

Chapter One

Camden Park, Lancaster, MD
Sunday, October 3, 7:50 p.m.

Whoops and giggles, the scent of Belgian waffles in the air, the screech of balloons being bullied into bubble-eared poodles. The sidewalks teemed with mothers pushing overstuffed strollers and fathers talking into Bluetooth earpieces, while preschool children orbited their parents like forgotten moons—lagging behind, straying from the paths, lured from arm’s reach by the colorful remnants of popped poodles on the ground or the call of a snow cone vendor. Bait, if you were a child molester or kidnapper. Easy pickings.

The killer was neither. Children were of no interest; they committed no crimes. Their mothers did. Heinous, unspeakable crimes they thought would go unpunished.

Wrong.

One such woman was about to learn that. Young, with dark flowing hair and porcelain cheeks, she lurked behind a magician’s kiosk, aiming her cheap little camera at the Kinney family—Robert and Alana, and their two-year-old son, Austin. For the past hour, the killer had watched the woman secretly trail the Kinneys through the carnival, snapping photo after photo of the child. Yes, two years after the fact, the woman’s conscience had apparently kicked in.

Too little, bitch. Too late.

Oblivious, the woman hunched deeper into her denim jacket and followed the Kinneys into the parking lot, keeping to the outer row of cars then edging into the woods to sneak more photos of little Austin. Fool. She was making things easy, tucked out of sight with her righteous ambition and her camera. The killer cut between cars and closed in, face lowered until the cover of trees, though there was little chance of being recognized: boots, cap, beard. Loose nylon

jacket with big square pockets. Trusty shears inside. They nearly vibrated with the need to complete their mission.

Easy, now. Watch, wait for the right moment. The Kinneys headed for the far corner of the parking lot, little Austin's legs straddling his father's neck, with his face stuck in a blue cloud of cotton candy. Robert Kinney pushed a button in his hand and a black Mercedes bleeped to life, and the woman who was about to die skirted behind a row of huge rhododendrons, lifting her camera. The killer straightened, adrenaline surging. She was only fifteen feet away. Distracted, out of sight, unsuspecting.

Now.

The killer came in fast, from behind, shears aiming for that slender throat like a missile. The woman must have heard; she whirled and opened her mouth to scream, but the blades sank into her larynx and the sound came out, *Unkh*. Her knees buckled and she dropped, the shears plunging in and out, in and out, time dragging each thrust into the slow motion of a dream. *The cheek, don't leave the cheek*. The shears pulled out and smashed higher against her face, the smooth flesh turning to pulp, blood spraying onto the killer's lips, tasting like copper.

Fifteen seconds, maybe twenty—Stop now, before she's gone. It's important that she live long enough to understand what's happening. Quit, stand up. Breathe.

The killer straightened, lungs heaving, and wiped spittle onto the jacket sleeve. The woman lay on the ground, pupils wide, her knees pulling in like an accordion losing air. A gurgle bubbled from her throat and her heart kept at it for another few seconds, then that beautiful moment of dawning came to her eyes.

She knew. In that final, glorious second, the woman always understood. *Take it*, her dying eyes said.

Yes, now, take it. For Kristina. To bring her back.

The killer knelt, gathered a handful of blood-slick hair, and sawed at it with the shears until the hank came free.

A car horn blasted, picking up time again. Shit, get going—there's still so much to do. Call Fulton; tonight, he would earn his pay. Even back here in the woods, if left, the woman's body would eventually be found. There was no time for that sort of complication. Less than a week until the meeting with Kristina.

So, pocket the shears and the hair. And take the camera—for god's sake, don't leave the camera. Shot after shot of Austin Kinney.

The killer looked down, satisfaction glowing from within, pulled out an embossed card and opened it. The clock was ticking, but this was important: Keep the records straight. On the right side of the card, a scrawled promise: *Next Sunday, Kristina, 7:00 p.m.* On the left, in the killer's flowery hand, a list of six names. Smears of brownish-red marked through the first three.

The killer bent, touched a finger to dead woman's cheek, then placed the glistening red ink on the fourth name and dragged a bloody line across it. Woman Number Four, done. Only two more to go.

Now, to tie up the loose ends the dead woman had unraveled. The killer gave a final glance to the body and walked away, keeping to the woods and digging out a pre-paid cell phone. Fulton answered on the first ring. "Are you with Russell Sanders?"

Fulton yawned. "He's been in his apartment all evening."

"What's he doing?"

"How the hell should I know? He's alone, spent some time in the kitchen."

Okay. So at least Sanders wasn't out talking to the police. Maybe the dead woman hadn't told him yet that she'd found Austin Kinney. Still, she had consulted with Sanders, that much was certain. Probably planned to run right over to him with the camera full of pictures tonight. Reason enough to make sure he didn't go digging around trying uncover secrets, or worse, calling his buddy Mitch Sheridan.

"You want me to take him?" Fulton. He was getting antsy. "He's pacing. Looks like he might be on the phone."

Calling police? The dead woman? Mitch? Sanders had to be stopped.

"Yes. Take him now."

#

The bandages reeked, the tang of infection wrinkling Mitch Sheridan's nostrils even from several feet away. An aging Kurd crouched still as a heron, robes pooling around his ankles and grenade launcher propped against his one good shoulder. The sun pulled ripples of heat from the sand, while in the distance, row upon row of tents sagged against their poles, like soldiers too weary to stand.

K-chhr, k-chrr.

The camera's shutter whirred. Mitch zoomed in with the Leica. Not too small; keep the stump of the man's right shoulder in the frame, the bandages filthy and oozing. Don't ask his name—that was a Cardinal rule. Don't think about the pain or wonder how it happened. Just get the pictures, tell the story.

K-chhr.

"Your turn," Mitch said, standing and tucking his Leica into the case hanging around his neck. The kid stepped in, about ten years old, and aimed a second camera just like Mitch had

done. Mitch had met him soon after arriving at the refugee camp, found him digging through a trash pile with a mongrel dog. The kid was fascinated by the camera and after a few days, Mitch let him try his hand with the Canon. He was good, had a good eye.

He started to bend down but noticed the sentry rise from his crouch. The old eyes crinkled into the sunrise, his body quivering like a live wire. “Firoke,” he whispered.

Mitch frowned. Firoke, firoke. He should know that word, but couldn’t place it. Not until a sound started in the distance.

Thwp-thwp-thwp-thwp...

Jesus, firoke. Helicopter, in Sorani.

