

Murder and the Cold Case

John Carter, #1

by Robert D. Coleman, ...

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 ... thru ... Chapter 15

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Chapter 1

John Carter woke up early and couldn't go back to sleep. Normally that wouldn't be a problem. As sheriff of Limestone County, a little county smack in the middle of the heart of small-town Texas, late nights and early mornings were nothing new. But this was Saturday on a rare day off. He hated it when he could sleep in and couldn't, had the right to—just not the ability.

He got up and got dressed, trying to be as quiet as he could, not wanting to wake up the whole house. His wife, Carolyn, would not be amused if he woke her.

He made his way to the kitchen and got the coffee going. When it was done, he poured himself a cup and walked to the back of the house and out onto the back porch. He sat down at the table just as the sun was starting to come up. He loved watching the sunrise and set. It gave a steadying rhythm to the rest of a normally chaotic life.

As the sun rose fully and he took the last sip of his coffee, he heard the back door open and looked up to see his wife Carolyn making her way to his side. She had an empty coffee cup in one hand and the coffee pot in the other. He looked up at her and said, "Morning. You're up early." She sat down at the table and poured coffee in her cup and said, "Well somebody kept waking me up this morning." She then filled John's cup with a grin. He smiled at her, "I'm sorry. I didn't want to wake you." She laughs and looks over at him. "Well, you failed." He looks down and takes a sip of his coffee. "Sorry, dear."

She looks over at him. "So what's bothering you, John? Why can't you sleep?" He looks up and says, "Oh, I don't know." Carolyn takes a sip of her coffee and says, "You don't know? Or you don't want to say? Does it have anything to do with your Dad calling yesterday and wanting you to meet him over at your Papaw's place and help him go through his stuff?" He looks over at him and says, "You should be a detective." She looks back at John. "Your Grandma passed away almost a year ago, and your Papaw he's been gone almost 20 years. Your Dad wants to retire and move back home. That means you have to clean out their stuff. Keep what you want. You're not going to forget them. Your Papaw is too big a part of you for you to, ever forget him. I have heard you tell so many stories about him. I feel like I knew him." He looks up and says, "You're right. He was just a huge part of my life. When Dad was away in the Marines, he stepped up and filled that void for me. He taught me so much. He was a big strong man, never been sick a day in his life. Then he was gone. You would think by now I'd of worked through it." She took another sip of her coffee and said, "Well, maybe going through your Papaw's stuff will give you some closure."

"What time are you meeting your Dad?" she asked. "Oh, around 9 am or so," he said. She looks at her watch. "Well, you better get a move on. Why don't you take Tom with you? You know how he loves to hear stories about your Papaw. Plus, there is that big tank behind the house. Just say the word fish, and he will be

ready to go.” John laughed, “You’ve got a point there, so what are you and Becky going to do today?” She takes the last sip of her coffee and stands up, and says, “Well, don't know for sure. Probably take advantage of my husband being gone and go spend some money.” She smiles at him and opens the back door, and goes inside.

John takes the last drink of coffee and stands up. He takes one last look around and heads inside. He turns down the hallway to his kids’ rooms. He has 13-year-old twins—a boy Tom and Becky, his girl.

There are two rooms at the end of the hall, Becky’s on the left and Tom’s on the right. He reaches down and grabs the knob on Tom’s door. Knocking with the other hand but not waiting for a response, he opened the door. Stepping into the room, he looked around, but the room was fairly neat, to his surprise.

He saw Tom lying completely under the covers. He walked over to the mound, looked down, and said. “Hey, Tom.” He heard a slight grunt coming from under the covers. He reached down and pulled back the blankets from Tom’s head. “Hey, get up and go with me to meet Granddad over at the old house.” Tom rolls over onto his back. “But Dad, it’s still dark outside.” John smiles, “That's because your eyes are closed.” Tom opens his eyes and squints, “Oh, my bad.” John turns and walks toward the door and says, “We leave in 30 minutes. And get your fishing pole. There’s a tank behind the house. Use to have some big fish in it.” Tom sets straight up in bed. “I’m up, Dad!”

John walks back to his bedroom, takes a quick shower, shaves, and gets dressed. He grabs his shoulder gun holster and puts it on. He hits the six-digit code on his gun safe and takes out his 38 revolver. He breaks it open, checks the load, snaps it back together, and puts it in the holster under his left shoulder. He picked up his Sheriff’s badge in his flip wallet and put it in his pocket, as he always did when he was off duty. He then puts on his sports coat, covering his gun, and headed to the front door. He stopped and put on his white straw cowboy hat. He yelled. “Tom, let's go!” Opening the door, he walks outside to find Tom waiting for him in the truck.

John smiles as he looks at Tom. “Well, I guess you’re ready then.” Tom smiled back at him and said, “Yep. Waiting for you, Dad.” Now both in the truck, they’re on their way leaving the small town of Groesbeck, Texas that they had called home since Tom was born.

About 10 minutes later, they drove through another small town Mexia, Texas though slightly bigger than Groesbeck.

When they got to the edge of town, they passed the Walmart. John looked over and saw a Mexia Police car, ambulance, several police officers, and a small crowd standing around a vehicle. John turned the truck around and entered the parking lot. Tom looked over at him and said, “Do we need something at Wal-mart?” “No,” John said. “I just want to find out what’s going on.” Tom smiles, “So we are going to be nosy. Mom does that sometimes, too.” John frowns as he looks over at Tom, “We are not nosy. Mexia is in Limestone County, and I'm the sheriff.” “Oh, okay. I see how it is.” Tom says. “It's okay to be nosy if you’re the sheriff.” John shakes his head. “Yeah, something like that.”

Parking as close to where everything was going on as they could, they got out, and John took his badge out of his pocket, flipped it around, and placed it on the breast pocket of his sports coat.

Two EMTs were waiting by the ambulance. The Mexia officers looked up at John and his badge and then back to his face. His eyes got big as he says, "Sheriff Carter." John looks at him and says. "What's going on?" "Well, Sheriff." the cop says, "we have a baby left in a car. We're paging inside Walmart, looking for the parents."

John ducks to glance into the back seat and sees a baby in a car seat. He sharply turns to the cop and says in a loud voice, "How long?" The cop ducks his head and says, "We are not really sure. Awhile. We have called somebody to come over and help us pop the lock."

John walks away while the officer is still talking, passes Tom, and reaching into the back of his truck, goes over the side and grabs his 4-way tire tool. He swivels back, growls, "Get back!" and hits the front driver's side window with the tire tool. The window shatters. He hands the tire tool to the cop as he unlocks and opens the front door.

Crawling inside and reaching over the front seat. He gets the baby out of his car seat and pulls him over the seat to him, outside the car. John hands the baby over to the EMT.

John then turns and walks back to the cop and, grabbing his tire tool back, gets in the cop's face and says. "When a child's life is on the line. You act! You don't wait around for somebody to pop the fucking lock!"

John then turned and walked away. He looked and saw the ambulance was leaving with the baby. He then walked back by Tom, standing there with big eyes. "Let's go." They both walk back to the truck. John throws the tire tool in the back, and they both get in.

Pulling out of the parking lot, Tom looks over at his Dad and says. "Woah, Dad, you got up in that cop's face." John turns and says, "I did not!" Tom smiles, "Oh, I took a picture with my phone." Tom pulls up the picture of his Dad and the cop and shows it to him. "Tom," John says. "You delete that right now!" Tom smiles, "I'm posting it to my Facebook page." John turns and takes a stern look at Tom. "Oh no, you're not!" Tom turns and says, "But Dad, all my friends will think you're cool!" John looks back over at Tom again, "I don't need or want any of your friends thinking I'm cool! Now delete it!" Tom frowns, "Ok, Dad. It's deleted. I should change my name to Tom Boring."

They drove for another 10 minutes through the county's backroads and finally the really small town of Kirvin, Texas. It was the closest town to his grandparent's place. It was not much more than a ghost town now. Only a post office, a church, and a volunteer fire department.

A few minutes later, they turned down the drive leading to the house, about 100 yards off the road. Pulling up in front, John killed the truck. As Tom got out, John took a long look at the house. It was a large two-story frame house with a porch on three sides.

John took his time looking around and walking up the front porch steps. He had spent many an hour sitting on this porch, growing up. Some of the best times of his life had been spent here.

Tom comes up on the porch, "Can I head down to the tank and fish while we wait on Granddad to get here?" "Yeah, sure. Just keep an eye out. We may need your help loading stuff later." Tom turns and heads out toward the tank.

A flood of childhood memories comes back to John as he looks around. He wonders if the house key is still hidden in the same place. Sure enough, it is hanging on a nail high in the corner of the front porch. Taking it down, the lock is stiff by budes with a squeak. A push and a shove, and he's inside.

He walks down the hall to the living room and looks around. It's just like he remembered it. He heard a noise from outside and walks over to the window and looks out. He saw his Dad, Luke Carter, getting out of his truck. He turns to go greet him, "Hey, Dad." John said as he extended his hand to his father. Luke Carter smiled as he took his son's hand and gave him a firm handshake. "Hey, John. Good to see you. You been here long?" John smiled back and said, "No, we just got here. Tom's down at the tank fishing." "Good," Luke said. "I might have to wet a hook myself."

They turn in unison and walk inside. Luke says to John, "Well, the main reason I asked you to come over is I wanted you here when I go through Dad's office." He finished just as they reach the door at the end of the long hallway. Luke reaches in his pocket and pulls out a key. "Grandma always kept his office locked after he passed." Luke unlocks the door and says, "Yeah, she wanted to keep it just how he had it. She would come down here and open it up and sit in his chair and talk to him. It was her way of staying close."

They opened the door and walked in. John looked around. It looked just the same as it did 20 years ago. It was neat and orderly- everything in its place. The only thing looking out of place was the large bag sitting by the desk. In it was the personal stuff that Papaw had on him when he got to the hospital. John had brought it home the night he died and put it in the office. That was the last time he was here.

Luke pointed to his right. "Look. File cabinets full of case files of every case he personally worked on for the 20 years he was sheriff. The later ones are in here. Some of the older ones are boxed up in the storage shed. "What was he going to do with it?" said John looking at the file cabinets. "I don't know. They were important to him." Luke said, "Well, see if you can make any sense of it. Keep anything you want. I know you and him were close."

Luke turns and walks out. John walks over and sits down behind the desk. He looks to his left and see's the gun cabinet with all of his Papaw's guns in it. Shotguns, rifles. On the corner of the desk was a picture of John standing with his Papaw's arm around him at a track meet his senior year in high school.

John looked down and saw a book on the top of the desk. He opened it to the first page, written in his grandfather's hand. It said: The Journal of John David Carter. John and his Papaw shared the same name. But most people called his Papaw "J.D."

He wanted to stay right there and read the whole journal. But right now, he was the most curious about what was said at the very end. So he turned to the last page. The last entry was dated the day that his Papaw died. It said, "My gut is telling me that something about this case is not right. I got a bad feeling that there

is something missing. I'm headed back out to the crime scene. There has to be something that we missed."

Okay, now he was hooked. Papaw always said, "Go with your gut." If his gut had been saying something wasn't right, then something wasn't right.

So now, I guess it's up to me to figure out what that something was.

Chapter 2

20 Years earlier

Freestone County Sheriff J.D. Carter sat at his desk finishing up paperwork. It seemed like there was never an end to the paperwork in the almost 20 years he has been sheriff. Today he was in a hurry because he wanted to get off work early today or at least on time. His grandson John was running in the district track meet today, and he wanted to be there to watch.

John was his oldest grandson. He was named John David Carter after him. He would be finishing High School this year and going off to college next fall. He wanted to major in criminal justice. He and John had always been close. He was proud that John wanted to follow in his footsteps.

For a while, he had hoped that John's father Luke would secede him as Sheriff. But he had taken a different path. He had joined the Marines and made a career out of that. He was currently serving his country in Iraq. He was also very proud of him.

He knew he wouldn't be able to hang on long enough for John to secede him. He was 68 years old.

He had not told anybody yet, but he was planning to retire when his current term was up. He was looking forward to doing a lot of hunting and fishing.

He put his pen down. He was done for today. He stood up and stretched his back. He then walked over and entered the bathroom that was connected to his office. He opened the small closet inside and pulled out a starched white shirt and jeans. He quickly took his uniform off and got dressed. He took his badge off his shirt, put it in the flip over, and put it in his back pocket.

He walked over to the sink and washed his face. Looking in the mirror, he stared at the old man looking back at him. He was still 6 foot 4 inches tall. But that was the only thing that had not changed. His hair was more gray now than black and thin. The glasses he wore were now a permanent part of his face. His mustache was still thick but all gray. He really should shave it off. But his wife would throw a fit.

He walked over and picked up his under his arm gun holster and put it on. He then picked up his 38 revolver. It had the initials J.D.C. on the butt. It had been a gift from the county on his tenth anniversary. He checked the load, placed it under his shoulder, put his sports coat on to cover it up, and walked back into his office. He grabbed his white straw cowboy hat and placed it on his head.

He opened the door and walked out into the Bullpen. There were several desks and deputies and office staff walking around. He saw his Chief Deputy Rick

Shelton and walked over toward him. Rick had been with him for the last eight years. He was very hardworking and dedicated. He really needed to sit down with Rick and tell him he was going to retire. That would give him a head start if he wanted to run for the job. He was betting he would, and he would do a good job.

