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The Jensen & Browning Series

Hole 7

All names, events and buildings within this work are purely fiction from the imagination of the author and unassociated with real-life action.

# Prologue

“Par!” The woman yelled enthusiastically as she lowered her putter club and walked to the hole to collect her ball. With a smile, she turned to her flight mate.

“Hey Craig!” she smiled as he attempted to chip from the edge of the green. He looked up and smirked. “What? I have to focus if I want to keep up with your score, miss pro player.”

With a grin, she stepped back and watched him chip the ball...and miss the hole by an inch. She had trouble keeping a straight face as he grimaced and walked to his ball, finishing the putt.

“Well, that’s minus three for me and four for you.” She winked at him as she wrote down the score. He raised an eyebrow at her and collected his ball, walking back to his golf bag and putting his club away.

“I’ll kick your ass on the next hole.” He smiled as they both walked with their bags to the path that would lead them to the next hole.

“Hole seven.” He commented dryly on the small board that noted the distance from tee-off to green.

“Hey, there’s a bathroom here. Mind if I take a short break?” she pointed at the cabin next to the tee. He shrugged. “Go ahead.”

With a thankful nod, she dropped her bag and removed her glove and entered the cabin. He stretched his sore limbs and cursed the woman for being such an amazing golf player and being so nonchalant about it.

Something in the corner of his eye caught his attention. He turned his head to see what was causing the commotion, and saw something disappearing into the bushes. His heart thumped loudly as he neared the bush and crouched to check if he could see anything. With a smile, he saw the rabbit hopping away from him.

*Damn those rabbits.* He shook his head as he got up again and frowned at the cabin. *And damn her for taking so long.*

Realising he had nothing to do, he took the ball he was about to tee with and put it in the ball cleaner, rinsing it and drying it off. The ball looked as good as new. He grabbed a plastic tee from his bag, put the tee on the right location and put his ball on top of it.

“If you don’t come out in five seconds I’m teeing off without you!” he yelled at the cabin. When he didn’t get a reply, he frowned and put his driver club down, approaching the bathroom.

“Hey, didn’t you hear me? I’m going to-...” he cut himself off when he saw the bathroom door, wide open and vacant. He looked around, his face now distorted with concern. “Where are you?” he looked around, seeing nothing but plants and grass.

A twig snapped behind him. He spun around so fast he swore he could hear his neck bones cracking. But he didn’t see anything. He walked back to his bag cautiously, grabbed an iron club and held it up like a weapon, approaching the place where he’d heard the sound.

“This isn’t funny...stop it!” he tried once more, but he didn’t get a reaction. He stepped into the rough bushes, looking around, until his feet were caught in something slippery. He looked down, expecting to see mud.

The dark red liquid stained his white golf shoes and his heart leaped in his chest. He now looked around frantically, stumbling like a drunk man, helplessly searching for her.

After ten seconds of running around, following the blood trail, his feet got caught up in something on the ground and he fell forward, hitting his head on the branches of a bush. He turned around slowly, his club lying forgotten in the dirt.

“Oh no...” his throat went dry at the sight before him. He reached into his pockets and with shaky hands dialed the familiar three-digit number.

The woman staring at him with hollow eyes was naked...and her blood was sprayed all over the ground and bushes in the vicinity.

With a shock, he looked down, right when the operator answered his call.

Her left hand was gone.

# Chapter one

“LEA!” the sound of her name being called shook the detective awake roughly. She grunted and rolled over in the bed, pulling the pillow next to her over her head.

“Hey sleepyhead!” she whined loudly as she sat upright, yawning. “What?!”

“Get downstairs and hurry!” She looked at the ceiling and cursed herself for forgetting to set her alarm. She looked at her watch and frowned. 07:43

She rolled her eyes as she quickly put some clothes on and went downstairs, where her partner was waiting impatiently.

“Liz, what the hell? I thought I overslept, you woke me an hour before the alarm!”

Elizabeth Browning looked up and frowned. “Well, excuse me for being an early birdie. And I didn’t wake you up when I got downstairs.”

“Why...” Lea took a deep breath and accepted the mug of coffee Elizabeth was handing her.

“I woke up around six and I couldn’t sleep so I went downstairs to do something useful.” Elizabeth explained. “Around half past seven I got a call. We have a homicide.”

“Well if you’d woken me up then at least I could have taken a shower.” Lea grunted.

“Stop complaining and get your ass ready. We can have breakfast afterwards.”

“I hate work in the morning.” She grunted again as she finished her cup of coffee in a couple of sips and raced upstairs to brush her teeth and fix her hair. Within five minutes, she was downstairs and ready. Elizabeth looked at her, dressed up nicely as always.

“Badge? Gun?” She asked Lea, who nodded quickly. “I’ll drive.”

The two women left the house and walked to the car. Lea got in the drivers seat. She started the car and their car raced off.

“What do we know?” Lea asked after a while of comfortable silence.

“Female victim, found at the golf course.” Elizabeth said, staring ahead.

“Golf course?!” she repeated, frowning deeply. Her partner nodded slightly. “We’ll have to find out the rest.”

“So much for a relaxing day of paperwork.”

Lea parked the car smoothly in a small parking spot in the lot of the golf club and got out. Elizabeth was right behind her, smiling. “Cheer up, at least we’ll have something to talk about in the evening.”

“Yeah. Awesome.” The other detective grunted as she locked the car and the pair walked towards the building.

“Maybe they’ll let us drive a golf cart!” Elizabeth said suddenly, sounding excited. Lea frowned at her partner’s enthusiasm but laughed it off. The receptionist looked up as they reached him.

“Hi, we’re LAPD homicide detectives.” Elizabeth smiled as she showed the man her badge. He nodded. “It’s terrible, what happened. They’re at hole seven. It’s not that far from here, I’d suggest you walk.”

“Are you kidding...?” Lea asked the man. He frowned and shook his head. “I’d give you a golf cart but they’re all taken for investigation.”

“Of course they are. There are moments where we do our work too damn good.” Lea growled as she turned around and started walking towards the course. Elizabeth thanked the man quickly and then ran behind her.

“Paradise.” Elizabeth smiled at Lea as they walked on the golf course, towards the crime scene. Lea looked at her partner and laughed. “Yeah, paradise, if you don’t mind the mud on your clothes and shoes.”

“You know, I actually golfed for a while.” The blonde smiled. Lea frowned. “Really? You?”

“Handicap 30. Had to quit.” Elizabeth nodded as she looked around her. “But I know a cool golf course when I see one. I’d love to hit a ball or two here.”

“Why did you quit?” Lea asked as they crossed the path from hole six to seven. The detective laughed and shook her head. “Keith.”

“What did your scumbag ex-boyfriend do?” Lea growled at the thought of the guy, who had caused her friend this much pain.



“He gave me the clubs as a birthday present. When he got arrested it turned out they were stolen, so I returned them. I didn’t feel like buying new ones.” Elizabeth shrugged.

Lea’s nostrils flared with the deep sigh escaping. “I’m so glad you got rid of that bastard.”

“So am I.”

They reached the hole and saw the crime scene tape hanging in the corner, next to a small cabin. The police officer on guard looked at them expectantly.

“I’m detective Lea Jensen and this is my partner Elizabeth Browning.” They both flashed their badges as routine, the officer nodded and they slipped underneath the tape.

“What do we have here?” Lea said to herself as they stepped in the bushes, walking up to the body. The medical examiner was already investigating.

“Good morning, Isabelle.” Elizabeth nodded at the ME. The woman looked up and smiled at the detectives. “I’m glad I get to see you guys again, however...” she sighed at the body. “I wish it were under different circumstances.”

