get the work to catch up.”

“Do you mind if we borrow those,” Paige pointed to the box. “I’d like to go through it and see if there’s anything that will help us determine what happened to Dutch.”

“No,” Sandy told her. “I’m not even sure who they belong to now... I mean, Dutch left them with me but maybe Felicity owns them now.”

“We’ll figure it out,” Havilland stood and picked up the box. “Thank you for your assistance. We’ll get out of your hair now.” He moved to the door and waited for Paige to open it.

When they were back on the highway, heading to the Hagerty residence Paige finally spoke. “It’s all connected. The bad dealings, the marriage to Felicity, Dutch being killed. And every time we look into something else, Keith’s money trouble surfaces. Desperate people do horrible things.”

“Wow,” Havilland said as he pulled up to the cast iron gate. “I’d say Dutch was doing well. No wonder Keith was pissed.”

“Ask the butler if he will allow entry, my dear fellow,” Paige mocked as Havilland pulled up to the black metal box. She listened to a brief discussion then the gate swung open and

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Havilland pulled up to the house. “Not my taste,” Paige glanced around the cobbled drive and the large flower pots on the front courtyard.

“Me either,” Havilland shut off the engine and climbed from the car. “Let’s get this over with.”

Paige smiled, knowing her partner wasn’t looking forward to the lady of the manor’s advances. “Follow my lead,” she whispered just before the large door swung open. “I knew it,” Paige smiled when a man dressed like a butler opened the door. He led them into a flowery, scented room that made Paige want to vomit. She was sure everything in the room was ultra-expensive but the overdone flowers with the mauve accent wall and the white fluffy rug, the ugly throw pillows on the couch... the list just went on and on. Yet somehow, it fit Felicity Hagerty to a tee. She settled in and waited. They didn’t have long.

“Can we make this quick?” Felicity asked. “I have a ton of calls to return and everyone wants to know when I’m going to hold the funeral. I wish I could give them some idea but that atrocious man at the morgue won’t tell me a thing. Do you know when my husband’s body is going to be released?”

“Nope,” Paige stood. “Those are amazing shoes. I’d love to wear something like that but they always seem to make my feet look tiny. What are you an eight? Eight and a half?”

“Yes,” Felicity walked, glided... to a chair that looked even more uncomfortable than the couch. “I’m a size eight.” She glanced at Paige’s shoes and scrunched up her nose. “Your feet are too small to wear elegant footwear. Better stick with those boots and tennis shoes. They fit you... in every way possible.”

Paige smiled and turned to Havi. She gave him a look that told him she was finished, then relaxed against the back of the couch.

“Mrs. Hagerty,” Havilland began. “We have a few questions we need answered then we can leave you to your phone calls.”

“I told you to speak to my attorney,” she stood. “I’ll let him know you stopped by. I’m sure he’ll want to file a complaint with your superiors.”

“If that’s the way you want it,” Havilland also stood. “I just thought you’d like to explain your relationship with Keith Shavell before I turn my findings over to the District Attorney.” He shrugged and turned to Paige. “Let’s go.”

“Keith who?” Felicity asked, more than a little nervous that they had found some kind of connection.

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“That’s okay,” Havilland moved toward the front door. “I’ll just let DA Tolman ask your attorney about it.”

“Well,” Felicity’s mind was racing. “I did know a Keith Shavell years ago. Is that who you mean?”

“Don’t you worry about it,” Paige placed a hand on the woman’s arm. “I’m sure it’s nothing.”

They left her there, standing in the doorway, wondering what the police knew and how they would connect it.

Havilland was laughing as he pulled away from Felicity Hagerty’s home. “I’d say we got a two-for.”

Paige grinned. “She is going to go nuts! And she can’t say anything because she doesn’t know what we know. If she admits to knowing Keith, she can’t bluff because they have history and she has no idea what part of that history we discovered. Think it will keep her up tonight?”

“Yeah,” Havilland shrugged. “I figured you scored on the shoe size, I had to up my game a bit.”

