

PAIGE CARTER

Deputy Sheriff

Jane Doe

Season 7, Episode 5

by:

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First Edition | Series: Paige Carter

Edited by LaPriel Dye

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MPSmith Publishing

Deadly Secrets

Paige pulled the pillow over her head and groaned.

Dax laughed. "If you don't get up, you're going to be late."

"I was thinking about that leave of absence thing you suggested." She pulled the pillow off her head. "Maybe that's still an option?"

"If you want to stay home until after the baby is born, stay home," Dax shrugged. "Just remember, I'm still working. I'm not at your beck and call. No calling the center to demand I drop by and grab a pumpkin spice latte and a jar of pickles."

Paige sighed. "Fine, I'll suffer through as long as I can."

"That's my girl." Dax set a mug of coffee on the nightstand, knowing she'd grumble about decaf not being real coffee. "I'll be downstairs."

Paige struggled off the bed and into the bathroom. She felt like a beached whale and knew it was only going to get worse. Good thing she was on desk duty. There's no way she could chase down a suspect like this. She was having a hard time tying her shoes.

"Paige," Gage pushed back from his desk. "I'm gonna head out and grab lunch. You want me to bring you back a burger?"

"Or a side of beef." Havilland crossed the room and dropped into his chair. "Man, it's hot out there."

"Not funny." Paige threw her pen at him. "You're an insensitive brute."

Havilland laughed. "We're family. That's what we do. You razz me when I scratch my balls. I harass you when you get knocked up."

"Well," Gage stood and started across the room. "I think scratching an itch is what got her knocked up in the first place."

Jericho exited his office. "Gage, grab me a burger while you're out. Duncan, if you want to scratch, do it in your car. Don't you have a street to patrol or a report to write? And Paige, I need you in my office. I have a case that I want you to look into."

Paige stood, started across the room, then hesitated. "The fat girl does want a burger, Gage. With extra fries."

Havilland laughed, flipped on his computer, and began to hammer out his last report.

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Paige settled into a chair and waited for Jericho to explain the case.

“I got a call from Sevier County the other day,” Jericho settled into his chair. “It seems news of your talent has spread. Departments across the region are hoping for a little help on their difficult cases. I’m willing to oblige as long as it doesn’t take you away from home. No more trips to Texas to rescue family members from dirty cops and the spoiled spawn of local politicians.”

“I wholeheartedly agree,” Paige relaxed. “I’m not up for another long-distance investigation. Junior here is forcing me to slow down.”

“You doing alright?” Jericho frowned. “We could always shorten your shift a few hours; or, if you want, just work half a day until after the kid is born.”

“I’ll let you know.” Paige settled further into the chair, trying to get comfortable. “What do you know about this new case?”

“I asked them to send me the file. It arrived this morning.” Jericho passed a large envelope across the desk. “It’s not new, it’s going cold. The detective thinks it’s a homicide. His sergeant is pushing for him to close it out as suicide. The division commander wants a second look. He can see both sides and hasn’t come to a conclusion of his own yet.”

“Did you look at this?” Paige reached for the packet.

“I skimmed through it,” Jericho admitted. “I’m not sure it’s worth your time, but I do think they could use a second opinion. Just take a quick look and decide for yourself.”

“Alright,” Paige nodded. “Do you want to discuss the general details, or should I just get started?”

“Basically, the woman parked her vehicle at the Castle Rock Campground and started up the Joe Lott trailhead. She never returned. The Forest Service was doing a sweep, closing gates and pushing out stragglers, when the camp host asked him to tow the vehicle because it didn’t belong to anyone staying at the campground. He looked into it, sent a patrol car to her house for a welfare check, and discovered she wasn’t home. He decided to take a look around himself. He walked the trail and discovered the body at the bottom of the cliff. He notified the local PD, and they sent out a homicide detective. That’s basically where the investigation stalled.”

“Why does the detective suspect foul play?” Paige wondered.

“One of the witnesses claimed she saw the victim with a man,” Jericho explained. “Plus, the situation is complicated — and mysterious.”

“What does that mean?” Paige frowned.

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“For that, you will have to read the file because it’s wildly bizarre and convoluted. I will tell you; the woman was using a fake name. She’s a Jane Doe at this point.”

“You’ve piqued my interest,” Paige nodded. “Anything else I should know?”

“That’s all I know,” Jericho sat back. “The case is cold. They want fresh eyes and an opinion, so they know how to proceed, but I don’t want you working long hours or staying up half the night trying to solve this. We’re assisting an outside agency with a complicated case, but ultimately, it’s up to them to figure it out.”

“I understand,” Paige stood. “I want to get started — looks like there’s a lot to read. I’ll keep you posted. Is there a contact name and number in here? I’m sure I’ll have questions once I get started.”

“The detective sent his business card. It’s stapled to the front cover.”

“I’ll get started then.” Paige hooked the large file under her arm and headed for her desk. She was so engrossed in the details; she didn’t notice Gage until he dropped her lunch on top of the report she was reading.

“What did the boss want?” Gage settled in at his own desk.

“Sevier County asked for assistance,” Paige glanced up, grabbed the sack that contained her lunch and dug in. “I’m starving.”

“What kind of case?” Gage frowned. He had his own favor to ask, but if the boss had just saddled Paige with a big case, it would have to wait.

“Why do you look like you just sucked on a lemon?” Paige sat back and studied Gage. “You want something.”

“A friend called this morning,” Gage admitted. “I played ball with him, but his cousin is on the job. He asked me to talk to you, to see if you could look at something for his cousin.”

“A case?” Paige dunked her fry into a pool of ketchup.

“Yeah,” Gage admitted. “But if the boss gave you a case, that takes priority.”

“What’s the something he wants me to look into, and where does this cousin work?” Paige hoped this favor thing didn’t get out of control.

“That’s the thing.” Gage pulled his burger out of the sack and set it on a napkin. “The cop works up north, Utah County. He’s homicide, but he can’t decide if he has a homicide.”

“Seems to be going around,” Paige mumbled.

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“What?” Gage swirled several fries into his own ketchup and took a huge bite.

“Jericho just gave me a case for Sevier County. The detective can’t decide if it’s homicide or suicide. What does this cousin of your buddy want?”

“Mostly a fresh look and another opinion. A guy was killed up the canyon,” Gage explained. “It looks like an animal attack, but the victim’s brother said the victim was scared of someone and insists it was murder. The detective’s sergeant insists it was an animal attack and wants it closed out. The Vic’s sister has a third theory. She says she knows exactly what happened — her brother was killed by Big Foot.”

Paige spit out the mouthful of soda she had just drank. “Big Foot?”

“Yeah,” Gage shrugged. “There’s been sightings up in those mountains since the pioneers settled in the valley. You didn’t know that?”

“Uh, no,” Paige laughed.

“You should look it up,” Gage smiled. “They’ve even done some of those paranormal television shows on it. You know, the ones where they send investigators out to look for the mysterious and elusive monsters stalking unsuspecting citizens.”

“Tell me, Gage,” Paige drowned another fry before she shoved it into her mouth, chewed for about two seconds, and swallowed.

Gage watched in fascination. “How do you not choke on your food? Fair warning, I’m a little rusty on the Heimlich.”

“Whatever,” Paige rolled her eyes before she continued. “Have any of those shows ever actually captured the image of their elusive monster? Has anyone proved, without the shadow of a doubt, that Big Foot exists? Or what about werewolves or lake monsters? Everyone in the world now has a handy camera on their phone and millions of people are hoping to get the first great shot. Why haven’t we seen proof?”

“I’m pretty sure they’ve captured what they claim to be ghost phenomena on film.” Gage took another bite of burger.

“Or cinematic nonsense,” Paige shook her head. “Tell your friend to send me the file. I’m sure it’s just a bear attack or maybe a mountain lion, but I’ll give him a second opinion. That way, your friend owes you a favor and the detective can close out the case and make his sergeant happy.”

“Are you sure?” Gage glanced at Jericho’s door. “Do we need to run this by the boss?”

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“If it gets complicated,” Paige decided. “If it’s going to take more time than reading through the file and studying the photos, I’ll talk to the boss. Contact the detective and tell him to send me everything. I need to see the best photos they have of the body, the coroner’s report, everything.”

“I’ll let him know.” Gage took a long sip of his soda. “Thanks. I owe you one.”

“You paid it forward with this lunch,” Paige disagreed. “How’s the high school team coming along?” She changed the subject, and they talked football while they finished their lunch.

“What’s the big file?” Dax stepped into the kitchen and set a large box of food on the table. “I grabbed takeout for dinner. It’s been a long day.”

“That smells wonderful.” Paige shuffled the paperwork out of the way to clear a place for dinner. “Jericho asked me to look at an unsolved case for another department.”

“We don’t have to leave town again, do we?” Dax frowned, but waited for the response.

“No travel,” Paige assured him. “I told him I’m not up to anything that takes me out of town. If I need something that’s not in the file, I’ll have the case agent do the legwork.”

“Good,” Dax relaxed and began pulling cartons from the box. “So, tell me about this case.”

“There’s some dispute about whether it’s a homicide or suicide.” She began to run him through the details Jericho shared when he gave her the file. Then, she added in the stuff she’d gleaned from the file while they dished their plates and began to eat.

“What’s your instinct telling you?” Dax pushed his plate aside and sat back.

“I have no idea,” Paige admitted. “I’m still going through it. The woman is a Jane Doe. She was using a fake name and when the husband discovered the deception, he took their kid, moved in with his parents, and filed for divorce.”

“Why murder or suicide?” Dax wondered. “People accidentally fall over cliffs while hiking or climbing all the time.”

“They ruled that out,” Paige told him. “There was a rail and other safety precautions in the area. She had to either climb over the railing to jump, or someone helped her over and pushed her — or tossed her over the cliff.”

Dax frowned. “What if she climbed over the railing to take a selfie, fell backwards, and died?”

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“No phone.” Paige pushed her plate away and sat back. “I agree with the initial detective. It was either a homicide or she jumped.”

“Okay,” Dax trusted her. “So, what does your gut tell you?”

“I haven’t gotten that far yet,” Paige admitted. “I’m still studying the file. The case is interesting and complex.”

“How so?” Dax stood and began clearing the table. “Run it through for me.”