Walking up to Shelton, he said. "He Rick. I'm fixing to get out of here." Shelton turned to Carter and said. "You better hurry if you want to catch the first rounds of the races." "Ya, I know," Carter said. I think he runs the 100 and 200-meter races. But it's the 400-meter relay race that is his big one. He runs the anchor leg." "That's great," Shelton said. "Wish him luck for me."

About that time, Deputy Jim Tisdale walked up. "We got Jimmy Cooper's wife Ann is on the phone. She says Jimmy is staying drunk, and they are fighting again." Carter frowns and shakes his head as he walks over to a phone. He looks back at Tisdale. "What line is she on?" "Two," Tisdale says. Carter then picks up the line and says. "Hello Ann, This is Sheriff Carter. Are you ok?" "Yes." She says. "But he is drunk, and he gets mean when he is drinking. I'm afraid he is going to hurt me." "Ok, Ann. I'm sending a deputy over there. Can you put him on the phone?" "Yes." She said. After about a minute, a man's voice comes on the phone. "Hello." Jimmy says, "Jimmy. This is Sheriff Carter. What's going on over there?" "Well," Jimmy says in a slurred voice. "Nothing is going on over here. She is just acting crazy. I don't know what her problem is. I wish she would just leave me alone." Carter then says. "She says she is afraid you are going to hurt her." There was a long pause on the phone, then he says. "I don't know why she would say that. I'm the one you should be worried about. She is crazy." "Ok, look," Carter says. "I'm sending a deputy over there to see what's going on. If I get another call and I have to come out there. Somebody is going to jail. You clear on that, Jimmy?" There was another long pause, and he said. "Yes, sir." "Good," Carter says as he hangs up the phone.

Carter then looks over at Tisdale. "Take a ride out there. Calm everybody down." Tisdale nods and walks away.

Carter turns and looks at Shelton. "Ok, now I'm out of here." "Ok, see you in the morning."

Carter turned and walked out and got into his patrol car, and made the short drive over to Fairfield High School and back around to the stadium in the back where the track meet was being held.

As he made his way through the bottom of the stands, he could see many High School kids running around in different colored warm-up suits, in both the stands and on the field and track.

He made a quick look for John but didn't see him. He then looked up in the stands and found his wife Martha and Daughter in law Sue. He climbed up the seats to where they were setting.

He sat down next to Martha and leaned forward and looked over at Sue, and said. "Hi, Sue." Sue smiled and looked back at him and said. "Hi, Dad." Carter then said. "Has John run yet?" Sue looks back at him. "Yes, he ran the prelim in the 100 meters. He got 2nd in his heat. I haven't heard if his time was fast enough to make the finals." "Good," Carter said.

He then looked around and saw John coming up the steps to where they were setting. Setting down, he said. "Hey, Papaw." Carter turned and smiled at his 17-

year-old grandson. "Hey John, How's it going?" Carter said. "Well," John said. "I made the finals in the 100 meters. But Danny Mays, our 3rd leg on our 400-meter relay team, pulled a hamstring and can't run. I don't know yet what we are going to do. We might have to scratch. We thought we had a good chance to win it. So we are all kind of bummed out about it." "Aw, John," Carter said. "I'm sorry. That's a tough break, at the district meet your senior year. Maybe Coach Fields will figure something out so yawl can run." "I hope so," John said.

"Yey Papaw, I heard Grandma got you a cell phone for your birthday." Carter half smiled and said. "Ya, I got one. Don't really know how to use the damn thing or what I need it for." Martha then turns to him and says. "It's so we can keep up with you. You're off in the pasture alone. Anything could happen. It would really help if you would turn it on. Carter then looks at Martha. "I should need to talk to anybody while I'm out in the pasture. I will turn it on. But I kind of like being alone in the quiet." Martha then says. "Well, you enjoy being alone in the quiet all you want. Just keep your phone turned on!" He rolls his eyes. "Yes, Miss Martha."

John holds his hand out. "Let's see it." Carter reaches down to his belt and pulls the phone out, and hands it to John. "I don't even know how to use it." John flips the phone and looks it over. "Hey, this is cool. Look Papaw. You can keep ten numbers in your phone and just push one button to call. And somehow, you can type out a message and sent it. Not sure how to do that. Oh, and look at this. It's got a camera on it." Carter looks at John. "What the hell do you need a camera on your phone for?" John looks back. "Well, I don't know Papaw. Let's try it out." He then hands the phone to Martha. "Take our picture, Grandma." Carter puts his arm around John, and they both smile, and she snaps the picture. She looks at it and smiles, and hands the phone back to Carter.

John then stands up. "I got to get back to the team and see what we are going to do about our relay team. I will catch you later." Carter looked up at John. "Ok. Good luck, son."

John turned and walked down the steps of the stands and down to the end and through the gate onto the field. He saw Coach Fields talking to Steven Turner. The 1st let on the relay team. Mike Stone ran the 2nd leg down the backstretch, and Danny Mayes ran the 3rd leg and pulled his hamstring. John ran the 4th leg to the finish. Their team had run well all year. Placing 1st six times and 2nd place two times and 3rd one time. But it all came down to today. If they won today, they would advance to the regional meet. If not, it was over. They were all seniors, so this could be their last meet. John hated the idea that an injury could cause them to have to scratch. He didn't want it to end like that.

When John walked up Coach Fields turned and said. "Ok, we are all here now." The four boys stood in front of their coach. Coach Fields looked at them and said. "Ok, guys. Here's the deal. There is no way that Mayes can run. So we got two options. One we scratch. Or we get a replacement. If this were anything other than the district meet, I would say scratch, and we will get them next week. But this is it, guys. If we scratch, that's it for you. There is no next week. So I say. Let's get a replacement and give it a shot. I know getting a good exchange with only a few warm-up tries is a long shot. But what have we got to lose?"

The boys looked at each other and then back to the coach. John then said. "Ok, Coach, who do we get?" John asks the question. But he already had a good idea who the coach had in mind."

"Well." Coach Fields said. "The way I see it is. We have to go with Hill." The boys just looked at each other, not saying a word. Cody Hill was the fastest runner and best athlete on the team. He had won several gold medals in the 100, 200, and 400 meters the last two years. The problem with Cody was. He was good, and he knew it. He had an ego the size of Texas. The only reason he was not already on the 400 relay team was that he didn't like to put the time in it took to get the exchanges down.

"Do you think he will do it?" Turner asks. Coach Fields turned and said. "Yes, I do. He is already in the finals for the 100, 200, and 400. He is not going to pass up a chance to take home four gold medals in the district meet." The boy's nod and the coach says. "Wait right here. I will go talk to him and be right back." Coach Fields turns and walks off.

Steven Turner then says. "I really don't want to work with Cody. He is such a pain in the ass to be around." John then says. "I know Steven. But it's only this one time. It's our only shot.

The boys waited a few minutes later Coach Fields returned. Mike Stone spoke first. "Will he do it?" "Yes." Coach Fields said. "But he wants to run the last leg. The anchor leg. So, John, you will have to move back to the 3rd leg." John frowned and said. "But Coach. I have been running 4th all year. Switching us around will make it even harder!" "I know." Coach said. "But it's the only way he will do it. So yall get with him, and every time the track is clear, you work on the exchanges.

For the next hour, Steven, Mike, and John worked on their exchanges. They had got it down well as they could get it. Now it was time to work with Cody on the last exchange. All John had to do was get the baton to Cody and let him finish. Cody was fast, and if they had him in 2nd or 3rd place. They had an excellent chance of winning. But it all came down to the last exchange.

Cody walks up to John. "Ok, let's get on with this." He puts a piece of tape on the track. "When your foot hits this spot, I'm going to take off. I will be at full speed, then we will make the exchange," He hands the baton to John. "I'm going to take home four gold. Don't you fuck it up!" John takes the baton and walks back to the starting spot.

They run it through the first time. John can't catch up with Cody before getting out of the exchange zone. Not good. On the second try, they drop the baton. An angry Cody walks back to John. "I don't have time for this. I have to get to the 100 finals. You better figure out something." Cody turns and walks off.

John followed Cody. He was in the 100 finals also. He would love nothing more than winning it and keeping Cody from taking home his four gold medals. He had not beaten Cody all year but now would be as good a time as any.

They lined up. Cody was in lane four, and John was in lane six. They lined up. The starter said. "Take your make." The eight boys got into their blocks. "Set." They raised up. The gun sounded. John got a good start and was briefly in the lead. Cody and another runner soon pulled even. At 50 meter mark, Cody had pulled ahead. At 75 meters, Cody had a 3-meter lead. John was third, with another runner closing in. John lowered his chest at the finish line. He came to a

stop and walked back in his lane. The man gave him his time and then said. "4th place.

John's heart sank. 4th place was good. It got points for his team. But only the top 3 got metals. He would have nothing to show for it. He was disappointed. But all the more reason he wanted to win the relay.

Over the next hour, he would see Cody win the 200 and 400. Then it all came down to the relay. It was the last race he would be in as he walked to his 3rd leg place. One of the cheerleaders comes up to him. Cassy Cook.

"Hey, John," Cassy said. "Hey, Cassy." John stopped to talk to her. "I heard Cody is going to help you with your relay team." She said. "Yes, that's right," John said. She smiled. "That's good. I know he will help you out. Good luck." John tried to smile back at her and said. "Thanks."

Even if they won, it would be all about Cody now. But no time to think about that now. He only had a few minutes to get ready. He found where his tape was set and got ready. They were lining up at the starting line. He heard the gun go off, and it looked like Steven had gotten a good start. Coming to the first exchange looked like they were in about 3rd place. The exchange was good, and now Mike is coming down the backstretch. It looked like he had moved up into 2nd. Mike hit the mark, and John took off. He was up to full speed when he heard Mike say. "Stick." John threw his left hand back for the blind exchange. He felt the baton hit his palm, and he closed his hand around it. He gave it all he had and had pulled even with the leader. John hit his mark, and Cody took off for the last exchange. If he could just get the baton to Cody, he knew they would win it. Cody had taken off too early, and John gave it everything he had to catch up to him before they got out of the exchange zone. At the last second, John yelled, "Stick." Cody's hand came back, and John reached for his hand, the end of the stick his palm, and Cody closed his hand. John watched as the baton slipped out of his hand and fell to the track.

John and Cody both came to a stop. Cody turned around and looked at John. His face was blood red as he walked back towards him. Cody looks at him and yells. "What's wrong with you? I could have won that easily! I could have had four gold! You idiot!" John came right back at Cody. "Aw, shut up, Cody. You left too early!" Cody ran up and shoved John. "Who you telling to shut up?" John made eye contact with Cody and threw up his fist, ready to fight. Cody did the same. Where he was and the people watching. His mother his grandparents. He didn't want to do anything to embarrass them. He also didn't want to get suspended three weeks before graduation. Mike Stone ran up to him, grabbed him by the shoulder, turned him around, and John walked away. He could hear Cody yelling. "That's right, John turn tail. You don't have the guts!" John felt his anger grow as he walked away. But he knew he had done the right thing.

Chapter 3

3 weeks later

John took a long look at the front of the school as he drove around to the back to the stadium. It was bittersweet. It was graduation night he was excited. But he was also sad. He had a lot of friends, they would all be breaking up and going in different directions after tonight.

At the start of the school year, he had high hopes of getting a football or track scholarship. There were schools interested after his junior year. But an ankle injury had kept him off the field for several games this year. He had a good track season but had been overshadowed by Cody. Cody had a great season. Winning several gold medals this year. Three at the District meet.

Cody had gotten a full-ride track scholarship. He should be happy for him. But he couldn't help being a little jealous. It didn't help that he put the 100-meter dash medal on a chain and wore it around his neck.

John pulled into the parking lot and found a spot and parked. He looked in the mirror and checked his hair and tie before getting out and up the bleacher and setting down. They would be calling his name soon to get lined up.

John heard somebody call his name. He looked up to see Cassy Cook walking toward him. "Hi, Cassy," John said. "Hey, John." She said back. He smiled at her. "You ready to get this over with?" She nodded and gave him a half-smile. She then said. "John your grandfather is the sheriff right?" John looked up at her. "Yes, he is. Is there something wrong?" She looked nervous and looked away and then back to him. "No. There is nothing wrong. I was just wondering." "Oh ok," John said. She got up to leave. John looked at her and said. "We are having a small party at my house later. Your welcome to come." He paused for a moment and said. "He will be there." As she turned to walk away, she said. "Ok. Thank you, John."

A few hours later, graduation was over. John had walked the stage and got his diploma. It was a very proud moment for him.

John stayed after and spoke to most of his classmates. On his way to his car. He saw Cassy talking to Cody. He started walking over to them. He said. "Hey, Cassy. Don't forget the party at my house tonight." She looked over at him and said. "Ok, John. I will try to make it by." Cody then frowned and said. "What's the deal, Carter! I'm not invited?" John turned to Cody and said. "Of course you've invited Cody. I thought you knew that."

About that time. They heard a loud voice. "Cassy, you better get over here right now!" They looked over in the direction of the voice. To see Cassy's stepfather walking toward them. Cassy yelled back. "I'm coming." He then stopped walking toward them and shouted. "You better bring your ass on!" Cassy hurried over, and they both got into the car.