Mitch’s heart lurched. “Come on,” he said, grabbing the boy’s hand. He had to get to shelter. The sentry shouted into a radio, frantic, the sound of the chopper growing louder. A hundred yards ahead, the camp erupted. Men grabbing weapons, women racing about, crying for their children.

Thwp-thwp-thwp...

“Faster,” Mitch shouted, his hand a vise grip on the kid’s. The chopper swooped in, a giant bee, and the boy stumbled, kicking up sand. Mitch hauled him to his feet. “Run,” he said, but the rotors hacked up his voice and threw it to the sky where the chopper stopped in mid-air. The doors slid open. Rivers of terror poured down.

Bombs. Explosions. Gunfire.

Mitch kept running, crouching over the boy and covering his head, geysers of sand exploding in every direction. Fifty yards from shelter, forty. Keep go—

His legs went out from under him; the kid screamed. Mitch humped halfway up, spitting sand. Don’t let go. Whatever you do, don’t let go of the kid. But his legs gave out and pain

seared his limbs. The kid yelled at him, tugging on his hand.

Let him go, Mitch thought—he can get to shelter. But his fingers squeezed tighter, while sand and debris and hot spatters of blood rained against his face like tiny darts. He tried to crawl but it was as if the desert had turned to quicksand. He couldn't drag his legs beneath him.

“Come,” the boy cried, and Mitch knew he had to do it. Let go.

He cursed and opened his hand. “Run,” he yelled, and the boy took off. Mitch watched, sand blurring his vision, and the boy dashed toward the shelter of the camp, closer, clos—

The sky went white.

“Noo!” Mitch screamed, the ground rattling. The boy jumped, thrown into the air. He looked like a rag doll, limp and helpless, hurtled through a silent sky, complete with pigtails and ribbons, ice cream in his hand. What? Mitch shook his head; it made no sense. But it wasn't the boy now, it was Mitch's little sister, Aubrey, who'd twisted from his hand and run into the street. Don't let go. But he had. Mitch called out, the battle coming back to his ears again, and from high above, the chopper began to bleep, like a dump truck backing up. Bleep-bleep—

Mitch jerked. His eyes popped open and he jolted upright, heart slamming into his ribcage.

The dream again. He cursed, letting the sound of his voice scatter the nightmare, like dust from an old blanket shaken in the wind. He rubbed a hand over his face and found it damp with perspiration, his breaths coming short. For Christ's sake, he thought he'd gotten past this. He'd put his sister's tragic impulse from mind two decades ago, and this wasn't Iraq. He was in Switzerland now—he had been for six months. In a hospital for two, fighting for his life, then at rehab learning to walk again, then to this bungalow with its comfortable furnishings, state-of-the-art physical therapy equipment, breathtaking view of the Alps. The perks of wealth. No

choppers here, no bombs or photographs of a kid he didn't save. Just the incessant *bleep-bleep* from a nightstand a foot away.

The satellite phone.

He reached to the night stand. Only one person would be calling him on the sat phone: Russell Sanders. Damn him.

Mitch picked it up, grunted.

"Mitch, are you there? Can you hear me?"

He flipped on a lamp and dropped his head against the phone. It was the size of a brick, like the walkie-talkies he and his brother used to play with as kids, crawling around in the web of drain pipes at Sedalia Park, dodging goose shit as they emerged from any one of a half dozen culverts on the bank of the lake. Except that what used to be static at fifty yards now allowed conversation halfway around the world. He cleared his throat. "I can hear you," he said.

"Christ, I was afraid you wouldn't answer."

"I'm not coming home, Russ. Get off my back. I told you, I'm done."

"You don't mean that. You need to show the pictures, tell the stories. You need it like you need to breathe."

"Like hell I do." Mitch dragged his legs over the bed, forced himself to sit up. There was a time he believed his photographs made a difference, but the attack on the camp at Ar Rutbah had only proved it was never enough. No matter what he did, the bleeding didn't stop. Somewhere in the world, the choppers still came, famines still raged, diseases still killed. Little boys got blown to the sky.

"Damn it, Mitch, this exhibition matters more than the others."

“Sure. It’s the one where famous photographer and humanitarian J. M. Sheridan let a kid get blown to bits. Big money for shots of that, I’m sure.”

“That’s not what I mean.”

“You want to do the Ar Rutbah show? Do it without me. You’re lucky you even have those pictures. It wasn’t my choice to send them.” No, some well-meaning hospital staffer had gone through Mitch’s things, given them to his brother Neil sometime during Mitch’s unconscious phase. Neil, in turn, had sent them on to Russ. Mitch had never even seen most of them. Not that he wanted to.

“Mitch, this is important.” Russ paused. “If something happens, promise me you’ll do this show.”

“If something happens?” The hairs on the back of Mitch’s neck stood up. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m in trouble, Mitch. It’s about the Foundation. You need to come home. Mount the show.”

“Oh, please...” But Russell’s tone of voice made Mitch stop. It wasn’t like Russ to try to manipulate him. “Look, I don’t know—”

“What?” Russ said, but his voice seemed aimed away from the phone. Mitch heard a thump.

“Russell?”

“No.” Something scraped in Mitch’s ear, then Russ again. “*Unh.*”

“Russ, what’s happening?”

Another sound, some shuffling. Maybe a piece of furniture dragging across the floor.

“Russ, what’s going on?”

“Mitch.”

Mitch stood, wide awake now, his left leg screaming at him. He gripped the phone tighter. “Russ.”

More scrapes and scuffs, another voice. A man. Panic trickled in. Mitch listened, straining to interpret sounds that were happening on the other damn side of the planet, then, as suddenly as the commotion had started, silence streamed over the satellite phone. No more voices, no more scuffle.

“Russell.”

But all Mitch could hear was the thundering in his chest. The connection was dead.

Chapter Two

Camden Park, Lancaster, MD
Monday, October 4, 6:46 a.m.

A storm rolled through Dani Cole's dreams. Thunder mingling with gun shots, until a cell phone chimed in and yanked her from sleep. A nose nuzzled her chin.

"Ick," she muttered. "Get off."

The forty-five pound pit bull on her chest didn't move. Dani pushed at the muzzle with one hand and groped for the phone with the other. "What?"

Chief Gibson.

"Wake up," he said. Gibson wasn't a man to waste words on pleasantries, at least not to Dani. She rolled upright, shoving Runt to the other cushion of the sofa. Two weeks since she'd slept in her bedroom. The thunder and gunshots were worse in there.

