

## Chapter 1

"Why is there a dead man in your office?" Bob asked. Sabre spun around to face her friend.

"Oh Bob, I'm glad you're here." Sabre shuddered. "The police just arrived."

Several police officers and detectives were checking for evidence. Sirens blared as more police cars arrived. An officer approached Bob and asked, "Who are you?"

Bob reached out to shake the officer's hand but put it back down when he realized the policeman was looking elsewhere. "I'm Attorney Robert Clark, a friend of Ms. Brown's." He nodded his head toward Sabre. He looked around the room and then added, "And her attorney, if I need to be."

"Please step back. Actually, I'd like both of you to wait in there." He pointed to another office next to Sabre's. "And please don't disturb anything."

Bob and Sabre entered David's office. Sabre hadn't been in there in a long time as David seldom came to work. He spent most of his time with his new ice cream business. Sabre walked her new Gucci heels and cobalt blue suit over to David's window. Her brown hair hung just beyond her shoulder. Bob followed her to the window.

Sabre started practicing law when she was twenty-five, just over six years ago. Bob started a few years earlier. They both knew not to touch anything and were very careful. As they gazed out the window, they watched the cops block off the area outside of the building.

Bob put his arm around Sabre's shoulder. "You okay?" he asked.

"It was a bit of a shock to find a body on my desk, but I'm all right. I'm just wondering how and why it's there."

A tall, thin detective with blond hair entered the office. Sabre had spoken earlier with another detective, but she had yet to meet this man. He appeared to be in his mid-thirties, around Bob's age. His hair was just beginning to recede.

He reached out his hand to Sabre and then Bob. "I'm Detective Shane Klakken with the San Diego Police Department."

"Sabre Brown. This is my office. Well, not this office; the office with the body is mine."

"I'm Robert Clark. I'm a friend and colleague of Sabre's."

"Have a seat if you'd like," Klakken said.

Sabre looked at the black powder on the beige chair and decided to remain standing with Bob and the detective.

Klakken looked at Sabre. "I understand you found the body."

"Yes, I did."

"What happened?"

"I don't know. I walked in and found him lying across my desk."

The detective turned to Bob. "Where were you?"

"I wasn't here; Sabre called me. I was on my way to court, so I wasn't far away."

The detective turned back to Sabre. "Come with me and show me exactly what you did." He looked at Bob. "You wait here."

Sabre walked out the door, the detective close behind her. Bob followed. Klakken frowned at Bob but didn't say anything. Sabre walked past her office and into the small entranceway to the back door. The area also functioned as a copy room.

"I came in here through the back door."

"Was the door locked?" the detective asked.

Sabre thought for a second. "Yes, I think so. Yes, it was. I had to put my key in the door and I...I turned the lock."

"You're sure?"

Sabre nodded. "Yes, I'm sure."

"And then?"

"I walked into my office."

"Show me, please."

Sabre walked past a large copy machine that had a sign on it that read, "TEMPORARILY IN ORDER," past a small desk, and through the hallway until she reached her office. A policewoman was leaning over the body, examining him. The dead man was still sprawled across the desk, lying exactly as Sabre had seen him earlier. He appeared to have been standing behind her desk and had fallen forward. His face was turned away from them, his right arm hung partway off the far side of the desk, and his left elbow lay next to his body with his hand on a manila folder. He wore torn jeans and a dirty, black t-shirt. The only other things on the desk were a penholder, a desk lamp, and the key box, all of which set near the corner of the desk closest to the door. Sabre kept her desk very tidy. Two other men were in the room. One was dusting for prints; the other was looking through Sabre's bookshelf.

"What looks different than the way you left it yesterday?" Detective Klakken asked.

Sabre pointed to her desk chair that was now about two feet from her desk. "My chair was pushed in behind my desk, not over there. That photo of my brother on the credenza was standing up. And there was no body on my....Oh no!"

"What is it?"

"Ron's hourglass is gone." Sabre stepped forward and pointed to a spot on the desk near the man's head. "There was a large hourglass sitting right there."

"What did it look like?"

Sabre fought back the tears. She had so few things left that belonged to her brother and couldn't bear the thought of losing one more.

"It was an antique, mahogany, Victorian hourglass. Very solid and heavy, about ten inches tall," Bob said, helping her out.

Klakken noted it on his pad and then walked over and told the man standing near the bookshelf. Bob put his arm around Sabre. She took a deep breath and composed herself. She looked at the man on the desk and muttered. "I guess there are worse things than losing a keepsake."

Klakken returned. "Start from the top and tell me what you did and what you saw when you came into the room."

Sabre took a deep breath and blew it out. "When I came in here, the first thing I saw was him lying on my desk. I dropped the files I was carrying because I was startled."

The detective looked around at the floor. Two manila folders, each at least one inch thick, lay on the floor near the door. A number ten envelope lay just under the desk near the leg, and a single sheet from a yellow legal notepad lay close to the folders. "Is this all you had in your hands?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. Then she shook her head. "No. I also had my keys."

"Where are they?"

"I dropped them in that little box on my desk. That's where I always put them."

"Where is your purse?"

Sabre looked puzzled. "What?"

"Your purse? What did you do with your purse?"

"I don't carry a purse."

"You don't carry a purse?" Klakken asked skeptically.

Bob spoke up. "Nope. She doesn't carry a purse."

The detective shook his head and mumbled. "I've never met a woman who doesn't carry a purse."

"Well, now you have. I have a briefcase that is with me most of the time. That's in the trunk of my car. I don't need another piece of luggage to drag around."

"Okay," the detective said, "so after you came in, you saw the body and dropped your files. Then you put your keys in the box?"

"No. I still had my keys in my hand."

Bob spoke up again. "Does it really matter what she did with her keys?"

"I'm just trying to get a clear picture of exactly what happened and what may or may not have been disturbed."

"It's okay, Bob." Sabre said. "I remember yelling, 'Hello,' but he didn't say anything. I said something else like, 'What are you doing here?' Still nothing. I pulled my phone out of my pocket."

"With which hand?" the detective asked.

"With my left. My keys were still in my right hand. He didn't move. That's when I reached over to try to awaken him."

"You didn't know he was dead yet?"

"He looked dead, but I thought he might be drunk."

"You weren't afraid?"

"A little, but I didn't really think about it. I just wanted the man off my desk, so I touched him on the arm. He felt cold, so I called 9-1-1."

"What did you do before the police came?"

"I stepped out of the room and I called Bob."

"Do you know the dead man?" the detective asked.

"No, I don't think so," Sabre said. "I walked around the desk and looked at him, but I didn't stand there studying his face. I'm pretty sure he's not anyone I know. At least I didn't recognize him." "Well, let's take another look." He led her around the side of the desk. Bob followed.

"Do you know him?"

Sabre shook her head. "No. I've never seen him before."

Bob ran his hand through his prematurely gray hair and said, "I recognize him." He looked up at Sabre and Klakken. "He's the husband of one of my clients."