“What’s the problem?” Lea said as both her and her partner crouched next to the body.

“Victim’s name is Sasha Ferguson, 25 , fatal stab wounds. Severed left hand, the limb itself wasn’t found.”

“Any idea on how long she’s been here?” Elizabeth wrapped her arms around herself. She hadn’t anticipated the cold wind when she’d dressed herself.

"The witness claimed that he found her about an hour ago."

"Witness?" Lea asked. "Did someone see it happening?"

"I have no idea. You should ask the guy, he's over there." Isabelle pointed at a man sitting on a bench nearby, in conversation with an officer. The two women got up and walked towards him.

"We'll take it from here, thanks." The officer nodded and left.

"What's your name, sir?" Lea asked him. The man looked up, his eyes were red. "C-Craig Danning. She's really dead...isn't she?"

The rhetorical question brought two identical sympathetic looks on the faces of the detectives. Elizabeth nodded slowly and took a seat next to him on the bench.

"I'm afraid so...Mister Danning, what was your relation to Sasha?"

"We were...golfing mates. I met her about a year ago on the course here...she's really good. On her way to becoming a pro...I went with her to practice. We had the earliest flight possible today because she had to go somewhere." He dried his cheeks with the back of his hand. "She wanted to go to the bathroom...I checked on her, she wasn't there. I found her in the bushes, I called 911."

"You did well." Lea said to the man. He nodded slowly. "Who'd want her dead? She was the sweetest girl..."

"Did she have any enemies? People she had disagreements with?"

"No...she rarely talked about her private life. And...there's only one person I can think of that disliked her..."

"And that person is...?" Lea asked him as Elizabeth grabbed a small notepad from her jacket pocket.

“Dawn Jacobs. She was her rival...they were very competitive against each other during events. They got into a fight sometimes.”

“Okay, we’ll look into that. Would you like to come with us to the police station to get an official statement?”

“Yeah, okay.” He rubbed his eyes tiredly. “Uhm...My club. I threw it in the bushes, an iron seven. Is it okay if..”

“We’ll examine it and when it’s cleared you’ll get it back immediately.” Elizabeth said. He nodded. “Okay.”

“Did she have any family or relatives we can contact about her death?”

“Her mom passed away and her dad went AWOL in Afghanistan.” He said, shaking his head. “But you can try her brother, he lives not too far from here.”

“What’s his name?” Lea asked. Craig thought for a second. “Simon. Simon Ferguson.”

“Okay, I’ll give Ben a call.” Elizabeth took her cellphone from her pocket and distanced herself from the scene. Lea turned back to Craig and sighed.

“Ben? It’s Liz.” She announced as soon as the phone clicked.

“Hey Liz...I’m on my way to the station, in the car. What’s going on?”

“We have a homicide at a golf course. I need the address for Simon Ferguson, he lives in West Los Angeles.”

“You got it. I’ll text you the address asap.”

“Okay, thanks.” She disconnected and walked back to her partner, who was comforting a now crying Craig Danning. Lea looked up at her

and shrugged sadly. Elizabeth took a deep breath and walked back to the body.

“Do we have any idea what the murder weapon is, Isabelle?” she asked the ME who was now working on getting the body in a body bag. The woman looked up, ran a hand through her hair and shook her head. “I don’t believe we’re dealing with a double weapon. It must’ve been one weapon to both sever her hand and to stab her. We’re getting the body transported so I can perform an autopsy.”

“Okay.” Realizing that her work at the scene was practically done by the numerous police officers walking around collecting evidence, she turned around to walk back to her partner. Then, she frowned as she saw something lying at her feet. She crouched and stared at it. It was white and it contrasted brightly with the muddy ground.

“Hey, can I borrow a pair of gloves?” she asked the ME, who nodded and got a pair out of her kit, throwing it towards her. Thanking her quickly, Lea put them on and picked up the object. It turned out to be a small piece of paper.

“Bag this, we need to find out what it is. It looks like there were letters on it but the mud made it unreadable.” The officer she was talking to nodded and put the piece of paper in an evidence bag.

Lea got up and walked back to her partner, who looked at her, holding her phone.

“Ben just texted the adress for the victim’s brother. Think we should go check it out?”

“We at least have to go tell him about his sister.” Lea shrugged.

Elizabeth groaned. “I hate bringing bad news.”

They walked back to the parking lot. "What do you think of the witness?" Lea asked.

The blonde detective thought for a second, then sighed. "Pretty sure he's clean. If his story is true, then it's that Dawn Jacobs individual we have to watch out for. We should put her on our bucket list."

"Definitely." Lea agreed with her. They reached their car in no time.

"I'll drive this time. I owe you one for pulling you out of bed anyways." Elizabeth said as Lea unlocked the doors and handed her the key.

As they pulled out of their parking spot, Lea got the creeping feeling that this wouldn't be the last time they visited the club.

# Chapter two

“Let’s hope this guy doesn’t cry. I don’t want to start crying too.”

Elizabeth frowned as they walked up to the front door. Lea had one hand on her badge and one on her gun, a reflex she’d grown accustomed to over the months of working with Elizabeth.

She knocked three times, then stepped back. After about ten seconds of silence, she frowned and knocked again. “Los Angeles police, open the door!”

After some time, the lock was turned and the door opened slowly. A boy stood in the doorway, he looked about sixteen. “Yeah?”

“Simon Ferguson?” Elizabeth asked. The boy’s eyes shot from her to Lea and back. “Yeah, that’s me.”

“My name’s Elizabeth Browning, I’m with LAPD...can we come in?”

“Uhm, my sister’s not home...” he hesitated. Lea sighed sadly. “We want to talk to you.”

The boy stepped aside and let the two detectives in. The hallway was full of pictures with Simon and Sasha, and two people that could only be their parents.

“Sit down, please.” Lea pointed at the couch. The boy took a seat, frowning deeply. “I was kind of in the middle of a gaming battle.”

“I’m sorry but it’s urgent.” Elizabeth took a seat next to him, looking him in the eyes. “It’s about your sister.”

"What's wrong with her?" he asked slowly, tensing. Lea crossed her arms and stared at the ground, hating this moment in her work.

"We...we found the body of your sister on the golf course." Elizabeth said cautiously. Simon's face remained neutral at first, then went to shock, and then turned to anger. "Who did it?" he asked slowly, clearly trying to keep himself under control.

"Well...that's what we want to find out." The boy breathed heavily at the answer. "Tell me you're lying...please..."

"Were you living alone with your sister?" Lea asked him, stepping forward. He looked up and nodded quickly. "She...she was all I had left." His fists clenched and unclenched.

"I think it's best if you come with us to the police station, we'll work things out and you can tell us the story, you can help us find who did it."

"I'm not leaving this house." He shook his head with a near maniacal expression. "I was gaming...I need to finish my battle."

"There will be time for that later, Simon." Elizabeth got up slowly and tried to pull him up, but he growled and shoved her away roughly before stomping out of the room and up the stairs.

Lea tried to go after him, but Elizabeth stopped her with a hand to her chest. Lea frowned. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. We'll just call some people to get him to the station, we're wasting time anyways. This guy isn't a suspect."

"So what do you propose we do?" Lea asked her partner.

"I guess we could head to the station and try to get some evidence."

“Sounds good. Come on.” Lea walked towards the front door, but Elizabeth stopped. The brunette officer turned around and frowned.

“What?”

“Simon..” she pointed at the ceiling, “...has headphones on and is in the middle of a vicious game battle.”

“Well spotted, Sherlock.” Lea frowned. Elizabeth shook her head.

“Now is the time to look around a little. A warrant will take forever to get.”

