

Murders with Natural Causes

Written by

Tom Stohlgren

Writer:
Tom Stohlgren
Email: tjstohlgren@gmail.com
Representation:
Eleni Larchanidou, LL.M.
Email: managerelenilllm@gmail.com
Copyright

FADE IN:

EXT. PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE RESERVATION - NIGHT

An old ICE TRUCK swerves by on a dusty road. A sign reads, "Pyramid Lake Paiute Reservation." There are no other vehicles or humans in sight.

The driver makes four stops along the dirt road before pulling over.

JAKE LONG BEAR (24), a raggedy-dressed Native American steps out of the truck and looks around.

He pulls out an altimeter and reads the elevation: "3854 ft."

He reaches into the passenger side of the truck to awaken his white Accomplice (30s), an equally poorly dressed drug addict.

They race to the back of the Ice Truck and open the thick metal door. They pull out an 80-year-old man in a navy-blue jogging suit and lay him out on the road face-up. His eyes are closed and he doesn't resist.

They work quickly to spread the man's arms and feet spread eagle in an unnatural pose.

Jake and his accomplice head back to the ice truck, but Jake leaps back to the man. He straddles him as he pulls out a BLACK SHARPIE PEN and draws a "W" on the man's forehead.

The man's eyes suddenly open but he can't move a muscle.

The two assailants hop in the truck and race away.

EXT. PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE RESERVATION - MORNING

Orange police tape surrounds the body, held down with rocks.

A Medical Examiner (40s), Photographer (30s), and COUNTY SHERIFF (50s), all white males, pack up and prepare to leave the crime scene.

TRIBAL OFFICER SARAH THE YOUNGER (28) squats on the outside of the yellow tape. She wears the disheveled uniform of an underrated woman. She waits patiently for the Sheriff's team to leave.

COUNTY SHERIFF
I'm glad you recognized our
jurisdiction, Sarah.

SARAH
Assuming he was killed by a non-Indian.

COUNTY SHERIFF
What do you make of the "W" on the vic's forehead?

Sarah looks sadly at the Sheriff.

SARAH
I think he was killed by a Numa.

COUNTY SHERIFF
(scoffs)
A Paiute? They don't hang with billionaires, and they would have taken his wallet.

SARAH
(smiles insincerely)
Two astute observations, Sheriff. That's why you're in charge.

COUNTY SHERIFF
I'll send you the ME's report and autopsy report.

SARAH
Thanks, Sheriff.

COUNTY SHERIFF
My primary suspect would be Jake Long Bear, a known drug addict who missed his last three probation meetings.

SARAH
I'll report him missing so you'll never find him.

COUNTY SHERIFF
(sarcastic)
Ha ha ha, Sarah. That hurt!

The Sheriff pulls an imaginary pistol and shoots Sarah.

The Sheriff and his CSI team leave.

From outside the yellow tape, Sarah surveys the crime scene like a hunter stalking a deer.

A black SUV pulls up too close to the body and the Officer stops him.

SARAH
Whoa, cowgirl.

FBI AGENT MAVIS COLLIER (28), an intimidating black woman in a black pantsuit, steps out of the SUV holding out her FBI Badge.

COLLIER
I'm FBI Agent Mavis Collier from the Reno office. I'm the one who told the CSI team to leave the physical evidence for my team that is on the way.

SARAH
I'm Tribal Officer Sarah The Younger.

COLLIER
(laughs)
Your middle name is "The?"

SARAH
I was named after Sarah Winnemucca, a great leader of our people. Your government made me lose the "the" so I add a "The" as my middle name on government forms to piss them off. Call me Sarah.

COLLIER
Hi, Sarah. I was named Mavis after my grandma, but in our office, we go by last names, so call me Collier.

SARAH
(looks away)
Nice to meet you, Collier.

COLLIER
Don't be so intimidated by us, Sarah. You should be happy I'm here. I've already called off the Sheriff's Department for you. I heard you didn't get along.

Sarah is perturbed.

SARAH
I get along with every outsider who recognizes our sovereign nation. Sadly, it doesn't happen as often as it should.

COLLIER
Okay, Chief, settle down.

SARAH
Call me Chief again and you'll look like our dead man over here.

Collier laughs and waves an apology.

COLLIER
My bad! Brandon Claremont, 80 years old, a self-made billionaire from the California side of Lake Tahoe, and the brother-in-law of Senator Granville Godfrey of California, which is why I'm taking over this investigation.

SARAH
First off, no billionaire is self-made. They fooled millions of poorer people into working for them and making them rich. Secondly, the best I can offer you is a joint investigation given that the murder was likely one of us!

COLLIER
An Indian? Or Native American, whatever you call yourselves.

SARAH
Numa. The people.

COLLIER
What are we?

SARAH
Outsiders, or diggers.

COLLIER
Huh! What do you have for the time of death?

SARAH
About three hours ago.

COLLIER
How can you be so sure?

SARAH
Rigor mortis was setting in when the CSI team arrived suggesting he died about two hours earlier.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

The body had only lost three degrees in temperature.

(laughs)

He doesn't smell too bad and the maggots aren't feeding yet.

COLLIER

COD?

SARAH

Cause of death? You Yankees love your acronyms.

COLLIER

I'm a Red Sox fan. Boston born and bred.

SARAH

The County Medical Examiner said it was likely a heart attack, so I'm going with drugs and a ritualistic burial by a Numa. A Paiute druggie named Jake Long Bear is a good first suspect.

COLLIER

Maybe it was made to look like an Indian did it! Mr. Claremont had many powerful enemies as a defense contractor and real estate mogul. We gotta record on him and his associates which will take you months to plow through. And since you have no evidence to the contrary...

SARAH

(interrupts)

No, this is ceremonial, and definitely Numa.

Collier turns to walk away.

COLLIER

You can't be sure.

SARAH

Did you see the "W" on his head?

COLLIER

Yes. I was getting a live feed from the ME's body-cam.

SARAH

So what's with the "W" on his head
and why dump a live old man on
Indian land?

Collier shakes her head in disgust and points to the "W" on
the victim's head.

COLLIER

I don't know yet! Maybe because
he's White and Indian lands are
always in the middle of nowhere!
Maybe some family lines are meant
to be discontinued! Either way, I'm
taking over your investigation!

SARAH

Read the law! If he was killed by
an Indian, the Bureau of Indian
Affairs says we are obligated to
work as partners.

Collier doesn't turn around.

COLLIER

Ha! We'll see about that!

The Coroner's van pulls up as Collier is about to hop in her
SUV.

Sarah looks on as an athletic CORONER, STEVE WAGNER, (30)
exits his van and fist-bumps Collier.

CORONER

Friday night.

COLLIER

Wouldn't miss it.

Collier drives away as the Coroner approaches the body with a
body bag.

INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: "The Next Day."

Special Agent in Charge, SPECIAL AGENT KIARA GUPTA (40s), a
strong Indian woman, reluctantly guides Sarah into Collier's
office. There is a map of Pyramid Lake with an "X" where the
body was found.

Collier doesn't look up from the pile of reports on her desk,
until her boss coughs.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Someone here to see you, Collier.

Sarah smiles as she walks in with two cups of coffee.

SARAH
Howdy, Pardner.

Collier looks up and glares at Sarah.

COLLIER
Thanks. We have a team looking for
Jake Bear.

SARAH
(laughs)
Jake Long Bear, remember?

Special Agent Gupta laughs as she turns and exits.

COLLIER
I thought Long was his middle name.

Special Agent Gupta laughs in the distance.

Collier glares at Sarah.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
How did you know he wasn't dead
before he was dropped off the
reservation?

SARAH
No sign of a struggle at the second
scene, which indicates he was
drugged, I guess.

COLLIER
The FBI doesn't guess. What was the
first crime scene?

SARAH
Wherever he was drugged. Reno,
maybe Tahoe. Our crime tip-line on
the Rez received several calls of a
suspicious Ice Truck on the road
about midnight. We have a problem
with unresolved missing children
cases. The Tip-Line is part of our
Reservation Watch program.

COLLIER
(scoffs)
You're a regular Sherlock Holmes.

SARAH

Can you guess why the Tahoe real estate developer's body was taken to Pyramid Lake at that precise elevation?

Collier looks around, baffled.

COLLIER

(mumbles)

Middle of nowhere?

Sarah points to the map of Pyramid Lake.

SARAH

Center of the most important place on Mother Earth. Home of the Numa.

COLLIER

Numa?

SARAH

The people.

COLLIER

I don't understand.

Sarah shakes her head in disgust.

SARAH

Not everyone does.

Collier stands angry.

COLLIER

One more negative comment and I'll have you thrown out.

SARAH

I'm sorry. Yesterday, we were, standing where the lake level would have been before the white men came. The body was placed exactly 60 feet above the current lake level. The Tahoe developer was ceremonially posed spread-eagle for stealing our most precious resource, the transparent gold of the west! Water!

COLLIER

So, the "W" on his forehead stands for Water? And you still think an Indian murdered him?

SARAH

A reference to Wovoka, the spiritual leader of the Numa from the Mason Valley an hour southeast of here.

COLLIER

I'll bite. What's so special about this Wovoka character?

SARAH

Wovoka predicted that the Earth would be destroyed by a great flood and "the spirits of Indians both dead and alive would then inhabit a new world to which they could fly through the air with the aid of magical feathers."

Collier rolls her eyes in disbelief.

Collier smugly steps to a large whiteboard and turns it around. The top of the whiteboard reads, "Persons of Interest."

COLLIER

You are free to believe all that nonsense. I have a murder to solve.

Collier points to the victim's photo in the top center of the whiteboard. The names are under the photos.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

That's our victim, Branson Claremont.

Her finger slides to the right.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

This is Estelle Godfrey, his business partner who had the most to gain by his death. If he dies first, she becomes executor of his Trust. We can't seem to locate her, probably for security reasons.

Her finger slides to the right to a pompous man in a gray suit, red ties, and an American flag pin in his lapel.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Her husband is Senator Granville Collier from California. That's who is on our asses to solve this case fast!

(MORE)

COLLIER (CONT'D)

He thinks his wife was having an affair with the victim and demands we keep them out of the news.

Her finger slides down to a group of 10 gray-haired men in blue blazers, red ties, and American flag pins in their lapels.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

This is the gang of ten, the most powerful munition suppliers in the world.

(points out the victim)

Brandon Claremont is among them, but at least seven of the ten hated him.

He points to the left side of the whiteboard.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

This is the victim's son, Adam Claremont, a real estate developer worth millions, but far less than Daddy. We're looking into the victim's will and investigating other relatives and associates now.

SARAH

None of those people would be caught dead driving an old ice truck onto the Rez.