"What's going on?" she asked.

"We have a murder at Camden Park," Gibson said. "You're on it."

She must still be asleep. He wasn't making sense. "You mean, I'm back?" she said.

"No more administrative duty?"

“You’re back,” Gibson said, but sounded unhappy about it. “Tifton caught the body. He said he needs you to look at it.”

Dani stood, alert now. Tifton? They’d been partnered back in their patrol days, but moved through the ranks separately. Getting back on a case was great. Doing it with Tift was even better.

But not with Internal Affairs watching her every move. Dani tamped back a thump of anger and padded to the living room window. “Hold on,” she said. She stuck two fingers through the blinds and scissored them open. Sure enough, a gray sedan squatted against the curb, less than a block away.

She dropped the blinds. “So if I’m working again, get IA off me,” she said into the phone.

Gibson hedged. “I’m not the one who ordered it.”

“But you can call them off. For two weeks, I haven’t been able to pee without those bastards breathing down my back. I’m not sneaking around making any deals with Ty Craig and you know it. Call them off.” She paused, frustration burning her cheeks. “I’m not my father, Chief.”

But Dave Gibson had never believed that. Dani knew he was just waiting for her to cross the same lines her father had crossed before he’d gotten fired, before he spent the rest of his pathetic life as an ex-cop and a two-bit thug for Ty Craig. In spite of Dani’s record in the department, Gibson still gave her the kind of look you’d give something crawling under the kitchen counter.

She held out. “Am I working or not?”

He cursed. “I’ll handle it. You get over to Camden Park.”

Twenty minutes later, twisting her hair up into a quick ponytail, Dani watched the sedan pull away from the curb and a little weight lifted from her shoulders. She rolled to the gates at Camden Park a little before seven-thirty. A uniform waved her onto a television-perfect crime scene: yellow ribbon strung around the perimeter of a parking lot and disappearing in the woods, half a dozen black-and-whites parked at various angles, a couple gray Chevrolets belonging to investigators. An ambulance sat square to the curb, the back open and two EMTs sitting on the bumper swapping tales—no one to save. Members of the media were roped off at a respectable distance, as if distance mattered with the kinds of magnifying lenses they used, and a handful of detectives in coats and loosened ties stood in the parking lot.

Reginald Tifton was one. He spoke with two of the uniforms, pointing in an arc behind them. Dani walked up as the officers jogged off in the direction Tifton had pointed.

“About time, Nails,” he said. He dropped from the curb and met her in an empty parking slot. He was a big man of forty-five, black, going for Wife Number Three, with a bowling-ball head perched directly on wide shoulders—no neck. He spoke like a Yale graduate, except when he decided to turn on the street charm and make a suspect believe he was from the hood. He was actually from the old-money area of Cheshire Hills, and secretly, Dani suspected he *had* gone to Yale. “Your beauty routine hold you up this morning?”

“Screw you,” she said. Too early for creativity.

Tifton’s eyes homed in on hers. “I haven’t seen you since your dad’s funeral. You hanging in there?”

Something tugged in her chest. Not heartache—her relationship with her father certainly hadn’t merited that. Must be heartburn from the coffee. “You mean, do I enjoy pushing papers

and doing mandatory grief counseling? Sure.” She looked around the scene. “What do we have?”

Tifton knew when to back off. He jerked his chin toward the bushes. “Guy trolling the woods with a metal detector found a dead woman. Stabbed sometime during the clown-fest this weekend.”

“Why did you call me?” she asked, starting toward the site of the body.

“Thought you might know something on this one the rest of us don’t.”

“Why?”

“The vic was one of your charity cases.”

Dani stopped, the words hitting like ice water. Someone she knew? A knot climbed to her throat and she picked up her pace. Tifton jogged after her.

“Nails, hold on. It’s ugly back there. It’s—”

The feet came into view and Dani hesitated, slowing as she approached the body. The left side of the face was battered beyond recognition, but it was a woman with dark hair, her knees in a fetal position as if she’d pulled herself in while dying. Her throat had been slashed—hacked, rather—and the dark puddle beneath her crawled with flies. Even in the open air, the smell of death hung over her: dried blood and waste and stale flesh.

Dani stepped around to look at the face, caught a glimpse of the flesh peeking between blouse lapels. Her gaze snagged on a tiny rosebud tattoo.

“Ah, no,” she said, shock pushing her back. She turned away. “No, no, no.”

Tifton said, “It’s her, right? Rosie?”

The backs of Dani's eyeballs prickled and she braced her hands on her knees, squeezing her eyes closed to keep the tears from coming. After a moment, she looked again at what was left of the face and forced her lungs to function. "Rose McNamara."

"Okay," Tifton said, then called to another investigator over Dani's back: "I was right, Wilson, it's Rose McNamara. She hooked for Ty Craig out of Readi—"

"No," Dani said. "She hasn't been hooking for a couple of years. She moved away, called me about a month ago to tell me she was back." Dani turned from the body, looking at Tifton. "She wasn't tricking anymore—not for Craig, not for anybody. She had a job at the Big Lots on Grimby Street. She was paying rent on her own apartment and trying to mend fences with her family. She was *making* it."

Grief came in a flood but Dani conquered it and took a deep breath, forcing herself back to work. Don't think about who the victim was, just do the job. Pretend she's a stranger and focus on finding the sonofabitch who would do something like this.

She pushed up her chin and walked the perimeter of the body, taking in the details. The victim's eyes were open, sunken, her throat stabbed into a mishmash of blood and torn tissue. The right side of her face was untouched—turned to the ground, probably—and the fingers of her right hand were open, hollow, as if she'd been holding something. Her limbs were stiff with rigor. She was fully clothed, and her hair—

"What the hell?" Dani crouched down to get a better look.

"Someone took a chunk," the ME said.

Dani was shocked. "Here? You mean post mortem?"

"Post mortem, I can't say. Here? I can say. He probably used the same object to cut the hair he used to stab her throat."

“Object. What kind of object?”

“Long blade of some sort. Narrow, single-edged.”

“Like a hunting knife, or bowie?” Dani’s father had used one during hunting season, to slit the throats of his kills and hang the carcasses to bleed. Dani still remembered the smell in the yard: sharp, coppery.

“Could be. Or boning knife,” the ME said. “You know, like chefs use.”

Dani inched around the body, trying to feel the killer—hunter or chef?—then sank in a crouch next to Rosie’s face. Tifton bent down beside her.

