

CHAPTER 2



Mac surveyed the entrance to the Public Safety building, home of the Washington police force. She half expected Jake to be waiting for her at the door. But he wasn't there, and a twinge of disappointment shot through her.

Sam pulled in next to her. "Ready to rock and roll?" She hitched her shoulder bag in place and smiled at Mac.

"I guess. This is not how I planned to spend my day."

"I know." She gave Mac a little shove. "Let's get it over with, and we can get back to preparing for our party."

Inside, they climbed the steps to the second floor, where the police precinct was located. The woman behind the counter gave them a broad smile.

"Hello, you two. Haven't seen you in a while." She picked up the receiver to her phone. "Here to see your brother, Detective Sanders?"

"It's Detective Young this time," Mac said. "I'm here to work with someone on a sketch."

"So, you're the one." She punched a button. "Mackenzie

Love is here.” She hung up and faced them. “He’ll be right with you. That must have been scary today. How are you, Miss Love?”

“A little headache, but I’ll live.” Mac gave her a wry smile and turned as Detective Young approached.

“Hi, ladies.” He motioned them to follow. “Let’s go back to my desk. Detective Walker’s waiting for you there.” He led them through the maze of cubbyholes to a small office in the rear.

A man with brown skin and warm brown eyes stood as they entered the room.

“Detective Walker, this is Mackenzie Love and her partner, Samantha Majors. They’re private investigators.” Young nodded at Sam. “Jake Sanders is Sam’s brother.”

“I’ve heard about you two.” Walker’s natural smile put Mac at ease. “Why don’t you ladies have a seat, and we’ll get started.” He sat behind a computer and punched a few keys. “Let’s begin with what the gunman was wearing.”

“Worn jeans and a long-sleeve dark T-shirt. I couldn’t tell if it was black or navy blue,” Mackenzie said.

“Any writing on it or an insignia?”

“Nothing that stood out.”

“Good.” He entered the information and smiled at Mac. “Now let’s talk about his face.”

Mackenzie closed her eyes. An image of the gun filled her mind as she tried to recall the details of her attack.

“Are you all right?” Sam touched her arm. “You moaned.”

“I’m okay.” Mac gave her a brief smile and closed her eyes again. On the screen of her mind, she lifted her eyes once more. “He had dark skin, but he seemed ... European, if that makes any sense. With a narrow chin.”

“Italian or Spanish?”

“Possible.”

“Could you tell if his face was oval? Square? Round?”

She pinched her brows together. “Square. I think.”

“Any facial hair?”

Was there a mustache? She pressed her hands to her temples. “No, nothing.”

“Okay. What about his other features?”

“His nose was sharp, and he had thin lips.”

Keys clicked as Walker entered the new information. “How about his eyes?”

“He wore dark glasses. Small ones.” The man’s face came into focus in her mind. “And a navy ball cap.” Her eyes popped open. “And a short scar on his left cheekbone.”

“Great.” Walker moved his mouse over an area of his screen. “The hat means he could be bald or have a full head of hair, but no problem.”

“I guess so.” A sudden weariness came over her. She opened her eyes. It didn’t sound like much to go on.

“Give me a moment, and I’ll have a sketch for you to look at.” Walker bent close to the screen. “Here it is.” He swiveled the computer around for Mac to see. “What do you think?”

The image of her attacker jerked her out of her stupor. “You did it.”

“Don’t sound so surprised.” Walker chuckled. “I’ve been doing this for a long time, and you gave me great details.” He pivoted the computer back to face him. “I’ll finish putting the information with this, and by afternoon, it’ll be out to every police station in the area. We’ll get him.”

“Get who?” Detective Jake Sanders strolled into the room. “Hi, Sis. Mackenzie.”

He brushed Mac’s shoulder as he passed, and for a moment, she lost track of where she was.

Detective Walker nodded his head at the computer screen. “This is the guy who attacked Mackenzie this morning.”

“I didn’t hear about the attack.” Jake tensed. “What happened?”

“Mackenzie was leaving the store when this guy with a gun ambushed her. She fought him off, but he hit her in the head and got away.”

Jake’s blue eyes darkened as he took in the bandage near Mac’s right eye. She winced inwardly under his intense gaze. It wasn’t the first time she’d gotten smacked on the head, but as she and Jake grew closer, he seemed more agitated each time it happened.

“It’s not as bad as it seems.” She straightened and stared back, hoping to deflect a future lecture.

“Hmm.” He returned his attention to the sketch. “I assume this will go out to all the surrounding local law enforcement?”

“Already working on it,” Walker said.

“Great.” Jake gave the women a grim smile. “I’ll see you two later.”

Mac waited for him to touch her shoulder again on his way out, but he didn’t. A kernel of regret lodged in her throat.

“Thanks for coming in.” Detective Walker stood. “If we think of any more questions, we’ll be in touch.”

“Our pleasure.” Sam steered Mac out of the room and to the parking lot. “Let’s get back to the office and help Ms. P with the party.”

Mac pulled her sunglasses from her purse. If asked to list the top five things she preferred doing right now, throwing a party would rank minus ten—along with cleaning the bathroom. Especially after seeing Jake.

Saturday night, Mac and Sam planned to celebrate five years in business. They’d invited everyone—past clients, friends, and family.

Which meant Miss Priscilla Freebody, their associate, and her nephew, Nathaniel Xander Westcott III, former boyfriend

to Mackenzie. And the other reason she'd avoided Jake. He didn't know about Nate. She hadn't even told Sam.

DETECTIVE JAKE SANDERS slammed his door, slumped in his chair, and cast an angry look over the files piled on his desk. Nothing had changed since he'd been away. Mac landed in the middle of trouble on a simple shopping trip. Didn't he have enough to deal with in his job without having to worry about her, too?

He punched the side of his file cabinet. Pain shot up his arm. Dumb move. The photo on top fell over. He picked it up.

With a big smile on her face, Mackenzie stood next to his sister in front of the house they used for their offices. Mac's dark hair blew in the breeze, and her chestnut eyes gleamed as if picturing future adventures. A thundercloud passed across his brow. Why did he want to yell at her and kiss her at the same time? Maybe dating her was a big mistake.

He swiveled his chair toward his desk and his backlog of paperwork. Besides, he didn't have time to go out. And after seeing the pain his mom suffered through this past month with his dad, he wasn't certain he wanted to get close to anyone. A simple life of work and friends sounded pretty good about now.