“Liz, this isn’t a good idea.”

“I know.” Elizabeth nodded as she walked through the living room, looking around. Lea’s phone buzzed in her pocket and she reached for it, checking the message.

“Head to the station asap. It’s from Ben.” Lea looked up at her partner who was still looking around intensely. “Come on, we’ll get a warrant later and search the place.”

Elizabeth didn’t respond immediately but followed Lea out of the house and into the car.

“I’m going to yoga class tonight, want to come?” Elizabeth asked Lea as she got behind the wheel and put her seatbelt on. The other detective shrugged. “I was thinking about going for a drink, it’s been ages since I’ve had contact with humans that aren’t dead.”

“Second that. I’ll drop by after class.”

“I’ll get you a cold beer ready.” Lea winked at her partner as they ripped through the streets again.



“So sad...a golf player with that kind of potential...lost talent.” Elizabeth sighed sadly. Lea shrugged.

“People are getting murdered everywhere, Liz. Talented people.”

“Still...25. She must’ve just finished college or something...I wonder what she studied. Come to think of it, neither her brother nor the witness told us anything about a boyfriend or husband. Maybe we should look into that.”

“Another thing to do, yaay.” Lea rolled her eyes, but Elizabeth knew that she was being playful.

“I wonder what that Dawn Jacobs individual is like.” Lea sighed after a while of silent driving.

“Knowing the pretentious people that walk around on golf courses, especially here in LA, I have a feeling she’ll be exactly like I picture her.”

“Now, now. You don’t stereotype, Liz.” Lea grinned. Elizabeth raised an eyebrow. “I’ve had enough flights with strangers to know when people are pretentious. And sadly enough, this town has a lot of people like that.”

“What is a ‘flight’ anyways? I feel like an idiot when you use that golf mumbo jumbo.” Lea looked at her partner expectingly.

“A flight is the departure from the main building to the holes. There is a flight every, say, eight minutes. People within one flight stick together during the holes. It’s nothing spectacular, it’s just people getting onto hole one to tee off.”

“Teeing off is hitting the ball?”

“Teeing off is putting the little wooden stick on the ground, putting your ball onto it and hitting it for the first time on every hole.”

“Right. Hey, I could be a pro golf player knowing all this.” Lea smiled jokingly. Elizabeth laughed as she parked in front of the police station and stopped the car, pulling the key out of the ignition.

“I could honestly use breakfast right now, I’m starving.” Lea whined as they walked inside the station. Elizabeth looked at her and smiled. “I’ll buy you a donut.”

“Cop talk, huh? I love it.” The brunette smiled as they walked to the small café inside the station and bought two donuts. Munching happily, the two stepped inside the elevator that brought them to the first floor quickly.

“You guys took your time.” Benjamin Moore, a black-haired young homicide detective, grinned up at them. They both gave him a weird look and he laughed. “Chillax, it’s okay, I was joking.”

“What do we know?” Elizabeth asked, biting her nails. Ben looked up at them.

“Sasha Ferguson, clean slate. I didn’t find any husband or boyfriend, she lived at the adress I texted you.”

“Together with her brother.”

“How did the guy take it?” Ben asked, turning his chair around to face his computer screen, connected to a beamer shining on a white wall. Elizabeth and Lea took a seat at their desks facing each other.

“Well...” Lea started. “He got pretty angry at us and disappeared upstairs to finish his game. We’ll need a warrant, but I doubt there’s anything interesting in the house.”

“Kids these days.” Ben shook his head sadly and typed some more on the computer. “I searched her name on the web.”

Images and newspaper articles popped up on the huge screen.

*Young talent wins golf cup – Ferguson drops to handicap 12 – Ferguson beats Jacobs again*

“Wait, show that last one.” Elizabeth pointed at the article. Ben enlarged the article, showing a photo of the victim with a short-haired brunette. Underneath the article, it said ‘*Ferguson and Jacobs, here still close*’.

“Still close? What does that mean?” Lea asked. Ben clicked a few more times.

“Apparently, they were great friends up until two months ago. During a match they got into a huge fight and they hated each other ever since.”

“That sounds like a motive.” Elizabeth commented. Lea nodded with a frown and searched on her own computer.

Lea’s phone buzzed in her pocket. She grabbed it and checked the message.

“Isabelle says she’s got something.” She got up and looked at Elizabeth, who nodded. “Right behind you.”

The two women walked towards the elevator and got in.

“I hope we solve this case before it gets too much media attention.” The blonde sighed. Lea nodded quickly. “Tell me about it. I researched that golf club, flooded with celebrities.”

"Too bad we didn't get to see any, then." Elizabeth smiled as the elevator beeped and the doors opened again. The detectives walked out.

"Good morning." Isabelle greeted the two as they entered the lab. The victim was lying on the table lifeless, a sheet draped over her. She looked fragile, it broke their hearts.

"Morning. What did you discover?" Elizabeth asked as they approached the autopsy table.

"Well...upon investigation..." Isabelle sighed. "She was raped."

"Wait, what?" Lea's eyes widened. "According to the witness, she was murdered in max five minutes."

"Well...from what I can tell..." The ME bit her lip as she looked at the victim, "...this was pre-mortem."

"She was raped *before* she got murdered? How long before?" Lea asked. Isabelle looked at her computer and then back up at the two detectives. "Uhm...about...three to four hours."

Elizabeth winced as she looked down at the girl. "So...two different crimes or one?"

"Hard to say." The ME sighed.

"Wait..." Lea frowned. Isabelle and Elizabeth looked at her.

"If we assume that Dawn Jacobs was the killer, and I know we shouldn't..." she paused. "Then she must've had a male accomplice for the rape, right?"

"Not necessarily. She has tearings and bruises but I didn't find any evidence of semen." Isabelle patted the dead girl's shoulder. "She

could've been raped with an object, which means a woman could have done it."

"Okay. Thanks, Isabelle." Lea turned to her partner. "I think it's time to pay Dawn Jacobs a visit, don't you?"

"Agreed." Elizabeth nodded as they left the morgue.

# Chapter three

“Miss Jacobs?” Lea asked as they walked up to the golfer, who was hitting balls on the practicing tees.

Without looking up, the woman replied. “That would be me.”

“Miss, could you please...step away from the mat and turn to us?” Elizabeth continued, frowning. The woman didn’t move but continued to hit the ball.

“It’s about Sasha Ferguson.” Lea attempted one last time, clearly losing her patience. The woman turned around, clearly bored. “Look, I’m not allowed to talk about the incident to the press so get lost.”

“Well, that would be hard.” Lea pulled her jacket aside slightly to reveal the badge. “Los Angeles homicide. We’d like your statement in a murder case.”

“Did that bitch finally die?” Dawn sighed in obvious relief. “That took too long. I was waiting for it.”

“Where were you this morning between six and seven AM, miss Jacobs?” Elizabeth asked. Dawn huffed and picked up her club again, hitting another ball.

“I was at home, sleeping, obviously.” She raised an eyebrow.

“Is there anyone who can confirm that story?” Lea asked. Dawn lowered her club again with an annoyed grunt. “My husband was at home. If you’ll excuse me, I have a flight in five minutes.” She put her club back and began to drive her golf trolley.

“You might want to skip hole seven.” Elizabeth said dryly. Dawn stopped, turned around and frowned.

“And don’t leave town, we’ll need you again.” Lea added. The golf player rolled her eyes and walked off. The brunette looked at her partner.

“Well that sure was useful.”

“That alibi is so transparent it makes my car windows jealous.” Elizabeth said jokingly. Lea laughed and straightened her jacket, walking back to the car.