“So, what’s the theory?”

Monster, Dani thought. “I don’t have a theory.” But an image reeled through her mind: some maniac decorating his bedposts with women’s hair.

“Come on, you’re the one with that degree in psychology. What does Freud say about knives and hair?”

She started to snap at him then remembered it was Tifton. He wasn’t ridiculing the degree; he was serious. She shook her head. “Freud’s specialty was penises. I don’t know what he said about hair.” She stood up, took a deep breath. “But whatever’s going on here, it’s not anonymous. You don’t get this kind of overkill for nothing. It’s personal. Sexual, maybe.”

“So she knew him, or he knew her. That might explain why she came back here in the woods with him.”

“Got some footprints here,” a CSI guy said. “Boots, probably.”

“Boo-yah,” Tifton said. Prints were good.

The crime scene guy started taking the print and the dance got under way, the steps rehearsed three or four hundred times a year in big cities like Philly and Baltimore, a few dozen

times a year in bedroom communities like Lancaster. Techies, uniforms, and detectives—all donning booties and gloves—went about their jobs: studying the body, canvassing for witnesses, searching the woods and parking lot and collecting items that would ultimately prove there had been a carnival.

Dani hung with Tifton until reporters cornered her into updates for the noon news reports. She was careful not to give away much, careful to make sure the department came across concerned: “Police are doing everything possible to protect innocent citizens like our victim...” And, in case the murderer watched the news, she threw in some firecracker words: *stupid, freak, monster*. If this was more than a random act—and the hacked hair meant *something*—maybe the killer would take up the gauntlet.

Two hours into it, the ME gave a shout: “We’re ready to flip her.”

Dani shut down the interviews and went back to where the ME and one of his assistants flanked Rosie. A techie started to bag her phone and Dani said, “Let me have it.” Wearing fresh latex gloves, she took it, then forced herself to watch while Rosie’s body was ceremoniously flipped.

Nothing. No new wounds on her back side. No murder weapon beneath her. No clues dropped on the ground by her murderer, at least not those visible to the naked eye.

She walked to the parking lot with Rosie’s phone, bent over the hood of Tifton’s car, and pressed POWER. Copied down numbers from recent calls, incoming calls, missed calls, then handed off the phone to a crime scene specialist and took out her own. She dialed the precinct. Spelled each name and number to a desk officer.

Fifteen minutes later, the guy called back and recited the names and addresses of people matching the numbers from Rosie’s phone. Dani recognized a few of them—Rosie’s sister, her

landlord, her mom. No one identifiable as a boyfriend or lover. No one unusual at all, at least not that Dani could tell, until the last name on the list. *Russell Sanders*. For half a second, the name didn't register, then she saw the rest of the tag line: *JMS Foundation*.

Her belly flopped. Oh, god, she remembered a Russell Sanders. She'd never met him but she'd heard about him—one summer eighteen years ago. A summer she'd worked hard to forget.

She glanced around, illogically making sure no one else noticed the secret flutter in her belly, then checked the time of the call: Sunday, eight-oh-seven p.m.—the last call made from Rosie's phone. There were two other calls to the same number from earlier in the weekend.

"Careful, your brow is gonna stay that way." Tifton had stepped over to her, pressing his thumb into the frown line above her nose.

She brushed his hand away, using her own phone to dial that last number. She had to be sure.

Voice mail picked up. "*You've reached Russell Sanders, managing director at the Sheridan Foundation for Photography Art. Please leave a message...*"

Oh, god, she was right. Sheridan.

She took a deep breath, trying to wash the name from her mind and concentrate on what the call meant for Rosie. She turned to Tift. "What would a hooker-turned-Big-Lots-cashier have to do with an upscale art-photography guild?" Tifton didn't understand. "The last call Rosie made was to Russell Sanders."

"Who's Russell Sanders?"

"The director of the J. M. Sheridan Foundation."

"Open eyes, open hearts. *That* Sheridan?"

Like there was another. Despite every effort, a memory unraveled: Local boy turned photojournalist extraordinaire. Rich, handsome do-gooder and champion of every underdog. Once, he'd tried to be Dani's champion.

For that, she'd broken his nose.

Jesus, get a grip. She'd put memories of Mitch Sheridan away years ago, along with any futile regrets or silly pipedreams. She'd been right not to let him close or allow herself lean on him. She'd have just fallen down when he left. "Yeah," she said to Tifton, "that one."

"Pretty posh circle of friends for a hooker."

"I told you, she wasn't hooking anymore." But he was right. What would connect Rosie McNamara to a social paragon like Russell Sanders?

"Looks like we're done here," Tifton said, pointing. A county van pulled away, the coroner's wagon behind it. The crime scene unit was packing it in. "We need to get to Rosie's next-of-kin."

A finger of sadness touched Dani's chest. She'd met Rosie's mother and sister—a couple years ago when Rosie was still in trouble. They were hurting then because of their estrangement. Dani could only imagine how much worse it would be now. "I'll go talk to them as soon as the ME's office makes it official."

"Meanwhile, let's go see if we can catch this Sanders dude. He's the last person Rosie talked to and a piece that doesn't fit."

"Sure," Dani said, trying not to react. Relax. Russell Sanders wouldn't know her and the Foundation's namesake, James Mitchell Sheridan, was—as always—overseas. The only thing to think about now is finding Rosie's killer.

Dani drove from the park, got stuck in the wrong lane, and did a U-turn across a bed of flowers in the median. Tifton laid on the horn behind her—he liked flowers—but she ignored him and headed toward Franklin Avenue, putting the Sheridan Foundation out of her mind and filling it with Rosie instead. Two years ago, Dani had interviewed her in a case. In the first ten seconds, Dani’s heart went out to her. Other cops looked at her and saw a street bust for their record. Dani looked at her and saw a kid who was...lost. Sixteen years old, with the pale, blank expression of someone who didn’t understand how she’d gotten there. Dani had cornered a couple other hookers and learned that Rosie had disappeared from the streets for a few months, and when she came back, she wasn’t quite right. Dani also learned that her pimp was Ty Craig.

That’s when it got personal. It shouldn’t have, but it did. Ty Craig was an upperclass, fancy-ass criminal whose interests in the underworld—high-end hookers and high-interest loans—were fronted by a legitimate chain of jewelry stores and real estate interests. Lancaster’s own version of a mob boss. He protected himself with significant contributions to the right politicians and well-placed community service, and stayed above the law by keeping a cop or two in his pocket.