“Elisha Walker met Cody Tanner at church,” Paige began. “That’s the name she was using at the time. From what I’ve read, it sounds like one of those tightknit church communities. They had a lot of potluck picnics in the park, gathered to perform community service projects, and helped the needy — that sort of thing.”

“So, they spent a lot of time together,” Dax nodded.

“Right,” Paige agreed. “Elisha and Cody developed a relationship and ultimately got married. His family wasn’t supportive. They found her to be secretive and elusive.”

“But he was in love and thought they’d learn to accept her,” Dax smiled.

“We’re not talking about your parents,” Paige frowned.

“Don’t get sidetracked.” Dax didn’t want to talk about his parents.

“After about a year, a wedge developed between Elisha and Cody’s family. She resisted spending time with them, tried to create distance, and always found excuses to stay home when he went to visit. At first, he went alone and tried to maintain a distant but close relationship with his siblings and his parents — but they were slowly drifting apart.”

“Was she abusive?” Dax wondered. “That’s a pattern when the spouse wants to maintain control.”

“I don’t know,” Paige shrugged. “Maybe controlling, but there’s nothing in the file to suggest she abused him.”

“Controlling can be abusive.” Dax suggested. “Maybe emotional abuse?”

“Maybe,” Paige conceded. “Anyway, they had a kid.”

“Cody wanted to spend more time with his family so his daughter could interact with her grandparents and her extended family. Elisha resisted; and when they did spend time with Cody’s family, she was erratic, detached, and often acted paranoid.”

“Strange,” Dax considered. “But she was using a fake name for a reason.”

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“True,” Paige agreed. “Anyway, the husband discovered some missing funds and asked her about it. She was evasive and wouldn’t tell him where the money went, or what she used it for. He kept asking, but never got an answer and finally talked to his dad about his concerns. His parents decided to hire a private investigator to look into Elisha. Oh, I forgot to tell you, the family was wealthy and had a lot of power and influence in the community. They were afraid Elisha married their son for money and power, not love.”

“And the PI discovered the fake name?” Dax realized.

“Exactly,” Paige loved this part of their relationship, and she was grateful Dax could follow along so quickly. “Elisha Walker didn’t exist before she moved to town. There was no record of employment, rental agreements, nothing. The private investigator kept digging and finally discovered a baby that died in Missouri forty-two years earlier — when she was two. Elisha assumed that identity fraudulently. Her records were all fake.”

“How did hubby take that news?” Dax wondered.

“That’s when he filed for divorce and had an emergency custody hearing,” Paige sighed. “The judge ruled in his favor. I think it was partially the family influence, but Elisha refused to provide her real name. Cody’s attorney argued that for the safety of the child, she needed to remain in the father’s care. Without Elisha’s background, it was impossible to know if she was violent or abusive. The judge agreed and awarded custody to Cody with supervised visitation to Elisha.”

“And then she died?” Dax frowned. “Why would the husband or his family kill her? They were getting everything they wanted.”

“The detective hasn’t ruled out Cody — completely. The husband will always be a suspect, but he’s at the bottom of the list. They have ruled his immediate family out. They all have solid alibis,” Paige told him. “Unless we’re missing something, the family is in the clear.”

“So, what now?” Dax asked.

“I’m not finished,” Paige grinned. “This is where things get interesting.”

“I was already interested.” Dax took her hand and pulled her to her feet. “Let’s move to the living room, where it’s more comfortable.” They settled onto the couch and Dax pulled Paige’s foot into his lap and began to massage her calf and foot.

“If I talk slow enough, will you do that forever?” Paige settled back, contented.

“I might.” Dax pulled her other leg up and placed her foot in his lap. “Tell me the interesting part of this story.”

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“So, Elisha died.” Paige grabbed a pillow and stuffed it behind her back. “The detective responded and started working the case. Except, he was focused on the death. He interviewed witnesses, took photos, and looked into the family and the victim. All the stuff you do when investigating a homicide. Once he realized Elisha Walker didn’t really exist, he changed the status to Jane Doe.”

“But he was focused on the cause of death, not the woman’s real identity,” Dax nodded.

“Basically. He knew the name was fake and there had to be a reason; but on the surface, that looked like a dead-end,” Paige explained. “He focused on the death and planned to tackle the mystery of her identity later. Meanwhile, the husband was understandably distraught about the entire situation. The investigation was taking time, his neighbors were looking at him funny, and he needed help caring for his daughter. So, Cody rented a permanent residence near his parents’ home and decided to sell his marital home. At that point, he realized he could never move back. There were too many memories, and the house was a constant reminder of the lies and deception.”

“Makes sense,” Dax began messaging her other foot.

“He tried to list the property as-is so he could just walk away and be done with it. But the realtor insisted he had to clear out their personal belongings and arrange for a few repairs,” Paige continued. “So, Cody started going through their stuff a little at a time. One day, he found a hidden box and realized it had to belong to Elisha. Inside, he discovered a few old photos and a birth certificate for Rebecca Ann Baker. There was also a marriage certificate for Rebecca and a man named John Franco. Instead of turning it over to the police, Cody took it to the PI his parents had previously hired and convinced him to reopening his old investigation.”

“Why not the police?” Dax frowned.

“I don’t think the family trusted the police at that point,” Paige surmised. “Like I said, the husband can’t be ruled out. Plus, Detective Riskin was focused on Cody and his family at the beginning of the investigation. He questioned all of them about their whereabouts and dug pretty deeply into their private lives and their finances.”

“I guess that makes sense,” Dax agreed. “Go ahead.”

“So, the PI went to work following the lead. He tracked this Rebecca Baker woman’s history and tried to locate the previous husband.” Paige picked the story back up. “It didn’t take long for him to realize Rebecca Baker was also a fake name. He tried to dig further, but Rebecca’s history only went back ten years. That’s ten years before Elisha moved to town and started attending Cody’s church. The PI went as far as he could with that identity, then focused on finding John Franco. That was also a dead end. At that point, he notified the family and closed out the new investigation.

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“Was she divorced or still married to this Franco dude?” Dax wondered.

“The PI didn’t know.” Paige shifted and settled further into the pillow, letting out a moan of satisfaction when Dax focused on the bottom of her foot. “Once the family realized Riskin wasn’t focused on them, they took the PI file and turned it over to the police.”

“Was he able to track Franco?” Dax wondered.

“Yeah,” Paige nodded. “It looks like he conducted a solid investigation. It’s just complicated and goes off in a million different directions. And with all the information he’s uncovered, the question still remains — suicide or homicide?”

“Why do they suspect suicide?” Dax wondered. “Is it just lack of evidence that points to murder, so they’re assuming she killed herself, or is there something more?”

“Some of the friends she had in the church told Det. Riskin Elisha was depressed. It devastated her when Cody left her and took their daughter with him. She feared she would never get joint custody of her little girl and she claimed she really loved Cody and didn’t understand why he wouldn’t forgive her — or even talk to her.”

“So, she could have driven to the canyon and jumped,” Dax nodded. “Tell me what the detective found when he tracked down Franco.”

“John Franco was a bouncer at a strip club in Dallas.” Paige dropped her head back and closed her eyes. “He still works there. He said Rebecca — or Becca as he knew her — was one of their best dancers. She captivated him. Riskin has a note that he thinks Franco still loves Becca, or at least has a soft spot for her.”

“What happened?” Dax changed feet again.

“She cheated on him with a patron,” Paige admitted. “Some guy that was a regular at the club. Franco still loved Becca, but he didn’t trust her, and he couldn’t forgive her. They got divorced, and she ran off with her new boyfriend. Franco claimed never saw her again.”

“Did the detective believe him?” Dax wondered. That situation could turn from obsession to vengeance that resulted in murder.

“Yeah,” Paige told him. “John Franco had a solid alibi for the time of the murder. If this was homicide, there is no way Franco killed her.”

“What about the new boyfriend?” Dax wondered. “If she cheated once, it could happen again. What happened to the new guy?”

“No idea,” Paige shrugged. “Riskin tried to identify him, but nobody knew much about him. He dug around and was given the name Darrell, but nobody had a last name and he always paid

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in cash when he visited the club. He disappeared with Becca and hasn't been seen since. Not in Dallas, not at that strip joint."

"Riskin never traced him?" Dax frowned.

"Nope." Paige admitted. "We just know Becca arrived in town and set herself up as a good, churchgoing, religious saint named Elisha. After a few months, she married Cody and here we are."

"You have a lot of unanswered questions," Dax decided. "I realize knowing who she is will be important eventually, but isn't the most pressing question how she died? I mean, if she jumped, the rest is pretty mute."

"True." Paige swung her legs off the couch and sat. "It's interesting and intriguing, but not really pertinent. First, we need to determine if this was suicide or murder."

"Will you pursue it?" Dax wondered. "Or let it drop once you decide if there was foul play?"

"I think —" Paige considered. "Well, if she was killed, I think we have to track down this Darrell guy and find out if he was in the area at the time. It could be an obsessed lover turned homicidal maniac when she ditched him."

"Right," Dax settled against the couch. "The missing funds could be important. She refused to say what she did with the money — it could be a factor. If she married the new guy, it could be marital debts she wanted to hide."

"I didn't get that far," Paige admitted. "I got caught up in the details, but you're right. I'll need to think about that. Anyway, I asked Detective Riskin to send me copies of all the photos he took at the crime scene. I have a few that he sent with the case file, but not enough to make an informed decision."

"Then you can't resolve this tonight. It's late and we've both had a long day," Dax stood. "Let's head to bed and you can pick this back up tomorrow." He took her hand and followed her up the stairs. "Oh, I got the final plans for the house today. The architect made those changes we requested, and I turned it over to the contractor. He said he completed the application for the building permit this afternoon and should break ground later this week once he gets approval from the city."

"I'm warming to the idea of moving," Paige paused on the upper landing. "These stairs get harder and harder every day."

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“Gage,” Margie called over the radio. “Are you finished with that vehicle burglary?”

“I should be pulling out in less than five,” he advised.

“Can you head over to the Perkin’s farm once you clear?” she requested. “He needs to report a theft that occurred over night.”

“Just give me the theft,” Paige stood and started toward Margie’s desk.

“No,” Jericho exited his office. “I’m not telling you again, Paige. Desk duty means desk duty. You’re not handling cases in the field. Where are we on the Sevier County case?”