“That makes Dawn Jacobs our number one suspect. We’ll have to check the husband.”

“And check her criminal record. I have a feeling that woman is hiding something.” The blonde added with a sigh.

They got back into the car. After a while of driving, Lea’s cellphone rang. She switched the car kit on. “Jensen.”

“Lea, it’s Ben, I’m afraid I’ve got bad news.”

“Right, let’s make the day worse.” Lea sighed. “What is it?”

“I just had a look at the evidence. I think you should head back here, there’s stuff I have to show you.”

“What’s so bad about evidence?” Elizabeth asked.

“Well...It’s not really positive evidence.” Ben explained, obviously annoyed at the lack of progress.

“Does it say that Dawn Jacobs isn’t the killer?” Lea frowned.

"It doesn't say anything at all." Ben said. This brought silence on both ends of the line.

"Look, just come back to the station asap." He said, before disconnecting. Lea looked at her partner.

"I have a feeling that this isn't going to be over soon."

"Yeah." Elizabeth grunted, stretching her neck.

"This should be good." Lea walked in, fixing her hair. Her partner walked in after her, taking a seat at her desk.

"Evidence said you found a piece of paper at the scene." Ben said to Lea. She nodded quickly. "Yeah, but it was unreadable. All wet from the mud."

"So you thought. Isabelle managed to reconstruct what was written on the paper. It was small and scribbled hastily, but she did it." He opened up a photo on the big screen.

*DJLAAKES WIDHNLSA*

"What the hell..." The three detectives stared at the words, cracking their skulls.

"It looks gibberish." Ben said after a while. Lea rolled her eyes. "No way!" she sighed. "It must be an anagram of sorts." She walked to her computer and typed the letters into an anagram software.

"Nasal jaws held kid?" she tried, grunting. "Add jeans hawks ill?"



“Wait a minute...” Elizabeth stared at the word intensely. Then, she turned to the computer and typed something rapidly, Ben and Lea watching her. After a while, the detective grinned.

“I knew I’d seen it somewhere before.” she flipped the screen. There was a case file from about a year ago with the photo of a man with tattoos all over his neck and arms. *Hank Lils*, according to the information next to it.

“What does a case file from a gang member have to do with this situation?” Lea asked her partner, frowning. Elizabeth smiled and walked to the whiteboard in the corner, writing the letters down quickly.

*DJLAAKES WIDHNLSA*

She turned around. “We didn’t solve this case, but I saw the file when I was in the archives some time ago. He was a gang member, went by the name of ‘Dead Jaws’.”

Lea and Ben had identical looks of confusion. Elizabeth smiled at them and wrote a second line on the blackboard.

*HANK DEAD JAWS LILS*

“It’s a match.” Ben whispered as he compared the two. “You’re a genius, Liz.”

“So I’ve been told.” She dropped back onto her chair. “Now we have to find a connection between a gang member and a golf player.”

“Wait a minute, this isn’t making sense.” Lea jumped up from her chair and walked to the whiteboard too, turning around to face the two others.

“If she got murdered and was found dead in five minutes, she wouldn’t have had the time to write down the name of her killer. Most certainly not in anagram.”

“What if she knew? Maybe the guy stalked her and she wanted someone to know if it came to this?” Ben theorized.

“Or...maybe someone else left it there to frame Hank Lils.”

“I don’t really picture a gang member that spent five years in prison for drug dealing making up anagrams if he murders.” Elizabeth bit her lip in thought.

“It all seems so weird...” Lea stared at the whiteboard intensely, hoping to find some hidden meaning. “What are we not seeing...”

Ben cleared his throat. “And...big question number two: why cut off her left hand? It seems like a symbolic move.”

“Incoming theory: Dawn Jacobs hires Hank Lils to get rid of competition by cutting off Sasha Ferguson’s hand. When she struggles, he kills her. Jacobs orders him to put a piece of paper at the crime scene in anagram style so that he doesn’t know what’s on it, to frame him and get her hands clean.”

Elizabeth thought about the theory for a second. “Sounds plausible, but we won’t know for sure until we talk to Lils, search Jacobs’ place for evidence and find a way to connect the two.”

“Great work, guys.” Ben said to them. Lea yawned and leaned back in her chair, looking at the clock. 13:52.

“We skipped lunch, Liz.” She said lazily from her chair. Elizabeth looked up and nodded. “You’re right. Come on, we can go eat something. We’ll be back in 30.”

"I'll call if something important happens."

"Thanks, Ben. Come on, Lee." The nickname brought a smile to the brunette detective's face as she followed Elizabeth out of the police station.

"This is a mess..." Elizabeth whispered, more to herself than to Lea, as they walked into the nearest bistro.

"I know. Good job on the anagram back there, I'm proud of you." Lea smiled at her as the blonde took a deep breath and shrugged. "I've always been good with words."

They quickly ordered two caesar salads and a jug of water.

"Your theory seemed interesting, but I think you stereotyped too much." Elizabeth said, looking her partner in the eyes. Lea raised an eyebrow in question.

"Well..." the blonde continued, "...the golfer is a rich snob who'd do anything to be number one so she hires the gang member who goes too far. It sounds too strained."

"I think it sounds pretty good." Lea shrugged. "As long as we make a connection between the two, everything is good."

"Something doesn't seem right." Elizabeth shook her head. "I have a feeling we're getting it all wrong."

"You overthink sometimes. This is perfect. And it's your anagram we're following."

Elizabeth didn't look convinced but decided to let it go when she saw their salads coming up. They thanked the waitress quickly and

attacked their plates. Neither of them seemed to realize how hungry they really were until they started eating.

About two bites in, Elizabeth's phone buzzed.

"Really?!" she grunted as she dropped her silverware and answered. "Browning. Oh, hey Ben, what's wrong? Uhu...yeah, okay. Thanks." She disconnected the call and put it back. Jane looked at her with both eyebrows raised. "And?"

"He confirmed what I feared. Lils was bailed out of jail a couple of weeks ago. The sum of money was posted anonymously."

"Did he check Dawn Jacobs' bank accounts?" Lea put her fork down as well and stared intensely at her colleague.

"He said that he didn't find anything interesting. Just regular deposits and purchases."

"Secret bank account?" Lea asked. Elizabeth put another piece of chicken in her mouth and shrugged. "Possible. Let's try and track Lils down first, see what he has to say."

"Good one. We should track him." Lea smiled. "We're making progress."

"Yeah, hooray for us." Elizabeth sighed deeply. "I can't get over the fact that she's dead. I read some articles about her a couple of weeks ago."

"How so?" Lea asked, finishing her glass of water. The blonde shrugged nonchalantly. "Golf magazines. She was really talented."

Lea didn't really know how to respond to this. She rubbed her friend's arm slowly, in an attempt to comfort. Elizabeth shook her head. "It's okay. I'm just wondering...I wanna find out who killed her."

"We'll find the bastard." Lea smiled. "I'm sure we will."

The rest of the lunch happened along with comfortable smalltalk. When the two finished their meal, they walked back to the police station.

"You can say whatever you want, I think I wore it better." Lea grunted as they reached their desks again. Elizabeth raised an eyebrow. "You're joking, right? I pulled that off way better than you."

"You looked like a manatee in that dress." Lea winked at her partner, whose mouth dropped open. "Excuse me?!"

"You're excused." Lea laughed as Ben walked up to them with a file, looking grim. The mood of laughter was broken immediately.

"What's wrong, Ben?" Elizabeth frowned at him.

"Doc says the official cause of death is blood loss. She had five stab wounds in her chest and abdominal area."