Like Dani’s father.

Shame prickled her skin and she cursed. She hadn’t been foolish enough to take on Craig, but neither would she send sixteen-year-old Rosie McNamara back to him. So Dani had brought in Keller Brooks, a psychologist at a teen help center. Keller was one of the good ones, and eventually, Rosie came around. When she called Dani four weeks ago, she’d come back home to be close to her family, had done her GED and found a job, an apartment. She was doing great.

Until some freak hacked her up at a carnival. Took a hank of her hair.

Ty Craig? He didn't like to lose employees, but above all, Craig was a business tycoon. Personal rage wasn't his style, especially two years after the fact. Russell Sanders? That would be too easy. Still, he was a strange person to be the last call Rosie made. That alone merited a chat with him.

Dani was a block from the photography foundation when her phone rang. Tifton. "Turn around," he said. "The squad sergeant just called."

"Why?"

"Russell Sanders's son is at the precinct filing a missing persons report. Sanders disappeared."

Chapter Three

Dani banged through the double glass doors of Homicide in front of Tifton, then stopped to let a uniform fill them in.

“Brad Harper says his father hasn’t been around since early last night,” the cop said.

“Harper?” Tifton asked. “Why don’t they have the same name?”

“Harper is his mother’s name. He was fourteen or fifteen when he first met his dad.

Harper was a big-wig corporate lawyer for a while, then left the big bucks to do pro-bono work at the Foundation for his dad. He and Sanders share the house next door to the museum.”

“Does he look good for anything to you?” Dani asked.

“He’s not all broken up about his dad being gone, if that’s that you mean.” The cop shrugged. “Then again, there’s not really anything that looks like foul play.”

Except that he was the last person Rosie called, Dani thought.

They went down the hall to an interview room, an eight-by-eight cement square equipped with a table, three wooden chairs, and a video camera. Tifton paused to straighten his tie. This wasn’t the crowd to play thug.

“Mr. Harper,” he said, entering and offering a hand. “I’m Detective Reginald Tifton and

this is Sergeant Dani Cole. We'll be looking into your father's whereabouts."

Harper stood. He was a slender man, an inch or two shy of six feet, wearing a pin-striped suit and burgundy tie with paisley whorls. His face was sleek, not unattractive, but his features were sharp and his eyes could have belonged to a gerbil. Or a lawyer.

"Tell us why you're worried," Tifton said.

"We're premiering an exhibition at the Foundation this Saturday night," Harper said.

"This morning, my father was supposed to meet with the set-up crew but didn't show."

"He couldn't have forgotten?" Dani asked.

"It's the most hyped exhibit in years. *The New York Times*, *People Magazine*, *Photography in Review*, and a dozen other reviewers are expected at Friday's preview. These are the pictures of a camp that was attacked, where Mitch almost died."

"Mitch..." Tifton prompted, and Dani found her throat going dry. She'd heard about the attack, held her breath and searched the internet for updates for weeks afterward.

"James Mitchell Sheridan," Harper said, a little chill in his voice. "He's the Foundation's namesake. The photographer of the exhibition. He's been an asshole about it, but Dad called him last night in Switzerland, around eight-thirty our time, and Mitch heard some noises then the line disconnected. He called me right afterward, convinced something happened to him."

"Like what?" Dani asked.

"He doesn't know. He says he heard bumps, and Dad saying he was in trouble and 'No,' and then he was gone."

"What did you do after Sheridan's call?"

"I was in Philadelphia. I called Dad, but there was no answer. But he'd mentioned that he was meeting someone last night—a woman. So at the time, I didn't think anything about it."

Dani straightened. “Who was he meeting? And where?”

“I don’t know.”

“Could her name have been Rose McNamara?”

Harper opened his mouth then did a classic double-take. “Who?” he asked, but his eyes slid left. Rosie’s name had rung a bell.

Dani felt a throb. “You know her.” Not a question.

“No, no.” He changed gears. “Look, my father doesn’t do much confiding in me. If you want to know his secrets, or what women he knows, talk to Mitch.”

“In Switzerland?” Tifton asked. He hadn’t missed Harper’s sudden interest in shifting their scrutiny to a man half a world away.

“He’s on his way home. His plane’s due at BWI this afternoon.”

“What?” Dani’s pulse skittered. Tifton frowned at her and she reined in her shock. “I mean, I didn’t hear you. Did you say Sheridan’s coming here?”

Harper nodded.

Oh, god.

“What do you mean, he’s being an asshole?” Tifton asked. “He and your dad don’t get along?”

“They get along. Mitch just doesn’t want to do the show. Or any more shows. Says he’s retiring his camera.”

Dani blinked. Mitch, without a camera?

Tifton said, “I understand you and your dad live together. Can you let us look around?”

“No,” Harper said. “I mean, yes, you can look around, but we don’t live together. The Foundation owns the house next to headquarters. The first two floors are split into our two apartments, and the third floor is another one. My father and I just share an entrance hall.”

“Who lives on the third-floor?” Dani asked. “Someone who may have seen him?”

“It’s empty. We use it for guests, clinicians, VIPs. Sometimes Mitch stays there.”

Dani tried not to think about that. “Did your father happen to mention where he was going to meet the woman? A restaurant, an apartment...”

“No.”

“A park, maybe?”

“I told you, I don’t know.” Harper stood, frowning. He was finished. Didn’t like talking about the woman, Dani thought. She started to open the door for him, then cocked her head.

“Do you or your father hunt?”

Harper frowned at her. “No. Why?”

“What about cook?” she asked.

He was confused. “Dad cooks. He’s quite the chef, in fact.”

“Huh,” she said, and stepped from the door. Harper left and Dani waited until he was down the hall before turning to Tifton. “I think we ought to go see what kind of knives Russell Sanders’s keeps handy.”

#

The shears hung on a hook over a work table, old and dull, with rust eating tiny notches in the blades. They’d always had the rust. Even twenty years ago when they’d hung from a hook on the side of a kitchen cupboard—a constant warning—the rust had been there. Mother had called them antique but they weren’t. They were just old. So old and rusty they hurt, the

blades tugging and ripping at hair.

Shorter, Mother would say, hacking at handfuls almost too short to grasp. Spittle sprayed from her mouth, her teeth clenched in rage as she sawed away. *You know better. Keep it short...*

The killer chilled with the memories and flipped on a small space heater. The room was cool, a third story dormer designed as storage not a work space, and if anyone chose to climb the steep, narrow staircase to get here that's what they'd see: boxes of long-forgotten Christmas decorations, a couple of outcast lamps, a few pieces of exiled furniture.