“And you did. Let’s see if it’s enough for Potter,” Paige turned in her seat. “I want a search warrant for that house. I want those shoes.”

Paige and Havilland sat in the conference room going through documents. They had briefed Jericho the instant they got back to the office. Then, they’d met with Tolman and presented their case. He was skeptical but agreed to see what he could do. Now, all they could do was wait. So, they decided to use that time to find out what Dutch had in that box. Margie joined them after only a few minutes. A few hours later, Gage stepped into the room.

“Paige,” Gage called. He had only taken a few steps inside the door.

“Yeah?”

“Can I talk to you for a minute?” Gage glanced at Havilland then focused on Paige.

“Sure,” Paige looked up. “Just as soon as the two of you go somewhere and hash this out.”

“What?” Havilland scowled.

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“This thing,” Paige motioned from Duncan to Gage and back again. “You need to talk because I’m tired of all the tension and so is Margie, she’s just too polite to say it out loud.”

Margie smiled but didn’t respond.

“Go out there, in the office area...” Paige smiled. “Or I could lock you each in a cell and not let you out until you resolved it already.”

“Paige,” Gage warned. “This is none of your business.”

“That might be true... but you brought all of us into it with all the tension and dirty looks. I’m done. Go do whatever... punch it out, insult each other’s mothers... I don’t care just end it.”

Gage stomped from the room. Havilland didn’t move. Paige and Margie stared at him until he pushed back his chair and left the room.

“I’m not sure the part about punching it out was wise, but thank heavens you finally forced them to deal with this. I swear that girl has caused more altercations between her brother and the men in this town than he ever had playing football,” Margie huffed and then returned to the pile in front of her.

“I’m not sure how to fix this,” Havilland began. “I guess I’ll start by saying I’m sorry. I never meant to hurt Christy.”

“I’m not sure talking about my sister is a good idea,” Gage grumbled.

Duncan ran his hand through his hair and settled into one of the visitor’s chairs across from Gage’s desk. “But don’t we have to? I mean, we have to find a way to work together.”

“She said she thought you were the one,” Gage said turning to stare out the window.

“I know,” Duncan admitted. “But that was the problem. I mean, I didn’t even date the girl for a month and she was already planning our wedding.”

“What?” Gage’s head whipped back around and he focused on his fellow officer. “Did you say you didn’t even date a month?”

“Yeah,” Havilland frowned. “That’s right, didn’t she tell you that?”

“No,” Gage shoved his chair back, stood and began to pace the room. “I swear I’m going to throttle that girl.”

“What did she tell you?” Havilland asked cautiously.

“She said she thought you were the one. She said I had to make you pay for breaking her heart. She said the break came out of the blue. One minute she was trying to decide what to

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wear on your next date, the next she was devastated, wondering if you found someone new,” Gage settled back in his chair. “Exactly how many dates did the two of you have?”

“Four,” Havilland said. “Four casually, let’s get to know each other dates and then suddenly Christy is telling me how she wants a fall wedding and her colors have to be forest green and pale pink. And, do I want a pink cummerbund or a green one?”

“Oh man,” Gage shook his head. “I’m gonna... I don’t know what I’m going to do to that girl. I’m sorry, about all of it. She made it sound like you’d been dating for... I don’t know a year or something. I didn’t spend much time with my family while I was playing and she made it seem like you really broke her heart. She begged me not to become friends with you, said she couldn’t handle knowing her brother took the guy in...bonded with a man the way cops do, that shattered her world... or some nonsense like that.”

“Gage,” Havilland said more forcefully. “Not even a month. You know me well enough to know I’m not a relationship guy. Then, she started talking marriage and I know she’s your sister but I freaked. Told her it was over and I bolted. Maybe I didn’t handle it as well as I should have but seriously man... a month.”

Both men looked up when Paige stepped into the room.

“It didn’t sound like furniture was flying so I thought it might be safe to join you,” Paige approached holding what looked like a ledger.

