

Justice for Leah
A Callie and Carter Mystery

By
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Chapter One

"Book or column?" Callie asked as she entered the loft to find Carter typing on the computer.

"Book right now. I need a little more info about the column. I'll probably send them a repeat column for this week."

"I thought you were doing another column about a cold case?" she asked, dropping her purse onto the coffee table as she stepped out of her shoes and left them to circle around him to put her arms around his shoulders.

"I am. But I got a call today from the daughter of the woman the story's about. She wants to talk to me." He stopped typing to put his hands on her arms and turn his head to give her a kiss. He had stopped trying to hide the fact that he wrote the syndicated column "Simon Says", since most of what he was writing wasn't anything that could put him or Callie in danger. "How's Allie?"

"You know Allie," was Callie's answer. "But she does seem very happy these days. For that matter, so does Dad. She told me that he's still talking about selling the house and moving into an apartment."

"Allie's apartment?"

"I think he's looking for someplace that doesn't have memories for either of them."

"That makes sense. Besides the fact that each of them probably spent time with their other friends in Allie's apartment or Marty's house - there's also the fact that Allie practically grew up in that house."

"Yeah. Allie had the silliest idea -" she shook her head and started to move away, but Carter stopped her.

"What?"

"Like I said, it was silly -"

"Callie -" He pushed back from the desk and pulled her into his lap.

"She suggested that they move in here and that you and I - that we move into the house. I told her that you have a long term lease -"

"That can be transferred if a fee is paid - or I can sublet."

"You can?"

He nodded. "I had to live here a year before that part of the lease kicked in, but there's a section that allows me to sublet - as long as the new tenants file an application and are approved by the management company."

"Oh. I told her that you like it here. So do I. It's small, and easy to clean. And there's no yardwork -"

"Sounds like you're making excuses," he told her. "We already have a housekeeper that comes in weekly. And as for yardwork, it can be hired out - which is what Marty does, I believe."

She nodded. "Marco's mowed the yard for years," she said. "And he's good about trimming hedges and such - you sound as though you'd be okay with moving."

"Would you be - okay with it?" he asked her. "You know that I like the house. And there's a room there where I could put *all* of my books. I hate having to leave them in storage -"

"Why don't we invite Dad over here and let him look at this place before we make any plans?" she suggested. "He might take a look at it and decide that it's too small for him and Allie."

"I'd suggest having them both over for dinner on Sunday, but since neither of us cook -"

"Leave that to me," she told him. "Now, when are you supposed to meet this daughter of the woman you're writing about?"

"She'll be here at three this afternoon," he said. "So would you mind putting your shoes on and helping me straighten the place up a little?"

Callie gave a long-suffering sigh. "I suppose so. How long ago did her mother die?"

"Ten years ago. She disappeared on the way home one night and her body was found in her car at the bottom of a small lake two weeks later."

As she slipped her shoes back on, she looked up at him. "That sounds familiar," she noted. "What was the woman's name?"

"I told you," he said, and she gave him an apologetic smile. "Leah Davies. The police closed the case when they weren't able to find any evidence they could use to continue and said that she had most likely been drinking and lost control of the car."

"Did the autopsy show any alcohol in her system?"

"She'd been in the water for two weeks," he reminded her. "The coroner said that he wasn't able to confirm or deny that she had been drinking. But a bartender at a bar a few miles from where she went off the road swore that she'd been there and had had several drinks."

"If that's the case, then it would make sense that she drove the car into the lake. Why would it be considered a cold case since there was no sign of foul play?"

"Her daughter contacted my syndication office and asked them to see if I would look into the case and maybe get some publicity. She's convinced that her mother was murdered."

"She *was* murdered!" Paula Davies declared. She was twenty years old, with blonde hair and blue eyes. Dressed in jeans and a blousy top, the girl was clearly determined to pursue the matter.

"Miss Davies," Callie pointed out, "a bartender swore that she had spent the evening drinking -"

"Mother didn't drink much," she said. "Especially if she was going to have to drive. Her father was killed by a drunk driver. It made her very careful."

"You were - ten when she died?" Carter clarified.

"Yes. I know. Everyone thinks I didn't know anything about her. But I did. She didn't even keep alcohol in the house. We were close. It was just the two of us."

"What about your father?" Callie asked.

"I never knew him. He died before I was born. The police just wrote her off as a drunk, and refused to listen to me or anyone else who knew her - That's why I was hoping you would write about the case, Mr. Jankowski. I've read the other columns you've done about cold cases, and well, maybe something you write would make someone come forward who knows what really happened that night." She sighed. "I'm sorry. The last ten years have been - difficult, with people insisting Mom practically killed herself."

"What happened to you after her death?" Callie wanted to know.

"Mom's job had a life insurance policy on her - it's taken care of the bills - and our live-in housekeeper stayed on as my guardian," she explained. "Martha - Mrs. Logan is nice, but - well, she wasn't my mom."

Carter nodded. "All I can tell you, Miss Davies, is that we'll do what we can to investigate your mother's death - but it **has** been ten years, and there probably aren't a lot of leads -"

"You can talk to her old boss - and there might be some people that she worked with that are still there -"

"Where did she work?" Callie asked.

"Appleton Investments," she said.

"From what I read in the report," Carter said, "she was executive assistant to Stanley Appleton himself."

Callie's eyes widened at the news. Stanley Appleton was **very** rich, with land investments around the globe. "Oh."

"Mr. Appleton was very nice to me," Paula said. "I think he was as upset about Mom's death as I was. As I am. I'm sure he'll be willing to help you with this."

"We'll contact him," Carter told her. "If I have anymore questions, I'll call you."

"Anytime," she said. "I have classes during the day, but you can leave a message on my phone and I'll call you back." She stood and looked at them. "Thank you. For being willing to listen to me and to try to prove that the police were wrong - that my mother was murdered."

While Carter walked the girl back down to her car, Callie went to the desk and looked through the folder for his current column, pulling the police report from it. She was reading it when Carter returned to the loft. "I wonder if we could get an independent pathologist to do another autopsy," she murmured, but Carter spoke up.

"She was cremated," he told her, and Callie stopped reading to look at him.

"Really? How convenient."

"You sound as though you think Paula's right."

"I don't know. I'm getting a feeling -"

"Aha. That cop's intuition kicking in," he said. "For what it's worth, I trust that intuition. So who do we talk to first?"

"George Piper," she said.

"He wasn't on the case ten years ago."

"No, but he'll know how to reach the detectives who were."

Piper actually smiled when he saw them enter the office. "Callie. Carter. To what do I owe this visit?" he asked, indicating the chairs in front of his cluttered desk.

"We're here to pick your brains, George," Callie told him.

"Don't have a lot of those left these days," he said.

"Do you remember the Leah Davies case?" Carter asked.

"Leah Davies," he muttered, sitting back in his chair. "Leah - yeah. Ten years ago. She worked for Stanley Appleton and ended up at the bottom of a lake in her car. If my memory serves, there was a witness who said she'd been drinking all evening before she disappeared. Some kids found the car when they were out fishing on the lake a few weeks later. Pretty cut and dried as I remember."

"As far as it went," Callie nodded, ignoring Piper's narrowed grey eyes at her comment. "Who handled the case?"

"That's in the record - Harry Lansing was the lead investigator. It was his last big case before he retired. I was only a junior member of the detective division, assigned to vice at the time."

"Would you know where he is these days?" Carter wanted to know. "How we could get in touch with him?"

"He's still in the area - I could probably find his address and a phone number for you - but, what's this about? The case was settled ten years ago. Leah Davies got drunk and drove her car into the lake."

"We were told that Leah didn't drink much at all - especially not if she was going to be driving."

"Who told you that?" he asked. "There was a signed affidavit -"

"Made by a bartender who swore she was drinking all evening. And another customer had the same story. One bartender and one customer - no one else made the claim. Her father was killed by a drunken driver. Did you know that?"

"I've seen similar cases," Piper began as Callie finally stopped talking. "It happens. Let me guess: business is so slow that you're looking at old, closed police cases now."

"It's a cold case, George," Callie told him. "There's more to this than what's in the police report, and we're going to uncover it all."

"You don't seriously think that someone killed her, do you?"

"Why not? As you said, George, it happens. Now, would you please give me Harry Lansing's phone number so we can talk to him?"

He looked in the rolodex on his desk and wrote a number on a notepad. "Here you go. But I can tell you now, he's not going to tell you anything different than I have."

The Lansing house was situated in an older neighborhood. The yard was immaculately mowed and trimmed, with well-tended flower beds. As they pulled into the driveway, Carter asked, "You didn't know Lansing when you were on the force, did you?"

"No. He retired the year before I became a probationary officer. I heard the name mentioned by some of the old timers," she told him. "Most of them seemed to have a lot of respect for him." She pressed the doorbell.

The door was opened by an elderly man with snow white, close-cropped hair. He smiled at them. "Mrs. Harris?" he asked, then to Carter, "Mr. Jankowski, right?"

"That's right, sir," Carter said, shaking the hand that was extended.

"Come in. I don't get a lot of company this time of year. School just started, so the grandkids are all busy." He led them into what was obviously still his study. "After you called, I went through my records and dug up my notes on the Davies case." He pointed to the chairs as he picked up a folder. "Such a sad case. Single mother with such promise, working for one of the richest men in the state, if not the country, and she dies in such a tragic manner." He sat down as well. "What can I tell you that you don't know from the police record of the case?"

"You spoke to her daughter-" Callie began, and he nodded.

"Oh yes. Pam, Pat - No, Paula. Poor kid just didn't want to believe that her mother had been drinking."

"She told you about Leah's father, didn't she?"

"Yes, and we confirmed that. He died when she was sixteen, and her mother died two years later of an overdose of sleeping pills - on top of having had several drinks."

"What about her coworkers, did they say she drank a lot?" Carter asked.

"Most of them told us that she didn't spend a lot of time with them away from the office, so they weren't sure about her drinking habits."

"And her boss?"

"Mr. Appleton told us that he had never seen her take more than one drink at office parties - but he said that he knew very little about her private life. She seemed to spend most of her time away from the office with her daughter - said that the girl was the most important thing in Leah's life other than her job."

"So no one could confirm that Leah Davies drank too much, but you still took the word of a bartender and one patron at the bar where she supposedly spent the evening getting drunk?" Callie said.

"No one else in the bar remembered seeing Leah Davies," Lansing explained. "The one person that did remember her said that he went over to her table and tried to talk to her, offered to buy her another drink, but she told him to get lost. While he was there, he said he saw her drink at least three daiquiris, and she had ordered a fourth when he left the bar. The bartender said that she had five before she left."

"And he just - let her go after serving her that much liquor?" Callie asked.

"He said she didn't have any trouble walking out of the bar, so he thought she was just someone who could hold her liquor." He sighed. "Leah didn't have much of a social life. She dated a few men, we talked to all of them. To a man, they all said that if she met them at dinner, she didn't drink, but if they picked her up and brought her home, she would have one. None of them would admit to more than just dinner for the most part - certainly her daughter said that her mother never brought men home. There were no other leads. There was nothing else we could do but accept the bartender and customer's statements and declare her death to be caused by too much alcohol and driving."

"I don't believe that to be the truth," Callie said. "There's more to this story."

"Possibly," Lansing nodded, surprising the two of them. "We were pushed to close the case."

"That's not in the record," Carter said.

"No, but the higher ups wanted it closed, so we closed it. And - there's something else that wasn't in the record - the coroner said that while he couldn't prove the level of alcohol in the body, he was able to confirm that -" He drew a deep breath before continuing. "That Leah Davies was around 8 weeks pregnant."

"There's no way that she would have been drinking that much, then!" Callie declared.

"Not unless she was going to end the pregnancy," Lansing told her. "Then it wouldn't matter." He closed the folder and held it out to her. "Here. This case has haunted me for ten years. I hope you can find whatever it was that I missed."

Callie handed the folder to Carter as she got into the Jeep. "You might as well start looking through the notes," she said, backing out of the drive. "I think we need to make an appointment to see Stanley Appleton and see what he says - maybe he can help with any employees who might have known Leah Davies. And we need to try and see if we can't track down those men she saw during the months before her death. Not sure how much luck we'll have -"

"One of them is going to be easy to find," Carter said. "You know him."

She braked for a red light and looked at him. "Who?"

"Martin Cantwell," he answered.

"Dad?" Callie said, surprised. "He's never mentioned -" A car honked, and Callie realized the light had changed. Driving on, she found a spot to pull over and took the folder from him. Scanning the notes on Lansing's interview with her father, she glanced at her wristwatch. "It's downtime at the restaurant. He should have time to talk to us."

"Are you sure you want to do it at the restaurant?" Carter asked. "Wouldn't it be better to talk to him at home?"

"He's never *at* home, remember?" she pulled the Jeep back into traffic, taking the first right.

They entered thru the kitchen doorway, since the restaurant was still closed for the dinner reset. Luka saw them and smiled, pointing toward the office.

Callie tapped on the doorframe, and Marty looked up from the open ledger book on the desk. "Callie. Carter. Come in!" He started to stand up, reaching for the golden topped walking stick, but she stopped him.

"Just stay there, Dad," she told him, coming around the desk to give him a hug. "How's the leg?"

"Aches when the weather changes. But most of the time I almost forget that I broke it. The doc said I could probably stop using the cane in the next few weeks."

"That's good news."

"Great news. I'm getting tired of hobbling around. Allie says I swagger, but she's prejudiced."

"Well, I'm going to agree with her."

Marty shook his head. "I know that you two didn't just happen to drop by - what's going on?"

"Well, for one thing, I'm hoping that I can convince you and Allie to come to dinner on Sunday."

"Dinner. At your apartment," Marty said, narrowing his eyes before looking at Carter. "Do you have any idea what she's talking about? Have one or both of you suddenly learned how to do more than boil water?"

Carter grinned, leaning against the doorframe. "I think Callie and Allie are plotting something."

"I might have known. You and she had lunch today, didn't you?"

"She did make a suggestion about letting you see the loft, and well, since I know how important a kitchen is for you wherever you move to - I thought you could make dinner for the four of us. If you'll send me a grocery list, I'll make sure everything is there -"

"I've never liked the kitchen at the house," Marty told Carter. "In case she hasn't told you. But since I don't do a lot of cooking for myself, I never saw any reason to have any work done. Okay. We'll be there. I'll get a list emailed to you before Sunday. Now that that's settled, you said one thing - that means there's something else."

Callie looked at Carter, and he asked, "Do you remember Leah Davies?"

Marty looked sad. "That's a name out of the past. Yes. I knew her. Why are you asking?"

"We're looking into her death," Callie told him. "Carter's latest column is going to be about her, and her daughter wants us to find out what really happened."

The sadness was replaced by confusion. "I thought the police decided that Leah had too much to drink and drove her car into that lake? You mean that isn't what happened?"

"Her daughter doesn't think so. And neither do I."

Marty looked at Callie. "Ask your questions. I'll try to remember - it's been ten years, though."

"Right after I left for college," she said. "I guess that's why you never mentioned her."

"There was no reason to," he said. "We saw each other three times. Once for dinner on a Sunday. Twice more for lunch - here, so they weren't really dates. Between my job here and hers, our schedules didn't mesh too well. She was a nice young woman. She loved her daughter and was dedicated to her job at Appleton Investments."

"How long before she died did you see her?" Carter asked.

"Oh, six months, at least. I regretted losing contact with her - especially after she died. I felt like she needed someone to be a friend - someone to talk to. But, like I said, our jobs made it impossible. Her daughter - is she okay? I was always worried about what would happen to you if something happened to me."

"There was a live-in housekeeper that became her guardian and a decent life insurance payout helped," Callie told him, giving him a hug. "I'm glad we never had to face that problem."

Carter smiled. "From what Callie's told me, she grew up here as much as at the house."

"If I was here, she was here," he said. "Allie, too. Her mom hated having to come pick her up, but at least she wasn't having to go home to an empty house in the afternoons."

"He put us to work folding napkins and rolling silverware," Callie recalled. "After we did our homework, of course."

"About Leah, honey," he said, "I hope you find out what happened."

"Speaking of which," Callie said, turning to grab the phone book. "I need to find a telephone number for Appleton Investments."

"We're going to try to get an appointment with Stanley Appleton," Carter explained.

"You know, I didn't tell the detective that I talked to after she died, but, when he asked about other men in her life, I should have mentioned Appleton. She raved about how wonderful he was, how much help he had been to her and her daughter."

"Why didn't you mention it?" Callie wanted to know as she grabbed a slip of paper and wrote a number on it.

"Everything I'd ever seen about the man said he was very happily married. His wife still does charity work, I believe. Mostly out of state. I think she has a national foundation for something or other."

"Literacy," Carter supplied. "I did a story about it once," he explained.

Chapter Two

"We have an appointment with Mr. Appleton for tomorrow morning at ten," Callie told Carter after she placed the call.

"You didn't tell Marty about Leah's pregnancy," Carter pointed out.

"There was no reason to," she replied. "You heard him say he hadn't seen her for six months before she died. You know, I don't understand how anyone could put enough pressure on the department to keep that out of the official autopsy results and police report."

"Could be that someone in the department knew her - or someone behind the scenes who had a lot of money and power."

"You're thinking about Appleton and what Dad said, aren't you?"

Carter lifted his shoulders. "It's a possibility."

"I think we need to be very careful about what we ask the man tomorrow."

"And how we ask," Carter agreed. "Now, let me see if I can't locate those other men that Leah dated." He went to the computer and turned it on while Callie grabbed the telephone book. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"Same thing you are," she said, "only old school."

He reached out to put his hand on the book in her hand, preventing her from opening it. "Let's make this interesting, shall we?"

Callie's eyes glistened with amusement. "You name it."

"First one to find a location and contact information that works - gets to choose where to eat dinner for the week."

"That's no bet," she told him. "We never argue over that."

"Then how about the loser has to pick up her clothes instead of leaving them wherever they fall?"

"You're on." She opened the phone book and started looking up the names in Lansing's notes. "I have numbers for three of them," she said.

"The bet was that you would make contact," he told her as he kept working on the computer.

Sighing, Callie dialed the numbers. "Hello, I'm trying to contact a Mr. Lucas Everett... I'm sorry." Another call got the same result. She sat down beside the desk as Carter took out his own phone and dialed a number.

"Mr. Everett? Are you the same Lucas Everett who was living on Forest Lane ten years ago?... My name is Carter Jankowski, and I'd like to talk to you about Leah Davies... Yes, well, I'm a private

detective that was hired by her daughter, Paula to find out about how Leah died... No, sir, she doesn't believe that, and my partner and I were hoping that you might remember a few more things than you told the police back then... Okay. Let me write that down... Anytime that's convenient, sir - ... We'll be there. Thank you." He hung up and smiled at Callie. "He owns a car dealership on Lemmon. He has to meet with a buyer this afternoon, but he'll be there after noon tomorrow."

"Stop smiling. So you found one of the men. What did he say?"