“I’m waiting for additional information,” Paige sighed. “And I’m bored. What exactly do you think might happen if I drive out to the Perkins farm? Old man Perkins might spit on my shoe? The theft happened overnight. If it wasn’t Perkins and his irrational demand that all reports be taken in person, I’d be handling the complaint over the phone.”

“No,” Jericho wouldn’t budge. “You never know what might happen between here and there. You’re on light duty. Accept it and be happy you have a mystery to solve.”

Paige returned to her desk but grumbled the entire way. She pulled out the file and started to go through it a second time. This time, she was going to pay closer attention to the details instead of getting lost in the intrigue.

Several hours later, she pulled into her driveway and shut down the engine. She was climbing the stairs before she noticed Sophie sitting in a lounge chair on the front porch. Paige frowned; she’d need to be more observant in the future. Just because she was benched, she was still a cop and needed to act like one. “I hope you haven’t been waiting long.”

“About ten minutes,” Sophie stood. “How are you feeling?” She frowned at the large stack of folders in Paige’s arms. “Let me get the door for you.”

“What brings you over tonight?” Paige wondered. “I thought Nathan was coming back today. I assumed you’d be catching up. He’s been gone nearly two weeks this time.”

“He got stuck in Washington and won’t be home until tomorrow,” Sophie advised. “I thought we could work on the nursery tonight. We’re running out of time. I wish you’d ask that doctor of yours if you’re having a girl or a boy. It would make things so much easier if we knew the sex of the child.”

“We decided we want it to be a surprise,” Paige insisted. She was tired of having this conversation. “Besides, I don’t care what the gender is. I found that cute animal border I loved, and I just need to decide what color to paint the walls to match. I’m not limiting myself to pink and blue, so why is the baby’s gender so important?”

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“Because if you’re having a girl, there are so many adorable frilly products I can purchase. I found a beautiful, delicate pink comforter with fancy lace trimming. I loved it but couldn’t buy it because you might be having a little boy.”

“And it’s a baby and the kid might choke on all that lace,” Paige offered. “Plus, you should thank me. I just stopped you from making an impulse buy that is impractical and was probably expensive.”

“I’m not worried about the cost, Paige,” Sophie scolded. “I’m going to spoil this child and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.”

“Oh, believe me, I know.” Paige dropped the files on the coffee table in the living room. She’d get to those later.

“I’m going to cook dinner,” Sophie decided. “If you want a say in what we eat, I guess you’ll have to come shopping with me.”

Paige glanced at the files, then at the clock. She left the office twenty minutes early today because she was bored out of her mind. When the photos arrived, she decided to go home and make up the difference tonight. She focused on Sophie and softened. The woman was like a mother to her, and she was excited about the baby. Nathan was also out of town, and Sophie had to be lonely. Paige could take a couple of hours to visit, especially if the result was a fresh meal. Sophie was an amazing cook.

Plus, if she went to the store, she could buy those cookies she loved and maybe grab a carton of ice cream while she was at it. “Let’s go. Dax won’t be home for another hour or so. I’ll call him in the car and let him know you’re making dinner.”

Once the meal was over, Dax left Paige and Sophie in the kitchen talking about changing tables and car seats. He was looking forward to the birth of the baby, but he figured the car seat was something Paige should pick out. She’d know the safest one for their kid and the color didn’t matter to him. The changing table; well, he didn’t really see the importance. Just plop the kid down on a flat surface and change the diaper. All this fancy stuff just seemed excessive to him, but he would never deny Paige anything she truly wanted. Sophie Porter was another story. That woman was adorable and fun to watch, but she was seriously getting out of control.

He dropped onto the couch and noticed the stack of files Paige brought home. He had to admit, her current case was intriguing. He found himself thinking about the woman with multiple names off and on throughout the day. One particular thing struck him as ironic. The victim had more names than most, had changed identities multiple times, but died a Jane Doe. That fact

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seemed sad and a little depressing. He spotted the FedEx package and dumped the contents onto the table. *Photos*. He could work with that. Smiling, he grabbed the stack, settled back, and began to sift through them. By the third photo, he was certain the woman had been murdered. That meant, Paige needed to track down the elusive boyfriend — Darrell with no last name. He wondered how far she'd gotten on the case today and wished Sophie would go home so they could discuss it. He glanced at the doorway that led to the kitchen, listened for several seconds, decided they would be awhile, and entertained himself by organizing the pictures in chronological order.

An hour later, Dax had the pictures spread out across the table and was lounging in his favorite chair watching a ball game.

"I'm heading out," Sophie announced when she stepped into the room. "I'm sure you'd like a little alone time with your wife and I'm not getting anywhere with the stubborn girl."

Dax smiled and stood. He walked Sophie and Paige to the door, leaned down and pressed a gentle kiss to Sophie's cheek. "Thank you for a lovely dinner. Drive safe and tell Nathan to call me once he gets settled tomorrow. There's something I'd like to talk to him about, if he has time."

Paige gave Sophie a hug, then headed for the couch. The instant she sat down, she spotted the photos. Intrigued with what Dax was doing, she leaned in and studied the layout.

Dax closed the door, locked up and joined Paige on the couch.

"What's this?" Paige glanced up. "Why did you arrange them in this order?"

"Because it shows what happened," Dax shrugged and settled back.

"This isn't the order they were shot," Paige pushed. "This one," she reached for an image, but Dax stopped her.

"No," he straightened the image then focused on Paige. "I don't know why your detective took those photos in that order, but it's wrong. This—" he pointed to the table. "Shows what happened before that woman was murdered."

Paige frowned. "You think it was homicide, not suicide?" Paige studied the pictures.

"It's clear from these shots that this was a murder," Dax frowned. "I thought you realized that already."

"Why?" Paige studied Dax. "Walk me through it."

"I will," Dax decided. "If you want me to, but first look yourself. You're the detail girl, pay attention to the details."

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Paige picked up the first image. It was a picture of the railing, a horizontal shot that showed the location of the bar as it ran along the steep cliff. “The rail?” She laid it back down on the table. “I don’t understand why you put that one first instead of this one.” She reached for a picture he’d placed further down the line.

“No,” Dax took her hand to stop her, then retrieved the first image. “I put this one first because right here —” he pointed to the side of the picture. “This branch is broken, indicating there could have been a struggle.”

“But—” Paige started to interrupt.

“This one comes second, because you can still see the broken branch right there in the bottom lefthand corner. But, if you look toward the top, you can see a footprint in the dirt. A large footprint.”

Paige pulled the image closer, squinted, then stood and headed for her office. She settled back down and studied the image with a magnifying glass. “You’re right. How did you see that?”

“Training,” Dax shrugged. “And lots of practice. Anyway, I pulled the coroner’s report, and that shoe mark is way too big to belong to the victim. It’s also a man’s shoe. See the design it left. I’d say he was wearing canvas running shoes.”

Paige just stared at him.

“What?” Dax asked, a little surprised by her reaction.

“Continue,” she motioned to the pictures.

“Alright,” Dax turned back and picked up the next picture. “This ground has been disturbed. You can see how the grass is trampled down and there are distinct marks in the dirt. I think this is where the altercation took place. That’s a guess, obviously I don’t know it was an altercation but a discussion at the least.”

“Because they were standing there for several minutes,” Paige realized. “Talking, arguing, something. Continue.”

“This isn’t as clear, it’s a poor picture but there’s another broken branch on this tree. Can you see it on the left side of that image?”

“Yeah,” Paige nodded. “And the foliage is disturbed. Like someone was lying there for longer than a few seconds. Not like they tripped and fell, then immediately got up. It’s mashed down like whoever did that was unconscious — or dead.”

“Right,” Dax pointed to several images of the same scene. “All of these go along with those. It doesn’t show the area as well as I would like, but I have no doubt someone was lying

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there. I suppose it could have been someone sitting under the cover of the trees waiting and that would make them out of order. But, either way, there were two people on that ledge when the woman went over.”

Paige studied the pictures. “I’m not sure this means he was there when she was killed. They could have met, had an altercation, and the man could have walked away angry, and she jumped.”

“Not possible,” Dax disagreed. “Because she was either dead or unconscious when she went over.”

“There is no way you know that!” Paige insisted.

“This picture shows the drag marks,” Dax handed her a photo. “It’s hard to see, and he tried to cover it up but see right there, her heels dug into the grass and made that line that continues into the dirt. Someone tried to cover up the evidence, but they missed enough that these photos prove the woman was dragged out of this area toward the edge of the cliff.”

Paige studied Dax for several seconds.

“You guys didn’t see this?” Dax asked, surprised. He was sure Paige would have picked up on it.

“I didn’t study these before I left the office,” Paige admitted. “They arrived, I called Riskin to notify him I got them. He told me some images might be irrelevant, but he took them because it was obvious someone had been inside those trees. He thought it could be a private conversation, but his sergeant insisted the woman sat down and contemplated whatever was troubling her before she jumped. They didn’t notice those drag marks, and I’m not sure I would have caught all of that if you didn’t point it out.”

“I think you would have,” Dax disagreed. “Your detail oriented like me. I noticed because it’s similar to tracking. I’m good at it and I’ve done a lot of it.”

“Sean’s always been better at that than me,” Paige admitted. “Let’s go through the rest of these.”

“Alright,” Dax picked up the next photo. “This one, as well as the next several in this stack all go together.” He handed her a photo. “You might need the magnifier for this one.”

Paige retrieved it from the couch.

“Right here,” Dax pointed to the image. “You can see a scuff on the railing. They took a ton of pictures of that rail, which made this part easy. I pulled these out because it shows the different angles of this section. The rest are over there,” he pointed to a stack of images he didn’t use. “Anyway, you can see her foot dragged across the top bar of that barrier. I checked the

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coroner's report, she had bruising on the back of her calf that would be consistent with her leg striking the railing when someone lifted her over."

Paige grabbed the report and studied the medical examiners' findings. "She says it could have been caused by the fall."

"Which is true," Dax agreed. "But it wasn't. The killer was hoping you'd just chalk it up to the fall. In fact, the killer tried to make this look like a suicide. But, when he tampered with the scene and tried to destroy evidence, he left proof there was foul play."

"Go ahead," Paige pointed to the line of photos. "I'm impressed so far."

Dax walked her through the rest of the images. He pointed out additional drag marks that were brushed over with something like a rock or a branch. He also showed her where the killer kicked at the dirt, trying to make it look like someone was pacing but there were no distinct footprints like there would be if someone walked back and forth deciding their next move. Finally, he showed her the last two images. There was a broken branch away from the scene and what looked like a man's footprint in the soft dirt several feet away. The direction of travel was clearly headed back toward the parking lot. "If it was just a casual hiker, they would have been on the main trail."