“If you think I’m going over those books for you, you’re crazy,” Gage grumbled. “I had more than I could take on that baby selling case.”

“Actually,” Paige glanced at Havilland. “I wanted you to look at this. You seemed to know more about construction than the rest of us. If I had to guess, you’ve been on a crew.”

“I have,” Havilland took the ledger and skimmed the contents. He let out a long whistle. “No wonder Dutch went tilt over this.”

“What is it?” Gage asked.

“Clear documentation of Keith Shavell’s questionable transactions. He was paying personal debts with company funds and it looks like he was paying off a previous company with funds from the partnership trust. All that in addition to the embezzlement,” Havilland said.

“That’s what I got out of it too,” Paige leaned against a desk and studied the two men. “Did you figure it out? You two, I mean?”

“Did you know?” Gage asked.

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“Yeah,” Paige sighed. “But it wasn’t my place to say anything. You know Christy. She’s a little... I don’t know, she gets these ideas and sometimes they just run away from her. Like maybe she went out a few times with a great guy by the name of Havi and got caught up in the fantasy of it all. She was young. I’m sure when he dumped her, she took it pretty hard. By the time she explained it to you, the whole thing had become bigger than it really was.”

“You let me believe he broke the girl’s heart,” Gage complained.

“How do you know he didn’t?” Paige shot Duncan an apologetic look. “I mean, she may have thought he did.”

“Paige,” Gage pushed. “You knew I would understand where he was coming from. You know about Kathy Hendrickson.”

“Who is Kathy Hendrickson?” Havilland asked.

“A stalker,” Paige sighed. “Football groupie that had a thing for Gage. She was a little scary to tell you the truth. The woman started showing up at the bars and clubs after the games, everywhere Gage went, she appeared. Finally, one night she managed to push her way into a spot at his table. Gage was too polite, she got the wrong idea and she started blogging about their babies.”

Havilland laughed. “Oh man, I’m sorry.”

“Had to get a detective to threaten her with jail and take out a restraining order before I got away from that nutcase,” Gage admitted. “Anyway, Christy’s not a stalker but she does have an active imagination. You should have told me. Both of you.”

“Now we did,” Paige shrugged. “Can we get back to the case?”

Havilland glanced down at the ledger. “This is illegal.”

“Yes,” Paige said impatiently. “But the victim is dead.”

“Not necessarily,” Duncan grabbed a phone and dialed Stan. The prosecutor would know if they had a case or not.

Paige listened as Havilland answered questions. It only took her a minute to realize he wasn’t talking to Tolman, he was talking to Stan Donaldson. Made sense, Havi always liked to deal with the lowest ranking man that could get the job done. She usually found herself dealing with Tolman, not by choice but because he usually stepped in and Stan seemed to have something against her for some reason.

Havilland hung up smiling. “Stan agrees, the way the business is set up, Dutch wasn’t the only victim. We might be able to use this to get answers in our murder investigation. If we get

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lucky, Keith will talk. If nothing else, it provides a clear motive. It's the reason Keith got practically nothing when he left the company. If he's still struggling to pay these debts, it's the reason he had to stop Dutch from changing things up before the divorce."

"But how does that help us now?" Paige asked.

"Don't know yet," Havi said as he moved back toward the conference room. "He's going to talk to Tolman and get back to me."

"Well," Paige followed. "If you'd called James in the first place we wouldn't have to wait." Paige stepped into the room then realized Gage had wanted to talk to her. She turned and called out his name.

"What now?" Gage teased.

"You said you needed me for a minute," Paige reminded him.

"Yeah," Gage told her. "I do, but it can wait. Finish up your case. It sounds more important."

"You sure?"

"Positive," Gage pulled out a file and focused on one of his own cases.

The minute she entered the room, she realized Margie had found something else. "What do you have?"

"Margie just tied Felicity into this mess," Havilland said, grabbing for the ledger.

"How?" Paige settled in next to them.