"He said that he never believed the official story, either, and has a lot to tell us about Leah." The smile didn't fade. "And why can't I smile? It's not my fault that the phone book isn't updated the way the site that I use to find numbers and addresses is. I'm sure this other number will put me in touch with Mr. Galloway. Now, I believe you have some things to pick up while I make that call?" he said, pointing out her shoes beside the door and her jacket, which was laying on the coffee table.

Callie walked over to pick up her jacket, taking it over to the coatrack to the left of the door and hanging it up. Bending over, she picked up the shoes, placing them neatly against the wall beside the bentwood rack. "How's that?" she asked.

Carter nodded as the phone at his ear began to ring. "Michael Galloway?" he asked the woman who answered... his smile of victory dimmed as he listened to her speak. "Oh, I'm sorry... No, it wasn't anything important. Sorry to have troubled you."

"What's wrong?" Callie asked, coming over to sit in the chair again.

"That was his wife. Michael died six weeks ago."

"Oh. Well, I guess we won't get any information from him about Leah," she said, reaching over to take Harry Lansing's notes and finding the ones from his interview of Galloway. "Same as Dad - only a few dates, seemed like she spent all of her time either with her daughter or at work. "But he did admit that they 'made out' in his car a couple of times."

"Which could mean that they had sex or just fooled around," Carter pointed out. "Speaking of making out-" he reached over and pulled her into his lap. Callie wrapped her arms around his shoulders, giving him a kiss.

Upon entering the Appleton Building, Callie and Carter were given plastic badges marked "Visitor" and escorted by an armed guard up to the top floor. As the elevator rose upward, Carter asked, "Have you worked here for very long, Sgt. Brown?"

"Fifteen years," he said in a clipped, brusque voice.

"That's a long time," Callie noted. "Must be a good place to work."

"It's ok."

"Good benefits, I guess. And good co-workers," Carter stated.

"Very good benefits. Get better after you've been here awhile. And most of the people who work here don't really notice me. I'm part of the wallpaper - but then, I'm supposed to be."

"You know, I had a friend who worked here a few years ago," Carter said. "Maybe you knew her - Leah Davies?"

The man's eyes narrowed ever-so-slightly. "I remember the name, but I don't think I knew her. I only moved into this position five years ago," he told them, looking relieved when the doors opened to what was obviously a secretary's office. "Here you go. Mrs. Collins' desk is just to the right of the doors." Once they stepped out, he pressed the button to close the doors and send the elevator back to the ground floor.

"Interesting," Carter murmured as they turned to smile at Mrs. Collins - a middle aged woman wearing out of style horn rimmed glasses - her graying hair pulled up in an unattractive bun on the back of her head.

"May I help you?" she asked.

"Callie Harris and Carter Jankowski," Carter told her. "We have an appointment to see Mr. Appleton."

She consulted her desk calendar, then picked up the telephone receiver. "Your ten a.m. appointment is here, sir." She hung up and used her pen to point toward a door to her right. "Go right in."

There were two men in the office when Callie opened the door. One was obviously Stanley Appleton. He was seated behind the large desk, studying a paper that the younger man had placed before him. Both looked up as they entered. Appleton stood, saying, "We'll finish this later, Stevens."

"Yes sir," Stevens replied, taking the paper and moving toward the door on the right, leaving them alone.

Standing, Appleton came out from the desk and offered his hand to each of them. "Mrs. Harris. Mr. Jankowski. Please," he said, waving toward the leather upholstered sofa and arm chairs in a corner. "Can I get you something? Coffee? A drink?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Appleton," Carter said as the man sat down in one of the armchairs.

"May I ask, sir, how you knew that I'm a Mrs. and not a Miss?" Callie wanted to know.

Appleton smiled. "I will confess to having done a bit of research after your telephone call yesterday," he told her. "You told my secretary that you're investigating Leah Davies' death, I believe?"

"Yes," Callie confirmed. "At the request of Paula Davies."

"I haven't seen the girl since Leah's funeral," he sighed. "How is she doing?"

"She's in college," Carter told him. "Wants to be a teacher."

"I take it that she still has doubts about her mother's cause of death, since she's hired you to look into the case."

"Don't you, Mr. Appleton?"

"I worked very closely with Leah Davies for five years. We traveled to many places on business. I never saw her take more than one drink in all that time. I'm sure that Paula told you about Leah's parents?"

"She told us about Leah's father," Callie confirmed. "Detective Lansing told us about her mother."

He nodded. "She told me that she was determined not to drink and drive - or to kill herself with liquor. She had learned her lesson about drinking because of Paula - Tell me, what did Paula tell you about her father?"

"That he died before she was born," Carter answered.

"Leah was never married," he told them. "She told me that she had gotten drunk one night and two months later discovered she was going to have a baby. I asked why she hadn't -" he shook his head. "I don't want to say 'taken the easy way out', but she told me that she couldn't do it. She stopped drinking, and was strong enough to limit herself to just one drink - no more. That young woman turned her life around, and set out to make a good life for herself and her daughter. The day she walked into my office, I knew she was something special, and took a chance on her." He sat back. "To this day, I haven't found another assistant that comes close to her. Oh, young Stevens tries, but - Leah was - well, as I said, something special."

"So you don't think she had too much to drink that night?"

"I'd like to think she hadn't, but - all of the evidence that the police compiled - that's hard to ignore. Maybe something happened that sent her back to the bottle -"

"Do you really think she would have done that to her daughter, Mr. Appleton?"

"I don't want to."

Callie and Carter looked at each other for a long moment before Callie spoke up. "Were you aware that Leah Davies was 8 weeks pregnant when she died?"

The blood drained from Stanley Appleton's face and he shook his head. "What did you say?"

"She was pregnant," Carter confirmed.

"The police -"

"They didn't include that information in their report because they wanted something that might help them in case other evidence came up at some point," Callie told him, aware that wasn't quite the truth.

"No, no, I didn't know," he said. "She never said a word - Have you told anyone else -?"

"No, we haven't," Callie said. "We thought, since she was your assistant, that she might have mentioned the possibility that she might need to take some time off. Maybe for that 'easy way' you mentioned earlier?"

"No, she wouldn't have - I do know that she hadn't changed her mind about that. She talked to a young woman who was working here who had told her she was planning to do that, and she talked her out of it."

"That's something else that we'd like to do, sir," Carter told him, "see if anyone she worked with might still be here and willing to talk to us about her."

"Oh, of course." He stood up, looking a bit lost. "I'll have personnel get in touch with you - leave your email address with Mrs. Collins and they'll send a list to you. And I'll send out a memo to the list that I'd like for them to get in touch with you for an interview. Now, if you'll excuse me, I, uh, I have some things that I need to take care of."

"Thank you for seeing us, sir," Carter said.

"It was - nice to meet you both. Please, if you find out anything, or if I can be of any help, don't hesitate to let me know."

"We will," Callie assured him, letting Carter open the door for them to leave the office.

Carter left the phone number and email address with the secretary, and they got into the elevator. "I don't think he knew," Callie said. "There's no way that he could fake his reaction to the news."

"I tend to agree," he nodded. "I think Marty might be right."

"About what? Leah and - Stanley Appleton?"

"Uh huh. We have no way of knowing how Leah felt about her employer, but I know one thing: he was - and still is - in love with her."

After having lunch, they went to the car lot on Lemmon Avenue. As they entered the showroom, a young man approached them, smiling. "Hello, there! Chip Carson," he told them, taking a business card from his jacket pocket and holding it out. "Can I show you one of our best selling models?" he began, indicating the brand new Jeep parked behind him. "It's got all of the -"

"Perhaps later, Chip," Carter said. "We're looking for Lucas Everett."

"Oh." Chip looked a little put out at the news, but his smile barely faltered. "He's right in there - but he's with another client right now. I'll let him know you're here."

Carter nodded, kicking the tire on the Jeep. Callie laughed, and he turned to look at her. "What's so funny?"

"Why is it that almost every man's first move while looking at a new car is to kick the tires?"

"Safety," he suggested. "Need good tires to be safe on the road." He continued to examine the red Cherokee, even opening the drivers' side door to look at the interior.

"What are you doing?" Callie asked.

"You're the one who's been saying that I need to get a new car," he reminded her. "I like your Jeep - so why not check out one for myself?" He got into the car and looked around. "This one has a few bells and whistles that yours doesn't have."

"Mine's not a new model, either. Are you going to try to trade the Ford in?"

"Probably. They probably wouldn't give me much for it, though."

"You'd be surprised how much we can give on a trade in," someone said. Callie turned to see a middle-aged man wearing a dark suit standing behind her. "Sorry. Couldn't help but overhear the conversation. It's an occupational hazard. I take it you're interested in the Cherokee-?"

"Just looking at the moment," Carter said, getting out of the vehicle. "Mr. Everett?"

The man looked confused for a moment, and then smiled again. "You called yesterday about Leah, am I right?"

"Callie Harris and Carter Jankowski," Carter confirmed, shaking the man's hand as he extended it.

"Sorry I was busy when you got here - finishing up with a new buyer. Why don't we go into my office and talk?" he suggested, leading them into the small office off the showroom. "Would either of you like any coffee or a soft drink?"

"No, thank you," Callie answered, sitting down in one of the chairs in front of the man's desk. "We just finished lunch."

"Now, what did you want to know about Leah Davies?" he asked, folding his hands before him on the desk.

"We have the notes from your interview with the police after her death," Callie told him. "You said at the time that you saw her only a few times -"

"Four. We had four dates for dinner."

"How did you meet?"

"She came in looking for a new car - I didn't sell her a car, but she agreed to have dinner with me, so I figured I came out ahead in the deal."

"How long before her death did the two of you date?" Carter asked.

"Our last date was a little over three months before she died."

"Did you meet her at the restaurant for dinner or -"

"No, I picked her up at her place - didn't go inside. She told me that she didn't like the idea of introducing her daughter to her dates, didn't want to confuse the girl."

Callie nodded, accepting Leah's reasoning for her decision. "How much did she drink at dinner?"

"One drink. I tried to get her to have a second one on our first date, but she told me that she had had a problem with alcohol when she was younger, and limited herself to only one. I backed off. She was a strong woman. I really wish I could have gotten to know her better."

"Why didn't you?" Carter asked.

"When I asked her out a fifth time, she told me she had another date, and that she was busy on every other night that I suggested. Then I heard that she was dead." He shook his head. "And when I heard how they said she died, I blew a gasket."

"You didn't believe it?"

"No, I didn't. I didn't know her very well, but she loved her daughter too much to have done something like they said she did. I mean, how does a woman who refused to take more than one drink at dinner suddenly drink herself stupid and then drive? No, I've never believed it. But the cops refused to listen to me."

"Maybe something happened that sent her back into the bottle," Carter suggested. "Another man, her job -"

"Oh, no. Not her job. She loved that job as much as she loved that daughter. Twice when we met for dinner, she had just come back from a business trip out of the country and spent the entire evening talking about the things she'd seen and done. You could tell how much her little girl and her job meant to her by just watching her face when she talked about them." He sighed. "I always figured that I missed my chance by not pushing to keep seeing her. And I kept meaning to try to talk to her little girl - to tell her how special her mother was."

"She knows, Mr. Everett," Callie assured him. "She's the reason that we're looking into Leah's death."

"Good for her. If you could, tell her I'd like to meet her, talk to her."

"We will," Carter said. "Is there anything more that you can tell us?"

"Only that the bartender and guy who said she was drinking that night are idiots. I don't know why they would say what they did, but they were lying." He smiled. "Now, why don't we talk about that nice, red Cherokee that you were looking at? It comes in other colors, if you don't like red."

"You do realize that it's almost impossible to tail someone if you're driving a red car, right?" Callie asked as they drove off the lot.

"I don't have to get the red. The metallic dark blue is nice, too."

"You're really going to do this, aren't you?"

"Probably. I told you that I'd get another car when I found one that I liked."

She sighed. "So what did you think about what Lucas Everett told us about Leah?"

"He seems like he really liked her. Probably could have fallen in love with her if he'd had the chance."

"You know who else might know something about Leah's private life?"

He shook his head. "Who?"

"The housekeeper. Mrs. Logan. She lived in that house with Leah and Paula day in and day out - I didn't see anything in Harry Lansing's notes about his having interviewed her."

"There was one little item," Carter said. "Something about the housekeeper not having any information."

"It won't hurt for us to talk to her, anyway. Maybe she'll remember something now."

Chapter Three

Martha Logan was a small woman with close-cropped white hair. After Callie and Carter introduced themselves, she stepped back to let them into the small house. "Paula's not here at the moment," she told them. "She called earlier and told me that she had some research to do at the college library," she explained, leading them into the living room.

"You're actually the person we wanted to talk to, Mrs. Logan," Carter said.

"Me? But," she looked away before answering. "I don't know anything. I never have. I told the police when she died that I was just the housekeeper and babysitter -"

Callie interrupted the woman. "Live-in housekeeper and babysitter."

"That usually means you would likely know everything that went on in this house, Mrs. Logan," Carter pointed out.

"I - kept to myself," she insisted. "I didn't ask questions. I kept the house clean, cooked meals and took care of Paula."

"Did you ever see Leah Davies drinking wine or hard liquor?" Callie wanted to know.

"No. Never. And I never saw any liquor in this house." Her answer was firm. "And I've tried my best to make sure that Paula follows that example," she told them. "Neither one of us ever believed that story about her getting drunk that night."

Callie spoke up. "So why, as her guardian, didn't you fight to prove that the police were wrong?"

The woman's head dropped, as she exhaled. "I couldn't," she said in a quiet, strained voice. Finally, she rose from her chair and said, "Excuse me."

Carter and Callie exchanged confused glances, and Callie went to the door through which Mrs. Logan had gone. "Should be follow -?"

"Let's wait. She seemed pretty upset."

It was almost five minutes before Mrs. Logan returned, carrying an envelope in her hand. She paused in the doorway, as if she might change her mind, then continued into the room. "The morning after Leah Davies disappeared, I found this note on the windshield of my car," she told them, holding up the envelope. The car was parked in the garage," she said. "We always locked it - but since Leah was out, I knew she would lock it up when she got home. Only - she didn't come home that night."

Callie took the envelope with "Mrs. Logan" written in neat block letters, and removed the single sheet of paper from inside and read it aloud.

"When the police talk to you, you were just the housekeeper. If you say anything else, you'll never see Paula Davies again, no matter what Leah Davies' will says. She'll end up in a foster home - or worse."

"You have no idea who sent this?" Callie asked, handing the note to Carter.

"No. No one else ever contacted me - don't you understand, I couldn't risk losing Paula," Mrs. Logan told them, taking a handkerchief from her pocket and wiping her eyes. "She was so lost. I was the only stability in her life with her mother missing - and then - dead. I didn't dare tell the police anything that might help them find out what really happened."

"You're the reason why Paula started asking questions after all this time, aren't you?" Carter realized.

"Yes. I was reading your - column about another cold case, and I mentioned to her that she needed someone like you to get her mother's case back into the public eye."

"Why now?" Callie asked. "What's changed?"

"Paula's grown now. No one can take her away. I have no reason to keep things hidden."

"Did you know she was pregnant?" Carter wanted to know.

Mrs. Logan took a deep breath, nodding. "Yes. She told me that the father didn't even know - that she wasn't sure about telling him. She hadn't told Paula's father when she'd become pregnant, either - but he died of a drug overdose a few months before Paula was born."

"You have no idea who the father of this baby might have been?"

"No, Mrs. Harris. That is the one thing she never told me. I never knew the names of any of the men she dated - and most of them *were* only dates. Nothing else. She did say that the father of this baby couldn't marry her, so I guess he was married to someone else."

Callie asked, "Would she have considered ending the pregnancy?"

"Never!" Mrs. Logan said in a firm tone. "She even told me that she hadn't done that with Paula, and she hadn't been in as good a financial condition as she was ten years ago - that she would manage the new baby. Her biggest concern was how to tell Paula that she was going to have a baby brother or sister." She sighed. "That's another reason why I knew she wouldn't have been drinking that night." A faint smile appeared. "It's such a relief to finally talk to someone else about all of this. I can't tell Paula - not until we find out who killed her mother. I've kept it locked up inside for ten years. Do you have any idea of what kind of hell that is? To not be able to speak the truth?"

"Anytime you need to talk," Callie said, reaching out to touch her arm, "feel free to call."

"Thank you."

"I think our next move is to find the two men who gave signed affidavits that Leah Davies was drinking the night she died," Carter said.

"I think you're right," she nodded. "I have a feeling that Mrs. Logan is going to sleep better tonight than she has in ten years."

"She'll sleep even better when we find out who killed Leah," Carter pointed out.

"Will you show me how to use that finder website?" Callie asked.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered with a smile.

"That's interesting," Carter said as he read the computer screen over Callie's shoulder. "There, highlight the second 'Daniel Green' in the list." Callie selected the name.

"What is it?"

"That link to the right - TABC - click that."

"Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission?" she said, clicking the link. "If he's a bartender, he would have to be licensed -"

Carter nodded, reading. "And so would a bar owner," he told her, nodding at the screen. "He's had a bar in downtown Dallas for the last ten years. Danny's. On Commerce -"

"Wow," Callie said. "I've been in that place," she told him.

"Really?"

"Not that way," she said, playfully swatting at him. "When I was on the force. We had a few calls for fights. So Danny is Daniel Green."

"Small world. At least it might give us an in when we go talk to him."

"Maybe. He probably won't remember me."

"We'll see." He stood up. "Why don't we go have dinner and then see if he's there tonight?"

"You don't want to try and find the other man? The patron who said Leah told him to get lost?"

"It's possible that Danny will know where he is -"

"After ten years?" she questioned.

"If we're right, and they were involved in covering up a murder, it's very likely they've stayed in touch. You know, I have to wonder how a bartender goes from working for someone else to owning his own bar overnight."

"Money," she said.

"Big money. I'm very interested to hear what Danny has to say about it."

"Lovely place," was Carter's comment as they entered Danny's Bar. "Really high-class."

"When we were coming here, it was nicer. But it was newer, too." She wrinkled her nose at the smell of stale beer and cigarette smoke. "You know, if I were the type to frequent bars, I think I'd find one that didn't allow smoking."

"I know what you mean," he said as they made their way to the bar. "Do you see him?"

She was looking around the room, and shook her head. "Not so far."

The bartender wiped the counter in front of them. "What can I get for you?"

"Sparkling water," Callie told him.

"Same for me."

He looked at them, eyes narrowed. "You do realize that this is a bar, right? We sell alcohol here."

Carter slipped a fifty dollar bill onto the bar. "Sparkling water. And I think this will pay the tab."

The man shrugged, taking the money and going over to fill two glasses with the carbonated water.

"Thank you," Callie said.

"Is Danny around tonight?" Carter asked, and the bartender paused for a moment.

"He ain't here. Danny figures since he owns the place, he doesn't have to be here at night."

"So he'll be here tomorrow?"