"You combine all of this with the fact the woman was missing her phone, the eyewitness that spotted her with a man on that trail earlier that day, and it's obvious the woman was murdered." Paige grabbed the file and began shuffling through reports.

"What are you looking for, I can help," Dax offered.

"I think you've helped significantly tonight," Paige smiled when she found what she was looking for. She skimmed the report then handed it to Dax. "No prints."

Dax read through the report and sat back. "He wiped them."

"Yeah," Paige agreed. "I think he did. The discussion could have begun inside the car. I need to call Riskin and ask him to do a thorough examination. He still has the vehicle. Since she's a Jane Doe and the car belonged to her before she married Cody, he doesn't want it. There's no next of kin to turn it over to, so they kept it in evidence just in case they needed it later."

"And if he doesn't find prints?" Dax wondered. "What's your conclusion?"

"I don't like to speculate, but if there are no prints inside the car, I'd say she knew her killer. They had a conversation that went south; and for some reason, they hiked a short way up the trail and stopped in a secluded area. Nobody saw them in that particular location. The woman that spotted them, said they were closer to the parking lot, heading up the trail when she saw

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them. She said they were having an intense conversation, but she wouldn't commit to an argument — just intense.”

“He covered his tracks and made sure nobody could identify him or place him with the victim,” Dax agreed. “So, he wiped the outside of the car, maybe the inside, and then after he killed her, he tried to make it look like she was depressed and jumped. Then he just faded into the background and disappeared.”

“That's what it looks like,” Paige agreed and sat back. “I need to find out who he is. I need to speak with John Franco and see if he can give me a better description of the new boyfriend — or, if he remembers a detail that was overlooked, or something he thought was insignificant at the time, but is really important.”

“Will you call Riskin?” Dax wondered. “Will you explain the photos and your theory that Elisha was murdered?”

“You mean your theory?” Paige smiled at him. “Yes, I'm going to call him in the morning. It's been a long day, and you just gave me my first big break in the case. Let's call it a night and go to bed early. Dealing with Sophie tends to wear me out these days. It's driving her crazy — not knowing if we're having a girl or a boy. For that alone, I'm waiting.”

“Cruel,” Dax laughed and followed Paige upstairs.

“Detective Riskin,” he answered.

“Paige Carter,” Paige told him. “I looked over your case and I need you to take care of something for me.”

“Alright,” Riskin agreed. “What do you need?”

“The report shows you still have the vehicle in evidence,” Paige began. “The one your Jane Doe drove out to the campground.”

“Right,” Riskin frowned. *What did she want with the car?*

“I need you to do a more thorough search for fingerprints. Check behind the mirror and on the lever that moves the seat. Check all the places you normally check, but then check the ones you don't. Think about what you touch when you get into the car. If there's a compartment for glasses, check that.”

“I told you we didn't find prints on anything,”

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“I know,” Paige agreed. “And that’s a problem for me.”

“A problem?” Riskin wondered where she was going with this.

“Who wiped them?” Paige asked. “And you should pose that question to the sergeant that keeps insisting this was a suicide.”

“You agree with me,” Riskin realized. “You’ve decided it was murder.”

“I’ve decided there are more questions than answers and there are things that just don’t add up,” Paige corrected. “I’m also looking into something else, but I don’t want to get into it until I have an answer on the prints. You guys didn’t locate any prints on the outside of the car. Nothing on the door handle, the windows, or the gas tank. Who takes the time to wipe prints off the gas cover? Nobody, that’s who. I think that car was wiped clean. If Ms. Doe was about to kill herself, why wipe the car? If she was running, at that point it wouldn’t matter if she was discovered. If she was depressed, I doubt she’d pause to do some cleaning before she jumped.”

“I agree,” Riskin sat back. He hadn’t thought of that, he was focused on interviewing witnesses and trying to determine who the woman was. The lack of evidence on the car escaped him. Maybe because he didn’t process it, one of the other violent crimes detectives handled that task. Just another good reason this case needed fresh eyes. “What are you looking into? Did I miss something?”

“No,” Paige hesitated then decided to fill him in. “Now that I believe there was foul play involved, I want to have my own conversation with John Franco. I know you cleared him, but he might know more than he let on. I’d like a chance to prod and see what falls out.”

“Alright,” Riskin didn’t mind if Paige gave Franco another push. The guy was in the clear, he was about a thousand miles away from the scene when the woman died. “In the meantime, I’ll do another search of the car. My guys are pretty thorough, though. I suspect they found nothing because there was nothing to find. If I’m right, that car was wiped for a reason.”

“I agree,” Paige told him. “Don’t forget to check the glove box — on the door and inside. If we get lucky, we’ll find prints other than your victim inside.”

“I never get that lucky,” Riskin ended the call and headed out to find a tech to assist with fingerprinting.

Paige dialed the club where Franco worked. She got lucky, he just arrived for his shift. The manager was reluctant but finally agreed to let him use her office for the call. Paige waited for Franco and took the time to skim through his statements to Riskin.

“Hello,” came a male voice. “This is John Franco. Uh, my manager wanted me to ask you to be quick. She’s not happy about the interruption.”

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“I’ll be as quick as I can,” Paige agreed. “This is Deputy Paige Carter. I work for the Sanpete County Sheriff’s Office in Utah.”

“Does this have something to do with Becca, because I already talked to that other detective and I’d just like to put this all behind me,” Franco grumbled. “I shouldn’t have to rehash one mistake for the rest of my miserable life.”

“Hopefully this will be the last time we need to discuss Rebecca,” Paige offered. If the guy was miserable, maybe he should change his life and make better choices.

“Fine,” Franco growled. “What do you need?”

“I have the basics,” Paige began. “You met Rebecca at the club where you work and the two of you hooked up. At some point you were married. Correct me if I get anything wrong. The report says the marriage was short. How long did it last?”

“About seven months,” Franco told her. “The best and worst seven months of my life. I caught her cheating in the backroom. Later I learned everyone knew, but they liked me, and nobody wanted to tell me what was going on. Life would have been better if someone had come clean.”

“And the man she was having an affair with,” Paige ignored that. She didn’t have an answer, but he was probably right. “Detective Riskin said his name was Darrell. I was wondering if you could tell me anything else about him. Riskin looked into financial records at the club, and he always paid in cash, but I hoped you could give me a general description.”

“I can do one better,” Franco grinned. “I have a shot of the two of them. I wanted to make sure she didn’t try to pull anything in the divorce. Or more to the point, he didn’t. Give me your number and I’ll send it to you.”

Paige rattled off her cell number and considered. “Why do you say that? Why did you think he might try to pull something?”

“The guy was a weasel and by the look of him, I’d lay odds he spent time behind bars,” Franco insisted. “I don’t know that, but he had that look — the dead eyes, the shifty stance and the smirk of a guy that’s up to no good. You understand what I mean?”

“I do,” Paige nodded, then snatched up her phone when the notification chimed. “I got the text, and I can see what you mean. It’s not a clear shot but this will help. I’m sure Detective Riskin informed you of this, but our victim is definitely your ex-wife. I’m not sure if it means anything, but I’m sorry for your loss.”

“At this point,” Franco sighed. “I’m over it. I wouldn’t wish that kind of end on anyone. But Becca, she was wild, and I figured she was headed for a bad end. Look, my manager is tapping her wrist. Is there anything else?”

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“Just one more thing,” Paige figured it was a long shot, but she had to ask. “Do you know if Darrell was from the Dallas area or if he was new in town?”

“Not new,” Franco considered. “I carded him one night after he got aggressive with one of the girls. She backed off and didn’t want a report. Anyway, he had a local license so if he was new, it wouldn’t have been recent. The card was worn and used, I guess.”

“Thank you for your time,” Paige grinned. “I won’t keep you any longer and tell your manager I really appreciate her cooperation as well. Stay safe, Mr. Franco.”

They disconnected and Paige immediately dialed an old friend.

“Paige Carter,” Lieutenant Bristol greeted. “I thought my days of doing you favors ended with your career at the Bureau.”

“Not likely,” Paige laughed. “You’re stuck with me for life. And yes, I do need a favor and it might be a big one.”

“How big?” Bristol asked cautiously.

“I need you to run everyone that’s been inside your jail for a period of ten years. I don’t have a name, not a full one.”

“You want a printout of every prisoner that’s been in my jail for ten years? Are you nuts?” Bristol questioned. “Do you have any idea how many people we process through here in a single year?”

“I have a first name,” Paige corrected. “I need a list of every prisoner named Darrell.” Paige rattled off the time frame she was looking at. “If possible, I’d also like the details on known associates and emergency contact names for all of these upstanding citizen’s named Darrell.”

“That doesn’t narrow things much,” he warned. “But I’ll have my secretary do it on one condition.”

“You want a favor?” Paige knew where this was going.

“I want a slot in one of those fancy courses your husband runs,” Bristol told her. “An advanced course.”

“Apply and I’ll tell Dax to watch for the application,” Paige offered.

“I have,” Bristol admitted. “My guy didn’t get in. He doesn’t look like it on paper, but he’s brilliant and he has potential. He just needs a little training, and he could be my best guy. Unfortunately, it’s the looking good on paper part that gets him accepted into the elite programs.”

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“You’re willing to put your reputation on the line to recommend this guy?” Paige asked for clarification. She trusted Bristol. If he said the guy was good, he was good.

“Absolutely,” Bristol said immediately. “Without hesitation. I can’t swing two courses, the department has limited funds and the beginning course would be a waste on this guy. If you can pull some strings, I’ll owe you for once and we’ll call your current fishing expedition a freebie.”

“Hold on a minute,” Paige started to put him on hold but hesitated. “What about travel funds? Could he fly out sometime and interview with the guys to see if he qualifies for the course?”

“I might be able to swing that,” Bristol considered. “I’ll make it happen if they need it. I’ll have to shuffle some things around, but I’ll make it happen.”

“Hold on,” Paige put him on hold and dialed Dax.

“Hamilton,” Dax greeted.

“Yeah, this is Hamilton,” Paige repeated.

“Hey babe,” Dax smiled and sat back. “What’s up?”

“I need you to approve someone for one of your courses,” Paige began. “An advanced course.”