Go deeper, though, past the dusty collection of life's excesses, and the true purpose of the dormer was revealed: six easels standing in an arc, each displaying a photo of one woman on the list. Four of the portraits, now including Rose McNamara, bore faces sizzled and burned. Two were yet unscathed.

But not for long. *Sunday*. It was finally happening—after all these years and heartbreak almost too intense to endure—retribution was at hand. Absolution.

So, get busy. The wig was time-consuming, though a labor of love... Hook, poke-through, twist, hook, poke-through, twist, over and over again, one thin strand at a time until sometimes it seemed there was no feeling left in the fingers. The work went faster now than it had with the first couple of women—practice makes perfect—but it would still take hours to get Rosie's dark tresses woven in.

They were ready now, washed free of the blood, conditioned, and dried. The comb slid through the hair with barely a catch, an overhead light reflecting off the dark tail. Beautiful locks. Not permed or damaged, and not too short, either. Short hair was a nightmare. So much waste.

But Rosie's would be ideal.

The killer hit a button on a small TV and settled onto a work stool. Pulled out the hackle with its five hundred thin nails and began slapping the black tail of hair onto it. Slap and pull, slap and pull, letting the weak strands break away, combing through the rest until every strand was straight and not a tangle remained. The TV anchor droned through the noon news in the background. So far, there'd been no mention of McNamara—not last night, not today. So far, her sudden absence from the world hadn't drawn any attention after all.

Still, let the news play, just in case. And slip the tail of Rosie's hair between the holding cards. Ready. Bring the wig block close and decide on placement...A swatch of Rosie's dark length, right along the cheek? Or would it be more beautiful to spread it out, working it into the shades of red and gold and light brown so the differences in color weren't so pronounced? What would Kristina like?

"...a carnival at a park over the weekend."

The anchor's voice slipped in. Oh, god.

"The woman, whose name is not yet being released, was brutally stabbed in the throat..."

What? Rosie's hair dropped to the table. On the TV screen, a camera panned a parking lot filled with emergency workers. It cut to a group of detectives and then pulled back from the scene and scanned the parking lot along the woods.

No, it couldn't be. But it was. That was Camden Park.

Body? Panic bubbled up, tainted with fury. *Body.* How?

Fulton. Damn him.

He answered the phone right away, defending himself from the get-go.

“I couldn’t get to her,” he said. The *bastard*. “I went there after I picked up Sanders and found a bunch of vendors and performers and shit. You didn’t tell me you were sending me into a fucking carnival.”

“You could’ve gone back later.”

“I did. But they were breaking down the rides and cleaning up. A guy noticed my truck, talked to me. I couldn’t hang around.”

Rage seeped in, like an icicle dripping poison. So, so close—and now Fulton might have risked everything. *Sonofabitch*.

But he couldn’t be cut loose. He knew where the bodies were buried—literally. He’d put them there. And Fulton’s type wasn’t easy to find. A misdiagnosed schizophrenic who was really a sociopath, Fulton had been born without that quirk of chemistry that allowed for emotion. There were no therapies or medications for men like him; modern psychiatry hadn’t yet learned how to manufacture a conscience.

He also had reason not to risk being discovered. The next time Ron Fulton went behind bars, he’d never come out again.

A reminder worth repeating: “I could ruin you.”

“You’re not that self-destructive,” Fulton answered, a thread of arrogance woven in.

“You knew this girl had a family. You knew there would be police this time.”

“I thought she’d be reported missing, not found dead at a crime scene a forensics team could tear apart.”

“What will they find?”

What *would* they find? Nothing. A footprint or two, which would lead them no farther than a man with size eleven feet, wearing boots. Rosie's own hair and blood. No camera. No connection.

"Nothing. They won't find anything."

"Then relax," Fulton said. "They'll probably find out she'd been talking to Sanders, but we both know he's a dead end. No pun intended."

"I just don't want another situation like Jill Donnelly."

In the dormer, Jill Donnelly's eyes seemed to glow from her easel. A tall, stringy redhead, after years of estrangement, she'd made a call to her family the very day she died. They went to police, but with no body and no reason to suspect foul play, nothing had come of it. Hookers come and go: Jill Donnelly, they concluded, was just another who'd gone.

Still, it had been too close. The fact that anyone had noticed Jill's absence at all had served as a wake-up call.

"It's not like they'll find Donnelly," Fulton said, "or any of the others. Thanks to me."

All right, breathe. Fulton was a necessary evil, and there was nothing to be done now. And all the more reason to hurry, mark the last two off the list before the discovery of McNamara's body kicks over too many stones. "I'll need you tonight."

Fulton chuckled. "I'm impressed."

"Fuck you. Don't mess it up this time. Take the body to Virginia, to the mine shafts."

"I know where the mine shafts are. Where will you leave her?"

"Near the old railroad depot, north of Reading. You know it?"

"I know it. A helluva lot better choice than a fucking carnival."

They hung up, the television still rolling, the anchor gleefully returning with a segment called “more details.”

It was bullshit and more bullshit, just the news team creating hype. The camera followed a body bag on a gurney, interviewed bystanders and carnival officials and police, but they clearly had no leads, no ideas.

So relax. Fulton was right, there was nothing to worry about.

A detective’s face filled the screen giving an interview, a name appearing at the bottom in capital letters: *SGT. DANI COLE, LCPD*. Something familiar about her. Cole. Who was she? She spoke with the reporter:

“...what kind of monster would do something like this... doing everything we can...”

The memory kicked in. Cole. This was in Rose McNamara’s file. This was the bitch-cop who’d cozied up to Rose McNamara two years ago. Arrested her then cut her loose and pulled her off the streets.

“...working to protect other young women like the victim, who appears to be innocent of any wrongdoing...”

Innocent. Wild, sharp-edged fury cut through surprise. Rose McNamara, *innocent?*

The word turned hot, rage swelling like a cancer. Sergeant Dani Fucking Cole, defending Rose McNamara—for a second time—saying she couldn’t imagine what kind of monster would do this to an innocent woman...

The news went on to the next story but Dani Cole’s face stuck in mind, like a tick. Stupid, arrogant, misguided. Promising to punish the wrongdoer and avenge an *innocent* girl.