The man laughed, drawing the attention of several other customers. "On a weekend? Not likely. He'll show up sometime on Monday, 'bout the time we open up." He glanced down the bar. "Excuse me."

Callie used the straw in her glass to stir the contents. "So what now?"

"We probably need to see if we can't find some information about Mr. Green's finances - say, about, ten years ago?"

"Even my sources at the department can't get information from a bank on the weekend," she told him.

"You can contact your source and see what they can find out on Monday morning before we come back to talk to Danny."

"Anything else I can get for you?" the bartender asked, returning to their end of the bar.

"No, I think we're good." He and Callie stood, preparing to leave.

"You want to leave a message for Danny? He might show up for a few minutes tomorrow - I never know. But if he does, it's not for long."

"No, we'll talk to him later. Thanks again," Carter told him. He placed another twenty on the bar. "It's a - personal matter - if you know what I mean."

He took the money with a grin. "Never saw you. Or the lady. Night."

Between interviews with some of Leah Davies' former coworkers, they spent most of Saturday making sure that the loft was at its best - and that the kitchen was sparkling clean. After that, they went shopping for the ingredients from the email that Marty had sent to Callie.

As the four of them enjoyed the chicken fettuccine, Callie asked him about the kitchen. He turned to look at the small area. "I like it. It's small enough that I can reach everything easily without too many steps. The one at the house is too spread out - the sink's too far from the stove and the refrigerator. There's a lot of cabinet space, but not a lot of counter space. This place - is almost perfect."

"Almost?" Allie questioned.

"I'd change the sink faucet to something a little newer - and add a double fridge instead of the one that's here."

"So - what about the rest of the place?" Carter asked.

"Oh, as long as he likes the kitchen," Allie said, "the rest is just icing on the cake, right, Marty?"

They all laughed at her comment, but Marty nodded. "She's right. But I do like the place. Not sure what we'll do with all of the bookcases - and don't say use it for my cookbooks, Allie. I don't have *that* many."

"We can take whatever you don't need with us," Carter told him. "They belong to me, anyway."

"They do?" Callie questioned, clearly surprised by the news. "I thought they had been installed by the building management."

"No. There are still a few in storage - you probably didn't notice them behind the boxes."

"No, I didn't." She smiled, telling Allie, "He still has at least ten more boxes of books in there - I told him that he needs to start his own library."

"There's a room at the house that would be perfect for all of those books," Marty said. "So, are we going to do this or not? I'm ready to sign the place over anytime you're ready."

"We should pay you something -"

"Nonsense," Marty told him, shaking his head. "The place would have been Callie's eventually if I stayed there. Allie tells me that there's a paper I need to sign that would transfer it to you without any major financial problems - what about this place?"

"You and Allie will have to fill out a lease application with the leasing company. You can either sublet from me and I'll pay them or I can pay a fee to have the lease transferred into your names."

After making plans to meet and get all of the paperwork taken care of, Allie and Marty left, leaving Callie and Carter to take care of the dishes and clean up. "There's not really that much to do," Callie said as she placed a dish in the dishwasher. "Dad's always been good at washing up as he goes. Unless he's at the restaurant -"

"Ah, but then he has people that he pays to clean up after him," Carter pointed out as he wiped down the counter.

She laughed. "You're right."

"I'm surprised that the only changed he wanted made here -"

"Besides the bookcases?" she asked.

"Besides the bookcases," he nodded, "was switching our bed out with his."

"His bed is huge," Callie reminded him. "Do you still have the boxes so that we can make a start at packing up the books that are here?" she asked.

"I do. In storage. I'll run by this week and get them."

"We still have to talk to Danny Green. And Archie Brooks."

"Did you tell your contact at the department that we needed that financial information early tomorrow?"

"I did. She said she'd get in touch with me as soon as she found anything."

He slipped his arms around her waist. "Would you mind if I made a few - minor changes at the house?"

Callie turned to look at him. "I thought you told Dad that you liked it?"

"I do. But it could use a little updating."

She turned around completely to put her arms around him. "It's going to be your home, too. Whatever you need to do to be comfortable and happy, we'll do it."

"Now, that's easy. All I need is you."

"Ruby! What have you got for me?" Callie asked as she picked up the phone after seeing her old friend's name on the Caller ID. She glanced over to where Carter was putting books into a box and grimaced since the call was making it difficult for her to keep up with him at the other end of the bookcase. "Really?... Yeah, I get that -... Just a sec. Let me find a pen and paper... No, I'm trying to pack some books... We're moving," she explained, going over to the desk to grab a pen and notepad. "Okay, I'm ready..." she wrote the information down. "All in cash?... Interesting... No, that's it for right now. I might have another name I need you to check for me - Archie Brooks... I don't have an address or anything on him yet... I will... Thanks, Ruby."

Carter stopped packing books and joined her. "What did she find out?"

"Danny Green paid the fees for his liquor license and business license in cash. And there's no record of a mortgage on the bar, so he probably paid cash for that, as well."

Carter gave a low whistle. "Wow. I'm starting to look forward to talking to Danny."

Danny was supervising the delivery of liquor when they approached the back door into the alleyway behind the bar. While checking off items on the invoice, he glanced in their direction, but didn't acknowledge them until the driver returned to the cab of the truck. Turning toward the open doorway, he yelled, "Charlie! Get this stuff inside!" It was then that he looked directly at them. "Officer Harris, am I right? Excuse me. You got a big promotion just before leaving the police department."

"I'm flattered that you remember me, Danny," Callie said.

He gave her a lingering look and grinned. "Hard to forget how you filled out that uniform. You were the best looking cop I'd ever seen - even if you were usually frowning at me when you and your partner came in here." He looked at Carter. "You an ex-cop, too?"

"No," Carter said. "But I am her partner. Name's Carter Jankowski."

"What can I do for you?" he asked. "I got things to do."

"We're looking into the murder of Leah Davies," Carter told him.

"Murder? That dame wasn't murdered," he declared. "She got drunk and drove into a lake -"

"Are you sure about that?" Callie asked.

"Listen, I made a statement about what happened that night. She came into the place I was working and had several drinks, then left."

"Did you offer to call her a cab instead of letting her drive after having so much to drink?"

"I watched her stand up and walk out. She didn't stagger or stumble. Looked almost sober, so I figured she was okay. After the way she told that other guy to get lost, I didn't want to make her mad at me. Is it my fault that she was able to walk but not to drive?"

"Some people would make a case for that, Danny," Callie said. "It's strange how you told the police that she was drinking - when everyone else who knew her swears that she never drank that much."

"Maybe she was a secret drinker," Danny suggested. "Or maybe she had a bad day that day. There are a lot of reasons why someone would decide to get drunk. I was just unlucky enough to be the bartender who served her the drinks."

"Unlucky?" Carter mused. "It's strange that you should say that."

"Why?"

"You worked for that bar for six months," Callie said. "- and then suddenly had enough cash to be able to buy this place and get your business *and* liquor licenses."

"I saved my pay and tip money," Danny told her. "What are you suggesting? That someone paid me to lie about Leah Davies for some reason?"

"Isn't that exactly what happened, Danny?" she asked in reply. "I don't think she was ever *in* that bar."

"What about that other guy? Brooks - yeah, Brooks, that was his name. He made a statement, too. Said he tried to talk to her -"

"But no one else that was there that night remembered seeing her." Carter shook his head. "Why don't you make it easy on yourself, Danny and give us a name?"

"I got no name to give! And if you don't leave me alone, I'll file charges on you for harassment," he threatened.

"Do you happen to know what Archie Brooks is these days?" Callie asked him.

"Of course not. He was a regular at the other place, but I haven't seen him or talked to him since I bought this place. Like I said, I got things to do." He went through the door, slamming it behind him.

"He's rattled," Callie told Carter.

"Terrified is a better word. Come on," he said, leading her out of the alley.

"Where are we going?" she asked, following as he turned the corner toward the front entrance.

"Where is Danny's office in there?"

"Past the restrooms," she told him. "Why?"

"What's closer to the office? The ladies or mens?"

"Mens."

"Wait here," he said, disappearing into the bar, leaving Callie standing outside.

"Carter -"

He went inside and quickly found the sign for the restrooms, then cross to enter the hallway. It was dark, with at least one bulb in the overhead fixture burned out. Carter leaned into the door of the office, trying to hear whatever might be going on inside.

"Look, if they keep coming around, I might just have to give them what they're looking for... no, that wasn't a threat. You need to handle this... Getting arrested for making a false statement won't do either of us any good... Yeah, I'll do that."

Even through the door, Carter heard him slam the phone down and went into the men's room, going into one of the two stalls. He heard the office door open, then close again, and held his breath until he was sure that Danny had gone back to the bar. After washing his hands, he returned to the hall, smiling and sketching a salute in Danny's direction as the bar owner saw him leaving.

Callie joined him as he came back out into the sun. "Well? Did you find out anything?" she asked.

"Let's get back to the car," he told her, taking her elbow, glancing behind them. Seeing Danny come out of the bar, he steered Callie to her right, into an alleyway.

"What -?" she asked, frowning as she looked at him. "Would you *please* explain -"

"Danny's following us," he told her as Danny appeared on the sidewalk, not looking into the alley. "Looking for us, Danny?" Carter asked loudly to get his attention.

Danny stopped, looking a bit surprised. "Uh, no. I was just going to get a pack of cigarettes -"

"There's a machine in the bar," Callie reminded him.

"I'm not going to pay those prices," was his reply.

"Where were you going to buy them?" Callie asked. "There's not a store in this direction -"

He shrugged. "Guess I got turned around."

"You've owned that bar for ten years, Danny, and you expect us to believe that?"

Carter's question caused Danny's eyes to widen. "I don't care what you believe -"

Callie gasped as Carter grabbed Danny and pushed him up against the wall of the building. "Who did you call when you were in your office?" he asked.

"Call? Did I call someone?"

"You told whoever it was that Callie and I needed to be 'handled'. Now, just a word of advice," Carter said, releasing the man and brushing his shoulders off, "if anything happens to either of us, you'll be talking to the police - and I'm sure they'll ask you about your involvement with the Leah Davies case."

Danny took off toward the bar as Callie and Carter watched. Once he was back inside, Carter smiled at Callie. "Shall we go?"

"What else did you hear?" she wanted to know.

"He admitted to having made a false statement for one thing. He made a blind threat to whoever he was talking to about what might happen if we keep asking him questions."

"I wonder if Archie Brooks will be as worried about his own false statement?" Callie said as they reached the parking garage where they had left the car.

"Well, we have an interview at 2 with that young woman that worked with Leah, so why don't we stop to get lunch and take it home so that we can try to locate Mr. Brooks before that appointment?"

"Sounds like a plan."

JoAnn Compton shook her head. "No, I never saw her take a drink. We weren't close, really, she gave me a lift a few times when my car was in the shop."

"Where did you work at Appleton back then?" Callie asked the woman.

"In the steno pool. I did some work for her occasionally. But she and Mr. Appleton shared a secretary, so they didn't need anyone from the pool, usually."

"Mrs. Collins was Leah's secretary back then?"

JoAnn nodded. "Yes. Just like she's Mr. Stevens' secretary now, as well as handling Mr. Appleton's calls and appointments."

"Did you ever spend any time with Leah away from the office?" Carter wanted to know.

"We had lunch a couple of times. Even back then, it wasn't unusual for an executive to have a couple of drinks at lunch. But Leah just had coffee or tea. I really liked her. She seemed to have it all together, you know? A kid, a great job, a future that looked like the sky was the limit. I just couldn't believe it when they said she died because she had too much to drink."

"You keep not believing it," Callie told her.

"You mean - that's not what happened?"

"We don't think so. We don't have any details, yet, but, you keep on believing."

"Thank you. I'm not sure that I ever stopped. It's because of Leah that I got married six years ago, and we have a three year old little boy. I know how hard it is for me, and I have a husband. I can't imagine how hard it must have been for Leah before she got the job with Mr. Appleton." She sighed. "It was such a shame. She always seemed like on of the good ones, you know what I mean?"

"Is there anything in Harry Lansings' notes about an interview with Mrs. Collins?" Carter asked after JoAnn Compton left.

"No. And I don't recall her name being on the list of employees that worked with Leah, either," Callie answered. She looked at her watch. "We have at least three hours before Mrs. Collins might leave work to head home - unless you want to try to talk to her at work -"

Carter shook his head. "Best to do it out of the office, I think. Why don't we check out that address we found for Archie Brooks, then head over to Appleton Industries and wait?"

The latest address they had found for Mr. Brooks had been in Addison, but there was no answer when they knocked on the door of the townhome. None of the telephone numbers listed had been his. "We'll have to come back later," Callie decided. "He probably has a job of some kind -"

"Maybe he's in the back yard," Carter suggested. "Won't hurt to check."

"This place doesn't have much of a back yard," she told him, following him around the corner of the house, past the garage. The townhome was designed with the entry and probably the living room/kitchen comprising the first floor, along with the single car garage. The second floor was no doubt a couple of bedrooms. "Carter -" she began when he kept going.

He was already opening the gate of the high wooden privacy fence when she caught up to him. "Yard's big enough for a pool," he told her, then stopped in his tracks. "Damn."

Callie joined him and looked toward the pool. Carter was already running in that direction and she pulled out her cellphone to dial 9-1-1.

Chapter 4

"You said you don't know who the victim is?" Addison police Officer Douglas asked Callie and Carter. Carter was wrapped in a blanket from the ambulance, since he was soaked after having jumped into the pool to try to save the man.

"All we know is that the townhouse belongs to Archie Brooks," Callie answered, watching as the paramedics worked on the man.

"Do either of you know Mr. Brooks?" Officer Douglas asked.

"No," Carter told him. "We were looking for him to talk to him about a case we're working on. I thought I heard something back here and came around to find someone floating in the pool. So I jumped in to pull him out while Callie called the police and an ambulance."

"You mentioned a case-?"

"We're private detectives," Callie said, pulling out her identification. "Mr. Brooks was involved in the death of a young woman ten years ago - at least, he gave a statement about her death, and we wanted to talk to him, to see if he might remember something new."

"I can show you my id," Carter said, "but it's a bit - water-logged at the moment." He kept looking back to the man laying on the concrete beside the pool. "He's not going to make it."

One of the paramedics looked up at him, and shook his head. "We're about to transport, but he hit his head on something - probably on the edge of the pool when he jumped in. Between that and the water -"

"Where are you taking him?" Carter asked.

"Parkland. Since we don't have any ID on him, that's where we take the county patients. They'll pronounce him there."

"I'll need your addresses and phone numbers," Off. Douglas said.

"You want to go with us, sir?" one of the paramedics asked Carter while Callie gave the officer the information he wanted.

"Thanks, but I'm okay. Wet, but okay. I'll keep the blanket, if you don't mind."

"No problem. You can drop it at any of the city fire departments - or at the hospital. They'll get it back to us."

"Thank you."

Callie was talking to the officer when Carter moved closer to them again. "Have you checked to see if there's anyone in the house?"

"No - I guess we should do that, Joe," he told his partner, moving in that direction, with Callie and Carter close behind. The back door was unlocked, and Douglas opened it, calling out, "Police. Is there anyone here? Hello?" He held his hand out to stop Callie from entering the house. "Mr. Brooks?"

"I don't think anyone's here," Callie said. "The bedroom upstairs is the best place to look for an id," she suggested, and Douglas turned to look at her.

"Yes, ma'am. Joe, why don't you go up there and look around?"

"I can help," Callie told him. "I was with the DPD for several years. Left as a detective." She took her wallet out again, and showed him a card that she was still a member of the county peace officer association.

Douglas glanced at Carter. "What about you?" he asked.

"Sorry. I'm just a simple P.I."

"Found his wallet," Joe called out, coming back down the stairs and handing it to Douglas, who was obviously the senior officer of the pair. Officer Douglas opened the wallet, removing the drivers license. "Well, we know who the man in the pool is - looks like you're not going to get a chance to talk to Mr. Brooks about your case." He showed the card to Callie and Carter before telling Joe, "Go out and let base know who the victim is."

Carter ran a hand through his hair, grateful that it was drying quickly. "Look, Officer, is there anyway that you can let us -" seeing Douglas' eyes narrow, he changed the word - "let her look around and see if she can find anything to help us with this case?"

"I don't know -"

"Officer Douglas," Callie said, "ten years ago, a young mother died. The police said at the time that she had been drunk and drove into a lake. We've uncovered evidence that she didn't have anything to drink that night - and that Mr. Brooks made a false statement about it. We need to find evidence of a payoff or -"

"I'll give you ten minutes," Douglas told her. "No longer."

"Look for banking information," Carter told Callie, not moving from near the doorway, ignoring Douglas' disapproval. "That will give us a place to start, anyway."

There was a desk in a corner of the living room, and Callie quickly found a bank statement, then stumbled on an addressbook. Douglas was still glaring at Carter, so she slipped it into the middle of the statement. "I have a bank statement."

"That should do it," Carter said, then sneezed, getting Douglas' attention again so that Callie could slip the small book into her purse.

"Let me see that," Douglas said as Callie started past him.

"What?"

"The statement," he clarified. "I need to be able to swear that it was all you took out of the house."

"Help yourself," Callie said, handing him the pages, waiting for him to look it over. He finally handed it back to her. "Can we go now?"

"Yeah. There are some keys on the desk - we'll lock the place up until we locate some family."

"Thank you, Officer," Callie said. "Come on, Carter. You need a hot shower and some chicken soup."

"So what now?" Carter asked as Callie drove back toward the loft.

"Well, we'll go over to talk to Mrs. Collins tomorrow afternoon - I'll call Ruby and ask her to see what she can get on Brooks' financials. Meanwhile -" she took a hand off the steering wheel to dig into her purse, "you can look in there and see who's in there."

"Well, there's a Danny here on the G page," he told her. "Which means Danny lied to us."

"Aww, I'm so disappointed to hear that," Callie replied. "Not that I'm surprised."

He glanced at the bank statement. "Interesting."

"What?"

"There's a sizeable deposit at the end of the month - it'll be interesting to find out if it was a recurring event."

Back at the loft, Callie told Carter. "Go take that hot shower."

"I'm feeling a little shaky," he told her, grabbing her arm as if trying to keep his balance. "I might fall in there -"

"And if I'm in there, who's going to call Dad and ask him to have some of his chicken soup ready for me to pick up?"

"It would be better if he has it sent over," Carter said.

"Why? I can go -"

His hand tightened slightly on her arm. "No." Seeing her frown, he explained. "Until this case is finished, I don't think either of us should go anywhere alone."

"You're worried that someone might be after us. You really think that Brooks' death wasn't an accident?"

"Don't you?"

"I'll ask Dad to have someone bring it over," she told him.

"Thank you." He gave her a kiss. "You know, I can forego the hot soup if you come in to make sure I survive the shower," he insisted, "Please?"

"Tell you what - go start the shower and I'll be in once I make the call."