COLLIER

You keep mentioning an old ice truck!

SARAH

Our tip line lit up after midnight about a truck that backfired a lot. Rez folks said it sounded like gunfire.

COLLIER

What time?

Sarah gets up to leave.

SARAH

Midnight. One of our crime tip line callers swears he saw the same truck at the farmer's market at Idlewild Park along the Truckee in Reno. I was just heading there when your boss asked me to stop by.

Collier yells out her office door.

COLLIER

Get me any CCTV you can on an old ice truck driving around Idlewild Park and Reno in the past month. I want plates and registration.

(to Sarah)

Let's go. We'll take my car.

Collier is stopped by ADAM CLAREMONT (55) a Real Estate mogul in a tailored suit, white shirt, and blue tie.

ADAM

Are you Collier?

COLLIER

Yes.

Adam takes a punch at her jaw but she blocks it with a mixed martial arts elbow move. Collier and Sarah restrain Adam.

ADAM

When were you going to notify the next of kin, asshole?

COLLIER

That's assaulting a federal agent! Besides...

(points to Sarah)

The local law enforcement is responsible...

SARAH

(glares at Collier)

It's the responsibility of the lead investigator. Everybody knows that.

ADAM

The Coroner notified me an hour ago to come in and identify the body of my father! I'll have your badge --

Adam stops when he sees the whiteboard and his photo as a person of interest.

COLLIER

Get him out of here. Come back with an attorney, Mr. Claremont. Let's go, Officer Sarah!

Collier stomps away.

ADAM
You don't know who you're dealing
with, Collier.

Sarah studies Adam for a few moments before slowly following Collier out.

INT. SUV - DAY

Collier drives slowly around Idlewild Park looking all around as she drives. Sarah looks at her smartphone.

COLLIER
Aren't you going to help?

Sarah mumbles as she shakes her head in disgust.

SARAH
You're looking in the barn after
you left the doors open, Cowboy.

Collier's smartphone rings and she answers with "hands-free."
FBI Agent GERALD NEWSOME (30s) is on the line.

COLLIER
Collier.

NEWSOME (V.O.)
We're in a penthouse suite at the
Atlantis. I have a team sweeping
the room where Mr. Claremont booked
for last night.

COLLIER
Great work, Newsome. I'm on my way!

Collier races away.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
It looks like you'll be stuck with
me for a while.

SARAH
What else does a Rez cop have to
do? I love putting parking tickets
on abandoned Rez cars and trucks.

INT. ATLANTIS HOTEL - NOON

The door is open to the penthouse suite.

Collier and Sarah stop at the door.

The beautiful view of Mount Rose is second to the charming smile of Agent Newsome, a tall, male, white agent in tight black slacks and a tighter white shirt.

COLLIER

Newsome, this is Officer Susan
Younger of the Pyramid Lake Paiute
Tribal Police Department.

Sarah tries not to drool over the agent, but she's clearly attracted to Newsome, who gives her the once-over.

NEWSOME

Nice to meet you, Officer Younger.

SARAH

(to Collier)

It's Sarah, not Susan.

(to Newsome)

I'm Collier's partner in the murder
investigation.

NEWSOME

(glances at Sarah)

Huh.

(to Collier)

The victim was here last night long
enough to change from a black suit
and red tie, still in the closet,
take a Viagra pill, the wrapper was
in the bathroom, and change into
the navy-blue jogging suit he was
discovered in.

SARAH

By me. On Indian land.

Newsome ignores Sarah and continues speaking only to Collier.

NEWSOME

Casino security footage has his
driver checking him in around 8 PM.
Mr. Claremont used a secure VIP
elevator to the top floor. He
walked out of the casino heading
west at 8:30, but not returning.

COLLIER

What's west of here?

NEWSOME

Cheap Mexican restaurants. Sports
bars.

SARAH

And massage parlors. You don't take Viagra to eat burritos.

COLLIER

Have the team knock on doors with the photo and get me his driver on the phone.

NEWSOME

Will do, Mavis.

SARAH

(smiles at Collier)
Mavis, is it?

Collier's phone RINGS.

COLLIER

It's the boss.

(she answers)

Yes, Ma'am.

(listens)

Right away, Ma'am.

Collier looks frightened.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

We have a situation. I have to get back to HQ.

SARAH

If it's a break in the case, I have a right to know.

Collier is angry.

COLLIER

(to Sarah)

No. Join Newsome and find out where Mr. Claremont was going and who took him to your Reservation in an ice truck. This isn't good.

(to Newsome)

Bring her to HQ after you've found something.

Collier races out.

Newsome glares at Sarah.

NEWSOME

Don't get in my way.

SARAH

Don't be condescending. Mavis
wouldn't like that!

Sarah exits. Newsome grimaces and then exits.

INT. FBI OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Collier enters the office of her boss. Her desk has a name
plaque that reads, "Special Agent in Charge, Kiara Gupta."

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Senator Godfrey has been riding my
butt all morning. His wife, your
vic's business partner and
mistress, has gone missing. He
doesn't want to involve the police.

COLLIER

I had her as a person of interest.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

I know. Their partnership is--

COLLIER

Classified.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

No, complicated. They have
international dealings with
munitions that have to be okayed
for delivery at the highest level.
With both Mr. Claremont and Mrs.
Godfrey indisposed, no one is
certain who can okay the badly
needed arms shipments.

COLLIER

No contingency plan?

Special Agent Gupta slaps a file down in front of Collier who
begins to read the file.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Everyone assumed that in the case
of Mr. Claremont's death, his stake
in the partnership would pass to
his son, Adam.

COLLIER

But --

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

It may pass to his granddaughter depending on what it says in his Will, and we don't even have a file on the granddaughter. Someone better find Estelle Godfrey or all hell is going to break loose.

COLLIER

Didn't Estelle have a second-in-command?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

No children, a slime-bucket Senator for a husband, and I bet old man Claremont convinced her that his son or granddaughter was worthy of the task.

COLLIER

They'd better be!

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

We have a team looking for Estelle now.

EXT. LAKE TAHOE - SAME TIME

MELISSA (MEL) CLAREMONT (24) paddles a kayak on the Lake. She wears a nondescript T-shirt and shorts with dark sunglasses and a floppy sun hat and listens to tunes with Earbuds.

She stares at her smartphone showing a bathymetric map of the lake and GPS coordinates. She rows slowly and steadily with two sturdy paddles.

She glances around to see no one paying attention to her.

She casually puts on a latex glove and reaches into a small pouch linked to a belt loop with a carabiner.

She reaches into the bag and pulls out a smaller heavily weighted bag.

She glances around again.

She casually drops the bag overboard in a spot where the depth reads, ">1000 ft."

She casually paddles away.

EXT. RENO - SAME TIME

Within eyesight of the Atlantis, Newsome and Sarah ask around holding a photo of Brandon Claremont.

NEWSOME

He was 80 years. How far could he walk?

SARAH

He was meeting someone within 30 minutes, the time it takes Viagra to kick in.

NEWSOME

I'd like to talk to his doctor.

SARAH

I'd like to talk to his driver and his PA.

NEWSOME

They're one in the same and I already checked this morning.

SARAH

So far, your investigation has wasted my time. Mavis took me on a tour looking for an old ice truck, and you took me on a tour of massage parlors.

NEWSOME

What would you have us do, Officer?

SARAH

I'd find out what events led up to the victim's murder. We need to see his calendar. Who did he meet with? Who did he piss off? Who wanted him dead?

NEWSOME

(snarky)

And I can't comment on an ongoing investigation.

Sarah glances around to see a black SUV approaching.

SARAH

That's okay. Mavis will.

Collier RACES up in her black SUV and rolls, down a window, and yells.

COLLIER
We're heading to the Tahoe Keys.

Newsome grabs the shotgun seat so Sarah hops in back.

INT. SUV - LATE AFTERNOON

Collier briefs Newsome and Sarah.

COLLIER
Estelle Godfrey is missing. The boss wants us to drop everything and find her.

NEWSOME
Including Brandon Claremont's murder?

COLLIER
The Coroner suggested it was a heart attack.

SARAH
Without the TOX report results? And is Claremont's murder and his mistress's disappearance a coincidence?

Collier is angry.

COLLIER
Based on available information. The Senator's wife was last seen at her summer home in the Tahoe Keys. The CSI team will beat us there.

She RACES away.

EXT. TAHOE KEYS - LATER AFTERNOON

Outside the entrance of the Tahoe Keys community, a small crowd (12 Extras) gathers to listen to DENNY SIMONDS (35) a calm but concerned seismologist. Mel Claremont, disguised in her dark sunglasses and floppy hat, listens intently to Denny.

As the SUV approaches, Sarah gets excited.

SARAH
Stop the car! That's my ex-boyfriend.

COLLIER

We can't stop. We have work to do.

Sarah rolls down the window and listens to Denny's speech as they roll past slowly.

DENNY

The Tahoe Keys was the largest marshland in the Tahoe Basin until the late 1960s. I'm here to raise awareness of the potential for devastating earthquakes and even tsunamis along the West Tahoe Fault.

A HECKLER is aggravated by Denny.

HECKLER (O.C.)

Stop spreading fear, you moron! The Tahoe Keys are our home!

Collier drives on.

INT. TAHOE KEYS HOME - CONTINUOUS

As Collier, Newsome, and Sarah enter the beautiful home in white scrubs, caps, and latex gloves, they are met by the CSI team lead who pulls Collier aside for a private conversation.

Newsome whispers to Sarah.

NEWSOME

So the crazy alarmist out there is your ex?

SARAH

(concerned)

That was so strange. He's an introvert and academic. That's not like him to give public speeches.

She looks back.

NEWSOME

(laughs)

Tsunamis in Lake Tahoe? That's a stretch.

SARAH

It's true. He showed me the science papers.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Sixty thousand years ago a landslide caused 300-foot waves on the lake the entire shoreline was wiped out in twenty minutes.

NEWSOME

(scoffs)

Sixty-thousand years ago? That recent?

SARAH

Another earthquake and tsunami struck 12,000 to 21,000 years ago, and major earthquakes occur every 3,000 years.

NEWSOME

What was the last one?

SARAH

4,000 years ago. We're overdue for one.

Sarah looks out the front door with a worried look.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Something must have triggered him.

Sarah checks an earthquake app on her phone and Lake Tahoe has several red dots in it.

Newsome looks over her shoulder.

NEWSOME

Too bad they can't predict earthquakes, huh?

Sarah mumbles as Collier approaches them.

SARAH

We can't predict murders, but they still occur.

Sarah looks around the house but listens in.

COLLIER

Mrs. Godfrey was here two nights ago. She owns a new Mercedes Sprinter camper. We have an APB out on her and the camper.