"Do we know with what object she was raped?" Elizabeth asked. He shook his head. "She's still working on it. In the meantime..." he pointed at his computer. "According to my sources, Lils is frequently visiting this bar." He pointed at a map of Los Angeles and zoomed in on Sunset Boulevard, turning around.

"It's a pretty shady place, and we can't go busting in. We'll have to do it the hard way."

“Go in and ask him nicely?” Lea frowned, scratching her neck. Ben nodded. “That’s kind of the plan.”

“I’ll go.” Elizabeth got up. Lea raised an eyebrow. “No you’re not.”

“Why wouldn’t I? I could hear him out, this is a murder we’re talking about!”

“Yeah, and it can be your murder as well if you don’t watch out.” Lea commented. “No way in hell I’m letting you go undercover into a tent like that!”

“Well, what would *you* do?! You’d go yourself and I don’t want you to go! What if something happens to you?”

“Okay! I get it, you both love each other!” Ben frowned, looking at the two detectives. “Look, Lea. She’ll be protected, we’ll have cops everywhere surrounding the place. She’ll wear a wire and a camera and we can be by her side in seconds.”

Lea looked her partner in the eyes, silently pleading. When she saw that it didn’t have effect, she grunted. “Okay, fine. But I’m going in as well, just hanging around.”

“I can live with that. Lea.” She continued, pulling Lea’s chin up gently to look her into the eyes again. “This isn’t my first undercover mission. I’ll be fine.”

“Okay...” Lea bit her lip, nodding. “But I’ll be there, Liz. I’ll protect you.”

“You always protect me.” Elizabeth smiled as she hugged the other detective, who smiled and wrapped her arms around her. Ben watched the exchange silently. When they pulled apart, Elizabeth nodded. “I’m

going to do this. Meet up with him, compliment him on his tattoos and try to get him to talk.”

“Fine. I’ll get the stuff.” Lea grunted, stomping out of the room with a defeated tread. Ben looked up at the blonde. “I’ll tell everyone what the plan is. Liz...” he stopped in front of her and grabbed her shoulders, looking her in the eyes. “There is a chance that you’ll get hurt, you know that. That guy isn’t a pussy, he’s dangerous.”

“I’ll be fine.” Elizabeth smiled. “Don’t worry, Ben. And make sure Lea isn’t hysterical, I know her.”

“You know why she’s protective of you.” Ben looked at her with a sad look on his face. She nodded quickly. “Because of what Keith did, I know...I already told her that it wouldn’t happen again.”

“Well unfortunately, that’s not your choice. So you’ll just have to bear with her, it was a tough time for her.”

“I understand, Ben...thanks.” she nodded quickly as she walked out of the room and got ready to go.

# Chapter four

“Just relax, okay?” Elizabeth looked at Lea, taking her right hand in both of hers. “You’ll be here with me, nothing will happen.”

The brunette took a deep breath and chuckled lightly. “I’m more nervous than you, apparently.”

“Okay, here’s the plan.” Their boss, sargeant Rick Cooper, appeared from one of the cars parked in the lot and walked over to the couple of detectives.

“Liz, you go in first. You walk to the bar and order something. The bartender has been notified, he’ll play along. According to sources, Lils is sitting at the bar as well, waiting for a deal. You’ll notice him immediately. Start a small conversation. Meanwhile, Lea enters, orders a drink at the bar too and stays there passively. Do not...” he looked at Lea sternly, “...interfere with what she’s doing unless things go downhill. And even if they go downhill, you take her and you get the hell out of that place. We have cops here outside the building on stand-by if it goes bad, but let’s hope it doesn’t. Give me your gun.”

Lea shook her head quickly. “No way.”

Elizabeth rolled her eyes. “Don’t you think they’ll notice it when you walk inside a club with a gun strapped to your waist? Jesus, Lee, just give it.”

“What if *he* has a gun? What if he shoots you?” Lea asked, with wide eyes. Elizabeth lifted her cardigan the slightest to reveal what’s underneath. “Kevlar. I’m wearing a damn bulletproof vest and it’s hot as hell so can we please just go, so that it’s over quickly? You’re



making too big a deal out of this." Elizabeth let Lea check the camera and wire one more time and then walked off, and into the building.

The first thing she noticed was a big amount of smoke, causing her to cough. Telling herself to regain her composure, she walked to the bar and ordered a martini. The bartender nodded and prepared the drink, putting it in front of her. She smiled slightly as she accepted the drink and looked around her. She saw a big table where about nine guys were playing poker. In the corner, on the sofa, there were two couples making out viciously, and near the bathroom, a what she could only imagine would be a prostitute, giving a man a lapdance.

With a jolt in her gut, she noticed Hank Lils, sitting one stool away from her. The one in the middle was empty. After another mental scolding for being such a chicken at times like these, Elizabeth scooted over into the middle seat and looked at him.

"Hey there." She smiled at him. He looked down, lowered the cigarette he'd been smoking, and looked at her, blowing the smoke into her face. She winced, but laughed it away. "What's your name?"

"I'm not interested in whores." He said roughly. Elizabeth laughed again, cursing the waver in her voice. "Too bad I'm not a whore then."

He frowned, turning around so that his body faced her. "What are you looking for? This doesn't exactly look like a five-star restaurant. You seem like a rich snob."

Resisting the smile flirting with her facial muscles, she looked him in the eyes. "I'm looking for a big boy around here...word on the street is that they know him from here to Tokyo."

Lils swallowed thickly and grinned, shoving the remains of his cigarette in the ashtray. Elizabeth drank from her martini once again, now noticing another person in the seat next to her. *Lea*.

“Well...I’d need a name to help you out.” His voice was rough, like sandpaper, and the detective felt the hairs on the back of her neck rise.

“I believe his name was ‘Dead Jaws’. Do you know anything about him? My friend told me he had lots of great stuff for a reasonable price.”

If his previous expression was a grin, he was now beaming. He scooted a little closer to her, but remained cool. “And what would you be interested in buying?”

Elizabeth leaned closer to him as well, feeling the smell of alcohol and vomit get into her nose and resisting the urge to throw up herself.

“Coke. 250 grams.”

“That’s a big purchase for such a small girl...” he brought his hand up and let it rest on her thigh passively. Next to her, she heard the thunk of a glass being put back on the bar a little too roughly.

Deciding to ignore *Lea*, she turned all of her attention to the man in front of her. Prison hadn’t done him any good. His hair was turning grey and his tattoos were getting stretched and soggy.

“Well...what can I say?” she winked at him and laughed as he bit his lip. “Naughty girl.” He raised his hand again and moved his finger from her stomach, and up to her chest. Her heart leaped at the thought of the wire and the bulletproof vest. He was going to feel something...

She took his arm and pulled it back gently. “There’s no need for that. I’ll pay you whatever price you want. Money doesn’t matter.”

"250 grams, eh?" he repeated, obviously distracted by the shape of her breasts. She nodded.

"Well...we're talking 2500 dollars, at least."

Realizing that this was taking too long, Elizabeth tried to figure out a way to get the answers quickly, but subtle.

"This morning, when my friend was over and he told me about you..." she winked at him. "...He told me that you just got out of prison...did the cops get you?" she pouted. He nodded, obviously trying to show off for her. "I put up a fight...I killed two with one bullet. Some asshole blocked my way and they got me. I was in for five years, got bailed out some time ago."

"Really? By your right hand or something?" she asked, raising her arm to move up and down his thigh, sipping from her drink. He shrugged.

"It was one of the people I work for. As soon as I got out he ordered me to get more coke over the border from Mexico so I did a few drug trips with false ID...you know the drill, I bet." He winked at her as her hand went even higher up, almost reaching his pelvis.