John looked over at Cody and said. "What's up with that?" Cody shook his head. "That's her stepfather. I think her family is really strict." John then said. "That's a little more than strict. That's degrading."

"Whatever, Carter. So you going to have food and beer at this party?" John looks back at him. "We are having hamburgers and other stuff. They won't be any drinking. So no beer." Cody then turns to walk and says. "Sounds like a really lame party, John. Just like you."

John turned and started walking toward his car. It really would not hurt my feelings if Cody didn't come.

When John got home, all of his family was already there. His mother, brother, Grandma and Papaw. His dad was deployed with the Marines in Iraq. He was hoping to get a call from him. But he didn't know for sure. It depended if he was where he could get to a phone. Sometimes it was weeks at a time they didn't hear from him. This was hard on everybody. But they hoped he would be home soon.

John walked into the kitchen. His mother, Sue Carter, looked over at him and smiled, and walked over and hugged him. "Your Dad and I are so proud of you." "Thanks, Mom," John said. "You think Dad will call?" She pulled back away from him and says. "I'm sure he will if he can." John shakes his head and says. "Ya, I know."

John then turned around to see his younger brother Brian helping himself to a hamburger. Brian was two years younger than John. Where John was tall and skinny, Brian was tall and heaver.

There Mom turned to Brian and said. "Brian, Wait for us to sit down and say, Grace." Brian then pulled out a chair and sat down. He then closed his eyes and said. "Dear Lord. Please bless this food. Ay-men." He then looks over at his mom and says. "Ok, we good?" As he takes another bite. She gives him a stern look and says. "You know that's not what I meant!" He smiles at her as he takes another bite.

Later that night, after most of his friends had left. Cassy had never shown up. He tried to call her, but she didn't answer. He hoped everything was ok with her.

He walked outside and saw his Papaw standing at the end of the porch. John watched as he reached in his front pocket and pulled out a bag of chewing tobacco. He took a bite of it off and put it back in his pocket. He called it his candy.

John walked over and sat down at one end of the swinging chair. His Papaw walked over to him and sat down on the other end. He looks over at John and says. "I'm really proud of you, son." John smiled big and said. "Thanks, Papaw." They set looked out at the stars for a moment. J.D. then said. "You ready to start the next chapter of your life?" John then says. "I guess I better get ready." J.D. laffed. "You still planning to work as an intern with me this summer? Before you go off the college. "Yes, sir," John said. "That's still the plan." "Good," J.D. said. John then looks over at his Papaw and says. "Hey, Papaw. You know last summer I worked with you. I loved it. But all I got to do was make coffee and do a lot of filing. Do you think this summer I can maybe get to be out in the field some? Maybe just ride in the car and watch." "Well," J.D. said. "Making coffee is very important. You don't want to be around me without my coffee. But maybe we could work something out to get you out and learn some in the field. It would kind of give you a head start when you go off to school if you major in criminal justice. You will be getting into all that stuff. So I guess you need to get your feet wet. But understand you can't get into anything that could be dangerous. You're just to watch and learn." John then smiled. "Sure thing Papaw. Thanks." "You're welcome," J.D. said. "I will come to pick you up Monday morning at about 7:45, so be ready."

J.D. then stood up and stretched his back. "Guess we better get gone. My bed is calling me. Go tell your Grandma that I'm headed to the truck. John jumped up and went into the house. J.D. walked down the steps. He was going to enjoy

having John work with him this summer. He hoped he could pass on some of the things he knew to John. With his retirement looming. This would be his last chance to work with John. So he was going to make the most of it.

Chapter 4

J.D. downed the last of his morning coffee. He got up and headed to the door. Stopping only to put on his Cowboy hat, he headed out the door. J.D. hated Mondays. So much went on during the weekends. He loves having time off. But I hated playing catch-up on Monday. It was like working three days in 1. He was lucky to have Chief Deputy Rick Shelton and Deputy Tisdale. They kept things running smoothly on the weekends. J.D. Seldom had to come in on the weekends.

He made the short drive over to John's house. As he pulled up outside, John came out and got into his squad car. J.D. looked over at John. "Morning. You must have been watching for me." "Yes, sir. John said. They then made the drive into Fairfield. Fairfield was the county seat of Freestone County. The Sheriff's Department was located right behind the Courthouse. They parked out front and went inside.

John and J.D. walked through the bull pin. J.D. stopped to briefly talk to a few people as he made his way to his office. Inside his office, Deputy Shelton was waiting for him. "Morning, Jim," J.D. said as he walked over to the coffee pot and poured himself a cup. He then said. "Jim, you remember my grandson John don't you?" Shelton turned to look toward John. "Sure do." He then stood up and shook hands with John. J.D. then sat down behind his desk. "John is going to intern with us again this summer. Shelton smiled. "If I had known that, I would not have fixed the coffee." They all laughed.

J.D. took a sip of his coffee and said. So how did it go this weekend? "Well," Shelton said. Not too bad for a graduation weekend. We had two missing High School kids. One turned up. The other a 16-year-old girl named Cassy Cook. She was last seen at about 10 pm Saturday night. John turned around with a surprised look on his face. "Cassy Cook. I know her. She came up to me right before graduation and asked me if my grandfather was Sheriff. I told her yes. But she wouldn't tell me what was wrong. I invited her to the house for the party. I told her you would be there. But she never showed. Do you think something has happened to her?" J.D. looks over at John. "She asks about me? But did not say what kinda problem she had." "Yes," John said. "Ok, we are not going to jump to any conclusions. This happens every year at graduation. Kids go out to celebrate and drink too much and don't make it home. They almost always turn up by Monday sometime. But we are going to get some more people out looking for her. John, do you know of any place she might go or people she might be with?" "No," John said. "She was a class behind me in school. I didn't know her that well. I think we had a typing class together. I mostly knew her as a cheerleader. What can I do to help find her?" "Ok, John," J.D. said. "I need you to get on the phone and start calling some of your friends and ask them if they have seen or heard

from her. Or know anything about where she might be. They might be more likely to open up to you about anything they might know.

John spent the next two hours calling everybody he knew. Nobody knew anything. He didn't know anybody else to call. He walked back into J.D.'s office. J.D. looked up at him from behind his desk. "I have called everybody I know, and nobody has seen her or heard anything about where she might be. Have you found out anything?" John ask. "No," J.D. said.

About that time, the phone on his desk rang. J.D. picked it up. "Carter." He said. "Ok. Make sure they secure the scene. Let's get a team together and get out there. I'm on my way." J.D. then hung up the phone. He looked up at John. "They found a body out at Lake Fairfield that fits the description of Cassy. I got to go out there." John looks back with a shocked look on his face. "Do they know what happened?" "No, John. That's all I know. That's why I need to get out there." John looks down at the floor and then back up at J.D. with a blank look on his face and says. "I want to come with you!" J.D. shakes his head no. "You don't want to do that, John. Dead kids. Especially people you know. It's just too hard, son." John walks closer to J.D. "Please, Papaw. If I'm going to do this kind of work. I need to know I can handle it. Please, I really need to do this. She came to me wanting help. I should have tried harder to get her to tell me what was going on. The least I can do now is try to help in some small way." "Ok," J.D. said. "Just do what you're told and don't touch anything." "Yes, sir," John said.

John and J.D. made their way out to his squad car. They headed out to lake Fairfield. John was quiet, not saying much. J.D. was having 2nd thoughts about bringing John with him. John had made a good case for letting him come. But J.D. had a bad feeling about it. He had given in too easy. He was afraid he had made a huge mistake.

When they got to the crime scene, J.D. parked far back behind some other cars. You could see the crime scene tape but not the body. J.D. turned to John. "Are you sure you want to do this? I don't think it's a good idea, John." John looked back at him. "Yes, sir. I'm sure. I can handle it." J.D. nodded his head, and they both got out and started walking.

J.D. raised the crime scene tape for John to walk under. There was a deputy taking pictures of the body. She was lying on her back. One leg pulled up and to the side. The other leg straight down. Both her hands were lying straight out. One bent at the elbow. She was nude from the waist down. She had a blue button-up shirt and a bra. But it was unfastened, and her breast were exposed.

He could hear a noise behind him. He turned to look and saw John gaging behind him. J.D. turned and took a step back and grabbed John by the arm, and said. "Not here!" he quickly moved John away from the area of the body. They stopped, and John bent over and threw up. J.D. stood there with him till he was finished.

John then stood up and looked at J.D. and said. "I'm so sorry, Papaw." J.D. then patted him on the back. "Don't be. Every time you see something like this. It should make you feel sick. You just have to learn to control it. Everybody here had threw up at a crime scene at some point. Even me.

They walked back to the car, and J.D. handed John a bottle of water. He drank some and splashed some on his face. J.D. then said. "I got to get back over there.

You don't have to come." John took another drink of water and said. "I'm coming. I can do this."

They both walked back toward the body. The deputy was finished taking pictures. Deputies Shelton and Tisdale joined them. J.D. bent down over the body and looked at her neck. "See this." He pointed out the discoloration around her neck. "Bruising and broken blood vessels." He reached up to her face and opened up her left eye. "Her eye is red. A clear sign of strangulation." He looked down and saw a big mark on her breast. "This looks like a bite mark." He then picked up her right hand and looked at it. "She was a nail-biter. She couldn't scratch him." He then looked at her knuckles. "Scuffed up knuckles. She put up a fight." He turns her hand over and sees a cut across the palm of her hand. He looks up at Shelton. "Look at this. What could have caused this?" Shelton looks at it closer. "Looks like she got it caught in something." J.D. looks at it again. "Ya, I think so too."

J.D. stands up. John takes a step closer and says. "Can't we at least cover her up? J.D. turns to his grandson. "No. Not yet. We have to document everything. She can't tell us who did this to her. So we have to let her body talk for her." John shook his head. "Yes, Papaw. Your right. I knew that."

About that time, D.R. Doug Walker, The Freestone County Medical Examiner, walked up. J.D. looked over at him. "Morning, Doug. We are going to need everything on her. Time of death and rape kit as quick as you can." D.R. Walker looked down at the body. "Will get right on it, J.D." He said.

J.D. and Deputy Shelton, and John took a step back and let Dr.Walker do his job. "We have an address on her parents?" J.D. asks. "Yes," Shelton said. "We can pull it up in the car." "Good," J.D. said. They turn and start walking toward the car.

J.D. stops and turns to John. "I need you to ride back to the office with Deputy Tisdale. When you get back there, I need you to write down anybody you can think of that knows her. Start with the people that you called this morning. I will ask for a list from her parents, but they may not think of everybody." "Sure. Anything to help." John said.

J.D. and Shelton got in the car. J.D. said. That will give John something to do. I think I made a huge mistake bringing John out here." Shelton fastened his seatbelt and said. "If he is going to be in this business, he is going to see things like that." "I know," J.D. said. "I just wanted us to enjoy the summer together. Maybe teach him some things. But not this. Not somebody he knows on the first day."

They made the drive over to the Cook home and parked out on the street. Telling parents that their child had died was by far the worst part of his job. He had hated doing it every single time over the last 20 years, after parking the car. J.D. paused before getting out, trying to think what to say.

They got out and walked up to the front door, and knocked. After a moment, the door opened, and a tall man with red hair looking to be in his mid 30's opened the door. A woman with dark hair stood behind him. "Mr. Cook," J.D. said. I'm Sheriff J.D. Carter, and this is Deputy Shelton. The woman looked at them and said. "Have you found Cassy? Is she ok?" J.D. looked at them and said. "I'm very sorry to have to tell you. We found your daughter, but she is dead." The woman started crying and pushed her head into her husband's shoulder. The man looked back at

them and said. "Was she in some kind of accident?" "No," J.D. said. "She was killed?" "Killed." The man said. "How? By whom?" J.D. then said. "Can we come in?" "Sure," The man said. Then they entered the house and went to the living room and all set down. J.D. then said. "To answer your question. We don't know right now. But we need to ask you both some questions. If you feel up to it? "Sure, anything to help." The man said.

J.D. took out his notepad. "Ok. Let's started with. Your names?" The man said. "My name is Jack Cook, and this is my wife, Sue." J.D. nodded "How long have you lived here? The man says. "About five years. Right after we got married." J.D. looked up from his notepad and said. "So who is Casey's biological parent?" Sue Cook looked up and said. "I am." Jack adopted her about three years ago. "Ok," J.D. said. "Do you have any idea who she might have been with? They both said. "No." J.D. looked up at them and ask. "Do you know of anybody that might what to hurt her? Anybody that she didn't get along with?" Sue said. "No. Everybody loved her."

J.D. Then said. "Can you get up a list of all her friends? We are going to need to talk to them?" "Yes," Sue said.

Jack Cook then looked at them and said. "Where is our daughter?" J.D. looks over at him. "She was found out at lake Fairfield. But she is being taken to the Freestone County Medical Examiner's Office." Cook took a hard look at J.D. "No! Absolutely not. We will not have our daughter's body violated! You will take her straight to funeral home here in town." Sue looked over at her husband with a surprised look on her face. J.D. then said. "I'm sorry, Mr. Cook, but it's a state law that when somebody dies under anything other than natural causes. There must be an autopsy." "No!" Cook shouted. "That will not stand. Our religion states that a body must not be violated." J.D. looks over at Shelton and back to Cook. "Sir, you do understand that there is important trace evidence on her body that will help us catch the person that did this?" Cook then says. "I'm sorry her sole and place with God are more important!" I will make a call to our lawyer." "Ok, sir. But without a court order, we can't release the body."

