

Three murders. All connected. Most likely committed by John. Yet I couldn't be certain. I needed help. Dave? No. I still had to check his alibi for the Orlando murder. What were the chances he might be visiting Florida in October two years ago? Unlikely, but with my own life hanging in the balance, I had to find out for sure. I need a long chat with Mrs. Johnson; if anyone knew his vacation schedule, it would be her. What about calling Kip? I didn't know enough about Kip yet. Didn't know whether he was in Florida at the time of the murder there. Didn't know his alibi for the murder here. When I walked into the office that morning, Charlie and Dave were focused on a wrinkled map flattened across Dave's desk. Charlie pointed to the map and said something to Dave, but I couldn't quite make out the words.

Mrs. Johnson got up from her desk and pulled me away from the two men. "Jake Lanway escaped from prison," she whispered in my ear.

"How? What happened?"

"Apparently Jake got assigned to the outdoor work crew. Those work crews are only for small time offenders ... drunk driving, criminal mischief, things like that. Well, he disappeared from the work crew."

Both our heads turned when we heard a metallic squeal. Dave had opened a large metal cabinet in the corner of the room. He pulled out two flak jackets and two shot guns. This was serious. I turned back to Mrs. Johnson. "Is Jake armed?"

The older lady shrugged. "He already killed two people, dear."

"When? Last night?"

"No, dear. Angie and the other poor girl."

My face wracked with guilt, I glanced at Dave and Charlie. The murder I just uncovered ... two years ago in Orlando. Jake was in prison. It points to another killer. Should I, at least, tell Dave? I heard metal clicks and looked back at the men. They had snapped ammunition cartridges into their guns. The pair started toward the door and I jolted up to join them. Dave turned at the door and pushed his arm out, his hand up in a stop signal. "No, you stay here."

"But—"

He closed the door in my face and all I could do was stare at it. What should I do? Tell him about the murder two years ago? What if Dave was the killer? Damn it! I had to tell him. I opened the door to get to them, but the police car was already speeding down the street, blinking red and blue lights warning away the trucks and cars of peaceful Mayburg. I dialed Dave's cell phone. The bored voice of Dave doomed my call to voice mail. Crap! Why didn't he answer?