SARAH

You should probably check out the traffic cameras around here, the Atlantis, and the Rez.

COLLIER

Good idea.

NEWSOME

My team will handle it.

SARAH

I saw only one family photo. A guy fishing at Taylor Creek.

INT. SUV - CONTINUOUS

As they exit the Tahoe Keys community, they see Denny talking to a woman with her back to them (it's Mel Claremont).

NEWSOME

He doesn't waste any time.

Sarah studies Denny and Mel as they drive by.

INT. SUV - EARLY EVENING

They pass Carson City on the way back to Reno.

SARAH

Wovoka, the Numa spiritual leader, lived thirty miles east of here as the crow flies.

NEWSOME

Why is that important?

COLLIER

He predicted the end of the world with a flood.

SARAH

And now my ex-boyfriend is doing the same. And Mr. Claremont's body was placed 60 feet above the current lake level of Pyramid Lake.

(sadly)

I don't believe in coincidences.

Sarah looks east as her mind wanders off.

BEGIN DAYDREAM

-- Sarah sees Ghost Dancers in her mind (stock footage).

-- Sarah sees warriors with "ghost shirts" being slaughtered by white soldiers.

END DAYDREAM

Collier's phone rings. Caller ID on her console reads, "Boss."

She answers the call.

COLLIER
Collier here.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (V.O.)
I have Adam Claremont in my office
with his attorney.

COLLIER
We're thirty-five minutes out.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (V.O.)
Be here in thirty.

Special Agent Gupta ends the call.

Collier steps on the gas.

INT. FBI OFFICE - EVENING

Special Agent in Charge Gupta sits high in her chair. Adam Collier and GARRISON THOMAS (60), a pompous attorney with a locking silver briefcase, sit impatiently across from her. They frequently check their smartwatches.

Collier, Newsome, and Sarah enter the office like it's a snare trap.

Special Agent Gupta smiles at Newsome and Sarah.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Collier, you remember Adam
Claremont with the great right
hook.
(points to Harrison)
Mr. Harrison Thomas, the gentleman
beside him, is the legal counsel
for his diseased father, Brandon
Claremont.

Harrison acknowledged Newsome, but not the women.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (CONT'D)

I'll have to ask Agent Newsome and your Native American friend to step out of the office. Some of our discussions involve higher Security Clearances.

Newsome glares at Special Agent Gupta, turns, and stomps out of the office. Sarah simply shrugs and exits.

Collier shuts the door and takes a seat.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Newsome backs away from the office door and turns his back.

Sarah half-heartedly consoles him.

SARAH

What's that about? Do you hate to miss a meeting?

NEWSOME

I was passed over for promotion by Mavis who is being groomed for the top because--

SARAH

She's smart?

NEWSOME

You wouldn't understand.

Sarah shakes her head in disbelief.

INSIDE THE OFFICE

Garrison glares at Adam, who holds a legal-sized envelope.

GARRISON

What I am at liberty to share is that I'm only here because my client's ill-tempered son was allegedly involved in an altercation with a federal agent while Adam's attorney, my son, is locking up a major real estate development in Dubai.

Collier points to her jaw.

COLLIER

This is the alleged jaw he missed and I'm pressing charges. I've got a half-dozen reputable witnesses.

Adam looks away.

GARRISON

Mr. Adam Claremont immediately felt remorse for his alleged actions and hoped he might trade some information that might shed light on his father's heart attack to quickly close your investigation without bringing undue attention to his family.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

We don't make deals that would compromise the integrity of the agency, Mr. Thomas.

GARRISON

Trust me, Special Agent in Charge Gupta, I have it on high authority that the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Senator Granville Godfrey, who heads the Senate Committee on Armed Services want this matter quickly and quietly resolved. Any number of your supervisors can have you terminated immediately for actions believed to be contrary to national security!

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

National Security?

GARRISON

The delay in promised munitions to certain countries and sympathetic private security forces.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Terrorist groups?

GARRISON

We're not at liberty to--

Special Agent Gupta stands in anger as if ready to fist-fight.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
You use the word liberty
differently than I do, Mr. Thomas.

Collier steps between them.

COLLIER
The exact cause of death remains
under investigation.
(glares at Adam)
Let's see what the champ has to
offer.

Adam holds the legal envelope firmly in his grasp.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Sarah inches closer to the glass window while looking away.

Newsome shakes his head, no, but Sarah continues.

INSIDE THE OFFICE

ADAM
When I know my father is in town, I
have him followed for his own
safety.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Because you're concerned about him.

GARRISON
(glares at Adam)
Adam suspects that Brandon
Claremont's Last Will and Testament
will make him one of the richest
men in the world, but the Will is
sealed until after the cause of
death is determined.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
And the cause of death is
essential.

GARRISON
That's what the Will stipulates.

Adam stands ready to punch Garrison.

ADAM

Dad warned me that if anything happened to him, the entire munitions portion of his portfolio would transfer immediately to that ditzy business partner of his!

GARRISON

Mrs. Godfrey's business is her own. You know nothing about his defense contracting businesses, and--

Collier steps between the angry men to confront Adam.

COLLIER

(to Adam)

He didn't trust you!

GARRISON

The top brass didn't trust him.

ADAM

My business with Estelle is private.

COLLIER

Not when it involves a federal murder investigation.

GARRISON

No one said it was murder.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

We have to treat it as a suspicious death until it's confirmed to the contrary.

Adam removes a single photograph of Brandon Claremont entering the passenger door of a new Mercedes Sprinter camper.

COLLIER

That matches the description of the vehicle owned by Estelle Godfrey.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

Sarah sneaks a peek into the office long enough to see the photo and than turns and slips away from the window.

Newsome inches his way to Sarah and pulls her aside.

INSIDE THE OFFICE

Collier gets a text message BUZZ. She takes a secret peek at her phone to see the Caller ID reads, "First Base." She turns to Special Agent Gupta.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

The Coroner wants to see Officer Younger and me immediately.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

(to Adam and Garrison)

We'll take tonight's suggestions under advisement and get back to you tomorrow morning with a decision.

(to Collier)

Collier, you may be excused. Send in Agent Newsome.

Garrison and Adam are perplexed as they begin to exit the office. Garrison glares back at Special Agent Gupta.

GARRISON

May I remind you that we want this matter quickly and quietly resolved?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

(smiles)

Yes, you may. Good evening, gentlemen.

Newsome walks into the office with a troubled look on his face.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Collier fist-bumps the Coroner as she enters the office. Sarah enters and sees their camaraderie.

SARAH

Old friend?

CORONER

Teammates. I'm Steve.

SARAH

I'm Sarah.

COLLIER

Co-ed softball league. Steve is our first baseman and clean-up hitter.

SARAH
Have you ever gotten to second
base, Steve?

Steve chuckles shyly.

COLLIER
What have you got for us?

CORONER
Better sit down.

The conversation turns serious.

CORONER (CONT'D)
Here's the problem. I never get
calls or threats from the Chief
Coroner, mayor, or governor. Hell,
I'm surprised they knew my name.

He stands and paces.

CORONER (CONT'D)
I'm worried.

COLLIER
(laughs)
I would be too, the way you've been
hitting.

The Coroner glares at Collier.

CORONER
They want to seal the report and
case files after I sign off on a
heart attack.

SARAH
What was in the TOX report?

CORONER
He had enough magic mushrooms on
board to match Woodstock, and--
(glares at Sarah)
A little birdie strongly suggested
I check the lung tissue for cyanide
spray.

COLLIER
(worried)
What?

SARAH
(smiles)
You found it, didn't you?

COLLIER
Oh, shit!

SARAH
Death is delayed up to eight hours
and it looks like--

COLLIER
Don't tell me--

CORONER
A heart attack! And that high
concentration of shrooms would have
left him tripping out until the
end.

SARAH
A final vision quest.

Collier looks away.

COLLIER
Murder.

Collier glares at Sarah.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
How did you know?

SARAH
He was an international arms
dealer. The KGB used to assassinate
enemies of the state using cyanide
spray in the face. The CIA had no
idea until a Russian defector told
them in explicit detail how it was
done.

CORONER
The only lab test to prove it
requires lung tissue samples and
costly analysis, which is why I'm
in trouble. I'll be reprimanded for
submitting samples for unauthorized
tests.

COLLIER
They wanted death by natural
causes. Psilocybin and cyanide
readily are found in nature.

CORONER
I don't think that's what they
meant.

SARAH
If we find that ice truck, it will
prove he was kidnapped and probably
drugged.

Collier and Sarah hop up.

COLLIER
Hold off on your autopsy report
until tomorrow morning, will ya?

SARAH
We've got a truck to find.

CORONER
What am I supposed to do?

Collier and Sarah begin to RACE out.

SARAH
Stall them. Tell them you had to
confirm the TOX report.

The Coroner looks worried.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Collier drives while Sarah studies her smartphone.

SARAH
RV, truck, and boat storage.

COLLIER
What are you thinking?

SARAH
Burning Man!

Collier glances over with a perplexed look.

SARAH (CONT'D)
If I was going to hide an old ice
truck, I'd put it among other old
busses, dilapidated RV's and
vehicles that might participate in
Burning Man.

COLLIER
The crazy festival 100 miles away
in Black Rock City?

SARAH
It's only a city for one week a
year. One hour north of the Rez and
my busiest season when they blow
through town will all their
garbage.

COLLIER
How many RV storage areas are there
in the area?

SARAH
Oh, we're not looking inside the
storage areas. They cost a couple
hundred dollars a month. But I
would abandon an ugly vehicle that
would hardly be noticed near such a
storage area.

COLLIER
Huh!

SARAH
We'll go past the darkest streets
first.

EXT. RV STORAGE BUSINESS #1

They drive by an RV Storage area and see several old RVs,
buses, and trucks. They stop, get out, and survey the area.

SARAH
How long have you and Newsome been
seeing each other?

COLLIER
The agency frowns on such
fraternization.

SARAH
Less than a month.

COLLIER
It's not dating. It's comparing
work notes.

SARAH
Huh.

EXT. RV STORAGE BUSINESS #2

They drive by another RV Storage area, stop, and look around. Their conversation is louder and more confrontational.

COLLIER

Was your former boyfriend, the volcanologist, always an environmental activist?

SARAH

Seismologist. If he was an activist of any kind, I would have kept him around.

COLLIER

You look for troublemakers.

SARAH

No, they find me. Did you ever play with Barbie dolls?

Collier stomps back to the SUV.

COLLIER

One more and I'm calling it a night.

SARAH

Leaving your teammate out on a limb?

EXT. RV STORAGE BUSINESS #3

They drive by another RV Storage area, stop, and look around. This time, their conversation is an all-out brawl.

SARAH

You never asked him how he feels about you?