After a brief pause, J.D. says. "Can we look around in her room?" Cook shakes his head no. "I want her room to say just like it is." J.D. takes a deep breath. He doesn't want to lose his cool on a family that has just lost a child. So it was probably best to end this. "Ok, sir. We are going to have to get a search warrant then. We are very sorry for your loss." They then turn and walk toward the door. When they pass Sue, they can see the shocked look on her face as she stares at her husband.

When they get outside, they stop at the car. J.D. looks over at Shelton and says. "What just happened in there?" Shelton then says. "Ya, I know that was strange."

J.D. then walks around to the driver's side, and they get in. J.D. then says. "Something is not right about this. Did you see his wife's face? She was as surprised at what he was saying as we were. I want to know everything there is to know about Jack Cook!" Shelton nods. "He is up to something. I'm on it, boss."

Chapter 5

Sheriff Carter and Deputy Shelton made the short drive to the Courthouse. Shelton had called ahead and ask the Judge for the warrant to search the Cook house. Judge White had agreed. So all they had to do was get the paperwork and head back.

They had also warned the Judge that papers would probably be filed to try to stop an autopsy. Judge White had laughed at that, and he said that he would throw it out as soon as it hit his desk. Based on state law.

When they got there, they parked in the front and walked up the stairs and quickly inside, to his office. They sat down and waited while his secretary got the papers together and took them into his office for the Judge to sign. She came back out and handed it to them. They thanked her and headed back down to the car.

They got back to the Cook house about 2 hours after they had left. They got out and walked up, and knocked on the door. The door opened, and to their surprise. Looking back at them was Jimmy Davis. One of the most high-priced lawyers in town.

J.D. stared at him and said. "Jimmy. What are you doing here?" Jimmy Davis smiled back at him and said. "I'm representing the Cook family. Please come in."

J.D. and Shelton walked inside to the living room. J.D. turned to Davis. "We need to speak to Mr. and Ms. Cook." Davis then looked back at him and said. "I'm afraid that's not possible. They are so upset. They just couldn't stand to be around here. I put them up in a hotel." J.D. then says. "Tell me, Davis. Just why do the victim's parents need a lawyer?" Davis smiles back. "They are just too distraught. They just don't want their rights violated." J.D. Then says. "And they can afford you?" Davis smiled again. "Well, J.D. apparently they can. Or I wouldn't be here."

J.D. then hands him the papers and says. "We have a warrant to search the place." "Yes," Davis says. "I thought you might." He looks at the papers. "This looks in order. Oh, and I will be filing a motion to stop the autopsy." J.D. then says. "Didn't you inform your clients that state law requires an autopsy?" Davis turns to Carter. "Yes, Sheriff, I did. They wanted me to file anyway. So I am." J.D. rolled his eyes. "Ok, now if you will get out of the way. We have work to do." J.D. says. Davis smiles again. "Of course, Sheriff."

Carter and Shelton walked down the hall to the bedroom. The first bedroom they came to was the master bedroom. They briefly looked in it and went down the hall, passing what looked like a guest bedroom, before coming to what had to be Cassy's room.

When they walked into the room, and they both looked around. They then looked back at each other and then back to the room. The queen size bed was made and had what looked like clean sheets. The floor looked like the carpet had just been vacuumed. There was nothing out of place. Everything was neat and tidy. J.D. Then said. "What teenage girl lives in a room like this? It's been cleaned up."

J.D. turns and looks around. "Look at this. A computer desk. With no computer." Shelton then turns to Carter. "This is bullshit!" "Ya, I know," J.D. said. "Let's take a good look and see if they missed anything."

For the next hour, Carter and Shelton looked around it Cassy's room, not finding much. Carter walked over to the bookcase and looked at the books on the

self as he looked over the hardbacks. One looked slightly out of place. The paper book cover looked just a hair too big. He pulled the book out and took the cover off to find that it was her journal. J.D. smiled big as he turned and showed it to Shelton. "Looks like they missed this!" Shelton walks over and pulls a large evidence bag out and opens it up, and J.D. puts it inside. "We need to go over it with a fine-tooth comb when we get back to the office," J.D. said.

They look over the room for a few more minutes. J.D. then looks up. "What size beds are in the other bedrooms?" he asks. "I don't remember," Shelton said. Sheriff Carter turns and walks out of the room and down the hall with Shelton behind him. He first looks in the guest room. It had a full-size bed. He then walked down to the master bedroom. It had a king-sized bed. "That's what I thought," J.D. said. They then walked through the living room. Davis was sitting watching TV. They walked past him to the washroom. J.D. opened the lid to the washer and reached in. He pulled out some sheets. He looked at the tag. "Queen size. I think it's safe to say these came off Cassy's bed." Shelton smiled. "I will get a big bag out of the car." Shelton gets the bag, and they put the sheets inside.

Carter and Shelton spent the next hour looking around the house, not finding much. J.D. wanted to find the missing computer. But they had not had any luck.

They walked into the living room, where Davis was still sitting on the couch eating potato chips as J.D. walked up. Davis looked up at him. "We are about done here." J.D. said, "Good." I can be on my way then." Davis said.

"Where did you say the Cook's are staying," J.D. asks. Davis stood up and said. "I had them put up in the Fairfield Inn." "Ok," J.D. said. "We are going to need to talk to them." Davis reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a card. "Give me a call, and we will set something up. We will also need a list of everything you took. J.D. took the card and said. "We will be in touch." Davis smiled. "I will be looking forward to it, Sheriff.

Carter and Shelton left the house and went out to the car, and drove off. A minute later, Shelton looked over at J.D. and said. "Where are we going. This is not the way to the office?" J.D. looked back at him. "If you were driving to the Fairfield Inn and you had a computer you wanted to get rid of. What would you do with it?" Shelton smiles. "I would find a place to dump it." "Right." "J.D. said. "So let's see if there are any dumpsters in plain sight between here and there." Shelton laffs "Good Idea, boss.

They make the short drive down the street and come to a convenience store on the corner. At the side of the building was a big dumpster. They pulled over to it and got out.

They walked over and opened the lid, and looked inside. "This would have been the first one they saw driving over to the hotel. They poked around soon. Shelton then pointed. "There is something that uses a plug under that box. They moved the box, and then they look at each other. "Well, I'll be damned." Under the box, there was the desktop tower to a computer.

Shelton smiles. "I guess I'm going in to get it." J.D. smiles back. "And you guessed right." Shelton then jumps up on the dumpster and throws one leg over and then the other. "You going to remember this come raise time. Right boss?" "Sure thing. Not that I can do anything about it."

They dig the computer out of the dumpster and put it in the car, and make the drive back to the office. When they get out, J.D. says. "Get everything we found booked in as evidence. Then get the sheets down to the lab and the computer down to the tech guys. I want to get a look at that journal as soon as we can." "Sure thing, Sheriff," Shelton said.

When they get inside, J.D. walks into his office. He puts his Cowboy hat on the hat rack just inside the door. He then walks behind the desk and sits down. He puts his elbows on the desk and takes his glasses off, and rubs his face and eyes. He has a splitting headache. He is sure it is from the stress of this case.

About that time, John walks into the office and sits down in the chair across the desk. "I made this list for you, Papaw. Did you find out anything else?" J.D. looks at his watch and then over at John. "John. I'm sorry. I should have called and got Deputy Tisdale to take you home. It's almost 6:30. "It's ok, Papaw. I was wanting to see how it was going? If you found out anything else?" "Well," J.D. said. "Her parents were not very cooperative. But we do have some sheets to test and a journal and computer to look at." "John looked at him with a surprised look on his face. "Why would her parents not cooperate?" J.D. stood up. "I don't know. That was really strange. They wouldn't let us look in her room. We had to get a warrant, and when we got back, her room had been cleaned. Something is not right with that." J.D. starts walking toward the door. "That's kinda weird," John said. "I know her parents were kinda strict. But that's crazy!" J.D. stops and turns to John. "That's crazy unless you have something to hide. If so. We got to figure out what that is. It's late. Let's get out of here. Nothing more we can do today."

They walked out of the office and threw the bullpen. J.D. stops briefly to speak to Deputies Shelton and Tisdale, who is briefing the 2nd shift on what is going on.

They go outside and get into the car, and J.D. Drops John off at his house. "Hey, John," J.D. says as John gets out of the car. John looks back. "You did really good today. I feel bad about taking you out to that crime scene today. I made a mistake. I hope you can forgive me." John looked over at him. "It's ok. I wanted to go. I got to get used to things like that." J.D. looks away. "That's just it. You never get used to it."

J.D. then makes the drive home. Thinking over the events to today and making no more scents of it. He pulls into the driveway and parks. Getting out and walking toward the house. He could see that Martha had been working in her flower bed. It was amazing what she could do with flowers.

Looking down at the other end of the flower bed, he saw his black Lab dog named Jett lying in the freshly worked dirt. J.D. stopped and looked at the dog and yelled. "Jett! You better get your ass out of that flower bed." Jett jumped up and ran off. J.D. knew that he was only looking for a cool spot to lay down. But Martha didn't play. When it came to her flower beds. Jett was going to get me and him both in trouble.

He made his way up on the porch and opened the front door, and went inside. He could smell something cooking, and he walked back to the kitchen. He found Martha standing over the stove. She turned and looked at him and said. "Hi. You're late. Supper will be ready soon." He set his briefcase on the table and walked up behind her and hugged her, and kissed her on the cheek from behind.

“Smells good he said, and he turned and picked up his briefcase and headed to his home office.

He walked in and took a seat behind the desk. His head was still hurting. He laid his head back and dozed off for just a minute.

Martha walked in with something in her hand. J.D. Looked and said. “Hey. What you got?” She walked up and sat on the corner of the desk. She handed him a framed picture. She said. “I had this picture framed for you.” He looked at it. It was the picture she had taken of Him and John at the track meet. “Aw, thank you. I love it.” He reached over and stood it up on the other corner of his desk.

She runs her hand through his hair. “You look tired. You ok?” “Yeah, I'm ok. A lot going on at work.” He had always tried not to bring his work home with him. Sometimes that was easier said than done.

Martha was going to hear about this case anyway. So it might as well come from him. “A young High School girl was found dead out at the lake this morning. It's going to be a hard case, and I can see a lot of late nights.” “That's so sad. Anybody, we know?” J.D. looks over at her. “It was Cassy Cook. A cheerleader. John knew her.” Martha shakes her head. “How's he taking it?” “He is doing ok. He wants to help find out who killed her.”

Martha stands up. “I know you will find out what happened and catch the person responsible. Come on. Dinner is getting cold.

J.D. Stood up and walked around the desk, and stopped to lock up his gun. He had left out the detail of taking John to the crime scene. He knew that Martha would be upset with him about that. He was already upset with himself about it.

But right now, he needed to stay focused. He owed that to Cassy. To find out what happened and who killed her and to bring them to justice.

Chapter 6

The next morning. J.D. picked John up and they drove into the office. J.D. spoke to a few Deputies on his way to his office. He saw Deputy Shelton and ask him to join him in his office.

J.D. sat down behind his desk and Shelton set across from him. Shelton pulls out a folder. “I had the night shift do some digging on Jack Cook. He currently works out at the High School as a custodian. He is married to Sue Cook and he adopted Cassy Cook about a year ago. Now here is where it gets interesting. About 6 years ago he was living in Tyler with his first wife Lynn Cook. She had a teenage daughter April Jones. Jack Cook was arrested and charged with molesting April. But she later recanted her story and the charges were dropped. But Lynn Cook divorced him right after. He then moves to Fairfield and marries Sue. Who also has a teenage daughter.”

J.D. shakes his head. “The charges were dropped so there is no criminal record. So he has no problem getting a job at the school. That son of a bitch thinks he is slick.

“Ok, his April Jones she's probably in her early 20's now. We got to find her and talk to her.” J.D. said. Shelton got up and started toward the door. “Ya, I'm

working on that. But nothing yet.” “Good,” J.D. said. “And we need to get several Deputies out talking to her friends, Cheerleader coach and anybody else you can think of. Oh and bring me that Journal. I want to read thru it.” “Will do, boss,” Shelton said as he went through the door. J.D. leaned back in his chair. This was going to be a long day.

A few minutes later, Shelton brought J.D. the Journal, and J.D. spent the next hour reading through it. When he was done, he put the book down on his desk and sat back in his chair.

He reached and grabbed the phone and hit the intercom button. “Hey, can you come in here?” J.D. hung up the phone. A Minute later, Deputy Shelton walked in and sat down across from J.D.

J.D. picks up the journal up and says. “It's very clear from reading through this that somebody was molesting her. She talks about him coming to her room, how he hurt her, how her Mom didn't believe her. She was scared she was going to get pregnant. A lot of things like that. Then she says. I know what he is doing out at the school. It's wrong. I should go to the police. But she never uses his name. So it doesn't prove anything.