"I just finished a job yesterday. Sold five kilograms to some rich guy in Beverly Hills. Got paid 5K to do it, and I'm celebrating right now."

"I bet you slept well last night." she smiled at him. He nodded. "Yeah, I went to the club last night, got wasted. Woke up with two whores in my bed around noon."

That was the answer Elizabeth needed, and oddly enough, her gut believed the guy. But to be sure..

"Have you ever killed someone other than the two cops?" she asked in played admiration as her hand went up, now reaching his private parts

and giving them a light squeeze. She heard Lea cough behind her, but paid no attention to it.

He gasped slightly, and smiled brightly. "Yeah, I killed my best mate. He was shitting himself about some deal we were making involving millions of dollars, and he was going to sell me out, so I finished him."

She nodded and let go of his pants, finishing her drink and leaning closer one last time, taking a ballpoint pen out of her cardigan pocket and writing down a fake number on his hand. She winked at him, mouthed 'call me' and left the bar, walking to the parking lot and getting inside the car they agreed on, waiting.

About one minute afterwards, Lea emerged from the building as well, getting inside the same car and hugging Elizabeth tightly. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine...I just need a shower. I touched that guy's junk!" she winced. Lea laughed weakly, putting a hand on her thigh as he had done, but with a loving gesture. "And? I didn't hear that much." The officer who was behind the wheel started the car and drove back to the station.

"He's clean. I mean, he talked so openly about drug trafficking and shooting cops, he didn't suspect a thing. And if he talked this much about all of his achievements to impress me, surely murdering a pro golf player would've been at the top of his list."

Lea shrugged. "I guess you're right."

Reaching the station in no time, Elizabeth got out of the car first and walked up to Rick, whose car had just pulled up and was waiting at the entrance. "Glad to see you back in one piece."

"Thanks, boss. So..." she started as they walked into the station and towards the elevators. "I assume you heard the story?"

“Yeah, he didn’t do it. But confessing the murder of two cops, drug dealing, trafficking *and* sexually harassing a cop, that’s basically a lifetime in prison.”

“He didn’t sexually harass a cop per definition.” Lea said as the three of them got inside the small metal cabin.

“Doesn’t matter.” Their boss growled. “That bastard is the prototype of the guys that we need to lock up forever. It’s been a long day, you two should head home.”

“Are you sure, sir? I can drive her home and come back?” Lea offered. Rick shook his head. “No way, you two need each other right now. The case won’t run away. Make sure you’re rested for tomorrow, I want this case solved asap!” he walked back to his office.

Elizabeth looked at her partner. “Shower and bedtime?”

“Sounds good. Uhm...” Lea looked at her feet, suddenly a bit nervous. The blonde raised an eyebrow at the woman’s discomfort.

“Can I...sleep in your bed tonight? I don’t know, this case...you going undercover...I have a bad feeling about it.”

Elizabeth chuckled. “I’m fine, nothing will happen. But okay, you can sleep in my room.”

Lea smiled. “Thanks, Liz.”

“As long as you don’t snore.” The blonde winked as they grabbed their stuff from their desks. Lea’s mouth fell open. “I do *not* snore!”

“That’s what you think.” With a grin, they walked back to the car and drove off. All of it, from exiting the bar to shoving her key in the lock of her front door, it all happened in a blur to Elizabeth. She became

aware of her surroundings as soon as she stepped in the shower and felt the warm water run on her back. With a content sigh, she felt all of his touches and hands disappear from her body. She washed her body, hair and stayed under for a couple more minutes, thinking about the case and staring at the wall.

When she was satisfied, she switched off the water, dried herself off and changed into her pyjamas. She walked into her room, seeing Lea lying on the bed with her laptop with her reading glasses on. Smiling, she closed the door and walked up to her. "Have I told you lately how adorable you look with those on your nose?"

"I hate them...I'm glad I don't have to wear them at work." Lea bit her lip after she answered, looking at the screen again.

"What's so much more interesting on a laptop screen than me?" Elizabeth slid underneath the covers of the bed as well and folded her arms underneath her head, looking at the screen. Lea was researching the media attention on the golf murder. Apart from some slight articles about police not letting anyone play on hole seven, the case remained quiet, apparently. A fact Elizabeth appreciated.

"I bet Rick pulled some strings to keep it quiet." Lea answered her silent question. The brunette took off her reading glasses, clapped her laptop shut and put it on her nightstand, grunting and switching the light off with a flick of the switch next to the bed.

"Goodnight." Elizabeth whispered through the dark. Lea scooted a little closer and sighed. "Goodnight."

"Do you blame me for going undercover?" Elizabeth asked now that they were both comfortable on the bed. Lea took a while to answer her question. "We both know you're the better actor...I think I'd have given

him a beating early on.” Both women laughed at her statement.  
“But...I’m just glad nothing happened. I don’t blame you.”

“That’s good...I felt how much you wanted to kick in when he was talking. I’m glad that you didn’t.”

“The guy was touching you all over...I mean...you must’ve felt *something*.”

“I felt something...but I knew that if I let my personal feelings get in the way, we’d never know who killed Sasha Ferguson.”

“So he didn’t do it?” Lea asked, putting her hand on Elizabeth’s stomach slowly, looking at her through the dark.

“We were wrong.” Elizabeth stated as if it were the most normal thing in the world. “The anagram was too good to be true.”

“So you’re saying that the clue has a different meaning?”

“I’m pretty sure.” The blonde detective bit her lower lip and stared at the ceiling, shrugging her thoughts off after a while. “We’ll work the case tomorrow. Right now I just want to fall asleep and dream about rainbows and ponies.”

“Second that.” Lea smiled as they both fell into silence, falling asleep rather quickly.

# Chapter five

“Morning.” Lea greeted her partner as the blonde walked downstairs and into the kitchen looking tired. She yawned as she answered.

“Morning. I’m usually the first one to wake up...I guess I didn’t hear my alarm clock.”

“You didn’t. I switched it off. I figured...since what happened last night, you could use a couple more minutes of sleep.”

“You make it sound like I almost died last night.” Elizabeth joked as she walked to the coffee maker and put a cup underneath it, the machine filling the cup up immediately.

“Well...to be honest I was kind of afraid for your life.” Lea admitted with the slightest hint of a smile. “Especially when he said he didn’t have any problem with murdering cops.”

“Okay, I hear you, but I think we should forget about it. We’ll just hand his file over to the drug unit and let them handle him for what he did. We have a homicide to investigate, and there’s something about that anagram that I can’t let go.”

“If it is even an anagram to begin with.”

“Yeah...I’ll probably spend most of my day searching for the answer.” Elizabeth drank from her coffee and grabbed a slice of bread from a bag, putting some butter on it and taking a bite.

“Why don’t we just hire a cryptologist?” Lea asked. “I mean, you and I would have more time to spend on the case itself and the other clues,



and that guy can solve the mystery of the paper and give us another hint.”

“Well, that sounds like a plan. You should propose that to Rick. In the meantime...we still have a suspect. We should have the warrant by now, we can go search her house.”

“From what image I have of the case right now, I bet there’s a forgotten drawer somewhere where there are some photos that will simply prove what we already know: they were best friends, they fought and then they were enemies. There won’t be a room with Sasha’s blood on the wall saying ‘die bitch die’.”

“Okay, admit that that would be cool.” Elizabeth grinned. Lea frowned at her partner’s enthusiasm but brushed it off quickly.

“Unless we can explicitly prove that Dawn Jacobs was at the golf course at the time of the murder, that woman has an alibi, even though it’s a crappy one. And the husband will confirm the story, whether it’s true or not.”

“Sounds like something husbands would do.”