“Tell him to submit an application and I’ll watch for it,” Dax offered.

“He did that already, and you guys passed him over,” Paige admitted.

“Paige, if he doesn’t qualify, I can’t just put him in the class. It will hold everyone else back and waste time.”

“I’m asking you for a favor,” Paige would not give up that easily. “His Lieutenant vouches for him. He says the guy is brilliant but doesn’t reveal his true potential and talent on paper. You guys only look at the paper. I’m asking you to trust me. Bristol is willing to bet his reputation that this is the right move, and a beginner course would be a waste of time for everyone.”

“Fine,” Dax let out a huge sigh. “Tell him to have this guy call me and I’ll look into it. If he can answer my questions, I might be willing to slide him in. What course is he interested in?”

“The shooting course,” Paige told him.

“Then he’ll have to get past Hawk,” Dax warned. “So, he better know his stuff. I won’t override Hawk’s decision. I can’t give someone special treatment if I know they’ll jeopardize our program — not even for you.”

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“I’ll have him call you tomorrow,” Paige decided. “When should he call?”

“Any time after nine thirty,” Dax decided. “And before three.”

“Thank you,” Paige added sincerely grateful he agreed. “I’ll get his name and text it to you. That way, you can pull his application before he calls. I’ve gotta go, see you at home.” She switched back over to Bristol. “Dax will consider it, but your guy has to get past Hawk. He better know is stuff because Hawk will know if you’re bluffing.”

“I’m not,” Bristol grinned. “Is this an in-person interview?”

“Nope,” Paige settled back. “Have the candidate call sometime tomorrow after nine-thirty and before three. By the way, what’s his name. They want to review the application before they speak to him.”

Bristol relayed the details and assured Paige his deputy and their Rangemaster would make the call the following day. “I already have Jaylene working on that other project. She’ll start faxing over the details in batches. Be prepared to waste a forest on this. I have no doubt there will be a lot of files to go through.”

“Thanks, I appreciate all your help on this,” Paige disconnected, sat back and considered her next move. She’d been sitting there for over an hour listening to the fax machine spit out paper, but still didn’t have a plan.

“Go home,” Jericho exited his office and headed for the door.

“My shifts not over and I have —” she glanced around. “Stuff.”

“We both know you’ll work on that at home. You’re just sitting there staring out the window waiting for the machine to stop ringing. By the way, I think it’s finished, and you look tired. Go home. That’s not up for debate.”

“You’re awfully grumpy grandpa,” Paige teased. “I thought getting back with Harper would improve your disposition but now I’m starting to wonder.” When he didn’t respond, Paige frowned. “You guys are still together, right?”

“Yes, Paige,” Jericho moved to her desk and started gathering up files. “Come on, I’ll walk you out.”

“So, what’s the deal,” Paige asked once the files were loaded into the car. “Trouble in paradise?”

“Not really,” Jericho looked away. “She wants me to meet her son.”

“That’s a good thing,” Paige decided. “I mean, it’s a sign she’s serious. How old is the son?”

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“He’s in college,” Jericho admitted. “And that’s the problem. She’s serious and — I don’t know. Does it bother you?”

“What?” Paige exclaimed. “No. I want you to be happy. Why would it bother me?”

“You know how serious I was with your mom,” Jericho stared off into the distance. “I loved her more than life itself. When she died, it nearly destroyed me. Then, you came back into my life, and I don’t want anything — or anyone — to get in the way of what we’ve built these past few years. If she brings her son into it —”

“I’ll do my best to get along with him,” Paige assured him. “And you’re going to be this baby’s grandpa. I know Sophie calls herself a grandma and Nathan sees himself as grandpa. I’m on board with that. They will be this baby’s grandparents, but you’re my family on Mom’s side. You’re going to be involved in this kids’ life. I need you to be involved. I think Harper will understand that. Just like I understand she has a son, and someday you might be a grandpa to his kids, too. We’ll get along, I promise. I’ll make sure of it,” she reached out and touched his forearm. “Tell Harper you’d love to meet her son.”

“And if he thinks I’m a grumpy old cop?” Jericho wondered. “You know how college kids are these days. How do you think that will impact my relationship with his mom?”

“Harper will have to deal with it. And she will if she loves you,” Paige shrugged. “I’m not worried. You shouldn’t worry, either. And Mom would like Harper. She’d also want you to be happy. I know you loved her and losing her was devastating to all of us. It’s time to let go and move forward, Jericho. It’s time for you to find happiness again. As long as you’re happy, I’ll accept anyone Harper brings into our lives. I just want to make it clear; we will always be a part of your life.”

“I’m gonna hold you to that, kid,” Jericho took a step back. “Go home and try to get a little rest before you tackle all of that.”

“Bristol talked like there’d be a hundred Darrell’s booked during my time period,” Paige glanced at the stack. “This isn’t bad, all things considered. It shouldn’t take too long to get through them.”

“There are hundreds in there,” Jericho frowned. “They only pulled the information you needed, not the entire booking history. Once you narrow it down, you’ll need them to pull the rest. You’ll want the entire history on your guy before you move forward. Set aside some time tomorrow to bring me up to speed. The earlier the better. Now, get home and put your feet up. Watching you makes me tired.”

“Goodnight, boss!” Paige pulled her door shut and headed home.

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“I pulled that application,” Dax settled onto the couch after dinner. “The kid looks promising, but he’s not as experienced as we like. As long as he knows his stuff, I think we can make it work. I talked to Hawk, and he’s waiting for the call.”

“Bristol said he was going to include his Rangemaster in the call. Hopefully, between the three of them, you’ll have the details you need to make a decision. I told him I will not intervene. I got his foot in the door, but his guy has to make an impression and convince you he can handle the advanced course. He’s confident the guy will sway you.”

“I guess we’ll see,” Dax decided. “What’s all this?”

Paige filled him in on the investigation and what she learned that day. “So, these are all the booking records on anyone named Darrell during the ten years before our Jane Doe moved to Fish Lake and joined that church group.”

“Want help?” Dax offered. “I assume you’re just looking at contacts to see if anyone listed Rebecca or Becca Baker when they were booked.”

“Or if the arresting officer listed Rebecca as a known associate,” Paige added. “But I can handle that. I think I already used up all my marital points for the day.”

“You get unlimited marital points,” Dax grabbed a stack of papers. “Let’s get through this. Then maybe, we can both relax and catch a movie or something before we turn in.”

They worked together skimming through the records for over an hour. Finally, Paige straightened, dropped the small stack of papers she hadn’t gone through, and smiled. “I’ve got him.”

“You found Darrell?” Dax set his stack on the coffee table.

“Darrell Eugene Mackey,” Paige read. “He lists Rebecca Baker as his emergency contact approximately two months after her divorce was final. He was arrested for assault. I need more information.” She reached over and pulled out her phone.

“What are you doing?” Dax tried to grab her phone but missed when she pulled it out of his reach.

“I’m calling Detective Riskin,” Paige hit send.

“It’s late, Paige,” Dax objected. “Wait until morning.”

“A detective never sleeps,” she told Dax.

“Ain’t that the truth,” Riskin answered.

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“Sorry,” Paige straightened. She ran through a quick update for him, explaining how she got the booking records and what she found. “I thought you’d want to know right away.”

“I do,” Riskin assured her. “I’m going to call my captain and ask for permission to head to Dallas. I want to interview anyone left that remembers Darrell Mackey and Rebecca Baker.”

“I didn’t get the full rap sheet,” she told him. “I just asked them to send me known associates and emergency contacts. You’ll want to get them to run a full history once you get there. If you have any trouble, contact Lt. Bristol. Tell him I sent you and he’ll take good care of you.”

“Thanks for this Paige,” Riskin said sincerely. “I knew asking for your help was the way to go.”

“We’re not there, yet,” Paige warned. “This might get us closer to finding out what happened to Rebecca and why she became Elisha, but we still don’t know who killed her.”

“Or who she is,” Riskin admitted. “This name is also fake, so she’s technically still a Jane Doe.”

“Good luck,” Paige hung up and turned to Dax. “Now, about that movie night.”

“Paige,” Riskin said the instant she answered the line. “If you don’t have it already, you should get a copy of Darrell’s full criminal history soon. He’s a repeat offender and a career criminal. The assault charge was related to Rebecca Baker. The two of them had quite the system.”

“What did they do?” Paige sat back.

“Rebecca would pose as a prostitute, pick up some unsuspecting John, and take him back to a cheap motel. Darrell would be waiting in the room. Together, they’d tie the guy to the bed and go through his belongings — stealing anything of value. They could use the credit cards for about a day until the victim was discovered, usually by housekeeping. I talked to a maid at their favorite motel, and she admitted she untied several men who begged her to keep it quiet. They were embarrassed and didn’t want anyone to know. The men would go home, cancel their credit cards and report them stolen.”

“What happened, why the assault charge?” Paige wondered.

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“One of the men fought back,” Riskin laughed. “He pummeled Darrell Mackey; I also asked them to forward you the booking photo. Anyway, when the cops got there, the guy pressed charges for assault and theft — and Mackey was arrested. Rebecca was long gone.”

“Did they move on from there or continue?” Paige wondered.

“They moved on,” Riskin admitted. “They traveled north and ultimately ended up in Utah. I’m heading home. I think I got everything I’m going to get out here.”

“Probably,” Paige admitted. “I think you should try to interview Cody and his family again as soon as you get home.”

“Why?” Riskin frowned.

“Because people always keep things from the police,” Paige insisted. “Maybe enough time has passed that he’ll tell you what he withheld.”

“What if he didn’t withhold?” Riskin wasn’t sure she was right.

“He did,” Paige said confidently. “But if he told you everything, what’s the harm?”

“Harassing a victim,” Riskin countered.

“He’s not a victim,” Paige disagreed. “Not in the way you mean. He’s a victim of Rebecca Baker AKA Elisha Walker AKA Jane Doe. You need to see if he held back. She’s a thief, Riskin. People like Rebecca don’t just stop stealing and become good church going saints. Find out what he didn’t tell you. And while you do that, I’ll try to figure out another angle we can use to find a new lead.”

“I’m flying back today,” Riskin told her. “I’ll try to talk to Cody tomorrow. Let me know if you find anything else.”