COLLIER

That is none of your business.

SARAH

And he never asked you?

COLLIER

Maybe we're shy. Bug off!

Sarah spots an old ice truck in a dark corner and parked against a fence.

Collier turns and makes a phone call.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Jerry--

(glances back at Sarah)

I mean, Agent Newsome. Bring the
CSI team out to 2245 4th Street. We
found the ice truck.

He ends the call.

SARAH

I know how to find out.

COLLIER

Find out what?

SARAH

How much he cares about you. The
personal space test.

COLLIER

(laughs)

You're as crazy as your ex.

SARAH

When he arrives, I'll be standing
close to you, invading your
personal space a bit.

COLLIER

What will that prove?

SARAH

If he stomps up and steps in
between us, he's madly in love with
you.

Collier steps away from her shaking her head in disgust.

The County Sheriff and CSI team of two (as in the first
scene) arrive first, establish a perimeter, and go to work.

The Sheriff nods to Sarah.

COUNTY SHERIFF

I should have guessed you'd find
it. But how do you know this is the
truck?

SARAH

The undercarriage will be gunked up
with sticky Pyramid Lake soil.

The Sheriff takes out his flashlight and looks under the truck.

COUNTY SHERIFF

Right, she is!

Newsome drives up with Special Agent Gupta in the passenger seat.

While Special Agent Gupta walks to the Sheriff, Sarah nudges extremely close to Collier.

Collier is taking notes on her smartphone when Newsome stomps up and steps between Sarah and Collier.

NEWSOME

Traffic was a mess. Sorry we're late.

Collier turns to see exactly what transpired. She glares at Sarah.

COLLIER

You're just in time. Please grab a few pics for our report, will ya, Newsome?

Special Agent Gupta walks up to Collier as Sarah eavesdrops from a distance.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

What's this prove?

COLLIER

It's officially a murder investigation. Our report will be on your desk in the morning. This looks like a murder-for-hire scheme to me, especially with Estelle Godfrey missing. We still can't find Jake, but I'll be bringing in Adam Claremont for questioning.

NEWSOME

I'll bring him in, Ma'am.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

You'd better be right about this or all of Washington will be on our butts!

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAWN

Collier and Sarah creep around Estelle Godfrey's Sprinter van in a remote area of the campground. Every window is shaded.

SARAH
Who reported the van?

COLLIER
The Campground Host thought it odd not to use the electricity plug-in feature that makes the van the equivalent of a high-end condo.

SARAH
Huh!

Collier KNOCKS on the side door.

COLLIER
Mrs. Godfrey. This is Agent Mavis Collier of the FBI. We'd like to ask you a few questions.

SILENCE

Collier KNOCKS again.

Collier and Sarah check all the doors to see if it's locked.

COLLIER (CONT'D)
We'll need a locksmith.

The CAMPGROUND HOST (60s) looks on from a distance.

Sarah glances back at the Campground Host who has as a stepladder and a "Big Stiffy" (long, thin bent metal rod).

SARAH
I don't think so.

CAMPGROUND HOST
People are always locking themselves out when they use the restroom.

Collier shows the Campground Host her badge.

COLLIER
Without damaging the vehicle.

CAMPGROUND HOST
In ten seconds or less.

He stands on the stepladder and pushes the Big Stiffy rod into the top passenger side door frame. He grabs the inside door handle with it and the door pops open.

A horrible smell escapes pushing them all back.

COLLIER

Thanks so much. We'll take it from here. You may want to keep the other campers in the campground for our questions later.

SARAH

(to the Host)

You are a hero, Sir.

Collier turns on her cop-camera, unlocks the doors, and then opens the main cabin door.

They both SEE Estelle Godfrey on her back, spread eagle, and dead. Her head hangs off the bed with her eyes open wide and mouth frozen open as if in terror. A bottle of sleeping pills is by her side.

Collier is on the phone.

COLLIER

We found Mrs. Godfrey, dead. Send a forensics team, ME, and the Coroner. And hold Adam Claremont there until we can talk to him.

SARAH

Spread-eagle, face-up. We have a serial killer.

Collier nods in agreement.

They HEAR a helicopter overhead.

The CSI Team shows up.

Sarah is under the Sprinter looking up.

SARAH (CONT'D)

This vehicle has never been to Pyramid Lake. The undercarriage looks new except for a little dust from the campground here. I don't think it was ever off pavement until today.

Sarah HEARS the stomping of several people coming toward her. Still under the van, she turns her head to see a half-dozen FBI agents coming toward her. SPECIAL AGENT DWIGHT MILLS (40), a stern white man in a black suit and wrap-around sunglasses yells out.

AGENT MILLS

This is Special Agent Dwight Mills
of the FBI. Step away from the
vehicle.

Sarah begins to crawl out from under the van as Collier steps to help her up.

COLLIER

I'm Agent Mavis Collier, leading
the local investigation.

Agent Mills smiles.

AGENT MILLS

Not in California, you're not.
Senator Godfrey and our Director
asked me to step in. I'm sure you
understand.

COLLIER

This is Officer Sarah Younger of
the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal
Police Department.

AGENT MILLS

(to Sarah)

You're contaminating my crime
scene.

Sarah steps away.

AGENT MILLS (CONT'D)

I don't know how things are done in
Nevada, but we have our own way of
conducting investigations here.

COLLIER

If I could explain--

AGENT MILLS

That won't be necessary.

Agent Mills barks orders to his team.

AGENT MILLS (CONT'D)

I want a perimeter established and digitals of every footprint inside the perimeter and van. Get photos of the footprints of these two officers as well.

(to Collier and Sarah)

If I could get you to step further away from the van, that would be great.

(to his team)

I want everyone entering the van in suits, caps, and gloves, and inside, I want photos before anything is touched.

COLLIER

Will you be using the Coroner in South Lake Tahoe or Reno?

AGENT MILLS

South Lake Tahoe, but we're flying in a pro from Sacramento, so stand down, Agent Collier.

SARAH

Huh. We may as well go.

AGENT MILLS

That's a good idea.

The crime scene tape is already up and the team of FBI agents starts to suit up in scrubs, caps, and gloves.

Collier and Sarah walk by the Campground Host on their way out.

Sarah glances at the Host and quickly back at Agent Mills. She puts a finger to her lips to indicate silence about breaking into the van.

The Host gives her a thumbs up.

Sarah looks at a tent set up on the opposite side of the campground.

SARAH

I know that tent.

(she walks toward it)

I'll be back in a minute.

EXT. CAMPGROUND, TENT SITE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah walks behind the tent to a picnic table where Denny Simonds drinks coffee by the campfire.

SARAH

Hi, Denny.

DENNY

Was that you in the chopper that woke everyone up?

SARAH

Was that you protesting at the Tahoe Keys yesterday putting everyone to sleep?

DENNY

You first.

SARAH

No. Tahoe Keys?

DENNY

That was me. My girlfriend, at the time, conned me into discussing an impending earthquake on the West Tahoe Fault but my University colleagues and my Department Chair say I'm putting my neck on the line.

SARAH

Because no one can predict earthquakes?

DENNY

Raising awareness about earthquakes has the stigma of protesting a school shooting with an AK-47 in your hands.

(looks away)

Everyone looks the other way at gun control even though they know the next shooting can't be stopped.

SARAH

Wow. You're serious about this.

Denny takes out his phone and displays an Earthquake App.

DENNY

I'm not an alarmist, but we're seeing swarms of small quakes right below the Lake.

SARAH

But your colleagues don't see it as a warning?

DENNY

No, and neither do I. We have minor earthquake swarms all the time and in lots of places. A big one is overdue here, and the signs are troubling, but...

(points to the tent)

When I told my lady friend we can't predict earthquakes, she got upset and called me uninteresting.

SARAH

Huh! Imagine that? So, you're not predicting a seven-point earthquake hitting Lake Tahoe?

Denny stands, angry.

DENNY

No. And fuck off! I never said that! I'm asking the public to be aware that a major quake could occur at any time. What they do with that information is up to them.

Sarah turns to see Collier on the phone.

SARAH

I gotta go. It was nice seeing you again. You never got fired up over anything when we were dating.

(winks)

It looks good on you!

She turns and walks away. As she does, she HEARS the rustling of a sleeping bag inside Denny's tent.

Sarah smirks as she rejoins Collier in the middle of a conversation.

COLLIER

So the asshole FBI Special Agent named Mills will be taking a DB to South Lake Tahoe City for an autopsy. They will be flying in some big-shot coroner from Sacramento to open her up. Do me a favor and weasel in to assist in any way you can so we can find out what's going on!

(turns from Sarah and listens)

No, recording it will get you fired, but I'd let you bat third in the lineup Friday night. Thanks, buddy.

Collier ends the call.

SARAH

Brilliant.

COLLIER

Who was that camping?

SARAH

My nerdy ex talking about earthquakes again. What did the Coroner say?

COLLIER

Did you see the near-empty 1-gallon jug of pond water and aquatic plants of some type?

SARAH

Eurasian watermilfoil and Curly-leaf pondweed are highly invasive in the Tahoe Keys.

COLLIER

It looked like waterboarding to me. What did you think?

SARAH

Not sure yet, but I hope Steve checks the lungs and stomach.

They hop in the black SUV and head out.

INT. FBI OFFICE - LATE MORNING

Special Agent Gupta has her hands full as Adam and Garrison are meeting in her office again. Both men are angry.

ADAM

Why didn't you tell us about
Estelle Godfrey's death?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

It's not our case and no official
information has been released yet.

GARRISON

Senator Godfrey called me
personally--

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

(interrupts)

I can't discuss the investigation
by our California colleagues.

Collier enters the office with Sarah.

ADAM

Because you and that Indian cop
botched my dad's investigation!

Collier glares at Adam, while Sarah studies him.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Officer Sarah Younger of the
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal Police
Department is, by law, our partner
in the investigation of your
father's death.

SARAH

We have reason to believe Mr.
Brandon Claremont died on our
Reservation at the hands of the
Paiutes.

GARRISON

Why not from another tribe?

SARAH

They would have asked for
permission to encroach on our land.

GARRISON

(scoffs)

I didn't realize cold-blooded
killers were so respectful.

Sarah realizes she misspoke.

SARAH

Good point. What I meant was--

GARRISON

We've heard enough.

COLLIER

(to Adam)

I'll still require a minute-by-minute account of your activities over the past three days.

Garrison stands.

GARRISON

I object.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

(laughs)

It's a little too early for that.

COLLIER

Adam is a person of interest. We're asking many others these questions. He can do it willingly, or we can detain him for 24 hours. It's up to you!

ADAM

Detain me, please. If someone murdered my dad and his business partner-slash-mistress, I could be next and so could my daughter, Melissa.

