

1

Veritas Noble and I had just seen the classic *The Apartment* with Jack Lemmon and Shirley MacLaine at the Kentucky Theater and were heading back to her car when she exclaimed, “Oh, Josiah. Someone has run into my Subaru Impreza!”

We both rushed and surveyed the damage to the back of her bumper which someone had severely dented.

“That’s terrible,” I said, looking around for cars whose color matched the paint marks scratched on the bumper. “Wait a minute, VeVe,” I said, referring to my nickname for her, as Veritas was too much of a mouthful. “There’s an envelope under the windshield wiper.”

Veritas pulled a white envelope out from the wiper and tore it open. It contained a large wad of cash. “Josiah, there’s a thousand dollars here,” she said, incredulously.

“Read the note.”

Pulling out a handwritten note she read—“*I’m sorry. Hope this helps.*” Just when I thought the worst, I find this. Kind of restores my faith in humanity. My insurance has such a high deductible.”

“Do you think the money will cover the cost of fixing the bumper?”

“It should be close enough. I feel so much better now.”

“It was very nice to leave some money, but who walks around with a thousand bucks in his pocket?” I wondered out loud.

“I don’t know and don’t care. Let’s go. I want to get home.”

“Can you get my packages out of the trunk?”

“Yeah. Looks like the trunk wasn’t affected,” Veritas said, inserting her key and opening it.

How shall I put this? The trunk swung open. We both stared at its contents, gasped, and ran down the street screaming.

A dead man had been stuffed into Veritas’ trunk.

2

Let me introduce myself. My name is Josiah Louise Reynolds. My grandmother named me after a righteous Hebrew king. I'm anything but. I'm not a king and definitely not righteous. I live on a farm near the Palisades in the Bluegrass overlooking the Kentucky River. I raise honey bees and make my living selling honey at the local farmers' market, boarding horses, and renting out my iconic home, the Butterfly, for events like wedding receptions.

I'm in my fifties, wear a hearing aid, walk with a slight limp, and in pain much of the time, although the pain has lessened. I am mannerly, housebroken, and presentable in public without embarrassing myself or others—most of the time.

That takes care of me.

As for Veritas, she is an old friend, and we had spent an enjoyable evening together until we opened the trunk of her car.

We ran screeching pell-mell, coming to a halt only when I careened into a parked car. I grabbed hold of Veritas' jacket. "Stop, VeVe. I can't go on."

"I think I peed on myself," Veritas said, glumly.

"You're not the only one who needs to change her panties. Come on. Let's see about this."

"No."

"The man might need assistance."

"He looked dead to me, Josiah."

"Stay here, then. If someone is playing a gag, and that stiff jumps out at me, I'm gonna make sure he's dead."

I made my way back to the car parked behind the theater. The trunk was still open, and the street was eerily quiet as if nothing untoward had happened. Peering cautiously into the trunk, I sputtered, "Sir, are you all right?"

I inched closer still and poked him with a finger. The man's head lolled to where I could see his face. He was dead all right. His eyes stared up at me with that blank look that only the dead have. I should know since I've stumbled upon my share of lifeless bodies during the past few years.

Digging into my purse, I pulled out my phone and used its itty bitty light to get a better look inside the trunk. The unfortunate man was a white male with nice features who must have been handsome in life. He was thirtyish, wearing expensive blue jeans, posh tennis shoes, black tee shirt, and jacket. His hair had been cut

recently, and his nails appeared to be professionally manicured. Rigor mortis had not set in yet, which meant the man had died within the last three hours. My concentration was broken by the clip-clop of Veritas' approaching steps.

"Is he?" Veritas asked.

"Sure looks like it."

"How did he die?"

"Don't know but there's a small blood pool underneath him. Better get the police, VeVe. I'll stay here with the body while you go."

"I'll be back in a jiffy," Veritas said, quickly walking to the police station only a block away.

I took the opportunity of her absence to rifle through the man's pockets and go through his wallet. I switched on my phone's camera, taking pictures of both the body, possessions, and the dented bumper before the police arrived. I even took a small paint sample from the scratching on the bumper and dropped it into an empty pill bottle in my purse. Seconds later, a squad car with two uniforms pulled up with Veritas riding in the back. I turned with a frightened, panicky look plastered on my face for the benefit of the male policemen who expected such scared looks from women after stuffing my phone in my pocket. Who am I to stand in the way of archaic prejudices?

A beat cop nudged me aside and felt for a pulse. "Yep, he's dead." He eyed us suspiciously. "Touch anything?"

"Why no, Officer," I lied. "Why would we do that?"

"Did you know him?"

Both Veritas and I shook our heads.