Paige was sitting at her desk, frustrated and tired. She didn’t know where to go from here. Nothing was jumping out at her. Oh, she knew Jane Doe was killed. She did not commit suicide. She knew the woman was a criminal — or at least became one once she started dating a criminal — and she knew there had to be a reason she was hiding. Beyond that, she had nothing.

“Paige,” Margie approached with a package. “This just arrived. I had to sign for it.”

“What is it?” Paige grabbed the package and stared at the label that listed the sender — John Franco. She grabbed her phone and dialed the club.

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“This is becoming a habit,” the manager complained.

“This is the last time,” Paige assured her. “I just have a quick question, then I won’t need to bother you again.”

“You got my package,” Franco greeted. “If you need instructions, I gave you far too much credit and overestimated your detecting skills.”

“What’s inside?” Paige demanded. “Unless I know it’s safe, I’m calling in the bomb squad and they’ll blow it to smithereens.”

“Geez, you’re paranoid,” Franco laughed. “It’s some stuff Becca left at my place after the divorce. I told her to take it, or I was going to toss it, but she never showed, and I thought it looked — I don’t know, sentimental or something. I couldn’t bring myself to throw it out, so I’m sending it to you. She’s dead, I’m pretty sure she’s not coming back for it now.”

“What kind of personal belongings?” Paige studied the package.

“Notebooks mostly,” Franco told her. “I don’t know, diary stuff, personal stuff. I didn’t read through it all.”

“Why not?” Paige wasn’t buying it. Anyone would be curious once they discovered it was personal.

“It was too painful,” Franco practically whispered. “If she talks about wild monkey sex with her lover, I don’t want to read it.”

“Sorry,” Paige felt a little guilty for pushing.

“Anyway,” Franco sighed. “It’s yours now. Read it, throw it out or give it to someone out there that might care. I don’t want it. I’m working to put all of this behind me. So —”

“I won’t call again unless it’s absolutely necessary,” Paige promised. “I’ll deal with the package. Thanks.”

Paige hung up and grabbed a knife to cut open the package. She pulled out the notebooks one by one, set the decorative mug aside, tossed the keychain with a frilly ribbon into the mug and settled into her chair to read the private thoughts of a stranger.

“You should go home, Paige,” Margie said softly and locked up her desk.

“Huh?” Paige looked up, saw Margie was getting ready to leave, and glanced at the clock.

“It’s happy hour,” Dean walked in. “You taking those notebooks or leaving them?”

“Taking them,” Paige stood and began cleaning up.

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“I’ll carry them,” Dean offered. “Just lead the way.”

Paige thought about her colleagues all the way home. Sure, they gave her a hard time and were constantly tossing out fat jokes; but, under the jokes and snide comments, every one of them had gone out of their way to take care of her. She was touched but felt a little guilty. She wasn’t pulling her weight, and now the guys thought they had to pamper and protect her. They were almost as bad as Dax.

She pulled into her driveway and carried the box of notebooks into the house. She hated calling this woman Jane Doe, but what could she call her? Not Elisha and not Rebecca. With a sigh, she dropped onto the couch and started to read. The woman was all over the place with these books. They reminded her of her FBI days, tracking killers who wrote everything down but none of it made sense. This woman was no exception. She had random thoughts, and the sentences didn’t end at the bottom of the page. No, once she reached the bottom, she’d turn the page and fill in the margins on each side. She was still reading when Dax walked in.

She greeted him and followed him into the kitchen, then frowned when her phone rang. She glanced at the display and realized it was Riskin. “I have to take this.”

“Go ahead,” Dax continued to pull items out of the bag. “But I’m eating while it’s still hot.”

Paige nodded and answered the phone.

“Okay, I’m never going to doubt you again,” Riskin greeted.

“Cody had more information,” Paige smiled. She knew it.

“I spoke to the entire family,” Riskin began. “They were all hiding something — missing money.”

“Elisha was stealing from them?” Paige frowned. How did Riskin not know this already?

“Not exactly,” Riskin told her. “Remember, it’s in one of my reports, Cody admitted that some money went missing and he contacted his father. That’s when his parents hired a PI to look into Elisha.”

“Right,” Paige nodded.

“Well, it was more than a few missing funds,” Riskin told her. “Cody and Elisha were fighting constantly over money. Large sums were coming up missing and the final straw was when Elisha didn’t pay the mortgage. She cashed the check, and the money disappeared. Cody found out and squared things with the bank. He paid the mortgage, and the late fee, but that’s when he decided to move out.”

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“So, wait,” Paige settled onto the couch. “This was an ongoing thing? Elisha was making withdrawals on a regular basis over a long period of time?”

“Yeah,” Riskin admitted. “When I talked to them initially, they made it sound like a onetime deal. They said they didn’t tell me this sooner because they thought if I knew about the fighting and the missing money, I’d suspect Cody killed Elisha. They tried to turn it over to the PI to track the funds, but he told them there was nothing to trace.”

“That’s not true,” Paige would have to talk to Nathan, to get his blessing, but Carmen might be able to track something.

“Normally, no,” Riskin gave a frustrated sigh. “But Elisha withdrew cash and then it disappeared. We know Darrell always used cash at the strip club where Rebecca worked. I doubt he deposited the funds into a checking account and started writing checks.”

“Yeah, that’s true,” Paige frowned. Now she was frustrated.

“There’s more,” Riskin admitted. “Once Cody found the missing money, he requested a printout from his cellphone carrier. He got a listing of calls Elisha made for the past six months — well, the six months before he left her and filed for divorce.”

“What did he find?” Paige wondered. There had to be something.

“A number he didn’t recognize,” Riskin told her. “Elisha called the same number every time she withdrew the money.”

“What’s the number, I have someone that can trace it and tell us who it belongs to,” Paige grabbed a pen and turned over the file she brought home.

Riskin relayed the phone number. “Cody confronted Elisha, and she refused to give any kind of explanation. Cody assumed she was getting a hotel with the missing money and paying for lush accommodations, dinners, and dates out with a lover. The infidelity combined with the information he received from the PI saying she wasn’t who she said she was, pushed him past his breaking point, and he filed for divorce.”

“I’ll call my contact and see if she can track down who owns that number,” Paige offered. “Now, do you have a minute? I have some things to tell you.”

“Sure, who has time for a personal life?”

Paige laughed, then told him about the stuff Franco mailed her. “He said Becca left them behind and he didn’t want them. I’ve been going through and trying to read them.” She proceeded to explain the notebooks and the convoluted way she documented her thoughts. “They’re jumbled but there’s a lot of stuff about guilt. This woman felt responsible for something.”

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“Maybe she was responsible for something,” Riskin corrected. “Any idea what?”

“Not yet, but I’m still digging,” Paige admitted. “Right now, I’m going to go in and have dinner with my amazing husband. You should go home and crash. I thought you planned to hold off and talk to Cody tomorrow.”

“You got me thinking and I couldn’t wait,” Riskin admitted. “I called, and they were available.”

“Well, I’m sure you’re ready for a break. It’s been a long day for both of us. I’ll keep looking through these books after we eat, and I’ll touch base with you in the morning.”

“Sounds like a plan,”

“Put this away for an hour,” Dax requested. “Let’s have a quiet dinner and we can pick it all back up once we’ve finished.”

“How did the interview go?” Paige settled into a chair.

“Bristol’s guy is in,” Dax followed her back to the kitchen. “Hawk said he knows his stuff, and the interview went so well; he’s wondering if we need to revamp the application process. He’s worried we’re shutting out guys like this Naylor guy who have the skills but not the background to get in.”

“I’m sure you’ll figure something out,” Paige glanced back to the living room and frowned. There were a lot of notebooks to read through.

“Let’s wait on that,” Dax joined her at the table. “While we eat, Bring me up to speed on the case.”

Paige dished her plate, then while they ate, she relayed everything that happened throughout the day.

“So, you want to go through those notebooks to see if there’s anything that will lead you to her true identity?”

“Or another fake one,” Paige grumbled, still frustrated.

Dax stood and took their empty plates to the sink. He rinsed each one, then returned to the table, took Paige’s hand and led her back to the living room. “Let’s get started.” He reached out and picked up a notepad from the middle of the pile. When he placed it in the palm of his hand he frowned.

“What?” Paige settled down next to him.

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“I’m not sure,” Dax straightened and opened the notebook. “Give me a minute.” He began slowly turning pages then set the notebook on the table, so it stood on end and let it fall. It opened to a page two thirds of the way to the back.

“It should open closer to the middle,” Paige picked it up.

“Give me a minute,” Dax took the notebook from her and gently turned one page at a time. He only got through three when he discovered several pages stuck together.

“Are they glued?” Paige studied the notebook. “It looks intentional.”

“It is,” Dax pulled out his knife and slid it down the outer edge of the page. It easily sliced open, and several loose pages fell out. Then, a tiny charm bracelet dropped to the floor. It looked like something a young girl would own.

“What is it?” Dax reached for the bracelet.

“Wait,” Paige grabbed his hand. “That’s evidence. I need to do this right.” She grabbed her go-bag and pulled out a small evidence bag and a pair of tweezers. She plucked the bracelet off the floor and slid it carefully into the bag, then sealed it. “I’ll have to get this to Riskin — eventually.” Paige grinned. “Now, let’s see what these are.”

“More ramblings of a lunatic?” Dax tried to read the paper over her shoulder.

“Not exactly,” Paige studied the pages. “She’s talking about dreams and flashbacks of her family dying. Then here, she says she’s terrified of fire and thinks it would be horrible to burn alive.” Paige frowned. When she combined the secret writings with the other notebook and the woman’s admission that she felt guilty, Paige had a bad feeling.

“You think she killed her family,” Dax realized. “That she burned them to death and had flashbacks of the incident.”

“I think it’s possible,” Paige wouldn’t lie to Dax. “In that other book she talks about feeling guilty. There are a lot of ramblings about guilt, actually.”

“What are you going to do now?” Dax wondered. “Because our fun game of intrigue, geared at uncovering the identity of your mystery woman, just shifted into something ugly and depraved.”

“I’m going to spend the night enjoying time with my husband and then I’m going to dig into this further once I get to work tomorrow. I think the first thing I’ll do is look into arson cases, public ones, where at least one family member died.”

“Nationwide?” Dax asked. “That will take forever.”

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“I know it happened before this,” Paige pointed to the stack of notebooks. “I know it happened before she went to Dallas and hooked up with Franco. That helps narrow it down. I have over a decade that I just eliminated.”