Shelton then looks down at his notepad and then says. “Well, I found out that Davis did file a motion to stop the autopsy, and Judge White threw it out. Without a hearing. So that's good. I also got a call from Dr. Walker, and he has finished with his preliminary findings. J.D. stands up and says. “Good. I need to get over there and talk to him.” Shelton then stands up and starts toward the door. “I'm going to run down some of her friends and talk to them. I got Deputy Tisdale trying to find the first stepdaughter April Jones.” “Good,” J.D. says as they walk out of the office into the bullpen. “Let me know as soon as you find out anything.”

J.D. then made the short drive over to the County Morgue. It was in a building at the end of the hospital. J.D. walked inside and down to Dr. Doug Walker's office. He had known Dr. Walker for the last ten years.

He walked into his office, and Dr. Walker looked up at him and said. “Sheriff Carter. How have you been? I was hoping I would get to see you in person. J.D. smiled. “Well, Doc, I was doing good till this poor girl got killed. So what have you got on it?”

“Well.” Dr. Walker said. “We have a cause of death was asphyxiation. Strangulation with force enough to cut off oxygen to her brain. But you already knew that.” He walks over to the cooler lockers that they keep the body's in. He pulls open the locker and pulls the sheet back from over the body. “There are clear handprints on her neck. Also, there is a bite mark on her breast. Definitely human, and it's a deep enough bite we could get an ID from it.” J.D. looks down at the bite mark and then back up at the Doctor. “That's good. Dr. Walker then picked up her right hand and turned it over with the palm up. “We also have this. It looks like an abrasion from some kind of chain. Probably a necklace. She got her hand caught in it during the struggle. She had a small necklace on. I didn't find any DNA on hers, and the chain pattern does not match.” J.D. Looks over at the doctor. “So it might have been on our killer?” “Yes, it could have,” Dr. Walker said. “What about sexual assault?” J.D. asks. “She was most defiantly Sexually assaulted. I found tearing and bleeding, and it was not the first time. I found scarring from older assaults. It was an ongoing thing. And to answer the big

question. Yes, I found semen. Enough to use for a DNA match. I'm breaking it down now." J.D. looks back at the doctor. "That's great Doc. Now we just gotta find who it matches too. Thanks." J.D. then shakes hands with the doctor.

J.D. makes his way back out to his car. If they had semen, that's going to help a lot. Now all he needed was samples to compare it to. Jack Cook was at the top of his list.

Deputy Shelton was doing some interviews at the high school with some of Cassy's friends. He thought he would go over there and see how that was going.

When J.D. got to the High School, he could see several students walking around even though school was out for the summer. They had done an interview with the local paper asking any of her friends to come to the school today to help with the investigation. He had hoped that it would save some time. Not having to run every kid down. From the looks of things, it had worked well.

Inside he found Shelton and two other deputies in the cafeteria sitting at 3 different tables talking to kids. The girl at Shelton's table was just getting up to leave when he walked in. He walked over to Shelton's table and sat down. "Any luck?" J.D. said. Shelton looked up at him. "Well, the big thing that everybody seems to know is that she didn't get along with her stepfather. That he was really strict on her. But nobody said anything about him physically hurting her." J.D. turns in his chair. "What about a boyfriend. Does anybody know if she had one? Shelton looks at his notes. "Nobody knew if she had one now. But she was with a boy named Mike Stone at the first of the year." "We need to talk to him," J.D. said. Shelton looked around. "I have talked to all the boys here, and he was not one of them." "Ok," J.D. said. "I'm going to get his address from the office and go have a talk with him. You finish up here, and I will see you back at the office."

J.D. walked down the hall to the school office. Inside he found principal Jim Baker. He smiled and shook hands and said. "Hey, Jim. How are ya?" "Well," Jim said. "I have had better days. I just can't believe someone would kill Cassy. I'm just so upset about it." "Well, Jim," J.D. said. "That's why I'm here. Do you know of anything going on with her? "Not that I knew of. She was just a normal student." J.D. then looks at Jim. "Her stepfather works here, right?" "Yes. That's right. He is a custodian here." "What can you tell me about him?" Jim looks right at J.D. "He has worked here for a few years. He does a good job, keeps to himself. J.D. writes a few notes in his book and then says. "You know of any problems with Cassy and her stepfather? "No. Why? Is Mr. Cook a suspect? J.D. then says. "We are just trying to cover all our bases. Do you have the address of a boy named Mike Stone?" "Yes, I can get that for you."

Jim then goes over to a computer, pulls up the address, prints it out for J.D., and hands it to him. "Thank you if you think of anything else that might help us. Give me a call." "Yes, I will," Jim says as J.D. walks out of his office.

J.D. made the drive over to that address he was given for Mike Stone. He pulled over to the curb. He got out and made his way up to the front door, and knocked. A tall, middle-aged redhead woman answered the door. "Good Morning. I'm Sheriff J.D. Carter. I was trying to get in touch with a Mike Stone." The woman had a surprised look on her face and said. "That's my son. Can I ask what it's about?" "Yes, ma'am. I'm investigating the death of Cassy Cook, and I believe that your son

knew her." The woman then forced a small smile and said. "Oh yes. Please come in."

She pulls the door open, and J.D. enters the house. "Please have a seat. I will call Mike." "Thank you," J.D. says as he sits down on the sofa. She then leaves the room and comes back in a few minutes with Mike with her. J.D. stands up and shakes Mike's hand. "I'm Sheriff Carter." The boy looks uncomfortable says. "I'm Mike Stone. Your John's Grandfather?" "Yes, that's right," J.D. says. Mike's Mother says. "Can I get you anything to drink, Sheriff Carter?" J.D. turns to her and says. "No, thank you, I'm fine." She turns and leaves the room. J.D. sets back down, and Mike sets down across from him.

J.D. looks across at him and says. "I guess you have heard about Cassy Cook's death?" "Yes. That's is so awful." J.D. takes out his notepad and a pen. "I understand that you knew her?" "Yes," Mike said. "We have gone to school together since grade school." J.D. looks over at him. "Did you know of any problems she was having? Maybe problems at home or school or with somebody?" Mike was quiet for a minute. "Well, her parents were strict. She didn't get along with her stepfather. But nothing else. As far as I know, everybody loved her." "Ok," J.D. said. "What about her relationship with you?" Mike's face turned red. "Well. We were kinda together the first of the school year." J.D. looks over at him. "When you say kinda together. Do you mean boyfriend and girlfriend?" Mike looks down. "Yes, that's what I mean." "Ok," J.D. said. "So why did yall break up?" Mike keeps looking down at the floor and is quiet for a minute. "Well, it was just that her family was strict. They wouldn't let her go out. I couldn't go to her house, and she could never get away to come here or anyplace else. She was afraid of what her stepfather would do if he found out. The only time we saw each other was at school. I was a grade ahead of her, so we didn't have any classes together. So it just didn't work out." "Ok. I see," J.D. said. "Do you know of anybody else she was seeing maybe later in the year?" "Not that I know of," Mike said. "Just one more thing," J.D. said. "Do you know who she was going out with on graduation night?" "No. I'm surprised her parents let her go out." J.D. looks over at Mike. "They didn't. She snuck out." Mike looks up. "That sounds about right."

J.D. stands up. "Well, I think I got everything in need." He reaches into his pocket and hands Mike his card. "If you think of anything else, give me a call." "Sure," Mike says as they shake hands.

J.D. walks back out to the car. That was interesting. But he didn't find out anything that he didn't already know. The one thing everybody knows for sure if she didn't get along with her stepfather.

J.D. got in the car and made the drive back to the office. Inside, several deputies were working in the bullpen as he walked through to his office. Putting his cowboy hat on the hat rack, he took a seat behind the desk. He took his glasses off and laid them on the desk, and ran his hand through his hair. His head was hurting again. He was sure it was from the stress of this case.

He looked up to see Deputy Shelton come in and sit down across from him. "You find out anything?" Shelton ask. "Not anything we didn't already know. Mike Stone said that their dating didn't amount to much because her parents wouldn't let her do anything. He also said she didn't like her stepfather. You find anything else out?" Shelton shook his head. "No, nothing else at the school. But when I got

back here. Deputy Tisdale has found April Jones. She works in a library in Tyler.” “That’s great,” J.D. said. Shelton looks up from his notes. “You want me to call her and set up a meeting?” J.D. was quiet for a minute and then said. “No. I will drive down there in the morning. I’m afraid she won’t want to talk to me, and it’s harder to say no in person than over the phone. So hold the fort down till I get back.” “Will do,” Shelton says as he gets up and leaves.

J.D. pulls the drawer out in his desk, takes out a pill bottle, takes out two pain aid caplets, gets up, walks over to the small fridge in the corner of his office, and takes out a water bottle. He puts the pill in his mouth and takes a big drink of water. Maybe that will help.

About that time, John walks into the office. “Hey, Papaw.” J.D. smiles and takes another drink of water. “Hey, John.” John then says. “You find out anything new?” “No,” J.D. said. “The stepfather is looking more and more like something is not right. But we will get to the bottom of it.” “Good,” John says.

J.D. then walks over and grabs his cowboy hat. “What you say, we go by the gun range on the way home and blow off some steam. John smiles. “That would be great.”

J.D. and John drive over to the inside gun range and go in. J.D. grabs several targets that are made to look like an outline of a man. The range is empty this time of day, so they walk down to the end and clip a target up. J.D. pushes a button, and the target is backed into place. He hands John some ear protectors and safety glasses. John puts his on, as does J.D.

J.D. takes out his 38 pistol and checks the load. Closing it back up, he looks at the J.D.C. on the handle. He looks over at John. “Guess you’re going to inherit this gun someday. It having your initials on it. Nobody else will want it.” John smiles big. J.D. then turns to the target and raises the gun. He fires off four shots. He pulls his ear protector down and hits the button, and the target comes back to them. He has all four shots in the center of the target, all within about 2 inches of each other. “Wow, that’s good,” John says.

J.D. takes the target down and puts another up. And hits the button and sends it out. J.D hands John the gun. “Ok, your turn. Just like we use to behind the tank at the house.” John lifts the gun up and takes aim, and fires four shots. J.D. Hits the button, and the target comes back. John has all four shots in the center of the target, about 4 inches apart. Not as good as J.D., but still good shooting. “Not bad, son,” J.D says. “Let’s see how you do with this.” J.D. takes the target down and puts another up. Then he takes the 2nd target and puts it in front of the other a little lower and off to the side. He looks over at John. “This represents a person using a human shield. Shoot the suspect without shooting the victim.

J.D pushes the button, and the target goes out and stops. J.D. then reloads the gun and hands it to John. John steps up and fires four shots, and puts the gun down. They bring the target back in. John has one shot in the suspect and one miss, and two in the victim.

John looks down at it and then says. “Why did I do so bad?” J.D. looks over at him. “Because I added stress to the shot. You can’t let that affect you. That’s a shot you only take if you’re 100% sure you can make it. The last thing you want is to hit your victim. That’s why we practice.

J.D. then hit the button and sends the target back out. He then turns and takes four shots. He puts the gun back on the table and hits the button to bring it back in. They look at the target. Four shots, all hits to the suspect's head. "Practice makes perfect." J.D. reloads the gun and says. "We will get you down here several times a week. You will get there. We got a long day tomorrow. We should probably call it a day."

Chapter 7

J.D. was up early again. He was awake an hour before the alarm was set to go off. He got up and showered, and got dressed. He tried to do it quietly, not wanting to wake Martha up. But he never did a good job at that. He was sure she was awake. But she was pretending to be asleep so he wouldn't feel bad about waking her up.

He made a cup of coffee and went out on the back porch, and watched the sun come up. About 15 minutes later, Martha came out the back door with her own cup of coffee. He looked over at her. "I woke you up, didn't I." She sat down and took a sip of her coffee. "No. I woke up, and you were gone." J.D. smiles and shakes his head. "We both know I woke you up." She smiles big. "Hunny, you have been waking me up for over 45 years. And I been lying about it for that long too. Why change now." He laughs. "Well, I'm sorry."

After a long moment, she says. "This girl's murder is bothering you." He takes a drink of his coffee and says. "Yes, a lot of things about it are just not right. It's stressing me out. Giving me headaches." She looks over at him. "Headaches. You don't get headaches. When did that start?" "Just the last few weeks. I'm fine," he said. "If it doesn't get better. Let me know, and I will make your appointment at the doctor's office." He turns and looks at her. "I'm fine, no need for that. It's just stress from this case." "Ok." She says. "But I'm going to be watching."

J.D. looks away and then back at her. "There is something I need to tell you." He turns to look directly at her. "I'm not going to run for reelection. I'm going to retire at the end of my term. I have not told anybody, and I want to keep it that way for the time being. So what do you think?" She smiled real big and reached over and kissed him on the forehead. "I was hoping that's what you would do. But I didn't want to say anything. I wanted it to be your choice." He looks up and says. "This will give us time to do some of the stuff we have wanted to do. Take trips and enjoy life. Before we get too old to enjoy it."

She got up and walked around behind his chair and bent over and put her arms around his chest, and kissed him on the cheek. "We got a lot of life to enjoy yet. John David Carter."

He squeezed her hand and looked at his watch. "Well, I have an out-of-town interview to do today. So I better get a move on." He stood up and took the last drink of his coffee. They walked back inside the house. He quickly put on his shoulder holster and took his gun out of the safe. He then put on his sports coat to cover his gun. He was going in plain clothes today. He kissed Martha and put his cowboy hat on, and headed out the door.