He started unbuttoning his still damp shirt as he moved toward the bathroom. "I'll hold you to that."

"Feeling better?" Callie asked as they sat on the sofa, each with a bowl of soup.

Carter had the addressbook in his free hand, studying it. "What? Oh, much better. I just hope my cellphone survives -"

"I put it into the bowl of rice the way everyone says that you're supposed to do. But since it was chlorinated water, I don't know if it will make a difference. Are you finding anything else of interest in that book?"

"Several numbers with initials, and first names with no last names. I should be able to search for the names on the computer later."

"Ruby said she would get back to me about Brooks' banking information sometime tomorrow." She took her bowl over to the sink and rinsed it out. "Do you think that Danny had something to do with Brooks' death?"

"Do you see him as a killer?" he asked, shaking his head.

"No, you're right. Danny talks like a tough guy, but I think he's a marshmallow."

Carter started laughing, handing her his empty bowl. "I think that's a little extreme," he finally told her. "I do think that he called Brooks and told him we were asking questions after he ran back to the bar with his tail between his legs."

"Then whoever paid them to make those false statements ten years ago was responsible for Brooks' 'accident'," she nodded. "If I were Danny, I'd be shaking in my boots."

"Might be worth going back over there tomorrow and make sure he knows that Archie's dead." He took the addressbook over to the desk. "I'd like to know how long Danny was in the pool. And if he was dead when he hit the water."

"I'll call Robbie tomorrow morning. He should have the autopsy finished by then and be able to tell me something." As she finished cleaning up the kitchen, Callie frowned. "Carter, if the person who killed Leah also killed Archie Brooks, you don't think that Mrs. Logan could be in danger, do you?"

He turned away from the computer and looked at her. "I hadn't even considered -" he began, grabbing the landline phone and checked the number for the Davies house before dialing it. "Whoever killed Brooks likely sent that letter to Mrs. Logan," he agreed, waiting for someone to answer the phone.

"Hello?"

"Mrs. Logan?"

"Yes," was her hesitant response.

"This is Carter Jankowski, Mrs. Logan. I'm sorry to bother you -"

"Oh, Mr. Jankowski," she said. "I was trying to find that card you gave me to call you."

"Has something happened?" he asked, turning on the speakerphone so that Callie could hear as well.

"I got a strange phone call a little while ago. Someone said that if I talk to anyone about Leah, they'll hurt Paula -"

"What it a man or a woman that called?" Carter asked her.

"I couldn't really tell. The voice was - muffled. I'm terrified, Mr. Jankowski," she told him. "Paula will be home soon - I don't know what to do."

"Did they ask if you had spoken to us?" he asked.

"No. The person just told me not to talk to anyone."

Callie spoke up. "Mrs. Logan, it's Callie. As soon as Paula gets home, make sure all of the doors and windows are locked."

"I've already done that," Martha Logan assured her. "And I'll double check them once she gets home. I worry about tomorrow, when Paula leaves for her classes."

"Ask her to call us when she gets home, please," Callie said.

"Are you going to tell her about the letter?"

"I don't think we'll have to do that just yet," Carter assured her. "But we need to let her know about some other developments in the case."

"You mean, you're making some progress?"

Her hopeful tone brought a smile to Callie's face. "A little, Mrs. Logan. Just make sure that Paula calls. Let me give you the number again..."

"Mrs. Logan said that you wanted me to call?" Paula Davies said a half hour later.

"We did," Carter confirmed. "You're on speakerphone on our end, Paula, so that both of us can talk to you."

"Okay. Have you found out anything?"

"Nothing definite," Callie told her. "But we think we're getting closer."

"The reason we called this evening, Paula," Carter added, "is that you need to be aware of people around you for the next few days. Even at school."

"Why?"

"The man who claimed he talked to your mother that night in the bar - he drowned today."

"Oh my. But - what does an accidental drowning have to do with -"

"That's just it, Paula," Callie said. "We're not sure yet that it *was* an accident. We'll know more tomorrow. It's possible that if someone did kill your mother, they know that we're looking into the case - and are getting rid of anyone who might implicate them."

"But I don't know anything," Paula insisted. "I couldn't implicate anyone."

"We'll explain tomorrow," Carter told the young woman. "Can we meet for lunch?"

"I only have a half day tomorrow, so I'll be at home for lunch."

"That's perfect. We'll be there at noon."

"Okay. We'll see you then."

Carter hung up the phone. "We're going to have to tell her about the letter - and the threat that Mrs. Logan got today."

"I hope it doesn't cause problems for Mrs. Logan," Callie sighed. "If she had shown that letter to Harry Lansing, they probably would have pursued the case and found the killer ten years ago."

"I think Paula will understand why she didn't show it to anyone," Carter said.

Callie put her arms around his shoulders, looking at the computer screen. "Making any headway on the initials and numbers in the book?"

"Most of them appear to be unlisted numbers, and those are hard to trace."

"And even harder to find out what names go with the initials," Callie sighed. "I wonder if Danny might know who some of them are?"

"Possibly. We'll ask him tomorrow morning." He closed the search site and pulled Callie into his lap. "Going to be a busy morning. Why don't we make it an early night?"

"I like the way you think," Callie told him, giving him a kiss before getting to her feet and pulling him to his.

"Archie Brooks official cause of death was drowning," Robbie told Callie the next morning. "But it might not have happened if he hadn't hit his head."

"You're sure about that that?"

"Well, there wasn't much pool water in his lungs, so he stopped breathing as he entered the pool would be my guess - but you wanted the official cause, Callie -"

"Any idea how he managed to hit his head?"

"That you'd have to talk to someone else about. The wound was on the back of the head - maybe he did a cannonball into the pool and didn't clear the side - that would be one way. But there was an anomaly in that the wound didn't look like it was made by the pool edge. And don't ask what else it could have been - as I said, that's not my department."

"And here I thought you were the one who dug out what happened to someone when they turned up on the morgue," she teased, knowing that he hated to be compared to an old TV show coroner.

"Just like you learned how to toss a baton to bring down a criminal on the run," was his reply.

Callie laughed. "Any idea how long he'd been in the water when we found him?"

"From what I've found so far, not more than an hour."

"Thanks, Robbie. I owe you."

"I'll add it to the list," he said. "Take care."

"You too."

"Hey, I got the safest job there is. Unless there's a zombie uprising."

"Bye," she said, still laughing. "He's crazy," she told Carter. "So he either hit his head, or someone else hit him in the back of the head before he went into the water, and it happened no more than an hour before we got there."

"Hmm," he muttered thoughtfully. "Would you say it was two hours between the time we left Danny and when we pulled up at Brooks' house?"

"Doesn't leave much time for Danny to called him and whatever happened after that."

"Plenty of time if Danny called as soon as he got back to the bar, and Brooks called whoever had paid them off the first time and asked for more money not to talk to us."

"You can't prove that -"

"No, but maybe Danny can. Why don't we go pay him another visit?"

They used the back door again, as they had the day before, but this time there was no delivery truck. When they entered the bar, another man said, "Hey, Boss."

Danny was at the bar, putting money into the register, and looked up, his eyes narrowing as he saw them. "What are you doing back here?"

"Paying a condolence call," Callie explained, perching on one of the stools before the bar closest to him.

"A - condolence call?" Danny repeated. "Who's dead?"

"Could be you before too long," Carter told him. "But right now - we thought you'd like to know that Archie Brooks was killed yesterday afternoon."

Danny's eyes widened almost imperceptibly at the news. He finished putting money into the register and closed it. "Brooks. He's the guy who was the bar that night, wasn't he?"

"The other man who gave the police a signed affidavit that was a pack of lies - just like yours," Carter told him. "I heard you on the phone yesterday, Danny. And I'd be willing to bet that when you got back to the bar after seeing us outside, your first call was to Archie to warn him about us."

"What are the chances," Callie continued, "that he called your mutual friend and threatened to talk to us unless he got more money?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Danny insisted. "I haven't talked to the guy in ten years -"

"Then why did he have your name and phone number in his addressbook?" Carter asked. "Your *private* number, not the one for this place." He pulled the small book from his pocket and opened it up to the page with the name and number on it.

Danny started shaking his head. "I got nothing to say. Not to you, not anyone."

"We just need a name, Danny," Callie said in a quiet voice. "If you won't talk to us, then you'll have to talk to the police. Because that's going to be our next stop -"

Carter spoke up. "The phone company should be have a record of the call you made to him yesterday. It'll be easy enough for the police to track it down. And then they'll be here to ask you why you called a man that you claim not to have spoken to in ten years."

"Maybe that's what we should do," Callie told him. "They can give him more protection than we can -"

"Protection?!" Danny repeated, shaking his head. "You have to know that the cops closed that investigation because someone higher up told them to. I don't know if that pipeline is still there, but if it is, you go to the cops, and I'm a dead man. So I'm not talking to *anyone*. Not you, and not the cops!"

He turned around and ran out of the building through the back door. Callie and Carter followed him, but by the time they came out of the alley, he was nowhere to be found.

"What now?" Carter asked.

"I think we need to talk to Harry Lansing again. I didn't ask him if he knew where the order came from to close the Davies case."

"Do you think he'll tell you if he does?"

"We have to try." Her cellphone rang. "Ruby, I take it you found something?..."

As they drove toward Harry Lansing's, Callie told Carter what Ruby had discovered about Brooks' bank accounts. "He had two at the same bank," she told him. "The one that we found the statement for was used to transfer money out of the other account. The statement account appears to have only contained money needed to pay his bills every month. The only deposits into that account came from the other account - that one contained around five hundred thousand."

Carter whistled. "Wow."

"The account was opened two months after Leah Davies' case was closed by the police," she continued. "The initial deposit was for 750,000. She's still trying to track down where that money came from."

"I have a feeling that there was almost another deposit yesterday - but whoever was supposed to make it made it unnecessary."

"Probably. Did you talk to Paula or Mrs. Logan this morning?"

"I called them while you were taking a shower. Paula left for classes, and Mrs. Logan was keeping the doors locked."

Harry Lansing was surprised to see them when he opened the front door. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"There have been a few developments," Callie said. "And we have a question to ask because of them."

Lansing stepped back, letting them in. "I have some coffee ready - either of you want a cup?"

"I'll take one," Carter told the man.

"So will I."

"You mind having it in the kitchen?" he asked. "That's where I usually have mine -"

"The kitchen will be fine," Callie assured him as they followed him into that room. The table was in a small area with windows that looked out over the back yard, and at this time of day was filled with sunlight.

Lansing brought two more cups of coffee to the table, then sat down in the chair at the one that had already been there. "Sit down." He studied them for a moment. "What's happened?"

"Before we get into that," Callie said, "May we ask why you didn't interview Stanley Appleton's secretary ten years ago?"

"She wasn't at work during the time we were investigating," he told them. "Appleton told us that she had gone on a scheduled vacation a few days before Leah Davies disappeared. By the time we found her body, we had the affidavits from the two witnesses, and were told to close the case."

"Danny Green has confirmed that both his and Artie Brooks' statements were a pack of lies," Callie told him after exchanging a look with Carter. "They were paid off to say that Leah Davies was at the Lake Bar that night, drinking."

A deep sigh was audible in the room as Lansing listened to her. "You don't seem surprised," Carter noted.

"Honestly? I'm not. I tried to break both of their stories, but they refused to back down. So I had no choice but to have them sign the affidavits, even though I had zero evidence to back up what they said happened."

"Archie Brooks is dead," Carter told him. "We found him in his swimming pool - after he apparently hit his head on the edge."

"But you don't think that's what happened."

"You tell me. The man received three-quarters of a million dollars ten years ago - and had half a million at the first of this month. His death came after we spoke to Danny Green - and he called Brooks to warn him that we were asking questions."

"What does Danny Green have to say?"

"He refused to talk to us, or to the police," Callie said. "Said that if the police found out that he was talking, he'd be as dead as Archie is."

"Where did the order to close the case come from, Mr. Lansing?" Carter asked.

"We got it from our Lieutenant," he said. "Sewell," he recalled. "I got the impression that he got it from somewhere higher up the chain. It was the first time that I ignored the chain of command and objected to an order. Captain Dobbs refused to speak with me except to say that *he* had received an order to close the case from his superiors - " He sighed again. "I was ordered to stop asking questions, with the implication being that my pension could be in jeopardy if I didn't. I suppose that makes me a coward. But I had a wife who was in poor health - I didn't dare risk that to find out the truth."

Chapter Five

"I guess that explains why he was so willing to give us his notes on the case when we first came to him," Callie said as they drove away from the house. "He's been living with this for ten years - knowing that he didn't finish the case and get justice for the victim."

"Because he was worried about his own security."

"His wife's security," Callie corrected Carter. "I think that if he hadn't had her to worry about, he would have pushed past the threats and found the truth."

"You might be right. But we're no closer to finding out who gave that order to close the case."

"We can investigate the names he gave us - see if we can find a connection to anyone involved in the case." She tapped the notebook in his hands. "What were the names?"

"Lt. Sewell, and Captain Dobbs," he told her without opening the notebook.

"Sewell was a Captain by the time I joined on the force," she told him. "I'm pretty sure that Dobbs was gone by then, though. I don't remember hearing the name."

"I still want to talk to Mrs. Collins," Carter said. "I think it was just a little too convenient for her to go on vacation at that time."

"We'll go over there this afternoon," she told him. "If *you* don't decide to go swimming again."

"It wasn't a decision that I wanted to make," he reminded her in a solemn tone, and Callie nodded.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have tried to joke about it."

He smiled and reached over to touch her hand on the steering wheel. "I'm sure we'll be able to laugh about it eventually." He looked around at the streets. "Where are we going now?"

"I thought we'd go on over to the Davies house and keep Mrs. Logan company until Paula gets there. She sounded pretty upset last night -"

"This morning, too," he confirmed. "I'm sure she'll be grateful for the company -"

"Unless the killer is watching her house and sees us arrive -"

"Well, short of our renting another car and then sneaking into the back, there's no much we can do about it. It's a risk we'll have to take, since we told Paula we'd be there for lunch."

"Just the same, one of us should keep an eye out just in case," Callie said, ignoring Carter rolling his eyes.

"I'm not convinced that the killer will risk drawing further attention to the case with another death. Tell me, as a former cop - if you were investigating Archie Brooks' death, would you accept the story about an accident?"

"Possibly. It would depend on how many cases were on the desk, and if anyone raised the alarm that it hadn't been."

"If not for us, no one would raise the alarm. So no one would connect the accidental death of Archie Brooks to a ten year old case that was ruled death by intoxication. But if there's another death - say, the daughter or housekeeper of the woman who died ten years ago -"

"You have a point," Callie agreed. "But I'm still going to keep my eyes peeled."

As they got out of the car in front of the house, Carter noticed Callie looking up and down the street. "See anything out of place?" he asked.

"Since I don't live here, I can't answer that," she admitted, leading the way to the front door. She knocked several times without any response, and finally called, "Mrs. Logan, it's Callie and Carter."

Immediately, they heard the door lock before it opened the space of the security chain. "Oh thank God," Mrs. Logan breathed before closing the door again and unfastening the chain to allow the door to open fully. "Come in, please." Once they were in, she locked the door and set the chain in place again. "I've been worried all morning," she told them. "I have some coffee ready in the kitchen."

Callie stopped on the way through the living room to look out of a window. "Mrs. Logan?" she asked.

The woman came to the kitchen doorway, the coffee pot in her hand. "Yes?"

"Have you noticed any strange cars in the area?"

"No, I haven't. Why do you ask?"

"She's just being careful, Mrs. Logan," Carter explained. To Callie, he said, "I'll bring you a cup of coffee."

"Paula's home," Callie announced as Carter and Mrs. Logan heard the sound of the garage door opening.

"Thank goodness," Mrs. Logan said, moving to the side door to unlock it and wait for Paula to appear. "Did you have a good day?" she asked the girl, who gave her a hug and nodded.

"I passed my history exam," Paula said, smiling at Carter. "Hi," she said, looking around. "Where is Callie?" she asked.

"Right here," Callie answered, coming into the kitchen.

"Lunch is almost ready," Mrs. Logan told them. "Paula, dear, would you mind setting the table?"

"I can help," Callie offered. "Where are the plates and utensils?"

"You said that one of the men who said Mom had been drinking is dead?" Paula asked after they finished lunch.

Carter had refused to discuss the case over the meal, so they were all four sitting in the living room after it was finished. "That's right. We spoke to the bartender, and he confirmed that he and the other man were paid to tell the police what they did."

"That's great! Does that mean that the police will open the investigation again?"

"Not just yet," Callie said. "We still have some people to talk to. But you do need to be careful."

"You mean you really think I could be in danger?"

Carter looked at Mrs. Logan, who rose from the table and went over to a drawer. Opening it, she pulled something out and then returned to the table.

Paula frowned in confusion. "What's going on?"

Taking a deep breath, Mrs. Logan began to explain. "You're probably going to hate me for this, Paula, but - the day after your mother went missing, I found this on my car - inside the garage." She slid the envelope across the table toward the young woman.

After taking it, Paula slowly pulled the letter out and silently read it. "And I always thought you talked to the police when I wasn't around," she said. "You should have shown it to them, Martha."

"I couldn't. If I hadn't been able to stay here, what would have happened to you?" She wiped a tear from her cheek.

"Tell her about the call you got yesterday," Carter said.

Paula's eyes widened. "A call? About -" she held up the letter, "this?"

"Someone called," Mrs. Logan told her. "They told me that if I talked to anyone about the case, you would be hurt."

"That explains why the place was locked up tighter than a drum when I got home. And why Carter and Callie told me to be careful this morning." She turned to look at the two detectives. "How much danger am I in?"

"Callie's more concerned than I am," Carter told her. "I'm of the opinion that another death will only draw attention to the case - which the killer doesn't want."

"Sounds logical," Paula nodded. "Why do you think the way you do?" she asked Callie.

"Because I'm an ex-cop who sees bad guys everywhere, I suppose," was Callie's reply. "The case was closed by the police instead of continuing the investigation. So it looks like someone in the department was somehow involved."

"Mom didn't know any police officers," Paula said. "Did she, Martha?"

"Not that I knew about, no," Mrs. Logan said.

"It could simply have been that the killer had some connection to the department," Callie explained. "And that that was where the pressure came from. After we leave here, we're going to look into some of the policemen who could have given the order to close the case and see if we can find a connection to someone who might have been involved in the case."

"The end shot of all of this, Paula," Carter said, "is that you do need to make sure that you're aware of anyone around you for the next few days at least. Let Mrs. Logan know if you're going somewhere with friends instead of coming directly home -"

"I understand."

"Paula's usually very good about keeping me informed as to her whereabouts."

After making sure that Paula and Mrs. Logan would be careful and let them know if they saw anyone or anything out of place, Callie and Carter left the Davies house. "Do you think we have time to go back home to run checks on Sewell and Dobbs?" Carter asked.

"Why don't we go talk to George Piper?" was her suggestion. "He might be able to tell us something about the two men."