"Pixolium," Margie said. "It was one of the companies Felicity and Keith defrauded nine years ago. It looks to me like they were blackmailing Felicity. Maybe they found out she was married to a man who had become successful."

Paige studied the information Dutch had compiled. He must have gone looking as soon as he realized his wife was connected to his crooked partner. He had bank statements, payment amounts, canceled checks. The data was a gold mine. Felicity was desperate to get her hands on the family fortune.

"What is this?" Havilland asked. "A secret account Felicity used to stash money?"

"I don't think so," Paige rifled through the documents and found what she was looking for. "Look, Dutch transferred that money from his profits to her account. I'd say he was keeping his finances and hers isolated."

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“Felicity needed funds, but Dutch controlled the purse strings,” Havilland decided. “She couldn’t access his accounts and once he decided to divorce her, he probably tightened that up.”

“And here’s a copy of the prenup,” Margie held up a document that was several pages long.

“Let me see that,” Paige settled in to read the details. Once she was finished, she looked up and realized her colleagues were waiting for her to explain. “It’s simple really,” she began. “In the event of a divorce, Dutch agreed to give Felicity half the family residence, half the furnishings and all of her possessions. The business is the sole property of Dutch and Felicity has no claim to it if the marriage is dissolved. If Dutch dies, Felicity will receive his profits from the business but the company will be controlled by other unnamed parties.”

“And if she cheats?” Margie asked.

“She gets nothing,” Paige said soberly.

“Seriously?” Havi said in surprise. “Usually the spouse would get something.”

“Nope,” Paige shook her head. “She gets nothing. This alone is motive.”

“Especially when you throw in this packet from Dunbar,” Margie provided.

Havilland opened the envelope and emptied the contents onto the table. It took a matter of seconds to realize Dutch had painted his wife into a corner she couldn’t get out of.

“That’s a pretty clear motive,” Paige glanced from photo to photo. They were clear, concise and demonstrated without question that Felicity Hagerty and Keith Shavell were involved. And she was engaging in this type of behavior at her marital home, in the backyard. “I agree with Trent, they are idiots.”

“I’m going to take all of this over to the DA’s office. Don’t go anywhere. I’ll have my warrant and we are going to serve it tonight,” Havi promised.

“I’m free,” Paige smiled. “Margie, you don’t have to wait. We’ve got this. Thanks for all your help.”

“I think I will head home,” Margie stood. “And let’s call it even. Life around here just got a lot easier with those two getting along.”

“They were just being dumb men,” Paige headed for the door. “They were bound to figure it out sooner or later.”

“I’m always happy for sooner,” Margie locked up her desk and headed for the exit. “See you in the morning. Call if you need anything. Susie will be here in under an hour.”

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“Have a good evening,” Paige called out. They wouldn’t need Margie. Susie wasn’t as proficient as the sheriff’s assistant but she was a good dispatcher and she knew the system well enough to pull anything Paige couldn’t handle herself.

By the time Havilland returned, Gage had gone home and Susie was looking up new desserts on Pinterest. Paige was pacing the room impatiently. “Got it,” he held up the paperwork for Paige to see. “I have a search warrant for the Hagerty home and Tolman’s blessing to bring both of them in for questioning. We know how to find Felicity, if we’re lucky she’ll tell us where to find Keith.”

“If we’re lucky, he’s at her house tonight,” Paige corrected.

They were lucky. Felicity argued at first. Insisted they didn’t have a right to enter her home. Then she tried her usual tactic on Havi. His response was to hand her over to Dean to transport to the office for questioning. That’s when she started to throw a fit. Demanded a phone call to Ryan Wickert and insisted they would all be fired. Keith just sat silently in a comfortable lounge chair with a sick look on his face. Apparently, he was smart enough to realize they were in serious trouble. It took Paige less than five minutes in Felicity’s closet to find the shoes. She hadn’t even bothered to clean them. They were still covered in dust and the subtle scuff mark Carmen told her to look for was there, on the left shoe clear as day. Paige bagged the shoes and returned to the library where Havilland was babysitting Keith Shavell.