I think not, Detective Cole. You’ve done enough in Rose McNamara’s life. There’ll be no avenging her now, nor stopping the rest from dying. You say you can’t imagine what kind of

monster would do this?

Hold on, bitch. I'll show you.

Chapter Four

Rosie's mother had a touch of the Irish in her—pale skin, dark hair, a little lilt in her speech. She was built lean and strong, an outdoorsy woman in her forties. Had a temper lurking beneath her grief.

“She came back thinkin’ everything was fine,” Mary McNamara said, her voice breaking. “Like she’d not already sent her father to his grave for worryin’ about her. And now—”

“Momma, stop.” Rosie's older sister, Janet. She was as fair as Rosie had been dark, as plain as Rosie had been striking. She juggled an infant on her hip. Two years ago when Dani had looked them up, Janet told her that Rosie was dead to them, a shame to the family. Today, she looked stricken.

Dani turned to her. “When Rosie called me a few weeks ago, she said you two were back on good terms.”

“We were working on it,” Janet said, cupping her hand over the baby's head and doing the continuous bounce that mothers do. “She wanted to be with Kyle.” She touched her cheek to the baby boy—Kyle—and a tear slid down her face into the baby-fine curls. “She was good with him.”

“God forgive her,” Mary McNamara muttered, crossing herself.

Maybe, Dani thought, but wasn’t sure her mother would. Dani tried to be sensitive but found herself more sympathetic to Rosie than her family. She’d pulled herself off the streets and out of Ty Craig’s stable. Had come back to get to know her nephew and make amends with her family, and been greeted with a cool reception at best. So much for the unconditional love and support of a parent.

Dani set her feelings aside and pushed through the routine: Who had Rosie been seeing? Was there a man in her life? What was her mood the last time they spoke? Mary McNamara confirmed what Dani already knew—there were no more men, pimps, or drugs. Rosie had gotten her life together. Now she was just trying to earn her family’s forgiveness.

Janet helped with lists: Rosie’s coworkers, friends, favorite haunts. Russell Sanders? The name didn’t ring any bells for them.

Thirty minutes into the interview, the calls started coming. Family, friends, neighbors. A funeral home. Dani watched Mary and Janet trying to field the calls, everyone offering condolences but making things worse. Question after question, and each one catapulted Dani back to her own hell, just two weeks ago: When do you want to hold the service, Ms. Cole? Cremation or burial? Is there any special music the deceased would have wanted? Where shall flowers be sent?

I don’t know, she thought, her chest squeezing. *He wasn’t supposed to die yet...*

She smothered the thought and left Mary McNamara with her remaining daughter and grandson, then called and found Tifton at the Foundation with Brad Harper. Ten minutes later, with no sign of IA’s gray sedan on her tail, she cruised past an enormous stone structure that

resembled a castle. A sign tucked into a bed of red bushes and yellow pansies proclaimed it the JMS FOUNDATION FOR PHOTOGRAPHY ART.

Dani slowed to look at it, not for the first time. This was Mitch's legacy, his vehicle for trying to fix the misery of the world, for doing overseas what he hadn't been able to do in his own home. With his rugged good looks and hometown roots, Mitch Sheridan was a local hero. Revealer of injustices and fixer of world tragedies.

Whirlwind summer lover.

Forget it, Dani told herself. *He* probably had.

She rolled on down the street. The castle itself shared the block with a few other huge Victorian homes: a private residence, an interior decorating business, a law office. The one next door must be the one shared by Russ Sanders and Brad Harper.

She got out of her car, found an officer posted at the front of the castle. "Detective Tifton?" she asked.

The guy pointed. "Next door, in the apartment building with Brad Harper."

"Thanks."

Dani walked halfway down the block and entered the lobby of the apartment building. An elevator and stairwell straight ahead, and two apartments—one to the right and another to the left. The door to the right was slightly ajar: Sanders's place.

She went in, allowed herself to be awed by the size and splendor for ten seconds, then heard Tift's voice upstairs. She found him in a hallway with Brad Harper, one hand on a doorknob.

"Hey," Tifton said. "I talked to the employees next door. No one's seen Sanders. And everything downstairs looks normal." He meant: *No bloody knife in the kitchen.*

Dani nodded. “What’s this?” she asked, pointing to the room he was about to enter.

“Mr. Harper agreed to let us look around. This is his dad’s bedroom.”

Dad’s bedroom. The thought nearly knocked Dani back a step, but she nudged past Harper and Tifton and entered the room in spite of it. Everything about Sanders’s bedroom appeared normal. There was no body sprawled between the bed and the dresser, no smudges on the wall, no bloodstains creeping through the fibers of the bedspread...

“As I told you,” Harper said, following them into the room, “I came in here and looked around right after Mitch called me. I didn’t see anything unusual.”

The bedroom had the earmarks of comfort: an Oriental rug over polished cherry floors, classic furniture, a king-sized bed with the comforter yanked partway down and decorative pillows strewn on the floor beside. A newspaper, its sections pulled out and re-stacked with sports on top lay on a blanket chest at the foot of the bed. A jacket had been tossed on the back of a desk chair and a wallet and spare change sat on the surface

“You didn’t consider it unusual that he left his wallet here?” Dani asked Harper.

He flinched, and his eyes darted to the desk. “I didn’t notice.”

Huh. Dani went to the newspaper: Sunday, Oct. 3. “When does the maid come in?” Clearly, there was one.

“Once a week, on Fridays. She works at the Foundation building next door two nights a week. On Fridays, she comes over here and does our apartments.”

It fit. On Fridays, the pillows would all be lined up across the head of the bed, the wrinkles tugged from the comforter and jacket hung in the closet. Anything lying out now had been left since the maid’s last visit.

Tifton strolled into the master bath, came out, and headed for the walk-in closet. Dani

went to the bed and lifted the comforter. The sheets were rumpled but bright clean—no signs that Sanders had a girlfriend. Harper tensed but didn't say anything: Calling off a search now would be hard to explain.

She moved to the nightstand. A roll of half-gone Tums, a pair of reading glasses, the rest of the sports section. A phone and blank notepad and pen—one of those wood-and-gold pens that probably cost a hundred bucks. Dani flipped on the light on the nightstand, and it was only when the wash of warm yellow hit the notepad that her pulse kicked up.

“Tift,” she called, torn between a rush of adrenaline and a wave of sadness. This was going to turn out to be the sonofabitch who butchered Rosie. Mitch Sheridan's dearest friend.