COLLIER

This daughter of yours, where is she?

Adam looks away.

ADAM

(angry)

We don't know. We're not exactly on speaking terms.

COLLIER

We?

ADAM

I've had the same private detective watching her since her mother died.

Collier checks his notebook.

COLLIER

I'm sorry for your loss. Do you
mind if we ask your PI some
questions?

Newsome barges in with LYNN CHONG (30s), a tough-looking
Asian private investigator with a chip on her shoulder.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Good work, Agent Newsome. What did
you find out?

Newsome smiles as he drops a file on Kiara's desk.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (CONT'D)

Mr. Claremont and Mr. Thomas may
wait outside. Mr. Claremont, I'd
like you to write a detailed
timetable of where you've been over
the past three days and who could
verify it. We'll get your phone
records and credit card statements
for that time.

GARRISON

I'm going out for a smoke.

Sarah looks closely at Garrison's spotlessly clean fingers.

Adam smiles at Lynn as he leaves.

ADAM

Thank God for PI-client
confidentiality.

Lynn smiles back.

LYNN

Don't worry, Boss. They won't get
anything out of me.

Newsome shuts the door and glares at Sarah before addressing
the group.

NEWSOME

Ms. Lynn Chong has worked for Mr.
Adam Claremont since his wife
committed suicide three years ago.

LYNN

She was murdered.

Newsome reads from his notebook.

NEWSOME

While there's no proof that was the case, San Francisco police raised several concerns about the weirdest family dynamics they had ever encountered.

COLLIER

That fits.

NEWSOME

The police say it was an open-and-shut case. A suicide note, sleeping pills, and her diary were left on her nightstand while her husband and only daughter were in police custody for a domestic violence dispute.

Special Agent Gupta, Collier, and Sarah glare out the window at Adam who looks away.

LYNN

You can't make this shit up.

NEWSOME

(doubtful)

Everyone assumed the constant battles at home led to the suicide, as the diary and note indicated.

LYNN

Nope! Adam's overbearing, well-connected father, Brandon, had the investigation closed after portions of Mrs. Claremont's diary were leaked online a week later. And the police lost the suicide note. It disappeared.

(sad)

I don't know how it was done or who did it, but it didn't sit well with me.

COLLIER

Why do you work for Adam Claremont?

LYNN

The money's good and the work is substantial. He trusts no one.

(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)

When I'm not out looking for Mel,
he's had me tail other realtors and
massage parlor workers, and
fisherman.

SARAH

Why fisherman?

LYNN

To find out when the salmon are
biting on Taylor Creek at South
Lake. He has to catch the biggest
salmon every year.

(laughs)

The bastard made me undercover once
at a massage parlor.

SARAH

(to Lynn)

Those salmon are another invasive
species! Outsiders. We don't like
them.

(to Special Agent Gupta)

Could we get the TOX report from
Mrs. Claremont's suicide?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Not on a closed case.

Lynn looks away, which Sarah sees.

SARAH

That's not the problem, is it, Ms.
Chong?

LYNN

They had her body cremated the next
day, as demanded by Adam.

SARAH

So additional exams on the DB or
TOX tests couldn't be completed.

LYNN

And a murderer goes free. I
secretly think Adam did it. I
stayed employed waiting for him to
slip up. I think Adam did it this
time too, with his mistress.

Everyone's eyes open wide.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Estelle Godfrey.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Talk to us.

Special Agent Gupta closes the shades in her office and everyone sits and whispers.

EXT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

Garrison Thomas paces on the sidewalk, frequently glancing at the blank screen of his black smartphone. It finally RINGS.

GARRISON
Thanks for returning my call,
General. We have a problem.

Garrison looks around suspiciously as he listens.

GARRISON (CONT'D)
Yes, double-encrypted, General.
(whispers)
I'm not sure I can deliver the
proxy vote on the munitions deal
for Brandon Claremont and his son
is... unstable.

Garrison looks around suspiciously again.

GARRISON (CONT'D)
The legal holdup is that Brandon's
business may not have transferred
automatically to Estelle Godfrey if
she died before he did, and his
will is sealed until the FBI sorts
out the two murders.

Garrison freezes.

GARRISON (CONT'D)
There's nothing I can do--

The General ends the call.

Garrison looks up at the FBI building in disgust before entering.

INT. FBI OFFICE - SAME TIME

The meeting breaks up and Lynn puts a battered look on her face before exiting the office to see Adam smiling. They fist-bump their hands and Adams smiles comfortably.

Another FBI Officer (30s) enters Special Agent Gupta's office and hands her and Collier each a file that reads, "MELISSA (MEL) CLAREMONT (24). A photo of her Stanford University Student ID is on the cover.

The officer exits and shuts the door.

Special Agent Gupta pokes her head out of the door quickly.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Ms. Chong, you may leave. Mr.
Claremont, you may not. If Mr.
Thomas comes back, he should stay
too if you need counsel.

ADAM

(furious)

Lynn, your fired. I never want to
see you again!

Special Agent Gupta shuts the door and returns to the file on her desk. Newsome and Sarah are flanking Collier as he reads the file.

COLLIER

Dropped out before graduating with
a Master of Science in Medicine.

NEWSOME

Probably to become a nurse.

SARAH

Looks like it was to volunteer at
the public library.

NEWSOME

She volunteers several weekends a
year building homes for Habitat for
Humanity.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

She drives a fifteen-year-old
Subaru and has rented a series of
studio apartments when her father
owns four houses in Reno, Tahoe
City, Napa, and Malibu.

NEWSOME

No police record. Registered
Independent.

SARAH

No credit cards or bank records.
She must get a monthly allowance
from he father.

COLLIER

Let's ask him.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Good idea.

Collier calls Adam into the office. Garrison follows him.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (CONT'D)

First, we'd like to ask questions
about you and your timetable. Then
we have some questions about your
daughter.

Adam looks to Garrison who nods his head, yes.

Adam hands her a short note, which Special Agent Gupta reads.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (CONT'D)

I was home watching sports,
drinking beer, and placing bets
with my bookie. I called my private
investigator once, and she called
me once. And I drove to the morgue
to identify my dad, but you
assholes know that.

(beat)

That's it?

ADAM

That's it.

COLLIER

I apologize again for not notifying
you personally.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Can anyone verify you were home the
entire time, except for your trip
to the morgue?

ADAM

I have a doorbell camera that will
show two pizza deliveries, but it
doesn't pick up entry or exit from
the garage.

NEWSOME

How convenient. I'll check it out later, Ma'am.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Now, about your daughter. Where is she?

ADAM

I don't know.

COLLIER

Why didn't she finish her degree program at Stanford?

ADAM

You'll have to ask her. I asked enough.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Do you know what she does for a living?

ADAM

Trust fund baby. Ask Garrison.

GARRISON

Her grandfather set her up nicely. She was the only one in the family he liked.

SARAH

(to Adam softly)

Do you have a phone number for her?

ADAM

She doesn't like to be bothered with family.

(hands his phone to Gupta)

She used a burner phone to call me to borrow my boat. I added it to my contacts but never dialed it.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Thanks.

She studies the contacts list before finding "Mel" and writing down the number and handing the phone back.

ADAM

She's an off-the-grid kid. Drives me nuts.

Adam fidgets nervously.

Adam looks away as Special Agent Gupta stands.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
We'll find your dad's killer.

ADAM
What about me? Am I safe?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
We have no reason to believe you or your daughter are targets. If you can get that message to your daughter, that would be great.

COLLIER
And we'd still like to talk to her.

Adam exits.

GARRISON
May I speak to the Special Agent In Charge in private?

Special Agent Gupta nods and everyone else exits.

GARRISON (CONT'D)
It's imperative for national security reasons that I be kept in the loop on the two deaths.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
We can't release any information on ongoing investigations.

GARRISON
It's very important to my clients and government officials to resolve the times of death of Mr. Claremont and Mrs. Godfrey so a proxy can be assigned to approve munitions deliveries that have already been greatly delayed by these two untimely deaths.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
I'm dreadfully sorry, Mr. Thomas, but I just can't--

Special Agent Gupta's phone RINGS.

Garrison walks out with a wry smile.

GARRISON
That will be your Director.

Garrison shuts the door as he exits.

We see Special Agent Gupta on the phone rolling her eyes in disgust.

She hangs up the phone, runs to the door, and yells at Collier and Newsome.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

The Director wants the two Coroner reports on Claremont and Godfrey, and a security detail on Adam and Melissa Claremont. Now!

COLLIER

We haven't found...

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Find her. Now! Newsome, you take Adam.

(smiles at Sarah)

Officer Younger, Collier could use your help if you can spare the time.

Special Agent Gupta slams the door.

EXT. FBI OFFICE - NOON

COLLIER

I put out an APB for Mel and her Subaru. But I'm at a loss as to where to look for her.

SARAH

I'm thinking the campground we were at would be a good place to start.

COLLIER

The campground?

SARAH

Trust me.

COLLIER

That's the California side of the Lake. Agent Mills is not gonna like that.

SARAH

(laughs)

I'll tell him I'm with the Washoe Tribe from Tahoe City.

COLLIER

It'll give me a reason to check
with Steve on the autopsy of Mrs.
Godfrey.

SARAH

Good plan. What could go wrong?

INT. SOUTH LAKE TAHOE POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Collier, Sarah, and Steve are in a holding cell, depressed
and quiet.

SARAH

I don't think you were impeding an
investigation. You were just being
curious.

CORONER

I could lose my license.

COLLIER

Did they catch you recording?

CORONER

No, but I refused to alter the time
of death.

SARAH

What?

CORONER

That Senator dude was screaming at
the FBI agent, who was screaming at
me that his wife had died this
morning, not two nights before.

Collier and Sarah pat Steve gently on the back.

SARAH

Agent Mills can't change the time
of death. Only a coroner can after
an inquiry.

CORONER

He tried to fire the young Coroner
when she wouldn't change the TOD.
The Senator was in a hurry to get
his wife cremated.

COLLIER

What the hell happened this
morning?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. SOUTH TAHOE MORGUE - DAY

A Young Coroner (28; female) assists Steve in the autopsy with Agent Mills pacing in the background using arm motions to hurry them along.

The young Coroner pushes the body of the Accomplice (in the first scene) into a storage box. We see clay on his shoes.

CORONER (V.O.)

It was the strangest morning ever!
They brought in a drug overdose
body, pushed it into the cold box,
and ignored it the entire time.

Steve works on Mrs. Godfrey.

COLLIER (V.O.)

Did the Chief Coroner for
Sacramento show up?

CORONER (V.O.)

Nope. He was afraid to fly in a
helicopter, so they let the rookie
coroner and me handle Mrs. Godfrey.
Agent Mills watched us like a hawk.