“I’m glad I’m not you,” Dax admitted. He knew this was what Paige did best — the details. It was her job, and she was good at it. He just wished, sometimes, that she didn’t have to deal with the ugly side of humanity.

“I’m sorry,” Paige took Dax’s hand. “I know sometimes I bring things into our home that should stay at the office. I didn’t realize where this was going, or I would have left it locked in my desk.”

“You don’t need to apologize, Paige,” Dax pulled her onto his lap. “This is who we are. I don’t mind. It’s just sometimes —”

“Sometimes you wish I raised puppies and danced around with flowers in my hair?” Paige grinned.

“Hell no,” Dax chuckled. “I’m pretty sure me and that girl — well, we wouldn’t stand a chance. Plus, think of the noise and the smell. Puppies have so many accidents.” He gave a fake shiver and pulled her in for a kiss. “I love you, Paige. That means all of you, brilliant mind, deductive reasoning skills, and the ability you have to solve cold cases that stump the best detectives.”

“I really am sorry,” she snuggled further into his chest. “And part of the reason I love you so much is I know you understand.”

Dax kissed the top of her head, grabbed the remote and flipped on the TV. “I want a repeat. Let’s relax tonight and you can deal with the ugly tomorrow.”

“I like that plan,” Paige tried to settle in and watch the movie Dax found on cable, but she couldn’t stop thinking of their life together — and her baby. What was she going to do once the baby was born? Not right away, she could still bring work home for a few years, but once the child was old enough to understand — things would have to change. She couldn’t bring the gory pictures that almost always accompanied a case home. She couldn’t risk traumatizing a small child that way. And their open conversations over breakfast or dinner — the ones that always centered on death and mayhem — that would also have to end. Their entire routine would have to change. They couldn’t discuss a tough case like this with a kid in the house but how would that impact their relationship?

“Shut it down,” Dax pressed a kiss to her temple. “I can hear you thinking and it’s distracting. Turn off that busy brain of yours and just relax.”

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Paige pretended to watch the movie, but she couldn't stop thinking about how things would change. She couldn't stop worrying what that would do to their marriage. They had always shared this connection. It made them a team, a partnership — but with a child lurking she'd have to stop.

The following day, Paige was sitting at her desk skimming through the internet looking for fires that killed a family trapped inside, when Carmen called.

“Sorry for the delay,” Carmen began. “But that phone is registered to one Darrell Mackey. I couldn't trace it. He must have it turned off, or he pulled the SIM card and ditched it. It's completely offline and has been all day,” Carmen paused. “Is something wrong?”

“What?” Paige jerked. “No, but could you do me one more favor?”

“Depends,” Carmen teased. “Will it get me fired?”

“Shouldn't,” Paige shrugged. “I have an in with the boss.”

“What's the favor?” Carmen asked.

“Can you pull the financial records for this account,” she pulled out the file and found the documents Cody had provided to Riskin. “I need you to see when the wife began withdrawing money and if there's a pattern to the withdrawals. Also, when did they stop?”

“Alright,” Carmen agreed. “That should be easy enough to do. Anything else?”

“No, I'm running my own search, trying to find a family that was killed in a fire,” Paige admitted.

“Send me the details and I'll set something up,” Carmen offered. “There's going to be tons, but I should be able to narrow it down.”

“I'll send you a possible — or, I guess, likely — time frame to go with it,” Paige decided. “Thanks for your help on this. I really appreciate it, so will the detective from Sevier County.”

“No problem,” Carmen clicked off.

Paige was sitting back, still thinking about the revelation she had the previous evening when her phone rang. *Riskin*. “Hey, I was just about to call you,” Paige greeted. “The phone number on the records Cody gave you belongs to Darrell Mackey.”

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“I’m putting an ATL out for him,” Riskin decided. “He could have left Utah, but I’m putting out an alert, anyway. I want to talk to that man.”

“I’d like to be there,” Paige decided. “Maybe by video, if that’s possible.”

“I’ll run it by the boss and call you,” Riskin offered. “I’m sure we can set something up.”

That afternoon, Paige was sitting at her desk reading through the files Carmen provided. She found several house fires that killed entire families. She had just finished reading about a family that was killed in their sleep when her phone rang. She snatched it up when she saw Riskin’s name on the display, prepared to give him bad news and explain why their Jane Doe was on the run. “Deputy Carter,” she greeted.

“Hey, you said you wanted to participate in my interview. Do you have a way to set up a video call?”

“You got him?” Paige held her hand over the receiver and called Margie.

“I’m in Salt Lake,” Riskin advised. “I’m holding Mackey but I’m not sure we have enough to keep him. The jail says they have the ability to set up a video call, but they need to know if you have the equipment on your end.”

“I’m going to put you on speaker so you can talk to our in-house wiz. She’ll know if we have what you need.” Paige turned to Margie. “I need to participate in a video call. Can you talk to these guys and set up what we need in the conference room?”

“Of course,” Margie picked up the phone. “I’m going to transfer you into the conference room. Give me just a minute and we can get started.”

Paige watched Margie step into the large room and maneuver around the table. The guys up north were in excellent hands with Margie. Paige glanced at the screen but couldn’t deal with fires and death any longer. She picked up the financial report she set aside earlier, planned to slide it back into the folder, but stopped when something caught her eye. The last withdrawal was weeks before Elisha’s death. Cody cut her off immediately once he filed for divorce. She didn’t have access to his money any longer because it was an inheritance and considered a premarital asset.

Margie called out and informed Paige everything was ready for her to start. Paige stepped into the room thanked Margie and was told she would lock the door when she left so Paige wouldn’t be interrupted.

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“I’m here,” Paige settled into a chair with her file.

Riskin started the recording on his end, read Darrell his Miranda warning and began the interview. Paige watched Darrell. He didn’t seem worried. He was cocky and arrogant, the way someone might be if they’d been through this routine before. She needed to knock him off his game. She listened while Riskin asked questions about his relationship with Rebecca, outlined the prostitution and the theft scheme, then ran through Darrell’s list of crimes.

“So what?” Darrell shrugged. “That’s all public record, and I did my time.”

“When did Rebecca tell you she was no longer in love with you?” Paige asked. She got the reaction she was looking for but after a couple seconds, he recovered.

“The woman was trouble,” Darrell shrugged. “She betrayed me, so what?”

“How exactly did she betray you?” Riskin glanced at Paige, nodded, and waited.

“It’s like you said,” Darrell’s eyes dart around the room then settled back on Riskin. “We hooked up and took off together.”

“You hooked up at the stripper club in Dallas, began an illicit affair with Rebecca, and then moved on after she divorced Mr. John Franco. Is that correct?” Riskin asked.

“Sure,” Darrell smirked. “That guy was boring, and Rebecca needed excitement. We hooked up right under his nose and the idiot never knew a thing. She got divorced, and we took off. When we ran out of cash, we might have requested a contribution from the Johns Rebecca brought back to the motel. None of them complained, so what’s the problem?”

“The problem is illegal prostitution, theft, forced detainment, and credit card fraud,” Riskin settled back.

“You can’t prove any of that,” Darrell finally barked.

“So, you moved on,” Riskin continued. “You moved to Utah and Rebecca changed her name to Elisha Walker. What was the plan, Darrell?”

“I want a deal,” Darrell demanded. “For talking. Before I say anything, I want a deal.”

“Okay, here’s the deal,” Riskin straightened. “You tell me what you and Elisha had planned for Cody and his family, or I send you back to jail and let the attorney’s hash this out.”

“What are the charges?” Darrell demanded.

“I already explained that,” Riskin sat back. “Theft, forced detainment, and credit card fraud. I think that’s a decent start and while you rot in a cell, I’ll be out looking for additional charges

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we can add to that list. By the time your case goes to trial, I'll have enough felonies tacked on to ensure you stay locked up for decades.”

“Fine,” Darrell glanced around again and considered. When he looked back, his smirk was wider, and his eyes were gleaming with something that looked like mischief. “Rebecca was sick of the prostitution gig. She said it was small time, and she wanted a big payout. So, she changed her name to ensure a clean start, and we headed to Utah. When we landed by Fish Lake, she saw a flyer for a church picnic or some nonsense. That’s what gave her the idea. She attended the social and scoped out our options. It was all her idea.”

“What was her idea?” Paige pushed. “Give us the details.”

“Becca said church people were easy targets,” Darrell settled in the chair, more confident now. “She started to attend the church looking for marks. That’s when we realized we hit the jackpot — the rich guy.”

“Cody Tanner?” Riskin asked.

“Right,” Darrell nodded. “Rebecca said she’d cozy up to the rich guy. She’d get him to fall for her and convince him to give her money, or she’d snoop around and find a way to access his account. Then, all she had to do was skim a little to get us by. She wanted me to follow him, to get pictures of him in a compromising position, then we could use them as blackmail if he wanted us to keep quiet. She had a lot of ideas but bottom line, we would target the rich guy and con him into giving Rebecca money.”

“What happened?” Paige pushed. “When did Rebecca stop seeing you as a partner and realize you were just dead weight she was carrying around — and she could do better?”

“That lying bimbo fell in love with the guy,” Darrell spat. “Can you believe that? She actually fell in love with the mark. She came to me, offered me money to go away and keep our secret. She said the guy could never know what we planned. I said no way, she wasn’t cutting me out of the deal. She finally agreed to compensate me for my trouble, and I agreed. There’s nothing illegal about that. Maybe there would have been if the slut didn’t fall for the mark, but we didn’t go through with it. Rebecca gave me money willingly, and I kept my mouth shut.”

“Did you meet Rebecca the day she died?” Riskin asked.

Darrell studied Riskin for several seconds before he answered. “I met her in the parking lot of the campground. We talked, she gave me the money, and I left. I have no idea what happened to her after I left.”

“So,” Riskin leaned forward. “You admit you were there?”

“I said I was, didn’t I?” Darrell barked. “I met her, she passed me the money and I split. She gave me extra after she had the kid. She was terrified her husband would find out everything, and

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she'd lose them both. I don't know what happened after that. I assume she jumped. The woman was loony, and everything was falling apart."

"But she paid you," Paige pointed out. "Why was it falling apart? You agreed not to say anything, and you claim you didn't love her, and she didn't love you, so why would she kill herself?" The man was lying, and Paige was going to pin him down and nail him to the wall.

