



Campbell was embarrassed, not just for being noisy while her father was on the phone, but because she didn't usually behave like a juvenile. Nick had always rubbed her the wrong way, but they'd managed to get along and even do some productive work together while her father was missing. And to be honest, he was right. She *wasn't* being fair. Why was she furious with him now? And letting it show? She looked down at her laptop.

"Don't you ever touch my computer again. Ever."

"I thought I was doing you a favor."

"Sure." She turned away and walked to the counter where the coffeemaker stood. With a little juggling, she managed to find enough space to set down the laptop. She didn't really want coffee, but she needed to do something credible that would excuse her from looking at Nicholas Emerson.

*What did I expect? That Nick would never come back, and I'd work here happily ever after alone with Dad?*

She measured coffee into the filter basket, feeling guiltier by the second. Was she jealous of this guy? The son her father never had? As a child, she'd sometimes daydreamed of having a big brother. But not a little brother. Everyone knew they were

nothing but a pain. And something about Nick brought out the worst in her.

Maybe she shouldn't have turned down that job offer of teaching freshman comp classes this fall at Murray State. Her father's business had run smoothly before she came. She didn't want to ruin that.

Bill hung up his phone. "Coffee ready?"

"Not yet," Campbell replied. "I just started a new pot." She turned toward him, but her father was looking at Nick.

"So, Nick, that was Ryan Crawford, the lawyer. He needs us to do a diligent search for an heir. Could you handle that at home while you finish your convalescence?"

Nick snorted, perhaps to indicate the question was a no-brainer, or perhaps at Bill's use of a four-syllable word. "Of course I could. Can't I just do it here? I'm not in quarantine."

"No, but your mother is serious about making sure you follow the doctor's orders. I don't want to be responsible for her flying up here from Florida to ride herd on you."

Nick's eyebrows drew together, but he didn't contradict Bill. He obviously hated being treated like a kid, but he and Campbell both knew his mother was perfectly capable of booking a flight to Paducah if she thought he was overdoing it.

"I guess."

Bill smiled and glanced at his daughter. "Good. And in the meantime, Campbell and I will discuss the furniture situation here. You two each need your own workspace, that's obvious. I can't spend my time refereeing your squabbles."

"Sorry, Dad," Campbell said.

"Don't tell me. Tell Nick."

She looked over at the offender, but she just couldn't get the words out.

"I'm the one who should apologize," Nick said. "Campbell, I'm sorry I cracked into your computer. I shouldn't have done that. I was just bored."

Her jaw felt tight, but she managed to speak. “You read my emails.”

“It was a challenge, since I had to do everything one-handed.”

“We won’t have any more of that, will we, Nick?” Bill said.

The smirk faded from Nick’s lips. “No, sir.”

Campbell could barely believe Nick’s humble attitude. Was he putting it on for her dad?

“Glad to hear it.” Bill gave him a perfunctory smile. “Where’s your own computer?”

“At my place,” Nick muttered.

“Well, I’m going to send you the details on this search. You’ll have them when you get home. Mr. Crawford would like to see some results by Monday if possible, so he can carry on with distributing the estate.”

“There’s a missing heir?” Campbell couldn’t help asking. The idea of tracking down people who had a nice legacy coming their way appealed to her.

“Yes, a grandson who left home ten years ago and hasn’t been heard from since. Nick is very good at tracing.” Bill tapped away at his keyboard while he spoke. “Okay, I’ve sent you my notes and attached a copy of the file Crawford sent me. I’ll leave that with you, Nick. If you have any problems, let me know later. Otherwise, it’s your case.”

“Thanks.” Nick didn’t sound truly grateful, but he stood and picked up his potato chip bag and phone. “Guess I’m out of here.”

“Hey,” Bill said, “it’s not that I don’t want you back at work. I just want you to be good and rested when you start putting in eight hours a day. So don’t work too hard on this, you understand me? I can chip away at it this weekend if it turns out to be more difficult than I think it will.”

“Okay.” Nick looked over at Campbell. “I guess this means you’re going to be a permanent part of True Blue, so welcome. And I truly am sorry. I was out of line.”