"Is it a good idea to involve him in this right now?" Carter wondered. "If Danny was right about -" he let his words trail off, letting her finish the thought on her own.

"Okay. We'll hold off on that," she sighed. "We'll go home and get back to Appleton to wait for Mrs. Collins to leave for the day."

"I just hope she's not one of those women who works late."

"I doubt it," Callie told him. "I noticed the photographs of her husband and other family on her desk when we were there. She probably leaves at five on the dot to get home."

"Mark Sewell died last year," Carter told her. "His obituary didn't list any family members that are connected to the Davies case that I can see."

"What about Dobbs?" Callie asked.

"I'll start checking on him when we get back from talking to Mrs. Collins," he said. "By the time we get there, it will be close to five."

"There she is," Callie said, sitting up straighter behind the wheel.

"And there's our friendly security guard with her," Carter sighed, watching the guard walk Mrs. Collins toward a small parking area near the front doors. He saw her to a Toyota before sketching a salute and turning back toward the building. "For a minute there, I thought he might get into the car with her," Carter said as Callie followed the secretary away from the parking lot. They had agreed to follow her home and talk to her there instead of at the Appleton Investments building.

The tail ended when the Toyota pulled into a driveway in Plano, and Callie parked the Jeep on the street. After the garage door closed, they waited a moment before going to the front door and pressing the doorbell.

When the door opened, Mrs. Collins' smile faded as she recognized them. Her hair was now down around her shoulders, making her features less harsh. "What are you doing here?" she asked as a man appeared behind her.

"Margie, is something wrong?" he asked.

"It's okay, Jack," she told him before turning back to the door.

"We found out that you never spoke to the police when Leah Davies disappeared, Mrs. Collins," Callie told her.

"I - was on vacation at the time," she said. "I took my vacation every year at that time."

"Mr. Appleton didn't ask you to come back when Leah disappeared?"

"He said there was no need. That there was nothing I could have added to the investigation."

"You were Leah's secretary, weren't you?"

Carter's question made her look at him. "Yes, I was," she confirmed. "Her private, confidential secretary."

"Mrs. Collins, we just want to ask you a few questions about Leah. It's very important to her daughter. I'm sure you met the girl -" Callie's statement caused Mrs. Collins' lips to almost curl into a smile.

"Of course I did. Before Mr. Appleton found a housekeeper -" she broke off as she realized what she had said.

"Mr. Appleton found Martha Logan?" Callie questioned.

"You might as well come in," Mrs. Collins told them, stepping back. "I'm not going to have this discussion on the doorstep." She led them into the living room, indicating that they should sit on the sofa. "Would you like something to drink?"

"No, thank you," Callie said, waiting for her to sit down. "Now, about Mrs. Logan -"

"After Leah came to work for him, she had problems finding a babysitter for the girl. So he said she could bring Paula to the office. It's a big room, with plenty of space for the child to read or color -. She was a very sweet little girl. Leah didn't abuse the offer unless she had no choice. She was very grateful when Mr. Appleton introduced her to Mrs. Logan."

"About Leah and Mr. Appleton, Mrs. Collins -"

Her expression became guarded again as Carter spoke. "They were friends," she told him.

"Close friends?"

"Mr. Appleton is a married man," she reminded them.

"Let me ask you this - was Mrs. Appleton the jealous type?"

Callie's question caused her to frown. "I -"

"That's the reason you've probably always worn your hair in such an unflattering style," Callie pointed out, "as for those horn-rimmed glasses at the office -"

The woman took a deep breath. "When I first started with Mr. Appleton, I kept my hair styled and colored, and wore contact lenses. But one day Mrs. Appleton came into the office, and I could feel her watching me every moment, as if waiting for me to look at her husband as though I was anything other than his secretary. After that, I began to wear my hair in a bun, and had clear glass put into an old pair of eyeglasses. The next time she came by, she barely glanced at me, but I did notice a smile of approval."

"Did she come to the office very often?"

"Not over the last few years. She's very busy with working with her foundation."

"What about when Leah was alive and in the office?"

Another deep breath, and now she turned to look out of the window into the backyard. "She came in a few times, but Mr. Appleton was doing quite a bit of traveling then -"

"And Leah Davies traveled with him," Carter pointed out.

"So did I," Mrs. Collins informed him. "There were only a few times that they went on trips and I wasn't able to go for various reasons. But I will tell you that I was the one who made reservations for hotels - and Miss Davies always had me reserve her room on a different floor from the one that Mr. Appleton would be on - to keep the press from trying to make any trouble."

"Did you ever see any sign that they might be more than - friends?"

"Nothing overt," she confirmed. "But if I walked into his office, and she was standing beside him, discussing a contract or prospect - " she turned to look at them again. "I'm not a romantic - you can ask my husband, he'll confirm that - but - I could see how they felt. It wasn't obvious. I knew that there was no way for them to be together - Mr. Appleton would have lost everything. Not that I think he would have minded, but Miss Davies - Leah, she thought of him as an important man - too important for her to cause that kind of upheaval in his life."

"What was she like during the days before she disappeared?" Callie wanted to know.

"She was upset - said that she wasn't feeling well. There were a few times that I thought she might have been crying, but I didn't ask her about it. I should have, I suppose. If I'd known what was going to happen," she gave a crooked smile. "I suppose that's what happens with hindsight, isn't it?"

"You said that you were with her and Mr. Appleton on their trips -"

"Most of the time, yes."

"Is there anyway you could find out when the trips you weren't on took place?"

"I suppose I could, but - you have to understand. Leah would never have risked her job or Mr. Appleton's marriage by allowing anything to happen. Even if I wasn't there, I will never believe that the two of them did anything that they shouldn't have."

"So, do you think she was trying to protect Mr. Appleton?" Callie asked Carter as they drove back toward the loft.

"No. I think she was being totally honest. She really believes that nothing ever happened between Leah and their boss."

"Do you think that Mrs. Appleton would agree?"

"She didn't strike me as someone who was worried about her marriage when I interviewed her," Carter said.

"How long ago was that?"

"Around five years ago. I did a series on the wives of famous and or wealthy men profiling the charities that they supported."

"Of course she wasn't concerned. Leah was already dead by that time."

"I had a feeling that you were spotlighting her for the murder."

"You don't agree."

"Let's just say that I'm doubtful. I think we might need to talk to Mr. Appleton again, however."

"He might not like finding out that Mrs. Collins spoke to us -"

"Possibly," Carter agreed. "But I think he'll be grateful for anything that helps find out who killed Leah Davies. Are we going to stop for dinner before going home?" he asked.

"I suppose so. Any preferences?"

"Gino's?"

"Gino's it is."

"If you're right," Callie mused as she watched Carter begin the online search for information about Captain Edward Dobbs, "and Mrs. Appleton wasn't involved in Leah's death - who do you think it could have been?"

"Not sure. Maybe when we track down the information about Dobbs, we'll know more. You don't remember hearing much about him?"

"No. Like I said, he must have left the department not long after Leah's case was closed. I'm sure George Piper would remember him - but we agreed not to involve the police right now."

"Since he's still on the force, he would feel obligated to pursue anything we told him," Carter explained, hearing her frustration in the comment. "I don't relish the idea of bumping into him on this investigation, do you?"

She grinned. "Nope. The look he gives me is worse than Dad's when I did something I shouldn't when I was young."

Carter laughed softly as he continued to type. "I can't see you ever doing anything you shouldn't."

"Allie talked me into trying to hitch-hike into downtown Dallas when we were thirteen," she told him. "There was some actor that she liked who was going to be there, and Dad was working - and her mother wasn't feeling well."

He stopped typing and turned to look at her. "Did you make it?"

"Well, we made it to downtown. Halfway in, a county sheriff saw us and asked where we were going. Allie told him that we were meeting her mother downtown, but had missed our bus. So he drove us downtown, left us in front of a restaurant where she said we were meeting her."

"Wow."

"I know. I was scared to death the entire time. The hotel where the actor was supposed to be staying wasn't far from the restaurant, so we walked over there - only to find out that the actor wasn't there - he'd been forced to cancel his trip at the last minute. I was cold, and exhausted, and kept telling Allie

that I wanted to go home. She said she couldn't call her mother, so I called Dad - I burst into tears on the phone, and he sent a cab to bring us to La Via Roma and kept us there until the end of the night. He was *not* happy with me *or* Allie that night."

"I'm sure. Did he tell Allie's mom what you'd done?"

"Oh, yes. And she blamed him. But she always blamed him whenever Allie did something like that. And then she grounded Allie - but a day later, it was like nothing had happened."

"I suppose that was normal as well?"

"Yes. Louise - Dad said that she was mentally unstable - which left Allie to fend for herself more often than not."

"And explains why Marty kept an eye on Allie as well as on you."

"Yeah." She watched as he turned back to the computer. "Finding anything?"

"Not so far. The last address this site has for him is five years old - but I'm not finding anything that says he's dead. It's like he simply - dropped out of sight."

"That's possible - especially if he was paid off the way Danny Green and Archie Brooks were." She wrote a number on a notepad. "If you get up before I do tomorrow -"

"Which I probably will," he teased.

"Okay, funny man. You have to remember that I used to work until the middle of the night. Anyway, you can call Stanley Appleton's office to see if he'll talk to us again."

"Yes, ma'am. And now, I'm going to get a few more books packed up before bed. Care to join me?"

"You're giving up on finding out about Dobbs?"

"I'll do a little more research tomorrow morning," he told her, going over to the bookcase to start placing books into a half-filled box. "I might have someone at the paper who can get me information about ex police officers."

"I have connections -"

"Ah, but my source isn't part of the police department," he reminded her. "Less chance of alerting the wrong people."

"I guess you're right," she nodded. "But that's also presupposing that the 'wrong people' are still there."

"It's still hard for me to believe that Dobbs was somehow involved with Leah's murder. The idea that a police officer would shut down an investigation that way -"

"That's because you were an honest cop," he reminded her, grabbing the tape to seal the box he'd been working on. "You're half a box behind me," he told her. "Less talk, more work."

Standing up, she told him, "I could always leave you to pack this up yourself and just go to bed."

"You won't do that," he said, taping the bottom of another box before putting a book into it.

"Oh?" She put her hands on her hips. "You sure of that?"

"I am," he said, finally lifting his head to look at her, a grin on his face. "Because you love me too much to leave me to do all of this on my own."

Callie stood there, but her lips were slowly curving into a smile as well.

"Another box, and I promise that I'll make it worth your while," he told her.

She swallowed heavily and ducked her head to try and hide her reddening cheeks before she returned to take another book out of the bookcase, ignoring Carter's soft laughter.

Chapter Six

"We have an appointment with Appleton at eleven this morning," Carter told Callie when she came downstairs and went to pour herself a cup of coffee.

"So soon?" she questioned in surprise as she came over to the desk to drop a kiss onto his lips.
"Morning."

"He was more than willing to talk to us. Getting past Mrs. Collins was the problem. She didn't want me to disturb him."

"I think Leah wasn't the only one in love with the man," Callie said.

"You think? I got the impression that she was going to tell him about our visit with her as soon as I spoke to him."

She looked at the computer. "Any breakthroughs?"

"My source told me that Dobbs retired right after the Leah Davies case was closed. Told his friends that he was going on a world cruise that he'd been saving up for."

"So I take it that he wasn't married."

"Nope. Spent twenty-three years with the department, was decorated four times, became a Captain three years before he left."

"So we don't really know much more than we did before."

"I'm still trying to track down his current location. I doubt that he's still on that cruise."

"So he's keeping a low profile for some reason. Maybe he spent most of his money on the cruise so now he's living simply - doesn't even have to be here in the area. Maybe he has family -"

"Speaking of family, Marty called and said that if we could meet him at the restaurant this afternoon we could sign the papers for the house. He and Allie got word yesterday that they'd been accepted to take over the lease on the loft."

"So I guess it's time to call the movers to get the bookcases and the bed," she told him.

"We can discuss that with Marty when we see him."

She picked up his cellphone from the desk. "You took it out of the rice. Does it work?"

"See for yourself." He watched as she pressed the button and looked at the screen. "Seems to be as good as new. But I'll probably get a newer model anyway."

"Probably a good idea," she nodded, handing him the phone. "I'm going to take a shower," she told him, finishing her coffee before moving toward the bathroom. At the door, she paused and looked over her shoulder with a smile. "Care to join me?"

"Mrs. Collins told me about your visit with her yesterday," Stanley Appleton said after greeting them.

"We realized that the police hadn't questioned her after Leah's disappearance and death, sir," Carter explained, "and wanted to find out what she might or might not know."

"She has always taken her vacation at that time - two weeks. She and her husband usually go to Hawaii. I called her when Leah was reported as missing, and assured her that we'd manage until her vacation was done."

"There still should have been an interview done upon her return, Mr. Appleton," Callie insisted.

"Did she tell you anything that you didn't already know?"

Callie grimaced at his question, then asked one of her own. "How did your wife feel about Leah Davies?"

Appleton looked down at his desk, as if considering his answer before speaking. "I was in love with Leah Davies, Mrs. Harris," he finally said. "And she was in love with me. But she respected the fact that I was a married man, and refused to let things go further than a few furtive smiles and two kisses during the five years she worked for me. I was willing to toss everything aside to be with her - but Leah insisted that she didn't want me to do that." He managed a small smile. "I think she liked my wife. Marcia - was never anything but friendly whenever she came into the office and Leah was here." He sighed. "After Leah's death, Marcia told me that the two of them had talked about what was going on - and Leah told her that she had no desire to break up our marriage - because she knew that Marcia loved me too. I was lucky enough to have the love of two remarkable women - and I want to know what happened to Leah."

"So Mrs. Appleton would have had no reason to want Leah removed from the picture?" Carter wanted to know.

"No." The answer was firm and definite. "She wasn't threatened by Leah."

Callie asked, "Did she ever mention any of the men she saw away from work?"

"Her dates?" he questioned, then shook his head. "No. I do know that she told me that she only went to dinner with them. She was troubled by something that happened a couple of months before she disappeared, but I dismissed it - probably because I didn't like to think about her going on dates at all. I didn't even notice her being ill in the days leading up to that." His expression was one of intense regret. "If I had, maybe she would have told me what was going on - "

"Considering the way she felt about you, sir," Carter pointed out, "I don't think she would have told you even if you had asked."

"You're probably right," he agreed. "Have you found anything that might get you closer to who killed her?" He must have seen the look they exchanged. "Look, I know that Paula is paying you to investigate this, but I'll give you a bonus when you can answer that question."

Callie spoke up. "Well, we've discovered that both of the men who told the police that Leah was drinking that night were paid by person or persons unknown to make those statements."

"They haven't told you who paid them?"

"One of them is dead, Mr. Appleton," Carter said. "The other is on the run, afraid that he'll be killed if he talks."

"If Leah wasn't drinking, then what happened? How did she end up in her car at the bottom of that lake?"

"*That* is one of the things we're still trying to find out," Callie answered.

"If you need anything - money, the pressure of this office, *anything*," he repeated, "Don't hesitate to call me. In fact," he took out a business card and wrote on the back. "This is my private number." He held the card out to Callie, who hesitated. "Please, take it."

"Your wife -" Callie said.

"Don't you understand? I have to know what happened. And my wife understands. If I'm honest, I'd have to say that my marriage is stronger than it has ever been."

Callie took the card, nodding. "We'll have to verify keeping you informed on the case with our client," she told him.

Stanley Appleton smiled. "I doubt that Paula will say no."

Callie's sigh of frustration was loud in the car. "We still don't have a clue as to who killed her."

"We'll just have to go back over everything," Carter said. "Maybe we missed something -"

"What? We've talked to everyone involved in the case that's still alive - except for Dobbs, and he's missing -"

"Maybe we should set up an interview with Michael Galloway's wife," he suggested.

"He's dead -"

"True. But maybe he said something to her about Leah -"

"We don't know that they were married -"

"They didn't have to be -" Carter frowned. "Callie - of the three men who were interviewed, only one admitted to having done more than have dinner with Leah."

"She nodded. Galloway," she confirmed. "He said that they made out in his car -"

"Tell me something - why would anyone 'make out' in a car?"

"The danger of possibly being discovered," she suggested.

"Go on."

"Teenagers - they do it because they don't have anywhere else -" Her eyes widened as she realized what he was getting at. "Leah couldn't take him home because she had a daughter."

"What if Galloway had a wife at home?" Carter speculated.

"It's possible," she nodded. "But I still can't see Leah doing that - Can you?"

"No, but what if it wasn't consensual?"

"You mean, what if Michael Galloway tried to -"

"What if he *did*?"

Callie pulled the Jeep over to the curb, clearly shocked by the idea. "Oh. I'd never considered that idea. If that's what happened, and Galloway found out she was pregnant -"

Carter reached over and took her hand in his. "We still need to find out if he had access to the money it would have taken to have her killed and cover it up - and if he had any connection to Dobbs. I almost wish we didn't have to go see your dad," he told her. "I need some computer time."

"What for?"

"After we found out Galloway was dead, I just dropped him as a suspect." He grinned. "And I got sidetracked, remember?"

Callie smiled. "I remember."

"If I'd been thinking clearly, I would have pulled up his obituary to see what it could tell us about him."

She pulled the car away from the curb. "I'm sure Dad will let you use his after we've finished with the paperwork," she told him. "Why don't you call Paula and tell her that Mr. Appleton wants to be kept informed on the investigation?"

"And now the house is yours," Marty said, quickly amending the statement. "Both of yours - since both names are on the deed."

"It's a good thing that Allie's a notary," Callie said, taking the papers from him.

"Only until I can convince her to marry me," Marty said, pulling the young woman to his side. "Once she's legally family, she won't be able to notarize things."

"Why do you think I keep hedging my answer?" Allie asked, smiling.

"Because you're stubborn," Marty said. "But I love you anyway." He dropped a light kiss on her lips, then looked at his daughter, who had finally gotten used to seeing her father with her best friend.

"Seriously, Callie, your mom would be so happy to know that you're going to be living in the house."

"I know, Dad," she told him.

"Marty," Carter said, "Would you mind if I used your office computer to check on something about our case?"

"No problem," Marty said. "How's it going?"

"We *might* have a breakthrough," Callie answered as they all followed Carter through the kitchen to the office. "Carter's looking for an obituary for someone who might have been involved."

"Who's obituary?" Marty asked, as Carter sat down at the desk. "That thing can be cantankerous, Carter."

"I'll manage," Carter assured him. "And the man's name was Michael Galloway."

"Mike? I have a copy of his obit here," he said, looking around the office. "I went to his funeral about a month and a half ago." He moved some papers, never noticing that both Callie and Carter stopped and turned to look at him.

"You knew him, Dad?"

"Anyone in the restaurant business knew him," Marty told her. "How was he involved in Leah Davies' death?"

"Michael Galloway was the last man that Leah went out with before her death," Carter explained.