He went by and picked up John. As John got in, he said. "Morning, Papaw." "Morning, John." He said back. When J.D. Made a left turn instead of a right, John looked over at him. "Where are we going?" J.D. then said. "We are heading to Tyler. We are going to go see April Jones. She is a former stepdaughter of Jack Cook. Several years ago, she accused him of sexually assaulting her. She later recanted her story, and charges were dropped. We need to find out what really happened." John looks over at him. "Will that help us find out what happened to Cassy?" "I think I could," J.D. said.

They drove along in silence for a few minutes. Then J.D. says. "She works in a library. When we get there, I need to talk to her alone. She is probably not going to be comfortable talking. So it would be better if I do it alone." John nods and says. "Ok."

About an hour and a half later, they pulled up in front of the Library and parked the car. Getting out, they walked inside and up to the desk where an older woman was setting. When she looked up at him, he pulled out his badge and showed it to her. "I'm looking for an April Jones?" She looks up at him with big eyes and says. "April is down there on the third aisle putting books up." J.D. smiles and says. "Thank you."

They start walking toward her. J.D then says to John. "Ok, there she is. Go find something to do, and I will find you when I'm done." "Ok," John says as J.D. walks up to the young girl with long red hair. Looking to be in her early 20's he said. "Good morning." He pulled out his badge and showed it to her. "Are you April Jones?" She looked at him with a surprised look on her face. "I'm Freestone County, Sheriff J.D. Carter. If you don't mind, I have a few questions about your former stepfather Jack Cook." She turns away and looks down at her books. "I don't have anything to say about him." J.D. puts his badge back in his coat pocket and says. "I need to know what all went on with him. It's important." She looks back at him. "Nothing happened. You obviously know what I said happened and that I lied about it." he pulls out his notes. "Yes, I know what you said and that you later recanted it, and the charges were dropped. But I also know that your mother divorced him right after that. There was a long moment of silence, and then J.D. said. "He married another woman that had a teenage daughter. Now she is dead. He is acting really strange about it. If he was abusing you, there is a good chance he was abusing her and a good chance that he may have killed her. We may not be able to do anything about what he did to you. But we can do something about what he did to her. And stop him from ever hurting anybody else.

She is silent for a moment and then says. "Let's go down to one of the reading rooms." They walk down the hall to a room that has several chairs and a sofa. She sat down on one end of the couch and turned and looks at him.

"At first, after my Mom married him, things were good. Then after about six months, he started coming to my room late at night. At first, he just touched me. Then things escalated. I tried to tell my Mom. At first, she didn't believe me. Then she just didn't want to talk about it. He said he would kill me if I told anybody. This went on for years. Then he started bringing friends home after school. Before Mom got home, I couldn't take it anymore. After one of those encounters, I ran to a friend's house, and they took me to the police station. They picked him and his friend up. When my Mom found out about it, she came and picked me up. She

was upset but didn't want him to go to jail. She worked out some kind of deal with him. I would say that I lied about it, and he would give her a divorce and some money for me to go to school on.

J.D. looked up from his notes. "So he bought his way out of it." She looked back at him. "Yes, you could look at it like that.?" He then said. "How much money?" She looked down. "About \$50,000, I think I'm not sure." "Where did he get that kind of money?" J.D. asks. "He worked down at the school. But he and this friend had something going on the side. They always had money." J.D. looked over at her. "What do you think they were doing?" She looked away and back to him. "I always suspected they were selling drugs out at the school. But don't know that for a fact." J.D. looked up from his notes. "Do you know the friend's name?" "Yes." She said. "Jeff Nolen." "Do you know what happened to him?" "No. He worked out at the school too. He left about the same time. Haven't seen either one of them since."

J.D. puts his notes away. "Thank you for talking to me. You have been a big help." She looked up at him with a tear in her eye. "Your welcome, Sheriff. Just promise me that if he killed this girl. You will put him away." J.D. looks back at her. "If he killed her. I will make sure he pays for it."

J.D. then stands up and shakes her hand and turns, and starts walking out. Finding John and they make their way out to the car as they get in the car. John ask. "Did you find out anything?" "Yes," J.D. says. "He sexually abused her." John looks over at him. "So, what do we do now?" J.D. starts the car. "We get home and bring him in for some tough questions!"

The next hour and a half, J.D. and John made the drive back to the office in Fairfield. J.D. called ahead and talked to Deputy Shelton and brought him up to speed on what he had found out in Tyler.

They got back and entered the Sheriff's office. J.D. saw Shelton as he walked in. They made eye contact, and both headed to J.D.'s office. J.D. sat down behind his desk and Shelton across from him. "Did you get ahold of Cook?" J.D. asks. "Yes," Shelton said. "They will be here at 2 pm. He didn't want his wife to come. But I told him we needed her too." J.D. nodded his head. "Good, that will give me about an hour to get my questions ready." Shelton stands up and says. "Where do you want to put them when they get here?" J.D. looks up. "Normally, I would put victim's families in the conference room. But knowing what I know now. Put him in interrogation room one and her in two. I want to talk to them separately." Shelton turned and started toward the door. "Will do, boss."

At about 2:45 pm, Shelton sticks his head in J.D.'s Office and says. "Cook and his lawyer are here. They didn't bring his wife." J.D. finishes writing in his notebook and stands up. "Well, that's not going to fly. Go get her." "Ok. They are in interrogation 1. I will be back before you get done with him."

J.D. walks out into the bullpen. He sees John and walks over to him. "We have Cook here. Come with me. They walk down to the interrogation room. They walk past the door that says room one and enter the next door. Inside is a small room the set in between rooms 1 and 2. It has a glass that you can see into both rooms. They look into room one and see Jack Cook and his lawyer Jimmy Davis. J.D. looks over at John. This is a one-way glass. We can see them, but they can't see us. You can sit in that chair and watch. Flip this button, and you can hear what's

being said. When Shelton gets back with Sue Cook he is going to put her in her." J.D. points to the other side. "Oh wow," John said.

J.D. walks back to his office and gets his folder and notes, and goes back and enters room 1. Cook and Davis look up at him as set down with his back to the mirror glass. "Thank you for coming. I believe we ask that Ms. Cook also come." The lawyer Davis then said. "Ms. Cook is too distraught to talk." J.D. looks over at them and says. "Well, I'm sorry for her loss, but we really need to talk to her. I have sent a Deputy over to get her."

Cook frowns and looks over at Davis who says. "This is an outrage. Have you no respect for a grieving mother?" J.D. then says. "Like I said. I am sorry for your loss. But I'm doing a murder investigation, and I need to talk to the people closest to Cassy, and that includes her parents."

After a moment of silence, J.D. says. "Have you thought of anybody else that might want to hurt Cassy?" "No," a very agitated Cook says. "Do you know of anybody that Cassy might be seeing or dating?" "No. Cassy was not dating anybody. There was this boy his name was let me see. His name was Mike Stone. He bothered Cassy. He stalked her, wouldn't leave her alone. But they never dated." "Ok," J.D. said. Writing things down in his notes. "Anybody else?" "No. Not that I can think of."

"Ok," J.D. said. "The night that Cassy went missing. What did you do?" Cook frowns again. "When we saw that she was not home. I went out and looked for her." "Just you?" J.D. asks. "Yes. Sue stayed home in case she came home." "What time was this?" J.D. asks. "Around 11 pm." "Did you talk to anybody? Did anybody see you?" "No," Cook said. "What time did you come home?" J.D. asks. "Around 5 am. Why is this important?" Cook asks. J.D. looked up and said. "It's so that we can get a clear picture of what when on. When did you call the police?" J.D. asks. "Around 6 am," Cook said.

J.D. then said. "Ok, let's see if I got it right. "You noticed Cassy missing about 11 pm. You alone went out and looked for her until about 5 am, not talking to anybody. You came home and called the police around. Is that correct?" "Yes," Cook said.

J.D. then looked down at his notes and then said. "I want to go in a different direction now, Mr. Cook." He looks up into Cook's eyes. "You remember April Jones? Your stepdaughter from your first marriage. The one you were accused of raping and molesting. Remember her? Cook's face turned red, and a look of anger took over. His lawyer Davis jumped in. "Don't say anything! My client will not say anything regarding April Jones. She is a disturbed young lady. She recanted all the lies she told, and charges were dropped. That is all we will say on the matter!" J.D. sits back in his chair. "Ok. What about the money you paid her mother for her to go to school? You know, right before she divorced you! The lawyer Davis stands up. "This interview is over." J.D. stands up. "Just one more thing. Can we get a DNA sample? Just to clear things up. Davis turned to him and said. "No, you may not!"

They all then walk out into the hall. J.D. walks down and looks in the window of room 2. "Ms. Cook is in here." Cook and Davis both start walking toward him. "I'm afraid we need to talk to her alone." "What do you mean!" Cook says. J.D. looks back at him and says. "Just what I said. We need to talk to her alone. Your lawyer

can be in there but nobody else.” Cook started to respond, but Davis put his hand out and stopped him. “It's ok. I will be in there with her.” “Thank you,” J.D. said. “You can wait in here. We won't belong.” J.D. Points to room 1. Cook turns and goes back in there. Davis goes into room 2.

J.D. goes into the room in between the rooms. John and Shelton are in there. They have been watching through the glass. John smiles and says. “That was so cool, Papaw!” Shelton then says. You got him shook up. “Ya,” J.D. says as he walks over to the thermostat and turns the temp down in room 1. He then turns to Shelton. Why don't you get Mr. Cook some water? Shelton then leaves the room. J.D. then turns to John. “Time for part 2.”

J.D. walks out and into room 2 and sits down across the table from Ms. Cook and her Lawyer Davis. “Hello, Ms. Cook. I'm sorry to drag you down here. But it's important. It won't take long.

Your husband says that you found Cassy missing around 11 pm, is that right? “Yes.” Ms. Cook says. “Then what happened?” J.D. asks. “Jack went out and looked for her.” J.D. looks up from his notes. “What time did she get back?” “Around 5 am.” She says. “While he was gone, did he call you at any time?” “No.” She says. “What time did you call the police?” “Around 6 am.” “Did you or he talk to anybody else before myself and Deputy Shelton came by later that morning?” “No.,” she says.

“Ok, Ms. Cook. J.D. says. “Did you know that your husband was accused of raping and molesting his stepdaughter from his first marriage.” Davis stands up and says. “Don't answer that! We are done here.” Ms. Cook has a shocked look on her face. “That can't be right. Jack wouldn't do that.” Davis then says. “Ms. Cook, I'm advising you not to answer any more questions.” She sat there staring at J.D. “The charges were later dropped after he paid his wife money to send her to school. She divorced him right after that. Did you know any of this?” She looks confused. “No, this can't be true.” She then looks up at Davis. “Is this true?” Davis looks at her and says. “Ms. Cook. Please don't answer any more questions.” J.D. looks up at Davis. “Ya, he knows all about it. They have both been keeping you in the dark. That's why they didn't want you to come today.” She looks down at the table and then back up at J.D. “They told me you didn't need to talk to me. I was surprised when your deputy showed up to get me.” “Ms. Cook. I'm afraid your husband has been misleading you. It was also kinda strange that he didn't want up to take her to the morgue and didn't want an autopsy done.” She looks over at him and says. “I thought that was strange too. But he said it was the right thing to do. Was my daughter sexually assaulted?” J.D. Looks at her and says. “Yes, I'm afraid so.” She lowers her head down in her hands and sobs. She looks up with tears in her eyes. “And you think Jack did that to her and then killed her?” J.D. Then says. “Ms. Cook, I don't know who killed your daughter yet. But your husband is a person of interest.”

She looks over at him. “I can't go back to the motel with him there.” J.D. motions over to the glass for Shelton to come in. “Do you have someplace you can go where you won't be alone?” “Yes.” She says. Shelton then comes into the room. “I will have Deputy Shelton have someone take you anyplace you want to go.” “Thank you, Sheriff.” She says.

Ms. Cook and Shelton walk out to the room and down the hall, followed by Davis. J.D. stops by room one and opens the door. "We are done with her now. You can go. We will be in touch." Cook stands up and comes out of the room. "Where is she?" He demanded. "I'm having one of my deputies take her someplace she won't be alone." Cook frown. "Why did you do that?" "Because she doesn't want to be alone with you?" Cook turns around very angry. "Just what did you tell her?" "The same things I told you about. I'm sure your lawyer will tell you all about it." Cook, his face red with anger, says. "When this is over, I will sue you, sheriff!" "You do that." Cook then turns and walks off.

John then comes out of the mirror room and walks over to J.D. "That was amazing," John said. Shelton then walks up. "Ok. I got Tisdale is going to take her to her mother's. Why didn't you ask her about some of the things Cassy said in her journal. Like her telling her mother and she not believing her? J.D. looks over at Shelton and says. "I don't know if she knows about the journaled. If she knows that, we know that she knew and didn't help. She might not be willing to help us. So we keep that to ourselves and play her against him. I don't think she had anything to do with the murder."

J.D. turns and walks back into Interrogation Room 1, and is followed by Shelton and John. He walks over, reaches into his pocket, pulls out some latex gloves, and puts them on. He then reaches down, picks up the water bottle off the table, and looks at it. About $\frac{3}{4}$ empty. He pulls an evidence bag out of his pocket, places the bottle inside, and closes it up. He turns and hands it to Shelton. "Sometimes, it's just too easy. Get this over to the lab asap. Tell them I want a top priority on it. I want to know if we have a DNA match as soon as possible.