She nodded. "Get some rest, Nick. And when we're done with the Harrison case, I'd like to learn to do the kind of search you're tackling. Maybe you can help me." She let out a breath as the door closed behind him. "I'm sorry, Dad. The last thing I want to do is squeeze Nick out."

Bill held up a hand in protest. "You won't. But he may be wondering. Now, I've still got that insurance fraud case. Nick can work on that one next week and free me up for the Harrison case. Are you going to get working on finding Katherine Tyler's old housekeeper, or do you want to shop for a desk first?"

The sound of the Jeep's engine starting outside prompted another objection. How could Nick even drive with that cast?

Her father's sober expression warned her not to voice it.

She swallowed hard. "Let's work, Dad."

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CAMPBELL LOOKED ONLINE for the minister of the church where Xina had told them Katherine Tyler attended.

"Should I call the pastor?" she asked her father.

"I'd go in person. Ministers are cautious about giving out information on their congregation, as they should be."

"Right." She spent some more time working on tracking down Mrs. Conley. Her father gave her a few tips, and by two o'clock she was confident she'd located the right person.

"I'm pretty sure her first name is Doris," she said. "Should I call first?"

"I usually get better results if I show up unannounced," Bill said.

"That seems to be a pattern."

"It is. Want me to go with you?"

"Well, I was going to go by the minister's house first and then see if I could find Doris Conley."

Bill nodded. "You go ahead. I'll stay here and keep working on this end. Call me if you run into problems."

Campbell hesitated. “Okay, but is that legal? I don’t have my license yet, and I’m supposed to assist you. Is it all right for me to go off and question people on my own?”

“I don’t think it’s a problem.” Bill sifted through the papers on his desk and opened the folder with *Harrison* on the tab. “The regs don’t get that specific. I’m supposed to instruct and train you. So let’s talk about what kind of questions you should ask Doris Conley, and also the ones you don’t want to ask.”

A few minutes later, she set out for the parsonage near the church Ms. Tyler had attended. The minister’s wife answered the door and showed Campbell into her husband’s study.

He greeted her cheerfully, but when she asked about Katherine Tyler, he frowned and opened a computer file on his desktop model.

“I’ve only been here a couple of years, and I don’t believe I’ve ever met Ms. Tyler. Her name seems to be on our membership roll.” He sat back in his chair and stared at the far wall for a moment. “I wonder if one of the older ladies in our church might be able to help you.” He reached for his phone. “I don’t like to give our members’ contact information to outsiders, but I can give this woman a call.”

“That’s very kind of you,” Campbell said.

He punched in a number and then waited. He smiled when he got a response. “Hello, Brenda. I’m fine. How are you? I wanted to ask you about another one of our members. Do you know if Katherine Tyler has attended any of our services lately? No ... I see. Well, thank you very much.”

Replacing the receiver, he looked across the desk at Campbell. “She says that Ms. Tyler hasn’t been to a service here in several years, to her knowledge.”

Campbell nodded soberly. “Well, thank you very much.”

“I should probably pay a call on her,” the pastor said. “You said you’re looking into her background on behalf of a family member?”

“Yes,” Campbell said. “I understand she’s become quite

reclusive. This person was concerned. But if you do contact Ms. Tyler, please don't say anything about it to her. I don't want to upset her."

He frowned. "All right."

"I assure you, we have only Ms. Tyler's best interests at heart."

She rose and shook his hand then went to her car. It was a short trip south to Hazel, a small, picturesque town heavy on antique shops. Campbell hadn't spent much time exploring this part of Kentucky, and so far, she liked it. Teaching at a university five hundred miles away had allowed her only brief visits to her father's adopted home.

Following the GPS directions, she turned onto Doris Conley's street, where she pulled the car over to the shoulder. The afternoon sun had brought a shimmering heat. A bottle of water, unopened, sat in the cup holder, and she twisted off the cap and took a deep swallow. For a moment she sat still, breathing slowly and preparing herself for the interview.

She walked up to the front door of the compact brick ranch, where she rang the bell. A middle-aged woman opened the door.