"Whose car is this?"

"Mine," Veritas said, her voice quaking a bit.

"We'll need you both to make a statement. This officer will show you to police headquarters."

"Don't bother. I know the way. Come on, VeVe. Let's get this over with."

"What a horrible evening," Veritas said, peering over her shoulder at the cop following us to the police station.

I couldn't have agreed more.

3

Norbet Drake walked into the interrogation room with a Styrofoam coffee cup in one hand and a file in the other. He glanced at me, shaking his head. “You are certainly a bad penny. How do you manage to keep any friends when bodies keep piling up around you? I would give you a wide berth.”

“Nice to see you too, Norbet.”

He sighed, “It’s Detective Drake.”

“We see each other so often, I thought we should be on a first name basis.”

“It’s rather like a revolving door for you and this police station. Okay, Josiah, let’s hear your story this time.”

“May I call you Norbet?”

“No.”

“Then it’s Mrs. Reynolds.” I batted my eyelashes.

“Do you always act like this just to be difficult?”

“Hmm, yeah, I think I do.”

Detective Drake cleared his throat. “Let’s get on with this.” He clicked on the video recorder. “It is twenty-two hundred hours on Sunday—.”

I interrupted. “He must have been shot.”

Detective Drake looked up from his file. “What makes you say so?”

“Because you made VeVe and me take a GSR test. Who does that anymore? It’s a rather outdated test, isn’t it?”

“When you say VeVe, do you mean Veritas Noble?”

“Did you know Veritas was the Roman goddess of truth? VeVe, that’s what I call her, is very much like her namesake. I don’t think she’s ever told a lie in her life. I don’t think she even can. If VeVe says something, you can take it the bank.”

“For this interview, let’s refer to VeVe as Veritas Noble.”

“Okay, but let’s get back to the gunshot residue test.”

“Mrs. Reynolds, I was under the impression I am conducting this interview.”

“Interview? See, that’s the problem. I thought we were merely giving statements as witnesses to discovering a body. My being interviewed means you think I’m a suspect. Did you find gunshot residue on my hands?”

Detective Drake leaned back in his chair. “NO! We didn’t.”

“So, I’m not a suspect?”

“My mouth waters at the thought.”

“Did you find a gun on me, VeVe, or in her car?”

“Privileged information.”

I replied, “Which means no. Did you find a gun anywhere in or near the crime scene like a dumpster or a storm drain?”

Detective Drake crossed his arms while clenching his jaw muscles.

I said, “I think the perpetrator took his gun with him.”

“What do you think happened?”

“I haven’t a clue. You’re the detective,” I replied in my best helpless female tone of voice.

“Will we find your DNA on the victim’s body?”

“You will. I touched him to see if there was a pulse.”

“What about Veritas Noble?”

“After opening the trunk, she never got close to the body again.”

“Why did Mrs. Noble open the trunk?”

“I asked her. We had been shopping before the movie, and I wanted to get my packages from the trunk since we were going home.”

“Why not leave them in the trunk?”

“It would save VeVe getting out of the car again when she dropped me off at home.”

“What did you do when you saw the body?”

“We both ran away. I believe I was screaming. I think VeVe was, too. I ran headlong into another car. A bruise has formed on my leg. Would you like to see it?”

Detective Drake ignored my suggestion to see the bruise.

It used to be when I teased a man about showing part of my anatomy, he jumped at the chance. Now, men acted as if a bee had stung them. It’s tough getting old, girls.

Drake asked, “Did you know the suspect?”

“It was dark and the man’s face was turned away,” I replied, trying to stifle a yawn.

Drake checked the report in the file. “The man’s face was facing up when the officer arrived.”

“Yes, only because I checked for a pulse.”

“Did Mrs. Noble know him?”

“You’ll have to ask her.”

“Why did you park behind the theater instead of Main Street?”

“We went to see a movie and all the parking spaces were taken on Main Street, so we parked in the back.”

“Why not use the parking garage half a block over?”

“Women dislike using parking garages.”

“Even if it is attached to a police station?”

“We parked only a block from the police station and look what happened right under your noses. A man was murdered and thrown into the trunk of a woman’s car.”

“Okay, I’ve had enough. We’ll call you back in if we need something further.”

“You will talk to my lawyer, Shaneika Mary Todd, if you need something further. I gave your men a statement. I complied with your GSR test. I’m done talking. See ya around, Norbet.” I gave Detective Drake a big smile, relieved the police hadn’t searched me. For if they had, they would have found gloves tucked in my pants’ pocket. Otherwise, my prints would have been discovered all over that dead man.

I may be a snoop, but that is no reason to make the police think I’m a killer.