AGENT MILLS

TOD?

CORONER

Closest we can determine is 48
hours ago -- maybe midnight to 2
AM.

AGENT MILLS

Maybe's not good enough.

SARAH (V.O.)

That's before Brandon Claremont was
even abducted, and at least six
hours before he died on the Rez!

AGENT MILLS

She died this morning!

Steve gets excited and uses hand gestures.

CORONER

Smell the damn body. It has been
decomposing a long time.

(MORE)

CORONER (CONT'D)

Full rigor mortis. And maggots! Oh my God, the maggots in the eyes, ears, and you know, down below... Ewww!

Agent Mills creeps closer to the body and turns green as the younger Coroner takes close-up photos of the maggots.

CORONER (CONT'D)

We'll order a full TOX report but I can't explain the copious amounts of blue-green algae in her lungs.

Everything shakes in the morgue due to a minor earthquake.

END FLASHBACK

CORONER (CONT'D)

That's when we felt the earthquake. It was only 3.5 but it put the fear of God in Agent Mills. He panicked and ran outside to call the Senator.

SARAH

I can explain the blue-green algae.

COLLIER

Enlighten us.

Sarah paces as she postulates.

SARAH

A few weeks ago, a woman reported her dog was poisoned from drinking algae in a pond in South Lake Tahoe.

COLLIER

I remember. Hysteria spreads faster than the algae.

SARAH

Officials raced out to test several beaches on the lake only finding minor amounts of algae and invasive aquatic weeds.

CORONER

The algae is toxic and all over the Tahoe Keys. When Mills exited to take an emergency phone call, I cut out a lung and put it in with the drug overdose victim.

(MORE)

CORONER (CONT'D)

When they find that, I'll be fired.
(yells)
But it was full of aquatic weeds!

SARAH

Like she had been killed by
waterboarding with filthy pond
water!

COLLIER

Holy shit. We have to tell the
Boss.

A Uniformed Police Officer enters to let the detainees out.

EXT. SOUTH LAKE TAHOE POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Collier and Sarah exit first and turn to wait for Steve who
exits with a cooler.

COLLIER

What's that?

CORONER

That brilliant young coroner left
this for me and told the officers
that I forgot my vegan lunch
knowing nobody would touch it.

He peeks in the cooler. Collier looks too.

COLLIER

It's the lung.

CORONER

She's so smart.

SARAH

And you just lost your heart,
didn't you?

COLLIER

Get that tested for algae, will ya,
Steve? We gotta run.

Collier and Sarah begin to run to the black SUV.

CORONER

Will do. Oh, and I sent you a copy
of the autopsy recording so Agent
Mills didn't make it disappear.

Collier throws Steve a kiss.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

The Campground Host meets Collier and Sarah.

CAMPGROUND HOST
Howdy, Campers! You're too late.
They had a tow truck haul away that
new Sprinter like it was
yesterday's garbage.

SARAH
Do you know where they took it?

CAMPGROUND HOST
Door on the tow truck said Carson
City Salvage.

Sarah and Collier glance at each other.

SARAH
(to the Host)
That cute couple that was in
campsite 64. Are they still around?

CAMPGROUND HOST
He paid for one more night.

Sarah glances toward Campsite #64.

SARAH
I'll go chat with them.

Sarah bounds off.

COLLIER
Thanks so much for helping us out
this morning.

CAMPGROUND HOST
No problem. I'm sorry they call
that device a "Big Stiffy," and
that how I ordered it on Amazon,
but it sounds so sexist.

Collier laughs until she sees Mel racing through the
campground with Sarah struggling to keep up.

SARAH
Help! She's getting away!

Collier takes off after Mel and Sarah.

Mel is outpacing them.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(yells)
We just want to talk.

COLLIER
(yells)
Stop or I'll shoot! This is the
FBI!

Mel disappears through the forest.

Sarah is furious with Collier when she finally catches up.
Both are out of breath.

SARAH
Stop or I'll shoot? Does that ever
work for you?

Collier puts her hands on her knees trying to catch a breath.

COLLIER
First time I said it.

Sarah shakes her head in disgust.

SARAH
You don't have your pistol with
you, do you?

COLLIER
I can't work in California without
local permission.

Sarah puts an arm around Collier.

SARAH
It's time for you to meet my ex.

They trudge back to Campsite #64.

EXT. CAMPGROUND, TENT SITE - CONTINUOUS

Denny sips coffee at the picnic table as Sarah and Collier
trudge in.

SARAH
Agent Mavis Collier, this my ex-
boyfriend, Dr. Denny Simonds, a
seismologist at UNR.

DENNY
Did you feel the earthquake today?
Sub-three-point-oh.

SARAH

We were in a big SUV and the tires muffled the quake for us, but the morgue was shaking, a friend said.

Collier puts a hand out to shake which Denny reluctantly accepts.

COLLIER

Nice to meet you, Denny.

DENNY

(smiles at Sarah)
She dumped me, not the other way around.

SARAH

Ancient history, Denny. Tell us where we can find Melissa Claremont.

Denny turns away, reluctant to speak.

COLLIER

Or I'll put you in a dark cell for a week with a guy named Bubba.

Denny's eyes open wide.

SARAH

She's kidding.

COLLIER

Not kidding.

DENNY

Okay, I'll talk.
(smiles shyly)
She read some of my journal articles and hunted me down at the University. She talked her way into staying at my place for a few days and then got me into protesting outside the Tahoe Keys yesterday.

COLLIER

Why?

DENNY

She wanted me to scare people to abandon the Keys or a tsunami would kill them.
(horrified)
(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)

I told her that's not what scientists do. Scientists don't tell people what they want to hear, they tell them what the data show.

SARAH

Was she upset with you?

DENNY

I think she wanted to kill me. She invited me out boating today on her dad's boat, but I can't swim.

COLLIER

Shocker.

Denny ignores the comment.

DENNY

She said she was taking out another friend who couldn't swim but that she had life vests. To be honest, I hope she doesn't come back here tonight. It's more peaceful without her.

SARAH

One last thing. Do you really think there's going to be a magnitude-7 earthquake under Lake Tahoe any time soon?

DENNY

Yes, sometime in the next few thousand years. That's soon in geologic time.

COLLIER

Thanks, Denny, You've been most helpful. It's a wonder Sarah let you go.

She pulls Sarah away laughing.

As they run to the black SUV, Collier is on the phone with Agent Newsome.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Jerry, we need the name, number, and docking slip of Adam Claremont's boat, and we'll need to see the CCTV at the Tahoe Keys Marina.

Collier ends the call.

SARAH
Jerry, is it?

COLLIER
Uh uh! I'm having none of that. I
met Denny.

They dash to the black SUV.

INT. SUV - LATER

Collier and Sarah drive around the beautiful west shore of
Lake Tahoe. They are quiet for a few moments.

COLLIER
We'll take the west shore to
Truckee then back to HQ to
apologize for not catching Mel.

SARAH
She'll turn up. She's probably
scared.
(sincere)
Sorry about riding you about Jerry.
My bad. I'm having enough trouble
managing my life.

COLLIER
What are you talking about? You
selected a career in public
service, same as me.

Looks away.

SARAH
It doesn't leave much time for
anyone else or anything else.

COLLIER
I get that. There's no such thing a
work-life balance.

SARAH
It's like sitting up in the air on
a teeter-totter with the world on
the other seat.

COLLIER
Got that right.

SARAH

Every night, I imagine pulling a big lever that opens a trap door and all the bad people in the world have to fall in before I can let myself sleep.

Collier and Sarah establish eye contact.

COLLIER

Does it work?

SARAH

Hell no, but I gotta pull that lever every night.

COLLIER

(sadly)

Me too, as long as there are bad people in the world.

They drive on in silence.

SARAH

I'm hungry.

INT. FBI OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Special Agent Gupta is reviewing the autopsy video recorded by the Coroner, Steve, who sits in her office like a scolded school child.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

My supervisor is watching this simultaneously and commenting as it plays.

CORONER

Agent Mills bullied the young coroner and threatened to have her fired three times.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

I counted four.

CORONER

I conducted the autopsy slowly and carefully as I had been trained.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Until you smelled the decaying corpse and saw all the maggots.

CORONER

That creeped me out. I usually don't see bodies that ripe.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

My supervisor has seen enough. He's taking the case from Agent Mills and giving it to Agent Newsome in our office.

CORONER

Am I free to go?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

There is the issue of the TOX report that Agent Newsome is about to order on my instructions, my ordering the freeze on any cremation until Agent Newson and I have signed off on the full reports, and your particular interest in the lung.

Steve holds up a Yeti cooler.

CORONER

I have a meeting at the University of Nevada, Reno, with a Professor of aquatic biology who has access to a Trace Gas Analyzer.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

I'll authorize any expense.

The Coroner gets up to leave.

CORONER

It won't cost you a dime. She's our centerfielder on our co-ed team. Collier will fill you in.

Gupta stares at her computer screen and yells out to Steve.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Our Director says he didn't hear that!

She smiles.

EXT. JAX ON THE TRACKS - EVENING

Collier and Sarah eat hamburgers, and French fries, and drink chocolate malts on the patio.

COLLIER

While we were driving, I got a text from my boss. Agent Mills was pulled from the case, and Newsome is handling Estelle Godfrey's murder.

SARAH

Anyone will be an improvement over Mills.

COLLIER

Newsome is going to be overzealous.

SARAH

But he has to guard Adam Claremont, right?

COLLIER

He doesn't sit still very long.

SARAH

I'll bet we might find Mel at Denny's condo in Reno.

COLLIER

We'll go there next.

SARAH

I keep seeing your whiteboard in my head.

COLLIER

Me too. We know that Estelle Godfrey died first.

SARAH

That made Brandon Claremont the immediate and sole heir to the munitions business.

(snickers)

At least until he died the next morning.

COLLIER

Did that lawyer, Garrison Thomas, ever tell us who inherits from Brandon Claremont? Does he have to share anything with Melissa Claremont's Trust?

SARAH

We don't know, but we do that Adam had the biggest motive in the timing of both deaths.

COLLIER

Because if Brandon died before Estelle, I bet she would have got the business and her husband, Senator Godfrey would likely have had a big stake in the munitions business.

SARAH

If there isn't a conflict of interest for a Senator.

COLLIER

They always find ways around them.

SARAH

But that means the Senator had a motive for killing them both, or having them killed, but in a different order, with Brandon dying first.

COLLIER

He's probably identifying the body now. I bet he had to drag Adam along.

SARAH

We should have Adam detained at the South Lake Tahoe Police Station until we talk to him again.

COLLIER

I'll text Newsome.