Tifton came out of the closet. Dani held up the notepad, then peeled back the top page and let the light shine through. The indentation of two words appeared.

“Does that say what I think it says?” Tifton asked.

“Do you think it says, ‘Camden Park?’”

He nodded, scratching his head. “Guess we better call an Evidence Response Team. And pick up Sheridan. We're gonna need to hear about that phone call he got in Switzerland.”

#

Dani-Fucking-Mother-Theresa-Cole of the LCPD stepped out of Russ Sanders's house, unaware of the eyes that followed her. Those eyes had picked her up at the police station after the noon news and followed her to Rosie's mother's house, and now, two hours later, they watched through a Canon 360 from a Saab parked a block away. A magnifying lens picking up the details: dark slacks and a blazer, a light knit shirt underneath. When she moved, the flare of her blazer revealed a police shield on her belt, a gun at her waist. She was slender and leggy, a little long in the torso—probably five-six or seven. Her hair was the color of black coffee and

pulled behind her head in a plain rubber band. Nothing fancy, but good genes had made her one of the lucky ones: high cheekbones and pale eyes, a tomboy who was nonetheless innately feminine, who would turn a man's head without even trying.

And, she was wired. Her hands were balled into fists, her movements agitated. When she stepped onto the front porch she let the screen door go, hitting the big cop as he came through behind her. The two of them talked for a moment. About Rose McNamara and Russ Sanders, no doubt. About monsters. "What kind of monster would do this to an innocent woman?" Cole had asked.

Look this way, Detective. Snap. Snap. Look behind the camera and you'll see. Snap.

Cole's partner held out his fist. They each pulled something from his hand then Cole put her hands on her hips. She said something that was probably obscene, wagging a finger at him until he took her by the shoulders and gave her a gentle shove. She dropped down the stairs and headed for her car.

That's it. The camera came down. Cole was off and running, angry about something. Anxious to avenge Rose McNamara, no doubt.

Stupid bitch. Won't she be surprised when she learns that tonight, while she's out there trying to find Rosie's killer, another one just like her was going to die? Number Five, Alicia Woodruff. Everything was ready. Fulton was ready. No mistakes this time.

The dashboard clock moved: three-forty-two. Alicia, given her chosen profession, would just be getting going for the evening.

Plenty of time to deliver a message to Sergeant Cole first. Make sure she understands.

#

Dani drew the short straw—toothpick, rather—and got drafted to meet Sheridan at the

airport. Nerves fraying, she pulled away from the Foundation, took a deep breath, and ordered herself to buck up. For god's sake, eighteen years had gone by. A man like Mitch Sheridan had probably filled every one of them with a different woman. Dani was just one of many.

Besides, this was business.

Halfway to the airport, she called her next-door neighbor. "Becky, hey. It's Dani. Say, could Seth get Runt for a while? I can't get home yet."

"Sure," Becky said. She was a forty-something single mom with a twelve-year-old son who was Runt's favorite person. Not that Runt was particular; Dani had always marveled at that. The bait dog for countless fighters-in-training, by the time Dani came across her, her canine teeth had been yanked out by the trainers and both ears ripped off in the ring. She bore numerous scars of a dog that had spent her entire life getting beat up yet she was infinitely sweet and docile.

Go figure.

"I'll send him over," Becky said. "You wanna come get her when you get home?"

"Nah, I'll probably be late. Just have Seth put her back in the house when he's had enough slobbery kisses."

Becky chuckled. "Will do."

Dani hung up. She turned her flashers on and pushed through traffic to BWI, bullied her way to the curb outside baggage claim, and used her shield to get through security to Concourse E. The flight was just arriving at a British Airways gate, no one yet off the plane.

She stood across the aisle against the far wall, letting curiosity about Sheridan momentarily run its course. Would she recognize him? Of course she would. Like anyone in Lancaster, she'd seen his publicity photo: a shot capturing his height and breadth and the classic

hard edge, with a perennial three-day beard and light blue eyes brooding beneath dark brows. In most photographs, the crook of a once-broken nose could be seen, but Dani had chosen to believe that was just the camera angle—a savvy publicist going for a rugged air. Fans no-doubt would chalk the bent nose up to rough living.

Dani knew better, shifting with the memory... A hard-muscled eighteen-year-old, with compassion she'd never known, ardor she'd never fathomed, and a burning need to fix what was wrong in the world. With *her*.

Only she'd been too afraid to let him that close. So she'd elbowed him away instead. Literally.

She cursed, realized her arms were clutched around her midriff, and dropped them. Relax. Even if he did recognize her, a summer fling when you're just out of high school isn't something a man hangs onto for two decades. Dani certainly hadn't: She was long past it. That swirling in her gut right now was a demanding day with too much coffee and no food, that's all.

She paced a few steps, then stopped when an airline attendant propped the gate's door wide. People began streaming through—parents with sleeping children, an elderly couple, a couple of businessmen hurrying to catch their connections. Dani held her breath and a moment later, in a sea of moving humanity, Mitch Sheridan appeared.

Her mouth went dry, an illogical spread of goose bumps rising on her skin. Dani watched him stride into the terminal. He towered a few inches taller than most other passengers, but there, the resemblance to the handsome publicity shot—and the images in her memory—ended. His hair stuck out, his cheeks were drawn, his eyes hooded and bloodshot. Worry had chiseled lines into his face—crow's feet at the corners of his eyes and deep grooves bracketing his mouth, darkened by a few days of beard. He wore faded jeans and a ragged polo shirt, and he looked

rangy and long-boned, leaner than she'd expected. His gait was stiff. Hours on a plane? By her calculations, he'd been traveling for the past nineteen hours, seven of which were lost in the time change. Maybe. Or maybe the stiff limbs were the legacy of the attack at a refugee camp a few months ago, the one Brad Harper had referred to.

He walked with a cell phone to his ear, coming within five feet. Dani blinked: The aristocratic nose had a decided crook to it. Well, shit. Maybe it wasn't just a trick of the camera angle.

He walked right past her.

Dani kicked into gear and followed. *Mit— Mister Sherid—* Suddenly, she didn't know what to call him.

"Sheridan," she said, and he snapped the cell phone closed. Kept going. "I need to talk to you."

"I can't right now," he said.

She pulled her shield from her belt and came around to cut him off. "You have to," she said, holding it up.

He glanced at the police ID and opened his mouth, then stopped cold. His eyes locked on hers. "Jesus Christ," he said.