“Find what you need?” Duncan asked when she stepped into the room.

Paige held up her evidence bag.

“Good,” Havi stepped forward and stood in front of Keith. “Get up, we’re relocating to the station. I have a few questions for you.”

Keith stood and waited for Havilland to lead him out the door.

“Hey, Logan,” Paige called.

“Yeah?” Logan appeared in the doorway.

“Here’s the warrant. You’re in charge. Make sure you lock up before you leave,” Paige held out a ring full of keys for the rookie. “Dean got them from the owner. She’s a pain, so don’t forget to lock everything up.”

“Roger,” Logan took the keys and the warrant and moved back into the house. He and Lovato could finish up. His older colleague was currently studying an alarm system. Logan hoped they could provide something that would benefit the case but if not, it was fun to execute a warrant. One more task he could add to his resume... not that he planned to leave Manti. He

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loved it here and hoped one day soon they'd have another full-time slot he could fill. In the meantime, he'd learn everything he could about the job he loved.

It was several hours later when Paige pulled into her drive. She was tired, hungry and grumpy. She made it all the way to her front porch before she realized Dax was sitting in one of her chairs.

"Dean said you caught the bad guys," Dax stood. "I expected you to be happier."

Paige let out a long frustrated sigh. "We caught them and I think we have enough evidence to hang them."

"But?"

"But Felicity lawyered up immediately and the smarmy attorney wouldn't let her say two words. We ended up booking her anyway, but it's cleaner if we can get them to confess."

"That's not the problem though," Dax observed.

"It's the prosecutor," Paige released her gun belt and dropped it onto the couch. "This Stan guy, I think he hates me. I called, just before I left to see if Havi was getting anything out of Keith. He's the second suspect and the DA wanted him interrogated at his office so he could offer a deal in exchange for information about Felicity. Anyway, I get Stan Donaldson and he's a real jerk about it. Says it's not my case and I'll have to get my information from Haviland."

"That's not standard?"

"It is," Paige dropped onto the couch. "But it was the way he said it and he knew I couldn't talk to Havi because he was still interviewing our perp. It just stinks. Now, I have to go to bed not knowing if he got anything or where the case stands until morning."

Dax moved her equipment to the chair and settled onto the couch, pulling one foot onto his lap. He maneuvered the boot until it came free and dropped it to the floor. "Maybe I can distract you," he smiled when Paige moaned as he began massaging her foot.

"You can always distract me," Paige said softly. "But I seriously think Stan hates me."

Dax frowned. "Hate as in..."

"No," Paige opened her eyes. "Stan's young. Younger than me. He couldn't have anything to do with mom. I mean I was only seventeen. He has to be five, six years younger than me at least. When mom died, that would make him twelve tops. More like nine or ten if I had to guess. And it all leads back to Tracey. Neither one of us was born at the time, so he's in the clear."

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“Then let it go,” Dax suggested as he removed her other boot and went to work on her right foot.

Paige settled further into the couch. “Keep that up and I’ll let everything go. I won’t be conscious much longer.”

Dax grinned and continued to pamper his favorite cop.

Paige stepped into the station and headed for her desk.

“Paige,” Jericho called.

She pivoted and headed for her boss. When she stepped inside his office, she was surprised to see Gage sitting in one of the chairs. She gave him a questioning look then settled into the chair next to him.

“Gage has narrowed the names for us,” Jericho began.

Paige frowned and looked from Jericho to Gage. Then it hit her. “The ring?”

“Yes,” Jericho handed Paige a stack of papers. “The top page is the most important.”

Paige scanned the names then turned the page. “And the rest?” There were a lot of names listed... several pages that contained name after name. Some she recognized, many she didn’t.

“Those are the athletes who received that particular ring,” Gage provided.

“All of them?” Paige asked in amazement.

“Yes,” Jericho answered. “Now you can see why I asked Gage to try to narrow it down a bit.”

“Right,” Paige turned back to the first page. “And these are what’s left? After he narrowed the scope?”