"He owned a restaurant?" Callie asked. "I thought I knew all of the -"

"He was the CEO for Texas Steakhouse Group," Marty said. "So he didn't spend a lot of time in the restaurants. But he wasn't the real owner - his wife had the money - Mike was just the front man. If you're thinking that Mike had a fling with Leah - trust me, his wife would *not* put up with that. That woman kept a tight rein on him."

"Not that tight a rein," was Allie's comment, and Callie suddenly realized that her friend had become withdrawn upon mention of Michael Galloway's name.

"Allie?" she asked now.

"I went out with him," Allie confirmed, nodding. "Once. And that was enough."

Marty turned to look at her. "When -?"

"A few years ago," she said. "I was between relationships, and some of the girls from work and I were at the Texas Steakhouse out on Lemmon. He came to the table and talked to us, and asked me out to dinner. He seemed okay - wasn't wearing a ring - so I figured he wasn't married, so I said yes." She sighed. "After dinner, he suggested that we go back to my place, but - I didn't like taking dates home," she told them. "So I suggested that we go to *his* place instead. I could always tell a lot about a guy by seeing his home. But he said that he had a 'roommate' who wouldn't like it. I jokingly said something like, 'Who? Your wife?', and his reaction told me I was right. I told him to take me home, that I had a rule about dating married men, but he drove out by Lake Lavon and parked the car, then tried to get fresh. I slapped him, and when that didn't stop him, I got a little more physical - and told him that if he didn't take me home immediately, he wouldn't be able to walk the next day." She smiled. "As he was driving me home, he practically begged me not to tell anyone, that he was sorry, etcetera, etcetera."

"You should have reported it," Callie insisted.

"Yes, you should have," Marty growled in agreement, pulling her close. "If I'd known -"

"No harm was done," Allie insisted. "I can take care of myself. Goodness knows that I've fought off my fair share of office wolves over the years. Grab 'em where they live, so to speak, and they become a pussycat." Both Marty and Carter winced at her comment. "I had no idea that he had been involved in a murder -"

"We don't know for sure," Carter said. "It's just a working theory - we still need to find a connection between him and the police department."

Marty had gone back to looking for the obituary, and now he lifted it triumphantly. "Aha. Here it is! The police department, you say? He had one. A connection, that is. At least, I think I remember hearing that he did. Or, rather, his wife did. Her brother was a police detective - I think he retired before you joined the department," he told Callie.

Carter read the obituary on the paper that Marty had found. "That's our connection to Dobbs -," he told Callie, handing the paper to her.

"Carole *Dobbs* Galloway," Callie read. "I think we need to talk to Mrs. Galloway," she told Carter.

"To the best of my knowledge, she's taken over running the business," Marty said. "Let me get you the address of the franchise headquarters." He looked into a rolodex on the desk, then wrote the address. "You don't think that she had anything to do with -"

"If she controlled the purse strings, she had to be involved, Dad. There was a *lot* of money spent just to cover up Leah's murder and make everyone think it was an accident. There's no telling how much the actual murderer received." She stopped talking. "I know we can trust both of you not to let this go any further - it is our case, and -"

"But I'm involved in the case, remember?" Marty reminded her. "So I think that gives me a small stake at least." He smiled at her. "But don't worry. We won't tell a soul."

The franchise headquarters for Texas Steakhouse Group was in a modest building in a small office park north of downtown. The receptionist looked apologetic when they asked to see Mrs. Galloway. "Do you have an appointment?"

"No, we don't," Carter told her. "We were hoping that we might be able to talk to her."

"I'm sorry, but, Mrs. Galloway doesn't see anyone without an appointment - I could make one for you -" she glanced at the computer on her desk. "Let's see - Her first available time would be a week from today at two pm."

"That's -" Callie began, but Carter took her elbow and spoke over her.

"That's okay. I think we'll just write her a letter. Thank you anyway."

Callie didn't fight his hand on her elbow, guiding her out of the building. But once on the sidewalk, she pulled away. "Why didn't you fight harder to see her?"

"We weren't going to get in to see her - and I didn't want to warn her that we were this close," he explained. "Let's go home and I'll do a little more research - I have her phone number, remember? And from that I can get an address."

"You're very good at this, you know that?" Callie asked, slipping her arm through his as they moved toward the Jeep.

"I had a good teacher," he said.

"Your uncle," she replied, nodding.

"I wasn't talking about Uncle Simon," he told her. "I was talking about you."

"Any luck yet?" Callie asked after he'd been on the computer for awhile.

"Oh, I have the address," he confirmed. "But I was emailing my contact at the paper to see if there had been any whispers about Michael Galloway having been accused of assault or any rumors that he wasn't as faithful as people thought he was."

"And?"

"Unverified rumors - and if there were any cases of assault, they were swept deep under the rug."

Callie frowned upon hearing that. "That could mean that there's still someone with the department that was covering for him. I really wish that Allie had reported -"

"Do you really think that it would have made any difference?" he asked. "Especially if Galloway had someone keeping his crimes quiet? If she had, she might have ended up like Leah."

"Possibly," Callie mused. "But I have a feeling that Leah was a special case - maybe because she worked for Appleton."

"That's very possible," Carter agreed. "Considering what else I found out -"

"What was that?"

"Guess who Mrs. Galloway's sister is?"

"No idea."

"Marcia Appleton."

"You interviewed her -"

"Five years ago," he reminded her. "But it was about her foundation, not her family. She did mention that she was from here, and still had family in the city, but there were no names mentioned."

"And if Carole Galloway is her sister, then Edward Dobbs is her brother. You know, I'm curious to hear what Mr. Appleton has to say about our theory. Aren't you?" She pulled the card that Stanley Appleton had given to her earlier from her pocket.

Carter took the card and glanced at it, shaking his head. "I'd prefer to ask in person. I can tell more about a person's reaction to questions if I can see their face."

"Well, it's already after five - so he's probably not at the office. Maybe we could meet him at his home." She picked up the phone and dialed Appleton's private number.

"Hello?"

"Mr. Appleton, it's Callie Harris - would you be able to talk with us this evening?"

"I think I could do that, Mrs. Harris," he answered. "Have you found out something?"

"It's possible, but we need to ask you a few questions - if it won't cause you problems with your wife."

"She's out at a committee meeting this evening," he told her. "Won't be home until around nine, most likely. But it wouldn't be a problem if she was here. I'll leave word with the security guard at the gate to let you and Mr. Jankowski through when you arrive."

"Shall we say around seven?" Callie suggested.

"I'll be waiting."

The Appleton home was surrounded by a high fence, with a security guard at the gated entrance, tasked with screening out the sightseers and occasional protesters. He glanced at his notepad and waved them through the gate, telling them to follow the drive up to the house and park at the front door.

"Same security company that handles the office," Callie told Carter.

"He probably has a contract with them for all of his security needs," he pointed out.

The door was opened by a middle-aged man in a dark suit. "Mrs. Harris? Mr. Jankowski?" he asked, closing the door behind them.

"Yes. I believe Mr. Appleton is -"

"He's waiting in the study," the man told them. "If you'll follow me." He led them to a pair of closed doors. Knocking once, he opened one of the doors. "Your guests are here, sir."

Stanley Appleton rose from his chair behind a heavy oak desk. "Thank you, Barrett. That will be all." Barrett closed the door once they were inside the room. "Why don't we sit over here," Appleton suggested, indicating the sofa and chairs near the window. He picked up a glass from the desk. "Would either of you care for a drink?"

"No, thank you," Callie said.

Sitting down, their host sighed. "Now, what's going on?"

"We have a few questions about Michael Galloway," Carter told him.

"Michael? Carole's husband? He's dead -"

"Yes, we know that he died six weeks ago."

"What do you need to know?"

"Did he ever meet Leah?"

He looked thoughtful. "Possibly - we used to have Christmas parties here for family and employees - their paths might have crossed, I suppose. Why?"

Callie looked at Carter before saying, "Are you aware that the last person that Leah was confirmed to have gone out with was Michael Galloway?"

"No. I had no idea - you're sure?"

"Detective Lansing interviewed him after Leah's disappearance. He admitted that he had gone out with her a few times -"

"And that they had 'made out' in his car," Carter continued.

"Now that I don't believe at all," Stanley said. "Leah wouldn't have done that. She thought too much of herself to -" he shook his head sadly.

"Our theory, Mr. Appleton," Carter said, "is that Galloway - forced himself on Leah -"

Stanley's eyes widened in horror at the idea. "Dear God," he breathed, taking a drink from the glass in his hand. "I never liked the man - kept telling Marcia that she needed to convince her sister to cut him loose before he did something that -" Putting the glass down, he ran a hand through his white hair. "No wonder she was so - different those last weeks. She was quieter than normal, and seemed slightly jumpy - But whenever I asked her what was wrong, she insisted that nothing was wrong." Closing his eyes, he bowed his head before it came up again, his eyes open. "It was his baby -"

"I could have been," Callie cautioned him. "As Carter said, it's just a theory - we don't have any proof -"

"We also need to ask you about Edward Dobbs, sir," Carter said.

Stanley frowned. "Eddie? What about him?"

It was Callie who answered. "The detectives handling the case were ordered to close it, to let the story about Leah drinking too much stand as the final cause of death."

"I'm sure the idea of a police captain doing something like that bothers you, since you were a police officer yourself, doesn't it?"

"Yes, sir," Callie confirmed. "Is it possible that your brother-in-law might have done something like that? He did retire from the department shortly after Leah's death."

Stanley sighed and rose from his chair, pacing over to the window that overlooked the back of the house. "Eddie and Carole are my wife's step siblings," he told them. "Marcia's mother died when she was young, and her father remarried a woman with two children. He adopted them after their mother died, but he left the lion's share of his estate to Marcia. I never felt that Eddie was too terribly upset by it, but Carole seemed to resent Marcia to some degree. But that never stopped her from coming to Marcia for money if she needed it."

The door into the room opened, and a well dressed woman stood there. Her gray-streaked dark hair was expertly styled, and she entered the room, looking at Callie and Carter - who had risen upon her appearance.

Chapter Seven

"Marcia," Stanley said, crossing the room to take her hand and give her a quick kiss on the cheek. "You're home early."

"Giles Morgan left the paperwork that we were *supposed* to go over at home - so we rescheduled," she explained. "I heard my name mentioned -" she prompted, moving away from him toward their guests. Stopping before them, she looked at Callie. "I've never seen you before -" she said, then turned toward Carter. "But you - I've seen you - Mr. - Carter -" Carter smiled, and she shook her head. "No, Mr. Jankowski. I never forget a name. You're a reporter. You did a lovely article about the foundation a few years ago."

Carter nodded. "Yes, ma'am," he replied. "I did get your thank you note after the article was published." He turned to Callie. "This is Callie Harris."

Marcia Appleton smiled at Callie, offering her hand. "It's nice to meet you, Ms. Harris. Are you a reporter as well?"

"No. I'm a former Dallas Police Officer turned Private Investigator," Callie explained.

"These are the two that you told me about," Marcia said to Stanley. "They're investigating Leah Davies' death?"

He put an arm around her shoulders. "Yes. Why don't we all sit down? Would you like a drink, dear?"

"Not at the moment. I also heard Carole's name mentioned. What could she possibly have to with poor Leah's death?"

Carter quickly recounted the details about Leah's death that they had uncovered, including the fact that the order to close the case had come from Marcia's brother. She frowned. "Oh dear. I do hope that you're wrong - Edward was always so proud of the fact that he was a police officer - and he was good at his job. Why would he have done something like that?" she asked.

Callie spoke up at last. "The only reason we can come up with is that a family member asked him to do it," she said.

"You think that Carole -?"

"Or her husband," Callie suggested. "Mrs. Appleton - I hate to bring up a touchy subject, but -" she ignored Carter's wince as she continued, "did you ever mention anything to your sister about Leah and -" she glanced in Stanley's direction.

It seemed that both men were holding their breath as they waited for Marcia's response to the question. But when Marcia smiled and reached out to take her husband's hand, they relaxed. "I might have mentioned something about being glad that Leah was strong enough to resist temptation. I do seem to remember Carole asking me how I could possibly let the two of them go off on business trips together - and I simply told her that I trusted Stanley *and* Leah." She looked at Carter. "What are you thinking?"

"Well, it's too coincidental for the last person that Leah dated to have been Michael Galloway, don't you think?" he asked. "Our theory is that Carole, in a clumsy attempt to make sure that Leah wasn't a threat to *your* marriage, had Michael take Leah out a couple of times. I don't know whose idea it might have been to take her completely out of the picture, but someone spent a lot of money to set up the two false witnesses and hiring someone to put her car into that lake. Then there's the money that one of those witnesses continued to get from that person before he, too, was killed."

Marcia sat there, shaking her head. "I had no idea," she murmured, leaning into her husband's side. "I had no idea."

"What is it, dear?" Stanley asked her, holding her close.

"Around - Around the time Leah disappeared," she began, "Carole told me that Michael had gotten a girl into trouble - and she needed enough money to give the girl so that she would leave town and never come back. I gave her the money," she said, lifting her eyes to focus on her husband's face. "I'm sorry, Stan. I am *so* sorry."

He reached up to touch her cheek, wiping away a tear. "It's okay, Marcia. I would have believed her story as well, if I'd known about it."

"We have one more question, Mrs. Appleton," Carter said in a quiet voice - and waited for her to look at him. "Do you know where your brother is right now? We can't find him."

"Edward? He's been staying with Carole. She has a guest house that he uses when he comes to town."

Callie had another question. "Do you think that he would have agreed to be a part of Leah's murder? Even if it was only to help cover it up?"

She sniffed again, nodding. "Edward and Carole have always been close. He would do anything if she asked him to do it. When we were growing up, she was always getting him to do things that I doubted he would have done otherwise."

"Well?" Callie asked as they drove out of the gates. "Should we go and see if Edward Dobbs is home?"

"I think I'd feel more comfortable if we make a stop at home first," he told her.

"Why?"

"To get our guns. I'd rather not go in there without any protection. The man *is* an ex-cop, remember?"

"True. We could get some help -" she began, but Carter was already shaking his head.

"You're going to suggest going to put this on George Piper's desk - the first thing he'll do is refuse to believe our theory - mostly *because* Dobbs is an ex-cop. The second thing he'll do is toss us out of his office. No, we have to find another way to do this."

"George hates dirty cops more than anyone I've ever known," Callie told him. "I used to tell him that he'd have been happier working for Internal Affairs instead of Homicide."

"But we have no proof - only an unsupported theory. Oh, we have Mrs. Appleton, who gave her sister money around the time that Leah disappeared - but without Danny Green to testify -"

"Then we'll get the proof," she declared.

"Any ideas about how we'll do that, love?"

"Let me think about it," she said.

"I found a two year old photo of Edward and Carole," Carter told Callie after they had been home for awhile."

"Really?" she asked, getting up from the sofa and coming over to the desk. The photo on the screen was of two men and a woman, all smiling into the camera. "Who's who?" she wanted to know.

"From left to right, Michael and Carole Galloway, and Edward Dobbs," he told her. "It was taken during a trip to Barbados."

Michael had been a good looking man, almost too good looking, Callie decided. Carole's blonde hair was likely colored, and was expensively styled. Edward Dobbs was wearing far more casual clothing, his tousled gray hair seemed to pair perfectly with his deep natural tan. "Dobbs is obviously an outdoorsman."

Carter nodded in agreement. "Sailing, tennis, probably golf as well. As of two years ago, he was still in pretty good physical shape if his bicep is any indication." He pointed to the muscular arm beneath the polo shirt the man in the photo was wearing.

"You think that he killed Leah, don't you?"

"It's possible. And I'd almost be willing to bet that if we checked back far enough, both Danny Green and Archie Brooks knew a Dallas police officer by the name of Edward Dobbs."

"They wouldn't have had a record - Harry Lansing would have found it -"

"No, but if they were informants - or just friends, that would do it."

Callie stared at the photograph for a moment. "I think I have an idea." She put her arms around his shoulders and her head close to his. "Why don't **we** try to black mail Mr. Edward Dobbs?"

"Are you out of your mind?" he asked. "Callie - you **are** aware that blackmail's illegal, aren't you?"

"It's a sting," she told him. "I'll call him and tell him I'm a 'friend' of Archie's, and know where he got all of his money -"

"It won't work," Carter insisted.

"Why?"

"Edward Dobbs was a Captain in the department. You were a decorated, well-known junior detective in that same department. He'll recognize you -"

"I'll use another name," she told him.

"And disguise yourself?"

"He retired before I finished the academy," Callie reminded him. "How would he know -?"

"That's my point. You spent less than half the time he did on the force - but whenever there's a newspaper or TV report involving the police, you devour it. I'm sure that Dobbs does the same thing. When you were given that promotion to detective - and then, well, everything that happened after that - your photograph was all over the papers."

"Was it?"

He smiled. "I've seen them. I told you that I checked the story out, remember?"

Callie sighed. "I guess you're right. I still think it would work -"

"It might - if he would buy me as Archie's - business partner. Maybe a cousin -" He pulled her into his lap. "Do you think you could call Robbie and find out if anyone has claimed Archie Brooks' body?"

"First thing tomorrow morning," she promised, sliding her arms around his neck.

Robbie confirmed that Archie Brooks' body hadn't yet been claimed by anyone. Carter called his contacts at the local papers and asked them to run an ad, informing anyone interested that there would be a wake for Archie Brooks at Danny's Bar at one pm the next day, to be hosted by his "cousin" Jerome Brooks.

"What's Danny going to say about your using his bar to trap Archie's killer?" Callie questioned.

"As far as I know, he's still in hiding. But we'll stop by there later and talk to his bartender, let him know that Archie's cousin would like to see him there."

"And what am I supposed to do while this wake is going on? Sit in the car?"

"I think you'll be safe enough with me," he told her. "But you might want to wear those big sunglasses that you got when we were on stakeout a few months ago -"

"I have a better idea," she said, smiling. "And trust me, no one who knows me at all will recognize me."

The bartender saw them come in. "Well, if it isn't the sparkling water twins. Need a refill?" he asked.

"Not right now," Carter replied. "I was hoping to talk to Danny."

"Danny? He hasn't been around in several days - not since you two were here the last time," the bartender told them.

"Have you heard from him?"

"Oh yeah. He's called two, three times a day to make sure the place is open. What in the world did you say to him? Poor guy's acting like he's doomed or something."

"An old friend of his died," Callie told him. "Guess he didn't take it well."

"I didn't think he *had* any friends."

"When he calls again, would tell him that we're having a wake here tomorrow afternoon for his friend?" Carter said. "And that he just might ought to be here."

"A wake? Here?"

"Is that going to be a problem?" Carter asked, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a hundred dollar bill that he slid across the bar.

The man grinned, putting the money into his own pocket. "Not at all. We're usually slow in the afternoon, anyway. Any idea how many people to expect?"

"Not exactly. But I think you'll be able to handle it."

