

CHAPTER 2



Jake had never had trouble getting dates, but since his engagement, it seemed like he'd become ... what did they call it? A chick magnet? He hated it. All he wanted was to do his job and spend his free time with Mackenzie. Was that too much to ask?

"Laura comes to the gun range." He stepped in front of Mac and looked her full in the face.

"What?" She furrowed her brow at him.

"Laura." He took her hand. "That's how she knows me."

"I've given up on that." She waved a hand in the air. "You're just a chick magnet."

That phrase again. "No. I'm not." He dropped her hand.

"Okayyy." She held up her hands in surrender. "Sorry."

"I'm your fiancé. That's it." He straightened his shirt. "Walk me through what happened." He followed Mac to the copy room, where she described the scene, indicated where Doug lay on the floor, and detailed administering CPR.

"What's the nurse's name?"

"I don't know. We'll have to ask Mrs. White."

Jake took notes. For a history museum, there was a lot of present-day drama happening here. A few months ago, a man was shot on the bench against the wall. Now, another man badly hurt updating the wiring. He shook his head. Poor Mrs. White. “We need to find her.”

“She’s probably in her office.” Mac led the way.

Mrs. White motioned them in and indicated two chairs in front of her desk. “I’m so glad to see you, Detective Sanders. This has me so flustered.”

“I understand.” Jake gave her a sympathetic smile. “There are just a few things I need from you.” He looked at his notes. “First, who found the—Doug?” He’d almost said ‘body.’

“One of the ladies who volunteers here regularly. Francis Underwood.”

Jake cut his eyes to Mac. Underwood. “Is she married to Thomas Underwood?”

“No, no. She’s his sister.” Mrs. White looked at Mac. “She’s the nurse who did CPR on poor Douglas, dear.”

Mac nodded, her teeth worrying her bottom lip.

Something was bothering her. Jake made a note to find out what. He focused once more on his questions. “Who turned the lights on?”

“Our maintenance man. He went back to where the breaker box is and flipped a switch.” Mrs. White lifted folded hands in the air. “Praise God, that’s all it took.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Jake gave her a warm smile. “I need to speak with him.”

“I’m sorry, Detective, he’s gone for the day. He’s got a doctor’s appointment this afternoon but should be back tomorrow.”

“That’s fine. It can wait.” Jake closed his notebook. “Thanks for your time.” He held the door for Mac. Time to find out what was bugging her.

But when they stepped into the hallway, she pivoted to face him. “I need to stay here a while longer.” She placed a hand on his chest. “I have a few more things I want to look up. See you later at Sam’s?”

“Sure.” Jake kissed her on the cheek. “Don’t be late.” He rubbed his forehead and watched her walk away.

If he thought she’d listen to him, he’d insist Mac leave with him now. Seemingly simple occurrences had a way of getting complicated when she was involved, and he had a feeling this could be one of those times. But it was apparent she was on a mission, and he might as well keep his mouth shut. For now.

MACKENZIE ENTERED the windowless research room to find all her papers as she’d left them. A picture taken at the Easter parade in 2015 lay on top. She moved it to another spot on the table, smoothed the wrinkles out, and took several photos of it with her phone.

Her parents could be seen in the background speaking with a man. From their body language, the conversation seemed heated. If only she could make out who he was. It wasn’t long after this photo was taken that they had their “accident.” The accident that wasn’t an accident at all.

Setting the picture aside, she picked up the phone book from that year. The good citizens of Washington, Missouri, still liked the White Pages back then, which made it a lot easier to find out who was living there. She thumbed to the U section and found an entry for Thomas Underwood and one other Underwood family member. Probably his parents. No Francis. She may have lived in another city, or if she was still living at home, her phone number would be the same as her parents’.

Douglas James was in there, but there was no way to tell if

he was married to Laura or not. Mac didn't remember her back then, but Mac wasn't around much. She'd have to ask her sister, Beth.

Mac closed the book and straightened the papers. Mrs. White preferred returning the files and photos to the stacks herself, so she left everything on the table. The name Underwood pestered her thoughts like a fly buzzing around her head. Time to call her sister and get some answers.

But contacting Beth would have to wait. Tonight, she had other plans. She and Jake were having dinner with her partner and her husband, Samantha and Alan Majors, at their house. Mac glanced at the clock and stuffed her notes into her bag. She'd have just enough time to go home and change.

"See you soon." She waved to Mrs. White as she passed her door on the way out.

"Goodnight, Mackenzie," the older woman said. "Be careful. It's raining."

Mac huddled under the awning, glaring out at the sheet of water pouring out of the sky. She pulled her sweater around her bag and sprinted to her car. Before jumping inside, she spied a sheet of paper plastered to the windshield. It was too miserable to spend time retrieving it. Besides, the message would be long gone anyway.

Tucked into the driver's seat, her bag on the passenger seat, and the car heater cranked up full blast, Mac raised her gaze to the windshield. Three words appeared as the defroster did its job.

FORGET THE PAST.