I also want a tail on Cook. All overtime is approved. Every time he scratches his ass, I want to know about it!

Chapter 8

The next morning J.D. arrived at work. He had not picked up John this morning. Cassy's funeral was at 12:00 pm. John was going over there with some of his friends.

J.D. was also going to the funeral. He had brought clothes to change into. He had not known Cassy personally. But he felt like he needed to pay his respects. He was probably not going to be very welcome after his interrogation of the Cook's yesterday. He could find out a lot. He would be looking at how people react and who they talk to. He was also having deputies parked in plain vans take pictures.

About that time, Deputy Shelton walked into his office. He walked over to the coffee pot and poured himself a cut. He looked over at J.D. "You need some?" "Yes," J.D. said. He then poured the 2nd cup and walked over and handed it to J.D. "Thank you," he said.

Shelton took a seat across from J.D., who looks over at him and says. "So have you found out anything on this Jeff Nolen guy? Shelton took out his notes. "Yes. He worked with Cook at the Tyler High School. Just like April Jones said he did. He also quit the same time that Cook did. So I did some looking and guess who

also works out at the Fairfield High School. Non-other than Jeff Nolen.” J.D. Looks up. “So if April is right about them. When things start going bad in Tyler, they just move there. They move here and start over.” Shelton then turns the page on his notes. “Yes, it kinda looks that way. He has no record, so he wouldn't have a problem getting a job out at the school. The charges on Cook were dropped. So there would be no record that showed up on a background check.”

J.D. sits back in his chair. “April also said that Nolen also took part in molesting her. If that's the case, he may also be involved in molesting Cassy.” Shelton looks over at him. “This case keeps getting sicker and sicker.” “I know,” J.D. says.

J.D. takes his glasses off and puts them on the desk. He reaches up and rubs his forehead. He then says. “So what has Cook been up to since leaving here yesterday. Shelton turns a few pages in his notes. “Well, after leaving here, we went to his mother-in-law's house to try to talk to his wife. Our Deputy was still there when he got there and ran him off. He came back later. Our tail man called Fairfield P.D., and they ran him off.” “Good,” J.D. says. “It will be interesting how things with them go at the funeral today. I want a Deputy close to her.”

Shelton nods and says. “After that, he went to that little bar just outside of town and drank for several hours. He met up with a man that we later I.D. as Nolen. They talked for a while, and then he left and went back to the motel. He checked out this morning and returned to their house. The last report I got, he was still there.” J.D. put his glasses back on and said. “Well, keep me informed on his movement.”

2 hours later

J.D. finished getting dressed and coming out of his office bathroom. He put back on his under-the-arm gun holster and then put on his suit coat.

Setting back down at his desk. He thought about who he might see at the funeral and what he might say to them. He picked up the phone and hit the intercom. “You ready? Good. I will meet you out front.” Hanging the phone up. He reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a bottle of pain aid. He took two pills and put them in his mouth, and washed them down with the bottle of water sitting on his desk. He wished he could shake these damn headaches.

He got up and moved to the door stopping to put on his Cowboy hat. He walked out through the bullpen outside where Shelton was waiting for him. J.D. reached into his pocket, pulled out his keys to the squad car, and handed them to Shelton. “You drive.” Shelton took the keys with a surprised look on his face. In there over ten years of working together. It was the first time he had ever ask him to drive.

They made the trip over to the funeral home and made their way inside. The first person he saw was Jack Cook.

When Cook saw him, he turned and started walking toward him. J.D. turned to Shelton. “This could be interesting.” Cook walked up with an angry look on his face. “You got a lot of nerve coming here after the way you treated my wife and I yesterday. I think you need to leave. Oh, and just an idea. Why don't you go look for my daughter's killer! J.D. smiled at Cook. “Mr. Cook. I'm here to pay my

respects to Cassy.” He paused and looked hard into Cook’s eyes. “And I can ensure you, Mr. Cook. I am looking very hard for her killer. Cook then turned and walked away.

A few minutes later, J.D. saw John, and some of his friends walk in. He walked over to John. “Morning, John.” John had a surprised look on his face. “Papaw, what are you doing here. Did you know Cassy? I mean, did you know her before? J.D. looks over at John. No, I didn't know her before. But I still like to pay my respects, and you can find out a lot watching people at a funeral.” John then leaned down and, in a low voice, said. “Do you think her killer might be here?” J.D. then said in a low voice. “Yes, I would bet on it.”

J.D. turned and looked around. In the corner of the room, he saw a group of kids standing and talking to each other. He recognized some of the kids. Steven Turner, Cody Hill, Danny Mayes, and a girl he didn't know. He walked over to them. Steven was the first to look over at him. “Hello, Steven.” J.D. offered his hand. Steven shook his hand said. “Hello, Sheriff Carter.” J.D. looked over at the other kids. Steven says. “You know Cody and Danny, and this is Jenny Rogers.” J.D. looks at Cody and Danny and shakes their hand, and says. “Yes, of course, good to see you.” He then looks over at Jenny and says. “Very nice to meet you.” She smiles back at him. “Thank you. Nice to meet you, Sheriff.”

So after an awkward moment of silence. Cody says. “So, Sheriff Carter. Do you have any leads on who did this to Cassy?” J.D. then looks over at him. “Well, Cody. There is not much I can talk about. Other than to say we are working on it.” Cody then looks down and says. “She was our friend. Please find out who did this to her.” J.D. then looks at all of them and says. “You have my word. I'm going to do everything in my power to catch the person responsible.” Cody then nods and walks away. The other three kids wait a moment and then walk away.

Shelton walks up, and J.D. says. “Have we got the van’s set up?” “Yes,” Shelton says. “We are getting pictures of everybody coming in here.”

They look around and see Jeff Nolen walk in and go straight over to Cook. They talk for a few minutes, and then Nolen walks off. J.D. says. “Well, that was interesting.” They wait a few more minutes, and Sue Cook walks into the room. They watch as Jack Cook goes over to her and try to talk to her, and she walks past him inside.

J.D. then hears a familiar voice coming from behind him. “Hello, J.D.” He turns around to find High School Principal Jim Baker. “Hey, Jim,” J.D. says. Baker smiles and shakes hands with him. “So, how are things going on finding who did this?” Baker asks. “J.D. smiles and says. “Well, Jim. I can't comment on an ongoing investigation. But we are working on it.” “Yes, I understand.”

Shelton then says to them. I think they are about to start. We better find a seat.” J.D. says to Baker. “We will talk to you later, Jim.” “Yes,” Baker says.

They turn and walk inside the chapel. J.D. and Shelton find a seat in the middle section in the back. They notice that the family is sitting in the section to the side on the right, and Jack Cook is sitting in the middle section near the front. J.D. whispers to Shelton. “Guess Sue Cook has put Jack Cook out of the family section. That's interesting.”

After the funeral, J.D. and Shelton drove back to the Sheriff’s Department. Entering His office, J.D. took his hat and suit coat off and set down behind his

desk. Shelton sat down in front of the desk. J.D. looks over at him and says. "As soon as they get the pictures they took at the funeral, I want to see them. I want to know who talked to who." Shelton looked up. "Will do." As Shelton walked toward the door. John walked in. J.D. looked at John with a surprised look on his face. "I was not expecting you to come in today," J.D. said. John then looked over at him. "Well, I went home and changed and decided to come up here. I wanted to see how things were going with Cassy's case." "Well," J.D. says. "There has not been much change."

About that time, the intercom rang. J.D. picked up. "Carter," he said. Deputy Shelton was on the other end and said. "Dr. Walker is here to see you." J.D. smiled. "Send him in, and you come too." J.D. looks over at John. "Things may be fixing to change."

A moment later, Shelton and Dr. Walker walked in. J.D. smiles and shakes hands with Dr. Walker. "Hey, Doc. You have some DNA news for me, I hope?" "Yes." Dr. Walker said. "I know it's important so I wanted to bring it over in person. The semen sample we recovered from Cassy Cook's body is a match for the DNA of Jack Cook. The sheets we recovered from the house also have Jack Cooks semen on them." J.D. got a big smile on his face and stood up. "Yes! We got that son of a bitch!" He then looked over at the Doctor. Who said. "But we do have a problem. We also have a 2nd unidentified Semen sample present." J.D.'s smile disappears. As he sits down in his chair. "Are you sure, Doc?" "Yes, I'm sure. I checked it twice." J.D. looked over at Shelton and then back to Dr. Walker. "Thanks, Doctor Walker. If we get something to compare it to, we will get it to you." "You're welcome," Walker says as he turns and walks out of the office.

Shelton sets down, and J.D. takes his glasses off and throws them on the desk. John then looks at them and says. "What's wrong. It's a match. Doesn't that give you enough to arrest him?" J.D. looks over at John. "Yes, the match gives us all we need to arrest him for statutory rape of a minor. But his lawyer will use the 2nd semen sample to hammer home reasonable doubt on a murder charge. Getting the son of a bitch for murder just got a whole lot more complicated."

Chapter 9

J.D. and Deputy Shelton and John all set in J.D.'s office. Trying to think about what to do after Dr. Walker had dropped the 2nd semen sample bombshell on them. Shelton looks up. "Maybe she had a boyfriend that we don't know about? Maybe she had consensual sex with him before Cook found her. Maybe that's what sent Cook over her edge. He found out about them." J.D. put his hand to his forehead and rubbed his temple. "Well, that would make sense. But with everybody we have talked to. Nobody has said anything about her having a Boyfriend. It looks like somebody would know about it. That Mike Stone kid was the only one. That was at the first of the school year, according to him. It ended because she could never do anything. We do need to talk to him again."

There was a long moment of silence, then J.D. said. "We also got Nolen. April Jones said that he was molesting her also if he was doing it to her. Good chance he was molesting Cassy also. We need to get his DNA and check it.

Shelton then said. "April said she thought Cook and Nolen were selling drugs out at the Tyler High School. If they were doing the same thing here and Cassy found out about it. She might be threatening to expose them. They took her out to the lake to kill her." "Well," J.D. said. "If that was the case. I don't think they would have raped her and put their DNA all over her. Knowing they were going to kill her. I don't think they are that stupid." Shelton then looked back at J.D. "Ya, thats right."

"Ok," J.D. said. "Here's what we do. We go arrest, Cook. That will give us 48 hours before we have to charge him with something. We lean on him hard. He will most likely lawyer up. But we will be able to get warrants to search for anything we want. If, after 48 hours, we can't make a murder charge. We charge him with the rape."

J.D. stands up. "We got to make that 48 hours count. Get as much info as we can. He and his lawyer won't know what we have on him. Make them sweat it out. If after 48 hours, we only charge him with rape. They will know we don't have enough to make a murder case."

J.D. stands up. "Get ahold of our tail guy and find out where he is." Shelton turns and leaves the room. John looks over at J.D. "Can I go with you?" "No," J.D. said. "It will probably be just a matter of picking him up. But when you're dealing with murder, there is always the chance that things get crazy."

Shelton walked back in and said. "Cook is drinking at that bar right outside of town." J.D. starts walking toward the door, grabbing his Cowboy hat. "Let's go." As they walk out, John says. "Be careful, Papaw."

J.D. and Shelton get on one squad car and Duties Tisdale and Allen in another. They make the short drive over to the bar and park outside. The four men walk to the door. They look and see Cook drinking at the bar. Right next to him is Jeff Nolen. J.D. turns to the other three deputies. "The guy next to him is Jeff Nolen. If he tries to slip away. Let him. But I want him fallowed.

J.D. and Shelton then walk up to the bar where Cook is drinking. J.D. Looks down at Cook sitting on a barstool. "Jack Cook." Cook looks up at J.D. with a surprised look on his face. "J.D. then grabs him by the left arm. "You're under arrest. Let's go." A drunk Cook pulls his arm away and says. "Fuck you." He then pushes J.D. away. J.D. grabs Cook by the hair of the top of his head and slams his head hard into the top of the bar. He held him down while he puts his handcuff on him. He then grabs his hair and pulls his head up. His nose is broken and bleeding. "You have the right to remain silent. If you give up the right to remain silent, anything you say can be and will be used against you. You have the right to an attorney. If you can't afford one. One will be appointed to you at no charge. Do you understand what I just told you?" "Yes," Cook shouted. "You broke my fucking nose." J.D then turned him around. "After what you did to Cassy, your lucky that all I did to you!"

He turns and tells Shelton. "Put him in the car." Shelton takes Cook and turns, and walks toward the door. J.D. then says. "Stop by the ER and get that nose looked at."

J.D. then turns and looks at the bartender. "Sorry about the mess." "No problem, Sheriff." J.D. then looks at the ½ drunk glass of beer sitting next to where Cook was sitting. He points to the glass and asks the bartender. "Does this beer belong to the man sitting with the man we arrested?" "Yes." The bartender says. "J.D. takes out some gloves and puts them on and picks up the glass and reaches over the bar and pours out the beer in the sink. He then puts the glass in a bag. He looks at the bartender and says. "I'm going to need this." The bartender smiled and said. "No problem. And tell that guy if he gets out. To stay out of my bar." J.D. Smiles and says. "Thank you."