“However...” Lea continued with a deep frown on her flawless face, “...the murder doesn’t explain the rape pre-mortem. I mean, if you were a killer, would you rape your victim first thing in the morning and then let her go on a morning golfing trip to follow her and murder her there?”

“I think it’s safe to say that they’re not related to each other.” Elizabeth scratched her chin in thought. “Let me finish my coffee, put my clothes on and then we’re ready to go back to the station.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Lea started to put the dishes in the dishwasher and clean up the table, and by the time she was done Elizabeth had finished her coffee. The blonde went upstairs, humming a song.

Lea stayed downstairs, cleaning up a bit and then taking her purse, badge and gun and waiting in the hallway.

“Adam Summers.” The brown-haired, dressed up man presented himself as he shook both detectives’ hands. “Head of Cryptola.”

“Cryptola?” Lea repeated. “I don’t believe I’m familiar with your company.”

“Oh, Cryptola isn’t a company. It’s more of an organization. It’s a group of people assembling every Saturday afternoon to learn more about cryptology and breaking codes. I’m the instructor. Forgive me about being this late, please, I had a long night last night. An ex-cryptologist at NSA was coming to speak about his career and it became late.”

“We understand, mister Summers. We need your help in a homicide case.” Elizabeth nodded towards a room normally used for interrogation. She pointed at the chair, inviting the man to take a seat. He did as he was bid, and looked at the two detectives. “A homicide case? Someone got murdered?”

“Yesterday morning, around seven am, a woman was murdered while she was playing golf. Her friend found the body in the bushes.” Lea showed him a picture of the body quickly. He looked at it, and then looked back up. “That...that seems horrible.” He was obviously distressed about the picture, so Lea took it back almost immediately.

“Mister Summers, we found this clue next to the body.” Elizabeth showed him a document with the text printed on it. “We were wondering if you could decipher what it means.”

*DJLAAKES WIDHNL SA*

The man stared at the paper for some time, narrowing his eyes. “It’s not a coincidence. It’s exactly sixteen letters.”

“What does that mean?” Lea crossed her arms, watching the man intensely. He looked up. “Have you ever read about cryptology?”

Both Lea and Elizabeth shook their heads. Adam Summers looked up and smiled. “It dates back from thousands of years ago, as soon as mankind had something to hide, they used codes to protect it. This code...” he tapped the paper, “...is the result of a technique developed in ancient Rome.”

“Okay...” Lea nodded for him to continue, handing him a writing pad and a pen. He accepted the two and motioned for them to come closer.

“If you write the letters separately...” he wrote down on the pad.

*D J L A A K E S W I D H N L S A*

“And put them in a box of four by four, known as a Caesar’s box...” he continued, doing as he was telling them.

*D J L A  
A K E S  
W I D H  
N L S A*

“That’s your code.” He pointed at the words with a smile. The two detectives shook their heads. He looked up at them.

“Read it vertically.” To help them out even more, he wrote down the solution of the code.

*DAWNJKILLED SASHA*

“Dawn Jacobs killed Sasha.” Elizabeth looked at her partner, running out of the room afterwards. Lea looked at the man. “Thank you for helping us. I’ll let an officer show you the way out.”

She nodded at the police officer next to the door and then left.

“We have her in a corner.” Elizabeth smiled at the large screen, showing the picture of Sasha and Dawn, hugging and smiling.

“We have one more clue. That doesn’t mean we have enough evidence to get her.”

“I can help you out in that department.” Isabelle walked in. The two detectives spun around to face their colleague. “Good morning!”

“Good morning! I have the results of the rape investigation.”

“And?” Lea looked expectantly at the ME.

“She was raped with a long, relatively narrow round object.”

“Well, that could be thousands of things.” Elizabeth shook her head.

“No, it can’t. The imprint it left is distinctive.” Isabelle smiled. “It’s a very specific shaft. The imprint was from a Callaway hybrid.”

Lea opened her mouth to voice her confusion, but Elizabeth interrupted her. “She was raped with a golf club?!”

“Yes. A very specific golf club. I took the liberty to do a little detective work for you guys.” she walked to the picture and pointed at the bag in front. “See that bag? Dawn Jacobs plays with Callaway clubs.”

Elizabeth and Lea shared a look, and then ran out of the room. Isabelle smiled as she followed behind them, going downstairs, back to her office.

“This is it...we have her.” Lea beamed. Elizabeth nodded as she strapped her seatbelt on and started the car, speeding off to the address Ben had given them.

“We’ll take her with us to the station and interrogate her there. A police car will arrive shortly after us to transport her.” Elizabeth said, adjusting the rear view mirror. Lea nodded, her hand resting on the grip of her gun absent-mindedly.

Reaching the mansion in no time, the two detectives got out of the car, walking to the front door and ringing the doorbell. “Los Angeles police, open the door!” Lea yelled. After a while of silence, Elizabeth tried again. “LAPD, open the door!”

Elizabeth nodded at Lea, who stepped back, kicking the door in roughly, wincing at the pain shooting up in her leg. “What is that door made from?!” They both pulled their guns and stepped inside, clearing the hallway.

Lea walked into the living room, guns aiming from left to right. “Clear.” Elizabeth whispered from the kitchen, and walked back towards her partner. As she reached the door towards the living room, a silhouette appeared behind her, grabbing her around the waist and pulling her away, spraying something in her eyes. Elizabeth cried out in pain as she was dropped to the ground, her gun falling on the ground with a thump. Lea’s heart stopped at the sound of her best

friend in pain, and aimed her gun, switching the light on. Dawn Jacobs was standing in the doorway, breathing heavy.

“What the hell!” she yelled out at Lea pointing the gun at her. “You two again! What are you doing in my house?!”

“We’re Los Angeles police and we rang the doorbell, asking you to open the door!” Lea shouted back, the gun in her hands not wavering.

“I was in the garden, I didn’t hear you! So what, you just barge in like this?! I thought you were a burglar!” she aimed the last part at Elizabeth, whimpering on the ground.

“Drop the pepperspray.” Lea said to the woman, who shook her head in disbelief and dropped the can. “I didn’t *mean* to mace you! I was protecting my house!”

“Okay, okay.” Lea holstered her gun and walked to Elizabeth, looking at her. “Are you okay?! Come on...” she pulled the woman up and looked at Dawn.

“Dawn Jacobs, you are under arrest for the rape and murder of Sasha Ferguson.” Lea grabbed handcuffs from her pocket and walked over to the woman.

“Wait a minute, what?! No! I didn’t murder that bitch! Someone else did!”

“Nice try.” Lea shook her head. “We found evidence against you.”

“I’m innocent!” the woman squealed. Lea took the woman and walked outside, seeing the back-up car and handing the golf player over to the officers. Then, she raced back inside, by Elizabeth’s side in seconds.

“Hey...come on...do I need to get you to a hospital?” Lea asked carefully. Elizabeth shook her head, rubbing at her eyes. “I’m fine...let’s head back to the station...”

Lea didn’t buy the answer but humored her partner by taking her back to the car.

“What happened to you?!” Isabelle’s eyes widened as the two walked inside the morgue, where the ME was working on stitching the Y-incision that indicated the autopsy.

“I got maced...Is there something you can do?” Elizabeth gritted her teeth and looked at the ME through red and puffy eyes. Isabelle stepped closer and grabbed a plastic tube with a small drop system on top. She pushed Elizabeth down into a chair and opened her eyes, dripping some of the fluid into the eyes. Elizabeth grunted.

“It’s regular water. You just have to keep flushing the chemicals out of your eyes, okay?” Isabelle handed the tube to her friend and turned to Lea. “How did it go?”