Sarah gets a text message. She stands and reads it to Collier.

SARAH

South Lake Police found Jake Long Bear's body by the Thunderbird Lodge. Suspected drug overdose. They took him to the South Lake Tahoe morgue and wanted me to identify the body.

COLLIER

Let's go!

INT. SUV - EVENING

Collier drives fast and wild around the east shore of the Lake. It's breathtakingly beautiful as they pass Sand Harbor.

SARAH

Denny used to talk about the 300-foot tsunami 12,000 to 21,000 years ago that destroyed everything in its path.

COLLIER

Do you have to talk about that now?

They drive on.

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Another night on the job! Work-life balance, my ass!

They pass the entrance to the Thunderbird Lodge.

SARAH

Can you request the CCTV from the Guard House at the entrance to the Thunderbird Lodge to see if we can pick up any sign of Jake Long Bear before he died?

COLLIER

Sure. I can do that!

They drive on.

SARAH

Thanks.

Lake Tahoe looks spectacular as they zoom past.

EXT. SOUTH LAKE TAHOE MORGUE - NIGHT

The Young Coroner meets Collier and Sarah at the door.

SARAH

I'm afraid I'm here to identify Jake Long Bear's body.

YOUNG CORONER

Follow me.

COLLIER

I'll make a few phone calls.

Sarah follows the Young Coroner to the small morgue.

YOUNG CORONER

Senator Godfrey dropped by to identify his wife. FBI Agent Newsome was with him.

COLLIER

Any comment, off the record?

YOUNG CORONER

If the Senator could have spit, he would have. The Senator said she had secretly divorced him two years ago, but for the re-election campaign, they kept it private for a bigger payout for his wife.

(beat)

And that FBI Agent got an emergency call while he was here and raced out like there was fire.

The Young Coroner opens the drawer and Sarah's eyes open wide and she turns sad.

SARAH

That's Jake Long Bear.

She sees a tattoo "OKA" partially hidden by his shirt sleeve.

She rolls up the shirt sleeve to read, "WOVOKA."

SARAH (CONT'D)

The tribe will make arrangements to fetch his remains and give him a proper burial and ceremony at the Rez.

YOUNG CORONER

No autopsy, but I ordered a TOX report because it was our second OD in as many days.

SARAH

(curious and shocked)

Who was the other?

YOUNG CORONER

A John Doe. Do you know him?

The Young Coroner opens the drawer and Sarah's eyes open wide and she turns sad.

SARAH
I've seen him with Jake months ago
on the Rez. I can find out his name
for you.

The Young Coroner hands Sarah a plastic evidence bag
containing a cell phone.

YOUNG CORONER
This may help. It's a burner phone.

SARAH
That should help a lot. Thanks.

Sarah sees clay caked on the man's shoes.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Can I see Jake's shoes?

The Young Coroner opens Jake's drawer and Sarah's eyes open
wide again as she sees the same clay.

EXT. SOUTH LAKE TAHOE MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Sarah walks out with two evidence bags with clay in them, and
another evidence bag containing a phone.

SARAH
It was Jake. His accomplice was in
there too. Both ODs. The Senator
identified his wife and your Agent
Newsome raced out like there was
fire.

COLLIER
And we don't believe in
coincidences.

SARAH
(sadly)
No, we don't.

Agent Newsome calls Collier in a panic. She answers on
Speaker.

BEGIN SPLIT SCREEN

COLLIER
Collier.

NEWSOME

I lost Adam Claremont. I slipped out for 5 minutes to meet the Senator...

COLLIER

(angry)

You left him alone?

NEWSOME

I called the boss. She's on her way by copter. We have to find him!

COLLIER

We're five minutes from Adam's house at Tahoe Keys. Sit tight.

END SPLIT SCREEN

COLLIER (CONT'D)

Let's go.

SARAH

Adam Claremont's in grave danger!

They RACE off.

EXT. TAHOE KEYS HOME - NIGHT

Collier and Sarah exit the car and race to the front door.

They barge in to see Agent Newsome racing around the house looking for clues, while Mel Claremont sits on the couch with a blank look on her face. She's disturbingly calm but distant, which Sarah sees.

SARAH

You're Melissa Claremont.

MEL

It's just Mel. I came to see my dad and Estelle but they were gone. I was scared and I thought, hey, safety in numbers. Agent Newsome told me to sit calmly and you'd be here soon to tell me what's going on.

Collier moves in to console Mel.

COLLIER

I'm Agent Mavis Collier of the FBI.
You've met Agent Gerald Newsome.
(MORE)

COLLIER (CONT'D)

(point to Sarah)

This is Tribal Officer Sarah the Younger from the Paiute Reservation at Pyramid Lake. My supervisor, Special Agent Kiara Gupta is on her way.

MEL

(to Collier)

Nice to meet you, Agent Collier.

(to Sarah)

Hello, Officer. I'm so sorry for the way we treated Pyramid Lake with water control and diversions.

COLLIER

Why did you run from us at the campground?

MEL

I thought you were kidnappers. I'm an heiress and was trained not to trust anyone. And my grandfather's lawyer texted me that he was kidnapped. I panicked.

Mel looks away sadly.

MEL (CONT'D)

Agent Newsome told me my grandfather died and so did Estelle. She provided my dad with lots of comfort after my mom died.

SARAH

Comfort?

MEL

I was away at college, when they moved in together here. It's so hard to believe they're gone.

Garrison Thomas KNOCKS once and enters. He races to comfort Mel.

GARRISON

Mel, you poor thing! We've been worried sick about you.

They HEAR a SIREN in the distance.

Everyone anxiously awaits.

Special Agent Gupta RACES in the door. We see her body cam is on.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Did you find Adam Claremont?

COLLIER
Taylor Creek. That's the last GPS location of his phone.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
(angry)
Agent Newsome, go fetch the man you were supposed to be watching! And call in local support. I want him found immediately.

Newsome begins to run out.

SARAH
(sadly)
Better send for the coroner too.

Mel glares at Sarah briefly then becomes calm and looks forward.

Sarah steps back observing everyone.

COLLIER
(to Mel)
What your family's attorney didn't tell you was that your grandfather was more than kidnapped. He was drugged, robbed, and dumped at Pyramid Lake where he later died of a heart attack.

Garrison looks away.

GARRISON
I thought Adam might be involved. He was extremely jealous of his father's wealth and unstable after his wife's death.

COLLIER
By suicide, is that right?

GARRISON
That's what the police reported.

SARAH

But Adam's private investigator,
Lynn Chong, thought all along that
Adam killed her with sleeping
pills.

Mel is stunned. Her hands shake. Garrison comforts her.

MEL

We were talking to the police when
it happened.

COLLIER

That's right. We read the report.
You and your dad were being
interviewed for domestic abuse
between the two of you, while your
mom was home taking sleeping pills.

GARRISON

(yells)

That case was closed!

(softly to Mel)

I advise you not to speak to these
people. Your father will straighten
everything out when he returns.

MEL

He was gone when I got here.

COLLIER

Your father promised to tell you
everything and keep you in the
loop.

MEL

I have his number blocked. We're
estranged.

SARAH

(mumbles)

They don't get any stranger.

Collier and Garrison glare at Sarah.

MEL

Who did it?

SARAH

We think it was two drug addicts
who threw him in an old ice truck,
robbed him, and dumped him at
Pyramid Lake.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

The funny thing was they power-washed the ice truck afterward, not something you'd think drug addicts would do after a robbery.

MEL

Maybe they didn't want to get caught.

COLLIER

That's what I thought, but Officer Younger found evidence of sticky Pyramid Lake soils under the truck.

Sarah holds up two small evidence bags containing clay soil.

SARAH

And we found the two kidnappers in the South Lake Tahoe morgue today, with the same clay on their shoes.

MEL

(surprised)
They were dead?

COLLIER

Over-dosed with the help of contaminated fentanyl, but that's what drug addicts do, right?

MEL

(calmly)
And you think they killed my grandfather?

SARAH

I'm not so sure.

Garrison is angry.

GARRISON

But you don't have a single thread of evidence that links Mel to his death!

MEL

(yells)
It wasn't me. I was with Professor Denny Simonds at his condo in Reno all night giving him a night he'll never forget.

COLLIER

What time was that?

MEL

All night long! Ask him.

SARAH

He doesn't remember much that night other than he was with you.

COLLIER

And the next day, you were protesting and went camping with the Professor here at South Lake Tahoe, and it happened to be the same campground where we found the body of Estelle Godfrey in her new Sprinter van.

SARAH

She was found face-up and spread eagle like your grandfather. Quite the coincidence.

MEL

I was with Professor Denny Simonds the entire time. He's a harmless academic.

SARAH

Especially if he's on roofies, giving you the perfect alibi again.

Newsome races in from the backyard.

NEWSOME

His car is gone from the garage. He's not in the house. No sign of him anywhere outside by his dock and his boat is still here.

GARRISON

Did you try his phone?

NEWSOME

Of course, several times.

COLLIER

Did you put a GPS tracer on it?

Newsome's eyes open wide, but so do Mel's, which Sarah sees.

Collier turns and makes a call.

MEL

He might have gone salmon fishing at Taylor Creek.

SARAH
(Suspicious)
At night?

MEL
It was his favorite thing to do.

Sarah pulls out handcuffs and places them gently on Mel.

Garrison is furious.

GARRISON
What's the meaning of this? We need
Mel's approval as a proxy for her
grandfather for a major munitions
deal. Brandon Collier left
everything to Mel! Everything!

Mel is shocked.

MEL
Not my dad?

GARRISON
No, you. He thought very little of
your father. You were the only one
in the family he trusted.

Mel's eyes turn glassy. She is stunned.

MEL
What? No! This can't be!

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Someone better tell me what the
hell is going on around here!

Agent Collier turns on her body cam too.

COLLIER
Officer Younger figured it all out.

GARRISON
This is wrong!

SARAH
Let me begin by saying that Agent
Collier is the finest young
detective and partner I've ever had
on the case, due in part to her
boss leading by example. Thank you,
Special Agent Kiara Gupta for
inviting this partnership with my
people.

Gupta is impatient.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA
Out with it, Officer Younger.

SARAH
Right.
(paces while she speaks)
We found Brandon Claremont had
suffered what looked like a heart
attack on Paiute land exactly 60
feet above the current lake level.
He was spread-eagle and face-up, in
ceremonial fashion with a "W"
marked on his forehead.
(beat)
I suspected the killer wanted to
warn us just as a Paiute spiritual
leader, Wovoka, tried to warn us of
the end of the world over 100 years
ago.

GARRISON
(interrupts)
This has nothing to do with Mel.