"May I help you?" Her gray eyes peered at Campbell through bifocals.

"Hi, I'm looking for Doris Conley."

The woman's eyes narrowed. "Your name?"

"Campbell McBride."

"I'm Doris. Come on in."

Campbell entered a small, tiled foyer. Beyond it, she could see a cozy living room.

"How may I help you, Miss McBride?"

"I understand you used to work for Katherine Tyler."

"Yes." Mrs. Conley said cautiously.

"How long were you employed by Ms. Tyler?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I'm an investigator." Campbell remembered her father's counsel to give as little information she could.

Doris frowned. "What sort of investigator?"

"The private kind."

"Has something happened to Miss Tyler?"

"I don't think so. Her family is concerned about her, and we're looking into her activities and her general wellbeing."

"Her family? You must mean her niece," Doris said. "That's all the family she has left."

"Have you met her niece?" Campbell asked.

"Several times. I first met Xina when she was about twelve. But she's got an MBA now. Works someplace out in California, I think."

That meshed with everything Xina had told them, and Campbell was relieved. "Why did you leave Miss Tyler's employ?"

Doris stepped back. "Why don't you come through and sit down?"

Campbell followed her down a short hallway, through the well-appointed kitchen, and out onto the shady back patio. They both settled in lawn chairs.

"Now, what is this for, exactly?" Doris asked.

Campbell ran down Bill's list of "rules" and tried to think of the least revealing answer she could give. "I'm with True Blue Investigations. I'm not allowed to discuss the arrangements of the case with you, but I assure you, we have Miss Tyler's best interests at heart."

Doris studied her face for a few seconds. "Well, all right. The truth is, she fired me."

"Did she say why?"

"No. One Monday morning, I was getting ready to go over and clean her house, and she phoned me. Said my services weren't needed any longer, and she would mail me a check for my last week of work."

"That sounds rather abrupt."

"It was. Especially when you've worked for someone twenty-eight years, and they never complained once. She didn't give me

any warning at all.” Doris shook her head. “I wasn’t sure I could get another job. I called a few times, to ask if she would give me a reference, but she wouldn’t answer.”

“Did that upset you?”

“Well, sure. Wouldn’t you be upset? I still have no clue what I did wrong.”

“Have you found another position?”

“Yeah, three days a week, and I pick up another lady for a fourth day—just light cleaning for her. It isn’t too bad. But I liked working for Miss Tyler.”

“Did you talk to her much while you were there?”

“Some. She might keep to her bedroom some days, or the little room she had fitted up for an office. If she was working on a new book, she barely spoke to me. But most days we’d chat a few minutes, or even have a cup of tea together. I got to know her over the years, and I thought we got along fine.”

“And then she let you go without warning,” Campbell said. “Can you tell me when that was?”

“Uh ... well, it’s nearly five years now. I think it was July, five years ago. Somewhere near then.”

Campbell nodded. “Thank you. Is there anything you remember that was odd the last few times you went to the house?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Our client mentioned that a few items of Miss Tyler’s seemed to be missing.”

Doris’s face blanched. “Is she accusing me of stealing something? She never said anything like that to me.”

“No, no,” Campbell said quickly. “It’s just that a couple of items that used to be in the house aren’t there now. A Ramsey painting, for instance, in the front parlor.”

“That landscape, you mean? Over the fireplace?”

“That’s right.”

Doris frowned. “It was there when I was last in the house.”

Campbell jotted it down in her small notebook. She glanced



at the list of questions her father had told her to ask. “What about a family photo from the mantel, or an antique match holder?”

She squinted her eyes for a moment. “I remember those, but I have no idea what’s become of them.”

“Do you remember anyone else that Miss Tyler had contact with? Maybe people in the area that she did business with?”

“Hmm. I did most of her shopping. If something broke down, she would have a repairman come. Sometimes I set that up for her. She paid somebody to mow the lawn, and one of the neighbors would do a chore for her once in a while.”

“Do you remember any names?”

“Just the furnace guy. I’d done business with him once before.” Doris gave Campbell the repairman’s name.

“What about the neighbor?”