“We got her...she kept on saying she was innocent though.” Lea looked at the ME. “Is there a possibility that Dawn Jacobs is innocent?”

“I thought you were the one convinced that she did it?” Isabelle asked the detective. Lea ran a hand through her hair and nodded quickly. “Yeah...but I can’t shake the feeling that we’re wrong. I mean, we were confident about Hank Lils and he had nothing to do with it.”

Ben’s head popped up from the doorway. “Lea, can I talk to you?”

The brunette followed him out and looked at him. “I just started interrogating her. She claims that one of her clubs was stolen at the

course two days ago. I talked to the receptionist of the club, he confirms that she walked up to him and threw a fit about losing an expensive club.”

“So the club was stolen.” Lea’s heart sank. He nodded. “And...more bad news. A phonecall was made from Dawn Jacobs’ cellphone yesterday at the time of the murder. I tracked it, it came from within her house.”

“So she’s innocent. Damn it.” Lea whispered, rubbing at her eyes tiredly. “Okay, I’ll go tell Liz.”

Ben walked back to his desk and Lea felt like crying as she came back inside the morgue. Elizabeth looked up, her eyes were getting a little less puffy. “What’s wrong?”

“Jacobs didn’t do it.” Lea spoke harshly. “Her alibi was confirmed and the club used to rape Sasha Ferguson was stolen two days ago.”

Elizabeth’s face fell. “So we have nothing.”

“Not a single thing. We had two suspects, we have zero.”

“Damn it.” Elizabeth cursed too as she dropped back in the chair, dripping some more water in her eyes. “This sucks.”

“Wait a minute...” Lea remained silent for a while, the two other women in the room looking at her expectantly.

“Why would Ferguson carry a piece of paper that had the name of her killer in code language?”

“Maybe...she wanted specific people to find out who killed her?” Isabelle tried. “Just people that knew the code.”



“The witness said that he didn’t know much about her personal life. It’s a long shot...” Elizabeth bit her lip. “...Adam Summers said that he had an event that yesterday afternoon. Craig Danning said that they took the earliest flight because Sasha had to go somewhere in the afternoon...”

“Let’s find out how many members that Cryptola organisation has.” Lea left the morgue, followed by Elizabeth who thanked Isabelle for the water tube.

“Cryptola...cryptola...” Lea repeated as she researched the organisation. She shook her head after a while, feeling Elizabeth watch over her shoulder. “There’s nothing. I can’t find anything on the internet.”

“Must be a hoax then.” Elizabeth sighed. “Well...this is new.”

“Let’s talk to Adam Summers then. Maybe he’ll know more.”

# Chapter six

“Mister Summers, we have a feeling that you are not telling us the truth.” Elizabeth sat on a chair facing him, Lea was standing at the door.

“What are you talking about? I cracked your code...” he frowned. Elizabeth shook her head, smiling. “I tried to contact you but you didn’t give me a business card.”

“Well...they’re getting printed right now...” both detectives could see that he was getting uncomfortable. Lea continued.

“And then we searched Cryptola on the internet but we didn’t find anything...how is that possible?”

“We haven’t had the time to make a website yet...” he said quickly. Elizabeth smiled. “See, I think you’re lying.”

“Look...” he leaned closer to Elizabeth. Lea narrowed her eyes, her hand going to the grip of her gun again unconsciously.

“I didn’t kill Sasha.” He whispered. “Dawn Jacobs did.”

“She didn’t. We found evidence that proved she wasn’t at the crime scene.”

“No!” Summers growled, leaning even closer, his face turning into a mixture of rage and sadness. “Dawn killed her! She tore Sasha apart!”

“What are you talking about!” Elizabeth’s eyes widened at the man’s aggression. He seemed to regain his composure and took a seat on his chair again.

"I've known Sasha for a while now. She studied math at UCLA, I was her professor. She was really into cryptology, and so was I. So... We got together after class sometimes to do some research and crack each other's codes." Lea saw beads of sweat appear on his forehead.

"It grew into something else." Elizabeth assumed, taking notes from what he was saying on a notepad. He nodded. "We kissed...she was still my student, I couldn't...If someone found out..." he looked down and clenched his jaw. "She was really good at golfing."

"What happened yesterday?" Lea asked, coming closer. Summers took a deep breath. "Dawn ruined her life by fighting with her. They used to do everything together, they basically lived together. She told Dawn all about her parents and why they were dead...and how she had to take care of Simon all by herself. Then that bitch let her down. Sasha was depressed for days. She wouldn't talk to me, or crack any of my codes...or kiss me."

"So you killed her." Elizabeth frowned.

"I DIDN'T KILL SASHA!" He yelled, losing all patience. The gleam in his eyes was one of pure madness. Elizabeth recoiled and nodded quickly. "Okay...you didn't...what happened after that!"

His face went normal again as quickly as it had distorted with rage.

"I told her we needed a solution. She said she couldn't live like this anymore...She wanted to go. She wanted to commit suicide." He started crying softly. Lea looked at her partner, unsure about what to do.

"I tried to talk her out of it. For days...It wouldn't work. She needed to go. She felt like it was her time." He dried his eyes roughly. "I told her that she'd at least have to take Dawn with her."

“Was that the plan? Kill Sasha and put Dawn in prison?” Lea asked. He nodded. “I had nothing to do with it...she ordered me to help her.”

“And you were so in love with her that you went along.”

“I loved her so much...She was perfect. She was so certain of what she was going to do...I just had to steal Dawn’s club, put the code next to her and get rid of the hand and knife.”

“Where is the hand?” Elizabeth asked. He looked up. “At home...I put it somewhere safe so that nobody could take it from me...take *her* from me.”

“Did she order you to rape her?”

“No...I didn’t...rape her. We had sex but...It wasn’t aggressive.”

“So what...she raped herself?” Elizabeth’s face scrunched up. Summers shrugged. “She told me she used to cut herself...and she flirted with the idea of pain and death.”

Lea winced. “How the hell can you rape yourself?!”

“Enough force.” Elizabeth said to her partner, before turning back to the man in front of her.

“So...she left the rape evidence, went on her morning golfing trip, disappeared into the bushes, discarded her clothes, chopped her own hand off and stabbed herself to death?”

Adam Summers, now in hysterical tears, nodded.

“All of that just to frame Dawn?”

He nodded again slowly.

Elizabeth took a deep breath. "Adam Summers, you are under arrest for conspiring against Dawn Jacobs and for your part in the death of Sasha Ferguson."

"Wait...I didn't do anything! No! PLEASE!" He yelled out as the blonde handcuffed him. He thrashed wildly, Lea called in officers who kept him under control and took him away.

Elizabeth pulled a stray lock of hair out of her face and looked at her partner. "Well...that was...intriguing."

"How can you rape yourself?! That must hurt like hell!" Lea exclaimed, wincing. "I can feel it happening!"

Elizabeth smiled, wrapped her arm around her partner's shoulders and left the interrogation room.

"So, what's going to happen to Simon now?" Elizabeth asked as she looked up from the book she was reading on their couch. Lea, who was playing a game on her laptop, looked up. "Huh?"

"Simon. The brother of the victim, what's going to happen to him?"

"I think he'll be in foster care until he's eighteen." Lea paused the game and put the laptop away, looking at the blonde.

"Poor guy. First his mom, then his dad, now his sister." Elizabeth sighed deeply. Lea nodded. "Yeah..."

"Good job today." Elizabeth smiled at her. Lea arched an eyebrow and laughed. "You too. Oh, and Liz?"

"Yeah?" Elizabeth faced her with a smile.

"You didn't really look like a manatee."