SARAH
Less than an hour ago, I identified
the body of Jake Long Bear at the
South Lake Tahoe Morgue. Jake bore
the tattoo of one of his heroes,
Wovoka, and he and his accomplice
also in the morgue, had Pyramid
Lake clay on their shoes.

Sarah shows them all the two evidence bags with clay in them.

GARRISON
This is ridiculous.

SARAH
I'm sure soil tests will reveal the
soils match Pyramid Lake.

GARRISON
Proves nothing.

SARAH
The old ice truck they drove was
power sprayed clean, but anyone on
the Rez will tell you there will
always be clay in the undercarriage
and brakes no matter how much you
scrub and clean.

GARRISON

Big deal. So the ice truck was there. Nothing links Mel to these two drug addicts!

Sarah hands Collier the evidence bag containing the burner phone.

COLLIER

So imagine our surprise today when we found a burner phone in the pocket of Jake's accomplice.

SARAH

Agent Collier, could you please dial the last number received by this phone?

She maneuvers the evidence bag to dial the number.

Silence.

A smartphone RINGS in Mel's back pocket.

Everyone but Mel gasps.

Collier grabs Mel's phone with an evidence bag.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Look at her recent calls.

Collier looks at recent calls.

Special Agent Gupta swoops in and looks over Collier's shoulder.

COLLIER

Jake Long Bear three days ago, an unidentified caller two days ago, Professor Denny Simonds every day for a week, Jack Long Bear mid-morning again, and Adam Claremont an hour ago.

Mel looks away. Garrison looks troubled.

GARRISON

Mel?

COLLIER

Busy girl.

SARAH

Neither Jake nor his accomplice were smart enough to be the mastermind of the plot, so Collier and I looked elsewhere.

COLLIER

I followed the money, and there was a lot of it. At every step, Adam Claremont looked guiltier. He planned to inherit his father's billions, especially after we found Estelle Godfrey died before Brandon did. That meant Adam would inherit her portion of their joint munitions company and Brandon's entire real estate empire.

GARRISON

Mel had no idea that her grandfather disinherited his son.

SARAH

It makes the trail of events that much harder to understand.

(directly to Mel)

Because the motive wasn't money!

(beat)

It was revenge, and not just for killing her mother, it was revenge for harming the earth, and it was years in the making.

Mel looks up at Sarah and smiles (psychotically).

SARAH (CONT'D)

I suspect that Lynn Chong was right. Adam Claremont killed his wife and no one could prove it.

Sarah paces as she talks.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Adam must learned about the KGB way to assassinate enemies of the state from his father. Cyanide spray in the face where the victim doesn't realize that in six to eight hours they'd be dead.

Sarah gets in Mel's face.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

SUPER: "Three years earlier."

Adam and Mel are yelling and pushing each other.

On the couch behind them, Mrs. Claremont is taking a pill with a drink of scotch.

SARAH (V.O.)

I suspect that your dad staged a violent altercation with you so that you would call the police. Your mom took a sedative to calm down. Your mom called the police, and when you ran off to your room...

Adam sprays his wife's nose with cyanide powder with a pre-made air puffer used for makeup.

SARAH (V.O.)

Your dad sprayed her nose with the cyanide. She was alive when the police came to take you both down to the station to file a report. When you returned your mom was in the bedroom dead. Your dad planted the suicide note that was later lost and put the sleeping pills by her side. He had the perfect alibi.

We see her mom, dead with the sleeping pills beside her.

SARAH (V.O.)

It was your mom's third attempted suicide, so Garrison stepped in to quiet things up. Garrison used his connections with Senator Godfrey to dodge a full autopsy and rush the cremation.

END FLASHBACK

Mel and Garrison look away.

COLLIER

That's when you changed your major at Stanford from Environmental Science to the Master of Science in Medicine with a minor in Biomedical Investigation. You didn't care if you graduated. You're a trust fund baby.

SARAH

We think you suspected it was murder too, and wanted to know how!

COLLIER

(to Mel)

Sarah pointed out the similarity in your mother's death and your grandfather's death.

SARAH

The delayed response of cyanide powder gave you time to establish your alibi with the professor.

COLLIER

But Estelle Godfrey's murder was different. Waterboarding with pond water filled with invasive algae and water bugs and shit.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

Mel is in a full hazmat suit inside Estelle's darkened Sprinter. Estelle is barely conscious as she lays face-up on the bed with her head hanging off the mattress.

Mel holds a jug of greenish-brown pond water above Estelle's gaping mouth.

SARAH (V.O.)

We suspected her lungs might contain traces of cyanide spay too, but you may not have considered that blue-green algae also contain a cyanotoxin called saxitoxin, so she died sooner than expected. Both Brandon's and Adam's DNA were found on the mattress. And we found the same prescription of sleeping pills in the Sprinter that claimed Mrs. Claremont's life, tossing more suspicion on Adam.

END FLASHBACK

COLLIER

And again, Senator Godfrey and Garrison Thomas stepped in to rush the body to cremation.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

We had to fire the FBI agent who tried to influence the autopsy.

SARAH

Luckily, the quick-thinking team of coroners saved the lung for further analyses which substantiated our claim. Psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic found in magic mushrooms, and pond water might be termed death by natural causes.

Agent Newsome races in with a sad look.

NEWSOME

We found Mr. Adam Claremont. He vomited a few poison hemlock leaves but he must have swallowed several more.

Everyone glares at Mel.

SARAH

Poison hemlock. It grows naturally in every state except Florida.

GARRISON

Mel? Why?

Mel stares to the side and down with a blank expression.

SARAH

Ah! The motive!

COLLIER

She's a serial-killing lunatic.
That's the motive!

Sarah paces again.

SARAH

At first, I thought there was a clear environmental message being sent. Brandon Claremont's body was placed exactly 60 feet above the current lake level of Pyramid Lake, the height of the lake prior to the white man's intervention with flood control and irrigation.

COLLIER

And the tie to the Tahoe Keys.

SARAH

Yes, the largest intact natural wetland in the Lake Tahoe Basin was destroyed and filled to create the billion-dollar real estate monster it is today, along with its degraded water quality, invasive species, and decadent lifestyle. I think that's why Estelle Godfrey was tortured with filthy pond water in her new Sprinter van.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

And now, Adam Claremont.

SARAH

Killed with psilocybin and cyanide, naturally occurring substances in nature. I'm guessing Adam was stunned with magic mushrooms before she shoved the poison hemlock leaves down his throat.

Mel doesn't respond which Gupta sees.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

Should we call an ambulance?

SARAH

(to Gupta)

Yes, but it won't do any good.

(to Mel)

Will it, Mel?

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

I'm calling.

Gupta turns and makes the call.

SARAH

Then Mel convinced Professor Denny Simonds to scare people in the Tahoe Keys about a major earthquake causing a tsunami. Denny told me he was sexually coerced into protesting.

Mel shows no expression.

SARAH (CONT'D)

But then there was the murder of Jake Long Bear and his friend who transported Brandon Claremont out to Pyramid Lake.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

I think they were murdered so they wouldn't talk. The messages on the burner phone and Mel's phone will bear that out.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

The ambulance is on the way.

SARAH

So while Mel's motives weren't entirely environmental, they were spiritually cataclysmic.

GARRISON

(sadly)

What do you mean?

SARAH

The "W" written on Brandon's forehead, the "Wovoka" tattoo on Jake Long Bear's arm, and all that talk of 7.3 Earthquake under Lake Tahoe are Wovoka coming back to life and predicting the end of the world again.

COLLIER

And you think Mel Claremont believed all of that?

Sarah puts her arm around Collier.

SARAH

Remember what we think about each night.

COLLIER

Pulling an imaginary lever that would open up a trap door for all the bad people in the world to fall in before we could fall asleep.

SARAH

That's what Mel was doing. It was her purpose in life.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

To kill her family? That's sad.

SARAH

Not to Mel. Her grandfather and Estelle Godfrey sold munitions that killed many innocent women and children in the name of war.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

He also destroyed wetlands all over the world. Her father killed her mom, and got away with it.

NEWSOME

Until tonight.

COLLIER

And the drug addicts?

SARAH

I'm betting the CCTV from Thunderbird Lodge where they found Jake will show Mel's old Subaru pass by an hour earlier. The drug dealers sell to children and teens to build their future markets and kill their users.

COLLIER

So her primary motive was to end the cycle and lives of the bad people in her world.

They HEAR a siren approaching.

Mel begins to die.

SARAH

(to Mel)

I'm betting the autopsy will show Mel spayed cyanide into her lungs earlier today. She doesn't have much time left. There is no cure. Nothing anyone can do.

Mel collapses, dead.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Mel was killing off her wicked family and herself to end the cycle of human and environmental degradation that her family had caused. She was making the world a better place.

EXT. TAHOE KEYS HOME - NIGHT

Two EMTs load Mel into an ambulance.

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA

(to Collier)

Great job Collier.

(MORE)

SPECIAL AGENT GUPTA (CONT'D)

You picked a fine partner.

(to Sarah)

And so did you. Thank you for taking the lead in the investigation and solving the mysteries of that peculiar and seriously dysfunctional family. If you can use us at any time always remember that we owe you.

SARAH

How can I forget?

(winks at Collier)

I live on the Rez.

EXT. SUMMIT OF MT. TALLAC - DAY

Sarah, Collier, Denny, and Steve the Coroner enjoy a majestic view of Lake Tahoe. They drink water in reusable metal travel mugs.

SARAH

This is it. Mount Tallac, what our ancestors called Tala-act meaning Great Mountain. Lake Tahoe was called Da ow ga, the Washoe word for lake.

Denny stares at his altimeter.

DENNY

My altimeter says it's 9739 feet above sea level. I loaned it to Mel last week; she returned it when we were camping.

COLLIER

Sarah thinks Jake Long Bear and his buddy used it to place the billionaire's body where they did at Pyramid Lake.

CORONER

You're a damn good detective, Sarah The Younger!

Everyone chuckles.

Denny points along the west shore of the lake.

DENNY

The West Tahoe Fault runs under the lake and that's where the major landslide and tsunami 12 to 21 thousand years ago creating thundering waves greater than 300 feet high, enough to wipe out everything along the shore.

COLLIER

Could it happen again?

DENNY

A magnitude 7 earthquake on the West Tahoe Fault could do the same, but we can't predict if or when that might occur.

CORONER

That is all Mel Claremont hoped for.

COLLIER

I can't be too hard on Mel. She saw what her family was doing by destroying natural landscapes and innocent civilians in war and wanted it to stop.

(beat)

Maybe some family lines are meant to be discontinued.

Sarah raises her travel mug for a toast.

SARAH

To, Mel! She was a deeply troubled human being trying to make the world a better place for future generations.

The others toast and cheer.

FADE OUT.

THE END