"I have no idea," Darrell glared at her. "I told you; the man was supposed to be a mark. She was supposed to seduce him, get him to shower her with gifts and find the details to access his bank account. Instead, she fell for the guy, married him and had a kid. The gig was up, and I was ready to move on. I just needed the funds she promised me. We met in the parking lot; she handed over the money she retrieved that morning and I split. What happened after I left is anyone's guess."

"I have a witness that saw you arguing with my victim just prior to her death," Riskin advised him. "She was about to come over and break things up, or call the police, when the two of you turned away and walked up the trail."

"She's lying," Darrell said automatically.

"I don't think so," Riskin smiled and waited.

"Then it was someone else," Darrell insisted. "Maybe her husband met her at the trail, and he killed her."

"How much did she give you?" Paige asked absently.

"What?" Darrell glanced at the screen. "I don't see why you're involved in this, anyway. Where did you say you were from? Nowhereville, Utah?"

"Sanpete County, actually," Paige grinned. "And I'm here because I was invited. How much money did Rebecca give you that day? The money you say she paid you, the funds she promised you before you took the envelope and split. How much?"

"Um—" Darrell faltered.

"I'm sure it was substantial," Riskin pressed. "Come on, man. This shouldn't be difficult. You said you two agreed on an amount, she met you in the parking lot, turned over the money and you left. How much did she give you that day?"

"Ten thousand," Darrell lied.

"Ten thousand," Paige sat back. "That would be difficult for a woman getting a divorce. Where do you think she got the funds to pay for your silence?"

"Him — that Cody guy, her husband," Darrell insisted.

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“But her world was falling apart,” Paige pretended to think. “Your words, not mine. Her world was falling apart. Her husband had filed for divorce, and she was desperate. Why did she need to pay you anything? I mean, could the secrets you had really make a difference at that point?”

“She said —” Darrell stopped.

“Yes?” Riskin asked. “What did she say? Help us understand because this story just doesn’t make sense to me.”

“Rebecca said she was afraid of Cody,” Darrell’s eyes were darting around the room like he was looking for something to latch onto. “She said he was violent, and she was afraid if he knew about us, about our past, it would make things worse. She paid me the money and was relieved when I told her I was leaving town.”

Paige pulled out one of the notebooks she got from Franco. “Darrell is exciting and dangerous,” she paused. “Oh, this is a diary she left with John Franco. You remember him, right? The husband that didn’t know Rebecca was cheating right under his nose?”

“That means nothing,” Darrell insisted.

“He’s dangerous and violent and that darkness makes me excited. I can’t get enough.”

“Was it Cody that was violent, Darrell? Or was it you?” Riskin pushed. “Did you get angry when Rebecca arrived without your money. You told her to bring it and there she was empty-handed. You argued, but realized people were watching, so you dragged her up the trail, found a secluded spot, and shoved her over the side.”

“No,” Darrell shook his head, clearly frustrated and terrified. “I left. I took the money, and I left.”

“There was no money, Darrell,” Paige advised. “Rebecca was broke. She didn’t have access to Cody’s funds — he blocked her from his accounts. She arrived empty-handed. Did that piss you off? You told that bimbo to bring the money and all she brought was excuses. You’d had enough, so you grabbed her, dragged her down the trail and the two of you continued to argue. Then, you knocked her out, tossed her over the side, and did what you’re good at — the only thing you’re good at. You ran.”

“You can’t prove any of that,” Darrell yelled. “You can’t prove I was even there. I left. She gave me the money, and I left.”

“I have a witness that says otherwise,” Riskin reminded him. “I have a witness that can put you on that trail.”

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“Okay,” Darrell agreed. “I did go up the trail, just barely — not far. Rebecca was jerking me around. She said she had the money, but she needed to talk to me first. She needed to say goodbye. She talked me into starting up the trail. She wanted sex, one last goodbye but I was done with that woman. She’s crazy. I told her it was over, and I just needed my money. She started to cry, shoved the money at me and ran up the trail alone. That’s the last I saw her. Maybe she just jumped. Or maybe she fell. That’s it, maybe she tripped and fell over the edge, and it was an accident. I don’t know. I just took the money and ran.”

Riskin looked at Paige. “I think that’s all we’re going to get.”

“I agree,” Paige shrugged. “Once you book him, we need to talk.”

“Book me?” Darrell jumped to his feet. “For what?”

“Oh, right,” Riskin grinned. “We covered some of the charges, but I’m adding extortion and murder to the mix.” Riskin opened the door and passed Darrell off to the jailers waiting to take him back to his cell.

“You can’t do this,” Darrell screamed all the way down the hall.

“I just did,” Riskin sighed and stepped back into the room. “What’s up?” he asked when he saw Paige was still there.

“The victim had a habit of writing things down,” Paige began. “I think you should go back to Cody and ask him about that. See if there were any notebooks or diaries that might talk about Darrell. We’ve got him, but I think — if Rebecca, Elisha, whoever she was — kept to pattern, there will be notebooks and they will talk about the plan, the money, and Darrell.”

“It’s worth a shot,” Riskin shrugged. “What else? I can see you found something. What is it?”

“I think I found your victim,” Paige admitted. “I think I know who she is.”

“Wow, that’s great,” Riskin began then frowned. “Or, is it?”

“I found an article,” Paige stopped. “Well, my friend sent me a stack of stories where family members died in a fire. This one fits.”

“Alright,” Riskin settled into one of the chairs. “Break it to me, I can see it’s bad.”

“A family was killed in New Jersey several years ago,” Paige began. “All of them, except their prime suspect, a seventeen-year-old daughter. Your Jane Doe would have been around seventeen at the time of the incident.”

“Alright,” Riskin considered. “What happened to the teen?”

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“She disappeared,” Paige told him. “I’m getting my information from newspaper clippings, so you’ll want to contact the New Jersey police and get the details. The article says the family was drugged and was asleep when the house was doused in gasoline and set on fire. The seventeen-year-old was the prime suspect. She disappeared, and the case is still open. Or was at the time of the report.”

“So, she killed her parents, fled and changed her name,” Riskin was shocked.

“She killed her parents,” Paige hesitated. “And her two younger sisters. They were fifteen and twelve. The girl’s name — the suspect — was Kimberly Frances Kennedy. I’ll send you the information, but I think it’s worth checking into.”

“I agree,” Riskin stood. “I’ll look into the fire and get back to you.”

“I also have Cody’s financial records,” Paige reminded him. “The ones you sent and a few extra details. You’ll need a warrant to get all of this, but you’ll want to pursue it. Elisha or Kimberly or whatever you want to call her, she didn’t withdraw funds that day. Cody cut her off, like I said to Darrell. She didn’t have ten thousand to give him. I don’t think she had anything. According to my information, Elisha was broke. Follow through on that, it’s going to help you trap him.”

“That and the witness,” Riskin agreed. “I can already prove he was lying. We’ll get more. Don’t worry.”

“Let me know what you find in New Jersey,” Paige requested. “Otherwise, I think my work here is done.”

“I appreciate all of it,” Riskin told her. “So does my sergeant. He’s a little steamed that he was wrong, but he took it well and he’s grateful we eventually got it right.”

“It’s what I do,” Paige grinned. “Go on, call New Jersey.”

A week later, Paige got a call from Riskin.

“So, I spoke with the case agent in New Jersey,” Riskin hesitated. “Do you want to know the details or a brief summary?”

“Give me the details,” Paige decided.

Riskin described the multiple homicide. The family was given a high dose of Benadryl, and the Jersey detective believed it was added to their drink at dinner without them knowing. He based that on their stomach contents. The family went to bed early and the seventeen-year-old

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family member went to work preparing the house for destruction. A large amount of gasoline was dumped throughout the residence, then it was set on fire. David and Amber Kennedy, along with their two daughters, Trina and Stacy were trapped inside and burned to death. Kimberly, their oldest daughter, was never seen or heard from again. The detective interviewed Kimberly's classmates. They painted a picture of a troubled girl who didn't have any real friends. She was a loner and seemed to get pleasure from hurting people or causing trouble for those who crossed her. Most of the kids were afraid of her. Nobody was surprised when they learned she may have killed her family.

"They have DNA," Riskin finally added. "They collected a sample from her locker at the high school and saved it just in case. They shipped the results over so my lab could verify my victim and their suspect are the same person. It came back today, it's a match. They'll finally be able to close their case. They won't get an arrest, but at least the extended family can finally get closure."

"What about Cody?" Paige wondered. "Did he have any notebooks or diaries?"

"Actually, he did," Riskin shifted gears. "He found them in Elisha's desk, partially hidden and taped to the top of a drawer. He had no idea they were in there until I asked, and he went searching for them. I've been reading through them, and you were right, they're going to paint a picture that will trap Darrell for good. I expect him to take a plea. Anyway, they look a lot like the ones you mailed to me — the ones Franco sent you. There's a lot of rambling and nothing organized or coherent. But she does talk about Darrell and his violence and claimed she was afraid of him. She also wrote that she shouldn't meet him without the money, but she had to. One of the other books had better details and was easier to read. She documented how she was supposed to seduce Cody and even marry him, then kill him before he discovered her secret or got suspicious. That way, all of his money and property would have gone to her as his surviving spouse. The last page of the notebook is a kind of mantra. I won't kill again; I won't kill again. I won't get caught. Then it goes back to the rambling. I'm not sure the girl was sane, Paige."

"What about the images, I numbered them in the order they should be presented to the DA," Paige told him. "Did you get the explanation and how they show a clear and concise story of what happened that day?"

"I got them," Riskin sighed. "I had those all the time but didn't see it. Nobody here did. How did you put that together?"

"I didn't," Paige smiled. "My amazing husband did."

"Well thank him for us," Riskin told her. "It's going to make this case even stronger. I realize she was a killer and clearly disturbed, but she deserves justice just like anyone else. Darrell will pay for killing the woman that betrayed him. I can't resolve the New Jersey case to

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anyone's satisfaction but the woman that killed her family is deceased now and can't hurt anyone else."

"That will have to be enough," Paige straightened. "Thanks for the call Riskin — and good luck. It was a pleasure working with you."

"If I can ever do anything for you, don't hesitate to call," Riskin offered. "Take care, Paige. And don't work so hard. You need to think about your baby."

They disconnected and Paige watched Jericho enter the back door and head into his office. She stood and followed him in. She would update her boss on the case, then she would go home to that amazing husband she spoke of.