"Say, I don't think I got your name -"

"Jerry Brooks. Tell Danny that I'm Archie's cousin."

"Archie? Is that the friend who died?"

"Yeah. I wonder - if something were to happen here - do you have a way to let Danny know about it?" Callie asked.

The bartender tugged at his ear. "Well, he did give me a number - but he told me not to give it to anyone. Like I said, the guy's terrified of something -"

"You got my name - what's your's?"

He grinned. "You won't believe me."

"Give us a shot," Callie said.

"You've heard the old joke that all bartenders are named Joe - even when they aren't?" he asked, waiting for them to nod in confirmation. "Well, you're looking at one who just happens to be named Joe," he confided and they all chuckled.

"Well, Joe, I think Danny needs a personal invitation to Archie's wake," Carter said. "Tell you what - why don't you dial the number for me, and I'll talk to him? That way you won't have to break any promises."

"Can't do that. He'd see the caller ID and know that I must have talked to you." He grabbed a pen and bar napkin, quickly writing down a series of numbers. "There you go. You didn't get it from me."

Carter made a cross across his chest. "You have my word," he said. "See you tomorrow."

Out on the sidewalk, Callie looked at him as he surveyed the street. "He knows I was a cop," she reminded him. "I'd seen him in there before."

"You didn't know his name," Carter said.

"I don't think I ever knew it. And if I did, I would have thought it was someone's joke since he's a bartender."

"He didn't seem to recognize you that first night, either. Are there any payphones left down here?" he wondered.

"There used to be one down the street," she told him, peering in that direction. "I think I see it -"

"Come on." At the phone, he dug into his pocket for some coins, then showed her the number. "Is that a local number to here?" he wanted to know.

Callie studied it. "I think so. They've changed up so many areas codes - all I can say is try it."

He pulled a twenty out of his pocket. "Can you find someplace to get some change just in case?" As she disappeared into a small store, he picked up the receiver and placed the coins required for a local call into the slot, then dialed the number that Joe had given to him. He was waiting for the call to be answered when Callie returned with the change. "He might not answer, since he doesn't recognize the caller ID," he started saying when the line clicked.

"Hello?" The fear in the man's voice was clear even over the telephone line.

"We've never met, but you might want to be at your bar tomorrow at one pm for Archie's wake."

"What?" Danny asked. "A wake for Archie? Who gave you permission - who is this? And where'd you get this number?"

"Name's Jerry. And I'll say that you gave me permission unless you're there tomorrow. One pm. Don't be late. Your mutual friends might not like it if you are," Carter warned before hanging up the phone.

"Think he'll be there?" Callie asked.

"We'll see." He pulled the small notebook from his pocket. "Why don't I make the other call while we're here?" he suggested, putting more coins into the machine.

"Texas Steakhouse Group," the operator said. "How may I help you?"

"I'd like to speak to Mrs. Galloway, please," Carter said.

"I'll switch you to her secretary," the woman told him.

"Thank you."

"Mrs. Galloway's office," the secretary said a moment later.

Carter glanced at Callie before saying, "I need to talk to my sister," he said quickly.

"Your sister?"

"Carole," he said. "Tell her that it's her brother. It's important that I talk to her. Now."

"I don't know -"

"It's a matter of life and death," he insisted.

"Just a moment," the woman said, putting him on hold.

Carter grabbed two more quarters and put them into the phone. "Insurance," he told Callie when she frowned. "I'm on -"

"Eddie? What's going on? Helen said that -"

"Sorry, Mrs. Galloway," Carter said. "Forgive my deception, but I wanted to let you know that I'm holding a wake for my cousin Archie Brooks tomorrow afternoon at Danny's bar on Commerce."

"Who is this?" she asked in a demanding tone. "I don't know any Archie - Brooks, was it?"

"Well, my name is Jerry. Archie was my cousin. We weren't close, but he told me all about what he and Danny Green did for you ten years ago. Told me how he 'earned' his money. I figure that since you were paying Archie to keep quiet, you can do the same for me."

"You're insane," she insisted.

"But I'm not going to be greedy like old Archie was. He was bleeding you for ten years. I'll take a lump-sum and then leave - never to return. I think five hundred thousand will keep me happy. And I'll sign a paper promising never to come back or ask for more money. Tomorrow at one - Danny's on Commerce. If I don't get the money, I'll pay a visit to the police and tell them what I know. Have a nice day." Hanging up, he turned to Callie with a smile. "She was **not** happy."

"I have a feeling that if we called her brother right now, he'd be on a call."

"I'm sure of it." He took her elbow and turned her toward where the Jeep was parked. "We'd better get out of here. I'm pretty sure that Eddie has the contacts to try and track down any calls made from this number."

"Everything set?" Carter asked as he picked up his suit jacket from the bed the next morning.

"They'll be there before one," she told him.

"Are you going to get dressed?" he asked her as he clipped a holster with his gun into the back of his trousers."

"Won't take a minute," she said, moving to the closet and digging into a little used corner. "This'll do it," she decided, tossing a black, short dress with a bodice that had been far too low-cut for her to wear to the restaurant onto the bed.

"I haven't seen that one before," he said, leaning against the wall to watch her.

"I bought it not long before we met," she told him. "I didn't try it on at the store, but when I got it home, I realized that Dad would have had a fit if I'd worn it to work - so I put it aside."

"Reminds me of the green one that you wore on our first date," he told her, and Callie grinned.

"I bought them at the same time. I've been waiting for a reason to wear it." She stepped into the tight fitting dress, pulling the thin straps over her shoulders as she turned away from him. "Can you zip me up, please?"

He stepped forward to pull the tab, then placed a kiss on her basically bare shoulder. "I think I'll enjoy *un*zipping it more."

Callie's face reddened as usual, and she moved back to the dressing table. Teasing her hair, she studied it for a moment in the mirror, then grabbed a long string of faux pearls to put around her neck. She finished off the outfit with a pair of black platform sandals. At last she turned slowly, picking up the sunglasses to slip them on. "What do you think?"

"I think you enjoyed working vice," he told her, shaking his head in amusement.

"I did for the most part. I played dress up a lot when I was young. Mom would let me and Allie take stuff from her closet to dress up in."

"While I love the dress, there's not much of a place to hide a weapon -"

"That's easy," she assured him, grabbing a midsize black handbag with a thin shoulder strap, which she tucked her gun into before slinging it over her shoulder. "See?"

Carter chuckled. "Come on, Dolly."

"Dolly," she repeated, taking his arm. "Oh, I like that." As they turned toward the steps, she pulled away. "One more thing," she told him, going to the dresser to pull out a long black silk scarf with long fringed edging. Putting it around her shoulders, she smiled. "Wouldn't want to get too cold."

The bar was more than half full when they entered, most of them were employed by Larry Kelso's security company. Callie winked at one of the men as she and Carter moved toward the bar where Joe was already pouring drinks. "Hi there!" Joe said. "Sparkling water?"

"In a minute," Carter said, looking around. "Is he here?"

"He's hiding in the office," Joe told them. "Refuses to come out. He thinks that I gave you that number."

"I told him that you hadn't, but I'll tell him again. Com'on, Dolly," he said, taking Callie's hand and leading her across the room to the corridor.

He knocked on the door to the office, and wasn't surprised when there was no response. He knocked again. "Danny, open the door," he said. "Or would you rather that I break it down?" Still no answer. "One. Two. Th-

The door opened just far enough for Danny to peer through. He frowned, but stepped back for them to enter, giving Callie a long, appraising look as he did so. "Let me guess: you're the one who called me saying that he was Archie's cousin."

"You're smarter than I thought you were, Danny," Carter nodded.

Callie spoke up. "We know about Mrs. Galloway and her brother Eddie Dobbs."

Danny dropped into a nearby chair. "You - kn-know?"

"How much did they pay you to sign a false affidavit?" Callie wanted to know.

"We each got a half million - and I took it and ran. Figured I'd be safer if I kept my mouth shut. But Archie - Archie kept calling, kept getting money - The day you two came here, I called him to warn him that you would be looking for him, telling him that if you kept coming around, I might just talk to clear my conscience -" he looked up at them. "That girl - Leah - she was in the bar that night - but she only drank water - said she was waiting for someone who was supposed to meet her there. She left alone, and I never saw her again. Archie - he followed her out of the place, said he wanted to make sure she got to her car safely - but he came back in a minute later. His cheek was red - and his was rubbing it. I figured she had slapped him."

"Did Archie say if he'd seen another car following her when she left?" she asked.

"He did. Some kind of low-slung sports car is what he said. I had a feeling he got the license number, but he never told me if he did."

Callie looked at Carter. "That would explain why Mrs. Galloway continued to give him money."

He nodded in agreement. "And I found some random letters and numbers in that addressbook that were probably the license number. I just hadn't put them all together. Come on, Danny, time to say goodbye to Archie -"

Danny shook his head, once again terrified. "I'm not going out there -" he told them. "I saw that ad in the paper - I'm sure there's someone out there who thinks I'm part of this little scheme of yours -"

"But that's what we're counting on," Carter told him, pulling him to his feet. "You're going to be our bird dog, Danny."

Callie grabbed the man's other arm, steering him toward the door. "Besides it wouldn't be a proper wake without Archie's best friend, now, would it?"

Chapter Eight

"All you have to do," Carter told Danny as they entered the bar room, "is be a gracious host and let us know when Eddie Dobbs or anyone he used to deliver money to you arrives."

"We'll even let you help Joe at the bar," Callie said, letting him go behind the bar. "He's a little nervous," she whispered to Carter.

"Not sure I blame him - but I doubt Dobbs would risk doing anything with so many in the bar. I figure he'll wait."

"You really think he'll show up in person? He'll be taking a huge risk, considering that he supposedly didn't know either man before Leah's death."

"Here you go," Joe said. Turning, they found two glasses of sparkling water on the bar.

"Thanks, Joe," Carter said as Callie perched on one of the barstools. Turning back to the gathered mourners, he lifted his hands. "Thank you, everyone for coming to show your respect for Archie. He and I were never close - we spoke to each other over the phone, mostly, but I thought that - if any of you who knew him would like - perhaps you'd be willing to say a few words -?"

Several people stood up and recounted anecdotes about their "friend", Archie Brooks, inciting laughter and head nods - and a few tears.

"Oh damn," Danny muttered behind Carter and Callie, and they turned to see him staring at the front door, his face as pale as his white shirt.

Looking at the door, they saw a tall man with a black stocking cap on his gray hair. He glanced around and went to a booth near the back of the room, carrying a briefcase with him. Joe nodded at the woman who was waiting on tables, and she went over to the booth.

"Relax, Danny. He's not going to do anything in here," Carter said quietly. "Too many witnesses."

"Just stay behind me," Callie added before taking a drink from her glass. "You'll be safe."

The waitress came back to the bar. "Gin and tonic," she told Joe.

Joe prepared the drink and she took it back over to the booth. Carter slipped off of his stool. "Guess I need to go introduce myself," he told Callie.

"Be careful," she said, her hand on his arm.

Carter leaned in to give her a kiss. "I'll be right back, Dolly," he told her. "Don't worry."

He stopped to talk to random people on his way across the room, then slid into the booth across from the man. "Hello, Eddie."

Eddie Dobbs' blue eyes narrowed dangerously as he studied Carter. "Do I know you?"

"I know *you*," Carter told him. "And I'm the one who called your sister yesterday."

"Saying that you were me."

"No, I didn't," Carter clarified. "If you'll check with her secretary, you'll discover that I told her to tell Mrs. Galloway that it was her brother."

Dobbs inclined his head. "You also mentioned a dollar figure -"

"I did. And I told Mrs. Galloway that I'd sign a paper promising never to come back here or ask for more money."

"I told her not to pay you," Dobbs said, opening the briefcase that he'd brought in with him as it lay on the dark corner of the booth seat to remove something before closing it again. "But she's hoping that this will be the end of it. That louse of a husband was to blame for all of it - just couldn't keep it in his pants." He placed a paper in front of Carter, then pulled a fountain pen out of his shirt pocket. "Feel free to read it before signing it."

Carter read through the paragraph, which declared that for the agreed upon sum of \$500,000, he promised to leave and never return. And that he promised never to contact Mrs. Galloway or any of her family for any reason, especially to ask for more money. "I'm assuming that you have the money," Carter said, the pen hovering over the paper.

Dobbs sighed and lifted the briefcase onto the table, opening it just enough to reveal the money stacked neatly inside. "You going to sign or not?"

Carter used the table to click the tip of the pen, seeing the eyes narrow ever so slightly again as he did so. "Why don't I use my pen?" Carter said, taking one from his jacket to sign the paper. Picking it up, he waited for Dobbs to push the briefcase closer to him. "Pleasure doing business with you," Carter said, wrapping his fingers around the handle. "It goes without saying that if anything happens to Danny, our - arrangement becomes null and void. The poor guy won't say a word. He's too scared of you." Lifting his other arm, he signaled to the waitress. When she came to the table, he told her, "Get my friend here another drink, please," before leaving the booth and returning to the bar. Danny's face was still pale as he looked at Carter. Smiling, Carter turned to the guests. "I want to thank you all for coming to give Archie a send off. And now, I have to be going. Thanks again." After helping Callie to her feet, he whispered, "Let's go, Dolly." He glanced toward the booth where Eddie Dobbs was still sitting as they left the bar.

Callie turned a few times to look behind them. "He's not following us."

"I didn't think he would. Yet." Arriving at the car they had rented earlier, he unlocked the passenger door and opened it for Callie, giving her the briefcase. "Don't touch anything but the handle," he warned. "His fingerprints are all over the top."

"Yes, sir," was her reply as she fastened her seat belt and waited for him to get behind the wheel. "Now, we wait."

They didn't have to wait for very long. Halfway to where they were going, Carter glanced into the rearview mirror and said, "Don't look now, but we've picked up a tail."

Callie nodded, looking into the side mirror. She scanned the police car that was several cars behind them. "I saw them right after we left the bar," she said. "Probably waiting for less traffic - fewer witnesses."

"What say we give them what they're waiting for?" He reached behind his back to pull out the gun, placing it under his suit jacket in his lap. "Can you get your weapon out without their seeing you?" he wanted to know.

"I think so." Her purse was in the seat beside her, so it was easy to unfasten it and slip the gun out. Placing it into her lap, she draped the black silk scarf across her lap, leaving her legs uncovered. Another glance at the car as it turned onto the side street behind them, turning on their lights. "Looks legit."

"Danny is convinced that Dobbs still has pull in the department, remember. Someone had to cover up Michael Galloway's - transgressions, after all."

"Street cops can't cover anything up unless they fail to make a report -" she shook her head as Carter finally found a safe place to pull the car to the curb. "I suppose if instead of filing the report, they reported what they had been told to Dobbs and let him handle things -"

The two officers came up on opposite sides of the car, and the one on the driver's side waited for Carter to roll the window down. "Did I do something wrong, Officer - Barnes?" Carter asked, reading the name on his uniform. "I wasn't speeding, and I made a full stop at the corner -"

"Mr. Brooks?" the officer questioned. "Jerry Brooks?"

"Forget it," his partner said, having taken a long look at Callie through her open window. "Let's go, Barnes."

Barnes looked at the man across the car. "What?"

"Don't know him, but I know the lady," the officer, who's name badge read "Sgt. R. Winslow", explained. "She's an ex-cop. The year I joined the department, she got promoted to detective. Worked with Lt. Piper."

"Then it was a set up," Barnes declared. "All the more reason why we can't just forget it. The boss -"

"You mean Eddie Dobbs?" Callie questioned. "If anything happens to us, the full weight of the department will come crashing down on both of you. Are you aware that he's responsible for the death of a young woman ten years ago?" she said, slowly bending toward the floorboard.

But Winslow drew his weapon and held it on her as Barnes did the same to Carter. "Hands on the dash where I can see them, please."

"I was just going to get the briefcase," Callie insisted. "- surely Dobbs told you what's inside - half a million dollars. We'll give you half - that's enough for you to disappear so that he can't take you down

with him." She laughed. "You can't think I'm armed. I mean, where would I possibly hide a gun in this dress?" she asked him, indicating the barely-there dress she was wearing.

Winslow's leering grin was echoed by Barnes as both men took a moment to appreciate the sight of Callie's long legs. In fact, Winslow leaned closer to the open window, giving Callie the opportunity to reach out and grab the barrel of his gun, pointing it up, grabbing her gun at the same time.

Carter took the sudden surprise of both men to pull his gun, pointing it at Barnes. "Drop it," he said, aware that several cars had passed and slowed slightly. Barnes didn't drop his weapon, but turned and followed Winslow back to the patrol car, jumping inside and tearing off down the road. "Did you see their badge numbers?" Carter asked Callie.

"I did." She opened the car door and picked up the gun that Winslow had dropped. "Nice of them to leave this, don't you think?"

"I think it's finally time to talk to Lt. Piper," he told her.

George Piper listened to their story from start to finish without doing more than asking a few clarifying questions and grunting. "'Why didn't you come and talk to me after Archie Brooks' death?" he finally asked.

"Callie wanted to," Carter admitted. "But there was the very real possibility that there might be someone in the department -"

"And he was right, George," Callie told him. "Sgt. Winslow and Officer Barnes."

"You're sure of the names?"

"And badge numbers," she nodded. "And I'm curious to know where the sergeant will say his gun is right now," she said, nodding at the service weapon laying on Piper's desk beside the briefcase.

"Well, let me get this briefcase down to get it checked for fingerprints - and I'll see if I can't locate Winslow and Barnes." Picking up the phone, he called for someone to get the briefcase, then dispatch. "Can you give me the location of Unit 3145?" He made note of the answer, "and where were they around an hour ago?" Nodding, he looked at Callie. "Thank you." He sighed. "They called in as being on surveillance fifteen miles from where you say they stopped you," he told them.

"And where are they now?"

"Their last check in was at that time. According to dispatch, they're still watching a house on Taylor for a possible burglary suspect."

A young woman knocked on the door. "You needed someone to pick up a briefcase, Lieutenant?" she asked.

"Right here. Concentrate on the lid - where someone would have opened it. I also need the contents inventoried and returned to the case, with a receipt for Mrs. Harris and Mr. Jankowski." She smiled,

nodding at them. "I need the fingerprint result yesterday, Barrios. Oh, and I need this weapon serial number checked against department records to find out who it's registered to."

"Yes sir," she replied, leaving the office.

"Lieutenant," Carter began, "is there anyway you could check to see what Winslow and Barnes location was when Archie Brooks died?"

"You don't think that they had something to do with his death -"

"It's a possibility, George," Callie told him. "They're on Edward Dobbs' payroll -"

"That's another thing. Dobbs' record with the department - the man won a purple heart, and was nominated multiple times for the Award of Valor."

"And he retired right after the Leah Davies case was closed - on his orders, according to Harry Lansing."