“Yeah,” Gage sighed. “I was hoping to whittle it down even more, but I guess I don’t have enough information. That’s the best I could do.”

“It’s great, Gage,” Jericho assured him. “I appreciate all the work you’ve put into this already. But, Paige and I will take it from here. I know your cases are piling up and I don’t want our problem to become your problem.”

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“I understand,” Gage answered. “But with all due respect, it already is. My problem, I mean. I know that list probably has the man on there that killed Paige’s mom. She was my friend in high school. She’s more than that, now. She’s my partner. Dean, Havi... even Logan feels the same. I can’t speak for Lovato because he’s hit and miss around here. Usually works graves and I don’t know him all that well. But we all think of this as our problem. I’m not asking you to bring us in... not permanently or anything. I just thought you should know, we’re here to help in any way we can.”

“Thanks, Gage,” Paige swallowed the lump in her throat. When she left Quantico, left the east coast to drive all the way to Utah, she didn’t expect to find a new family out here. But she had and the realization hit her pretty hard. Everyone here, as well as Dax, Carmen and even Zeus had become her new family and she was theirs.

Gage stood. “Anyway,” he hesitated. “I just thought you should know. I’ll leave you two alone to discuss that list.”

“Actually,” Jericho settled back in his chair. “I think we’ll discuss that later. I’m guessing Paige would like an update on her murder.”

“I would,” she admitted.

“Keith Shavell didn’t exactly sing,” Jericho smiled. “But he told us enough. Claims he didn’t have anything to do with the murder. Admitted the marriage was a fraud, even admitted it was his idea. The whole point was to con Dutch out of his fortune and pay off the guys hounding Keith. In Shavell’s eyes, Dutch owed it to him and he didn’t do anything wrong. Plus, he needed the money. He’s in deep and doesn’t have a way out. Apparently, that subdivision was supposed to be his salvation but he cut corners so much, hired shoddy workers and now has half a dozen lawsuits pending. He can’t sell a single home because the city council has an injunction of some kind.”

“Do you believe him?” Paige asked. “I mean about not being involved in the murder?”

Jericho shrugged. “That’s for the lawyers and the courts to figure out. It’s possible. Apparently, Felicity found that locket and drove over to confront her husband about the affair. Keith claims that’s all he knows. Havilland said you didn’t find any other footprints by the body so who knows, really.”

Paige considered. “We didn’t. I’m nearly positive he wasn’t there. Doesn’t mean he didn’t send her though. I mean all that stuff Dutch had on Keith was pretty incriminating.”

“Like I said,” Jericho shrugged. “That’s for the lawyers to figure out. Felicity has been charged with Dutch’s murder and that’s enough for me.”

“Even if Keith Shavell goes free?” Paige asked.

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“He won’t,” Jericho grinned. “The feds heard about the business stuff. Keith is going away for the embezzlement and the other fraud. Seems those stockholders Dutch enlisted aren’t all that forgiving.”

Paige smiled and stood. “Then I guess I can live with that, too.” She started out the door then stopped and turned. “What about that list? When do you want to talk about it? I mean, there are names on there...”

“Not here,” Jericho cut her off. “Why don’t you call that man of yours? Tell him to expect two for dinner and I’m in the mood for a good steak.”

Paige smiled. “I’ll do that. And Jericho, I’m pretty sure I can already eliminate your friend from that list.”

Jericho didn’t answer, he just nodded then focused on some sort of paperwork he had on his desk.

Paige started for her own desk, then made a detour and dropped into the chair across from Gage. “Thanks for all your work. On that... you know.”

“You’re welcome,” Gage answered. “I meant what I said.”

“I know,” Paige swallowed, stood and moved around to give her oldest friend a hug. “And it means a lot to me. Don’t think we’re shutting you out. We’re not and if I need help, I’ll call. I promise.”

That’s all I asked.

Paige moved back to her desk, picked up the phone and dialed Dax. It was time to focus on her mother again.