“Hmm, Ben something. He lived right next door, if that helps.”

“What about her doctor and dentist?”

“I’m sorry. I can’t recall any names.”

“Did Miss Tyler drive herself if she had an appointment?”

“Sometimes she’d take a taxi.”

Campbell noted the fact. “She didn’t have a car?”

“She did, but she didn’t drive it much by the last of my time with her. It was still in the garage, though. She’d take it out now and again, but not long distances. The last conference she spoke at, she paid me to drive her to the airport in Nashville.”

Campbell hurried to keep up. “And do you recall who her agent is?”

Doris shook her head. “I never talked about the publishing business with her.”

“All right, thank you. If you think of anything pertinent, would you call me?” Campbell wished she had new business cards with the office number on them. She took out one of her old ones and wrote the office number on the back.

Doris took it. “You live in Iowa?”

“Not anymore. I came home recently to work in my father’s agency.”

To Campbell’s relief, Doris didn’t probe about that. She seemed more worried about Katherine Tyler’s current activities.

“She’s not saying I took that painting, is she?”

“No, not at all. You can rest easy on that. So far as I know, Miss Tyler hasn’t said a word against you. I just wondered if you knew anything about its history. Thanks for your time.”

Doris walked through to the front door with her, and Campbell went to her car. Had the painting been switched out for the Winslow Homer print last fall, just before it was sold in Atlanta? Maybe the new housekeeper would know, if they decided it was important enough to ask. She punched in the office phone number.

“True Blue Investigations,” her father said briskly.

“Hi, Dad. It’s Campbell. Listen, I need some business cards. Don’t know why I didn’t think of it before. Do you have a place that you order from?”

“Yeah, I use a job printer downtown. What do you want on them?”

Campbell scrunched up her face as she thought about it. “Maybe model them on yours, with the logo, but put my name? And the office address and number on there, the way it is on yours.”

“Sounds good. I’ll place the order. Did you talk to Doris Conley?”

“I did. I’m on my way back, but I thought I’d go to Ms. Tyler’s neighborhood and interview some of her neighbors.”

“Okay. Be discreet. Park where your car can’t be seen from her house.”

“Got it.” The last thing she wanted was for Katherine Tyler to look out a window and see her making the rounds of her neighbors’ doors. “How’s it going there?”

“Busy. I’ve had a call from another prospective client. He’s coming in tomorrow morning to talk.”

“Wow. The whole time you were missing, all we got were routine insurance and legal cases.”

“Well, the publicity from the Beresford and Shepherd cases drew a lot of attention to us. Not to mention the missing exchange student case you solved.”

“We solved. I guess so.” Campbell could hear the pride in his voice, and it felt good, but she hoped she could live up to his expectations.

“We can’t wait until one case is closed before we agree to take another,” her dad said.

“Right.”

Campbell drove to Ms. Tyler’s street and rolled by the house, trying not to stare at it. She parked farther down the block, out of sight, and walked back toward the white house. Two doors before Katherine’s, she approached a charming Princess Anne and rang the bell. No one was home, either there or at the house directly across from Katherine’s.

Back in her car, Campbell drove around the back of the block. She parked at the other end of the street and ambled to the neighbor’s on the other side of Katherine’s. After scouting to make sure no one was looking out from Katherine’s, she hurried up onto the porch.

This time, a man answered her summons.

“Hello,” Campbell said with a smile.

He peered at her through black-rimmed glasses. His graying hair looked a little greasy, and his brown eyes were set back into his puffy face.

“Who are you?”

“I’m Campbell McBride. I wondered if you’re acquainted with Miss Tyler, next door.”

His eyes narrowed. “Are you a cop?”

“No.”

“Then I don’t have to talk to you.” He started to shut the door.

Campbell put out her hand. “Please wait.”

He hesitated with the door open about three inches.

Campbell said quickly, "I'd just like to know if you have any contact with Miss Tyler. Do you ever talk to her?"

His hard eyes shocked her. Did her dad get this reaction often? She didn't like the tightness in her chest as he glared at her.

"You get out of here, or I'll call the cops." He shut the door in her face, and the deadbolt clicked.