Picking up the phone again, he called dispatch. "What was that date again?" he asked Callie, writing it down when she told him. "Piper again," he told the person on the other end of the line, "I need to know where Unit 3145 was on the third of this month from say around 1200 to 1500 hours." He sighed as he waited for a response. "You're sure about that?... Who were the officers assigned to that unit that day?... Thanks." He hung up the phone. "They were both off that day. They were scheduled to appear in court that morning."

"Damn," Carter muttered.

"The murder could have happened early in the afternoon," Callie pointed out. "That would have given them time -"

"I'm not saying that I don't believe you," Piper said as the phone rang again. "Piper... Did you identify them?... Really?... And did you check on that serial number?" he asked, grabbing the gun. "Okay. Thank you... Yes, please. Send it to my office when you finish the count." He hung up. "The fingerprints were mostly smudged. But there were two they were able to identify as belonging to Edward Dobbs. The prints were still on file with the department. They also found a small tracking device inside of the briefcase."

"That's how they knew who to follow," Carter said.

"And the gun?" Callie wanted to know.

Piper picked it up again. "According to department records, this weapon belongs to Sgt. Steven Winslow."

Callie and Carter waited in the hallway outside of the interview room while Piper informed Winslow and Barnes of their rights. "You look nervous," Carter pointed out, seeing her try to pull the bottom of her skirt down as a couple of officers passed with a long look in her direction.

"No, uncomfortable," she clarified. "I wish we had gone home so I could have changed clothes. I feel a bit too 'on display' right now. I'm sure most of them think I'm a -"

Give me your shawl," he told her, taking the triangle of silk from her and placing it around her waist, tying it, marginally lengthening her dress. "There. Is that better?"

Thank you," she told him as the door opened behind them and George Piper spoke.

"Come on in."

Winslow's eyes narrowed as he saw them, but Barnes looked decidedly worried. "Now, you were telling me about how you lost your service weapon, Sergeant Winslow?"

"I have nothing more to say," Winslow declared.

"Barnes?" Piper asked.

"Look, I only got into this because Steve here kept taking me to the track on our days off -"

"Shut up," Winslow muttered. "Let me make a call -"

"No, I won't!" he yelled. "I needed the money," Barnes told them. "I admit that. Taking reports on things that Dobbs' brother-in-law had done and giving them to Dobbs instead of filing them - But I never counted on getting involved with a murder - not even as an accessory."

"I said shut up!" Winslow said again, with more force this time.

"Are you waiving your rights, Officer Barnes?" Piper asked the younger man.

"Yeah. S-sure."

"You're an idiot," Winslow declared. "I never realized how much until right now. You don't want to cross Dobbs."

"What things did you take reports on, Officer Barnes?" Callie asked, speaking for the first time since they had entered the room.

"Look, I need some kind of assurance of protection. Winslow's right. Dobbs is dangerous -"

"I can't make any deals," Piper told him. "But if you tell us what you know, I'll speak to the District Attorney's office on your behalf."

"That's coercion," Winslow insisted. "You can't -"

"Dobbs' brother-in-law - Mr. Galloway," Barnes blurted out, "he had - problems with - women."

"What women?" Carter asked. "And what kind of problems?"

"R-rape," Barnes said, trying to ignore the glare that his partner was giving him. "Dobbs would call Sgt. Winslow and tell him who we needed to talk to, and we'd go take a report - but we never turned them in. They went to Dobbs."

"And what did he do with those reports?" Callie asked with thinly veiled disgust.

"Don't know. Once we handed them off, we were out of it. I guess Dobbs handled it from there."

"You have anything to add?" Piper asked Winslow. "I'm sure that the DA would include you in whatever deal he gives Barnes - *if* you talk."

Winslow looked thoughtful before making up his mind. "Not until he's behind bars," he said.

"He?"

"Edward Dobbs," Winslow clarified. "Once that's done, I'll tell you anything you want to know."

"I still say that it wasn't necessary for you to come with me," Piper told Carter and Callie as they turned into the driveway of the Galloway residence.

"You're not going to cut us out of this, George," Callie insisted. "We're the ones who found enough for you to even be interested in talking to him at all."

"We did come to you early on, remember?" Carter pointed out. "You barely gave us Harry Lansing's name."

Piper sighed and rolled down his window to push the call button on the security system. "May I help you?"

"Lt. George Piper with the Dallas Police Department. I need to speak with Edward Dobbs."

"Mr. Dobbs isn't here at the moment -"

"I worked with him when he was with the department," Piper told the young woman. "I'm sure he'll see me. I really need to give him a 'heads up' about some trouble that he might be in," he said, giving Callie and Carter a wry smile in the rearview mirror.

Carter leaned closer to Callie. "I think that's our cue to stay out of sight until we're inside," he told her.

She glanced at George Piper, who nodded as the girl began to speak again. "Mr. Dobbs is in the small cottage behind the house, Lieutenant. Just keep to the right when the drive splits off."

"Thank you," Piper said, rolling the window up again. "Duck down. Best that anyone who's looking only sees me in the car." Callie slid down in the seat beside Carter, who saw her pulling at her dress again, and handed her his jacket. Putting the car into gear, Piper said, "Here we go."

Carter, practically laying on top of Callie in the back seat, ran a finger across her shoulder, leading her to swat his hand away. "Stop that."

"Okay, you two, this is an official police vehicle," Piper growled. "Behave." He parked the car in front of the cottage as the front door opened to reveal Edward Dobbs. "Give me a minute to get inside," he said quickly, "Then find a place where you can hear what's being said." He opened the door. "Captain."

"Long time since I've been a Captain, George," Dobbs said. "Why don't we go inside? I have some fresh coffee ready."

They waited until they heard the front door of the cottage close before slowly sitting up and looking around. "I don't see anyone else," Carter told Callie, quietly opening the car door.

"That row of hedges should hide us from the main house," Callie pointed out.

They got out and moved to the cottage, beside a pair of French doors, where they stopped to listen to the two men talking inside.

"So, what's this 'heads up' you mentioned to the maid?" Dobbs asked.

"Your friends in the department have been discovered, Captain."

"I have quite a few old friends in the department, George."

"Winslow and Barnes."

"Who? I'm not sure I've heard the names."

"They claim to know you. Said that they've been doing 'clean up work' for you."

Dobbs chuckled. "Clean up work? What does that mean?"

"Interviewing people about crimes committed by your late brother-in-law for one thing and giving their reports to you to be handled."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Dobbs told him. "Mike had his faults, but when did he commit a crime?"

"Rape's a crime," Piper told him. "Apparently, according to these two, he raped more than one woman - I'm sure once we talk to them a little more, they'll be able to remember the names of some of those women that they interviewed."

"So don't talk to them," Dobbs said. "I can make it worth your while to help me on this, George," he said.

"Interesting," Piper replied. "You're offering me money to sweep this under the rug - but you threatened another detective with the loss of his pension if he didn't drop a case."

"What?"

"Ten years ago, just before you retired early from the department, Harry Lansing was investigating the death of Leah Davies. Do you remember that case, Capt. Dobbs?"

"Vaguely. What's this about ordering - who was it?"

"Strange that you don't remember the case. Especially since Miss Davies worked for your brother-in-law Stanley Appleton as his executive assistant."

"Okay, I remember the case. Did Lansing really say that I gave an order to drop the case?"

"No, actually, he says you told him to close the case, accepting the statements of two men who claimed to have seen Miss Davies drinking on the night that she disappeared. Says that you threatened him with losing his pension if he didn't do as he was told."

"I honestly don't remember telling him that. He's clearly mistaken. Why would I have done something like that?"

"To cover up what really happened to the woman," Piper suggested.

"And just what is it that you think happened?"

"Either you or your sister - or Michael Galloway wanted to make Leah Davies disappear before she had a chance to tell Appleton about what Galloway did to her. Doesn't really matter which one of you did it - as you know, all of you would have been implicated in her death. One of you bought false affidavits from the two men to cover the fact that somehow one of you sent Leah Davies' car into a lake with her inside."

Dobbs' laughter sounded from the cottage. "I thought you were a better detective, Piper. You can't use anything I've said in a court of law. I don't recall your informing me of my rights -"

"I don't think I'll need to worry about it," George said. "Between what those two officers have told me, as well as Harry Lansing, I think we have enough to arrest you, at least. Plus, we have one more pair of witnesses - You two want to join us?" he called out.

"That's our cue," Callie said, using one hand to open the French doors. Her other hand was covered by Carter's suit jacket, hiding her gun from view.

"I believe you know Mrs. Harris and Mr. Jankowski?" Piper asked Dobbs.

"Harris," Dobbs mused, finally focusing on Callie's face. He had barely glanced in her direction at the bar. But now, he studied her. "Callie Harris." Turning to Piper, he said, "Your protege. Cal - something?"

"Calista," she supplied. "Callie."

"Now that one -" Dobbs told Piper, nodding toward Carter - "he tried to blackmail me - said he was Archie Brooks' cousin."

"You paid the blackmail," Carter said. "But we didn't call you to ask for money," he said. "We called -"

"I'd suggest that none of you move a muscle," a woman's voice said. "Turn around."

Carole Dobbs Galloway stood in the open doorway, a gun held in her shaking hands. She was clearly unused to handling a weapon, but that made her all the more dangerous. "Carole," Dobbs cautioned. "That's not necessary -"

"I'm not going to jail because Michael couldn't keep his hands to himself," she declared. "Tie them up, it'll give us a chance to get out of the country, someplace they can't extradite us from - I've always liked Rio -"

"We always knew this could happen," Dobbs reminded his sister. "We talked about this, remember? Even before Mike died -"

Carole shook her head. "Stay back, Edward," she warned him. "I won't go to jail for you, either. My hands are clean - all I've done is cover up with Michael did - and pay blackmail - even to you."

"Me?"

"If I hadn't given you money, you might have turned on me as well - If you'll promise to keep them here, let me get away -"

"You won't shoot me, Carole," he said, but she stood her ground.

"Stop. I mean it."

Callie lifted her arms, letting the suitcoat slide to the floor and reveal her gun. "Drop the gun, Mrs. Galloway. No one needs to be hurt here."

Piper brought out his own service weapon, backing up Callie. "She's right, Mrs. Galloway."

Finally, Edward Dobbs held out his hand. "Come on, sis. Give it to me." As she did so, Callie and Piper changed their sights to him, but he shook his head and held the gun out for Carter to take. "We won't fight, George," he said, putting his arm around his sister, who was quietly sobbing. "Whatever comes, we'll face it together," he told her. "Just like we've always done."

Chapter Nine

"According to his wife and brother-in-law, your mother was killed by Michael Galloway," Carter told Paula and Mrs. Logan the next morning.

"Who?"

"He was married to Mrs. Appleton's step sister," he explained. "He and his wife own several restaurants in the Metroplex.

"Why did he kill her?" Paula asked.

"According to his wife, Galloway said that he overheard her talking to her brother about Leah - that she was concerned about Stanley Appleton leaving their sister because of her," Carter began. "Apparently Galloway was jealous of Appleton - and 'arranged' to run into her at a local restaurant and turned on the charm. Leah agreed to go out with him. After dinner, he drove to an isolated spot and took advantage of having drugged the one drink she had agreed to have."

Paula gasped in horror. "You mean, he - he raped her?" she questioned.

"It wasn't the first time -" Carter confirmed.

"Or the last," Callie added, thinking of what Allie had told them about her date with Michael Galloway.

"Is that why he killed her?" Paula wanted to know. "Because of what he did?"

"In a way," Carter nodded. "According to his wife, the more he thought about it, the more worried he became that she would tell Stanley Appleton about it - and he knew that, since Appleton didn't like him, he would insist that she report it to the police."

"She should have done that anyway," Mrs. Logan said.

"Yes, she should have," Carter agreed. "But it weighed on Galloway's mind for a couple of months before he decided to try and buy her silence. He didn't tell his wife who the woman was, but he asked her for enough money so that the woman could leave town for good. She had to go to Mrs. Appleton for the money - simply telling her that Galloway had a problem with another woman and needed to pay her off. Apparently it wasn't the first time she had made such a request."

"Mrs. Appleton knew that -"

"She didn't know that the woman was your mother, Paula," Callie assured the girl. "And she swears that Mr. Appleton never knew that Galloway was -"

"A rapist," Paula said in harsh tone. "Do you believe her?"

"For whatever it's worth," Callie answered, "yes, I do. The relationship between herself and Mrs. Galloway is - complicated. Mr. Appleton was never happy about her giving either of her step-siblings any money, felt that they were taking advantage of her."

"If he was going to pay her off, why did he kill her?" Mrs. Logan asked.

"Mrs. Galloway isn't sure when his plans changed. We do know that Galloway frequented the Lake Bar where the two 'witnesses' claimed to have seen your mother drinking, so he knew both men. Galloway left to give Leah the money in a meeting at the bar, but at the last minute, decided not to meet her in public as agreed, and waited for her to come out of the bar. He followed her until they got to the lake, and then pulled her over. He told his wife that he got into Leah's car to talk to her, and they argued. The argument ended with him strangling your mother, and then pushing her car into the lake. Then he went home and told his wife what he'd done - and who he'd done it to."

Paula closed her eyes, wrapping her arms around herself. "Poor Mom," she whispered as a tear rolled down her cheek. Opening her eyes, she asked, "Did he - did he know that she was pregnant?"

Callie and Carter looked at Mrs. Logan, who sighed. "I thought she should know the truth," she told them.

Callie answered Paula's question. "He told his wife that that's what they were arguing about when he killed her. He wanted her to take the money and terminate it. She insisted that she wouldn't do it."

"It was Mrs. Galloway who set up the affidavits from the bartender and other patron, which they paid for using the money intended for Leah," Carter continued. "She even convinced her brother Edward to make sure the police would close the case after your mother's body was found, to mark it as death due to intoxication."

"You told us that one of those witnesses had been killed -"

"He had been greedy, continuing to threaten to tell the truth about that night - he'd seen Galloway's car follow your mother's car out of the parking lot at the bar and put two and two together. Once he discovered that we were looking into her death, he called again and asked for even more money - only this time, she was tired of his demands, and sent her brother and a police officer that *he* had used to cover up Galloway's later problems. Now, Edward says that the man's death wasn't intentional - they only wanted to scare him into leaving town, but he slipped and hit his head, then fell into the pool and drowned. That's for a jury to decide if it goes to trial."

"And who sent me that horrible note?" Mrs. Logan wanted to know.

"Mrs. Galloway wrote it, and her brother placed it in your car."

She nodded at Callie's answer as Paula asked, "Do the Appletons know about all of this?"

"The police contacted them this morning, asking them to come down to the station to discuss the case. Mr. Appleton asked me to tell you that he would like to talk to you at some point - he really did care a great deal for your mother, Paula. That's the truth."

"I know. I'll contact him. I really want to thank you both. Finding out that we were right all along, that Mom hadn't been drinking and that she didn't kill herself is such a relief - you have no idea. The sad thing is that her killer ruined so many lives - not to mention the lives of the other women that he -"

"The officers who were helping them cover up those rapes have agreed to give the police the names of those women, so hopefully they'll get the help they should have gotten at the time," Callie explained.

"Well, what do I owe you?" Paula asked.

"The only thing I want is your permission to tell the story in my column," Carter answered.

"You have that, of course. But you had expenses -"

"Mr. Appleton has told us that he'll cover our expenses," Callie explained. "You'll need to take any arguments about that up with him."

"I'll do that," Paula told her.

"I *think* that was the last box to unpack in the kitchen," Carter said as Callie came back into the house after collecting the mail. "Unless you're hiding more somewhere. I'll go start on the boxes in the study -"

"Okay," Callie said, not really listening as she opened an envelope and began to read the contents.

Carter chuckled at her distraction, knowing that she would tell him what she was reading when she finished, then went into the small bedroom that they had agreed to use as a study. Cutting the tape on one of boxes of books, he pulled several out and placed them into the shelves.

"Carter!" Callie's shocked tone caused him to turn, a concerned frown on his face. She almost ran into the room, holding a piece of paper before her. "Look at this!"

"What -?" he began, taking the paper - which he discovered to be a check. Reading the amount, he scanned the information, confirming that it was from Stanley Appleton. "Wow. I think this will more than cover the expenses on the Leah Davies case."

"Three times over at least," Callie nodded. "There was a letter with it. He thanked us for finding out the truth about Leah's death, and says that he's changed his will." Looking at the letter, she read, "I've changed my will. While Paula has always been included in it, now she will receive a much larger portion. Marcia is in total agreement with my decision. She's agreed to testify for the prosecution in any trial involving Carole or Eddie, with the hope that the court will go easy on her providing money to cover their crimes. I hope the enclosed check will cover any and all expenses you may have incurred. You both have my everlasting gratitude. If you ever need anything, please don't hesitate to call." She looked at him.

"He's a good man," Carter told her as the telephone began to ring.

"I'll get it," Callie told him, picking up the phone on the desk. "Hello?"

"Callie, you need to turn on the TV." The concern in her father's voice surprised her. "What's wrong, Dad?"

"Turn on the TV. I'll - I'll talk to you later."

"Dad?" she frowned as she realized that he had hung up. Going to the television, she turned it on to a scene of two tall buildings - one of them had smoke coming from it. "What the-?"

Carter shook his head. "That's New York City," he said. "The World Trade Center. Turn up the volume."

Callie pushed the button on the remote. "Oh my - Carter - do you -" An airliner was heading toward the towers - and made impact.

He pulled her close as they both sat on the edge of the desk, their eyes fixed on scene. "That wasn't accidental," he said. "I - uh - need to make a phone call," he said, pulling his cellphone from his pocket and dialing a number. After a moment, it went to voicemail. "This is Carter Jankowski. Give me a call when you get this, let me know what's going on, please." He hung up. "The syndicate that handles the column - their office is in that tower," he explained.

"I remember you mentioning that," Callie nodded, watching the scenes on the streets around the towers. "I know several Dallas first responders who moved to New York - they're probably out there somewhere, trying to help..." She shook her head slowly. "Why?" she asked. "Why would someone do this - the people on those planes -"

As they continued to watch - another aircraft was reported to have slammed into the Pentagon. The towers fell, almost in slow motion, Callie thought. Seeing all of the ash and soot covered people running away from the scene, she couldn't help but think about all of the police and firefighters and other personnel who would have been running *into* that cloud of dust.

She finally turned to Carter, who was just as shocked as she was. "Let's get married," she said.

He looked at her, clearly surprised. "What?"

"I think we should get married. As soon as possible."

"Callie, do you know what you're saying?"

"I'm saying that I want to marry you," she told him. "Have you changed your mind?"

"No," he told her. "I just don't want you to rush into something because of -" he waved toward the TV, "because of what's happened."

"I'm not - well, I am, but - it's hard to explain - I don't want to risk something happening to either of us, leaving the other with regrets for what might have been." She looked at the TV again. "All of those people - they left their homes and families this morning and had no idea -" She took a deep breath, swallowing the tears that were threatening to fall. "I love you."

Carter lifted her chin and gave her a kiss. "Okay. We'll get married."

The End