J.D walks outside and see's Shelton walk up to him and stops. "I sent Tisdale and Allen to the ER and then to the jail with Cook. I just got a call from Deputy Mase. He was following Nolen. He said Nolen went straight to Cook's house and is trying to get in." J.D. looks back with a surprised look on his face. "Let get over there. Call him back and tell him to watch him but don't confront him till we get there. It's only a few miles from here."

Shelton makes the call, and they get in the car and make the short drive over to Cook's house. They park and walk over to the car that Deputy Mase is setting in. "He still here?" J.D. asks. "Yes, he went around back," Mase says. Mase gets out and joins J.D and Shelton walking around the house. As J.D. starts around the corner, he reaches down and draws his gun. The other two deputies do the same. As he goes around the corner, he can see Nolen trying to get the back door of the garage open. "Hey there," J.D. says. Nolen turns, startled. "Just what are you doing there?" J.D faces him with his gun at low ready. Nolen says. "This is my friend's house. I came over to check and make sure the dog has food and water."

J.D. puts his gun away and walks toward Nolen. "Ok, let me get this straight. Your drinking with Cook when we arrest him. The first thing you think about it. I better come to check the dogs. Is that right?" Nolen nods his head and says, "Yes." J.D. looks at the man and says. "Ok, and who might you be?" J.D. already knows the answer to the question but wants to see what he will say. "I'm Jeff Nolen. I'm a friend of Jack Cook." "Ok, Mr. Nolen. You have some ID on you?" Nolen reaches for his wallet and pulls out his ID, and gives it to him. J.D briefly looks at it and hands it back to Nolen. "How long have you known Mr. Cook?" "Several years," Nolen says. J.D. then looks over at him. "I saw you at his daughter's funeral this morning. Did you know her?" Nolen then looks back at him and says. "I had just seen her around a few times. I really didn't know her that well." "Ok," J.D. said. "You got any idea of anybody that might want to kill her?" "No," Nolen said quickly. "Like I said, I didn't know her very well." J.D nodded his head. "Well, we have a warrant to search the place. If we find the dog food. We will set it out for you." Nolen started walking away and said. "Yes, that would be good. Thank you." J.D. then said. "Mr. Nolen. Just one more thing." Nolen stops and turns around. "Where were you last Saturday night?" Nolen turns around and says. "I was at that same bar until closing time around 2 am." J.D. smiled. "Ok. Thank you, Mr. Nolen." Nolen then turns and walks off.

Shelton turns and looks at J.D. and says. "Well. What do you make of that?" J.D. then looks around the backyard and says. "I don't know. But I sure as hell know he was not here to check the dog. Let's get in here and find out what he was really after."

They get inside the house and spend the next hour looking around. J.D. and Shelton started searching the garage. Shelton pulls out a large tote and looks inside it. "Hey, Boss. I think I found what he was here to get." J.D. walks over and looks in the tote. It was filled with bagged-up products that looked like Crystal Meth. "Wow," J.D. said. "It's bagged up and ready to sell. It looks like Cook will be looking at a significant drug charge also.

Before they were done, they found another tote with almost as much in it. They gathered it all up, sealed the house up, and headed back to the Sheriff's Department.

It took them several hours to do all the paperwork and get all the evidence booked in and the glass they had gotten from the bar off to the lab to pull DNA off of it.

It was getting late. But he had one more thing he wanted to do before he went home. He grabbed the phone and got on the intercom. "Bring Cook up and put him in interrogation room 1. And call his asshole lawyer and tell him we are going to talk to him.

A few minutes later, J.D. gets up from his desk and walks out of his office. Shelton gets up and says. He is in there. They both go into the windowed middle room and look at him through the glass. He is now wearing an orange jumpsuit that has FCSD across the back and the word Inmate underneath. His eyes were swollen and black and he had a white bandage across his nose as they look at him through the window. Shelton laffs. "Aren't you getting a little old to be busting guy's noses?" J.D. smiles and says. "You're never too old to bust assholes like him noses."

J.D. reaches inside a cabinet drawer and pulls out a tooth mold. They are used to get impressions of teeth. They needed it to check the bite mark on Cassy.

They walked into the room with Cook. He looked up at them and said. "What the hell is this all about? I want my lawyer! I'm not saying anything without my lawyer." Cook then points his finger at J.D. and says. "I'm going to sue you!" J.D. rolled his eyes and looks over at Shelton and then back to Cook. "Set down and shut the fuck up." He then points to a chair. Cook walks over and sets down. J.D. sat down across from him and pull out the mold. "We need a mold of your teeth." Cook looks at them and says. "Fuck you! I want my lawyer." J.D. smiles. "We have called your lawyer. We have a court order for an impression of your teeth. Now we can do it the easy way or the hard way. Just ask yourself. Is your face up to the hard way?"

About that time, his lawyer Jimmy Davis walks in. "My client will not be answering any questions." J.D. looks over with an annoyed look on his face. "I don't want him to answer any questions. What I do want is a tooth impression that's been ordered by the court." J.D. pulls the paper out and hands them to Davis. Davis looks over them and says to Cook. "Everything is in order. You have to do it." Cook looks up at Davis. "What the fuck!" Davis hands the papers back to J.D. and says. "Just do it." J.D. hands Cook the mold, and he puts it in his mouth and bites down and takes it out, and hands it back to J.D., who puts in an evidence bag. "That all I need for now. Deputy Shelton will take you back to your cell."

J.D. walks back into the bullpen. He sees Deputy Tisdale and walks over to him, and hands him the mold. "Get this booked in and over to the lab to test for the bite mark." Tisdale takes it and walks off.

J.D. walks back to his office and sits down behind his desk. They had had some setbacks today. But they had also made some progress. He was tired, and his head hurt. He was going to go home and get some rest. He smiled. Busting Cook's nose had just worn him out.

Chapter 10

J.D. and John got to work at around 8:00 am. John got the coffee started in J.D.'s office and then got to work on his filing. The other duties all looked busy doing paperwork.

J.D. sat at his desk thinking. They had Jack Cook on molesting and raping Cassy. They also had him on a big drug charge. But they still couldn't put Cassy's murder on him. At least not beyond a reasonable doubt.

He hoped that might change this afternoon when they got the DNA back on Jeff Nolen. He knew Nolen was involved in Cook's drug dealings. Why else would he have gone straight to Cook's house after they had arrested him?

This case was stressing him out. He walked out of his office into the bullpen. He saw John sitting at a desk putting papers in order and filing them. "Hey, John," J.D. said. "John looked up and put his papers down and started walking toward J.D. He smiled and said. "Ya Papaw." J.D. then said. "Let get out of here for a little bit. You want to go to the range and shoot or the track and drive." John smiles big. "Let's go to the track." J.D. turns to Deputy Shelton and says. "John and I are going to be down at the track if you need anything." Shelton looks up and says. "Sure thing, boss." They start toward the door, and J.D. sees Deputy Tisdale. "Hey, Tisdale," J.D. says. "We are going to the track, and we need a car to chase." Tisdale looks up with a surprised look on his face. He stands up and says. "I'm coming."

J.D. then looks around the office. We need a victim. He sees Deputy Sharon Glass. "Glass, you're with us." She jumps up excited and quickly walks over to J.D. and smiles. "Thank you, sir. Where are we going." "J.D. smiles back at her." We are going to the track to do some stress relief and training driving. Her big smile dropped to a bit of a smile as she tried to hide her disappointment. J.D. looks over at her. "Don't give me that look. You haven't been on the job that long. This is training for you too.

When they got out to the track, they got two old retired squad cars. Tisdale and Glass would drive by them speeding, and J.D and John would turn their lights on and run them down. J.D did it twice, and then he let John drive and do it.

After John's 2nd try. J.D. said. "This is kinda boring. Let do it one more time, and I'm going to spin you out. Tisdale and Glass get back in the car and start around. When they pass them, J.D and John take off. They close ground as quickly as they can when they get right behind them. J.D. gets on the radio and says. "Ok, slow down a little on the next turn, and I will spin you." Tisdale

responds, "Ok, I will be ready." J.D. looks over at John in the passenger seat. "Ok. When they slow down to take the next corner, we will hit the gas and hit them with our right side front corner with their left side rear.

When they got to the corner, J.D. hit the gas and hit the other car, and it spun out, turning twice before coming to a stop. J.D. got on the radio. "Yall ok in there?" Tisdale responds, "Yes, we are good." "Good," J.D. says. "Let's do some role play."

J.D. and John get out and go to the back of the car, and pop the trunk. Inside is a small paintball handgun. J.D. takes it out and hands it to John. "Ok, get behind the wheel. When I say go. Your suspect is going to get out of his car using a human shield.

When J.D. said go. Tisdale got out of the car and pulled Glass out and got behind her, and faced John. He held a plastic knife to her neck. John opened the door and got out with Gun in hand. J.D. said. "Kneel behind the door." John did this, pointing his paintball gun at them. "Drop the knife," John says. "No, stay back," Tisdale responds. J.D. then says to John. "Ok, you can see that he has a knife, not a gun. You can stand up." John stands up. J.D. says. "Take two steps to your left and put the sun at your back. Make him look into the sun. Don't take your eyes off the knife. Try to talk him down if he lowers the knife anytime. That's when you have a shot. But you only take the shot if you're sure you can hit the target." John says again. "Drop the knife." Tisdale again says, "No way." Tisdale briefly lowers the knife about an inch. John takes the shot. The paintball hits Glass in the shoulder. They all stop and look at John for a long moment. J.D. then says. "Great. You killed your victim. That's why you only take that shot if there is no other choice. And you have to be 100% sure you can make that shot.

J.D. smiles. "Ok. That's enough for today. We will work on this some more another time. They get back in their car and drive it back to the garage. John says. "I'm sorry, Papaw. I will do better." J.D. looks over at him. "Nothing to be sorry about. This is why we work on things like this.

They made their way back to the office, and John back to his filing, and J.D. went back to his office and sat behind his desk. When his intercom rang, he picked it up. "Carter," he said. Shelton's voice on the other end said. "Dr. Walker is here." "Great. Send him in. You come too." A moment later, Dr. Walker and Deputy Shelton came in and sat down across from him. J.D. looked at the doctor and said. "Thanks for coming over. What you got for us?" Dr. Walker opened his file, held it in his hand, and said. "The teeth marks are a match for Jack Cook." J.D. smiled. "Good." The Doctor then turned to the next page. As for the DNA your recovers from Jeff Nolen. It is not a match for the DNA found in the 2nd semen sample recovered from Cassy Cook's body.

J.D. sat back in his chair. "It's not a match?" "No." Said Dr. Walker.

"Damn," J.D. said. "Until we know who that sample belongs to. There is no way we can get a murder conviction on Cook or anybody else.

Dr. Walker stands up. If you get anything else, let me know. J.D. stands up and shakes hands with the Doctor. "Thanks, Doc. We will see what else we can come up with." Dr. Walker turns and leaves.

Shelton looks at J.D. "Ok. What's our move now." J.D. sets back down. "Looks like we are at a dead end. Guess we start over. Talk to everybody we interviewed

again. Maybe we will come up with something new. Shelton nodded and got up, and left.

J.D sat back in his chair and took his glasses off, and rubbed his face. His head hurt again. He was so tired of these headaches. About that time, Shelton came back in. "We just got a call from Ann Cooper. Says Jimmy is drunk again and threatening her. J.D. put his glasses back on and said. "Damn it. I told Jimmy if I had any more problems out of him, I was going to come out there." J.D. stands up. "I'm going out there. I won't be gone long." Shelton takes a few steps closer to J.D. "You want me to ride out there with you?" "No." J.D, says. "I will take John with me. I need you to start setting up interviews with all the Cassy Cook people."

They both walk out of the office. J.D. sees John and calls to him. "Hey, John." John looks up from the file cabinet he was working at. J.D. says. "You're with me." John smiles and meets him at the door. "Where we going?" John ask. "We are going to tell a drunk to stop drinking and leave his wife alone." John opens the door. "Sounds like fun."

They get in the squad car and make the drive out to the Cooper place. When they get there, they see a big pile of clothes on fire burning in the front yard. They pull the car up and stop. "J.D. then says, "This could get interesting."

They get out and see Ann Cooper throwing more clothes on the fire. She looks over at them. "I'm going to burn everything he has! I told him to leave, and he won't. So I'm going to burn his ass out. J.D. walks over to her and grabs the clothes she has in her hand. "You can't just burn everything he has. On top of that, there is a burn ban. Where is he?" "He is inside. He is probably passed out drunk! That's all his ass if good for. Lazy ass! Won't work." "Ok ok," J.D. says. Let me go talk to him. You don't put anything else on that fire." He put the clothes down but not before smelling a strange smell coming from those clothes. He walks toward the house. John joins him. J.D says. "Try to find a water hose and put that fire out. Keep an eye on her. I'm going to see if I can find her husband."

J.D. walks toward the house. He hears Ann shout. "Take his ass to jail, Sheriff!" inside. He finds Jimmy Cooper passed out in a chair with a half drank bottle of beer in his hand. He reaches down and shakes him by the shoulder. He gets no response. He tries again. "Jimmy." He says. Still nothing. He walks to the kitchen and gets a glass, and fills it full of water. He walks back to Jimmy and pours it over his head. Jimmy then shakes his head and looks up, and says. "Hey, what the hell!" J.D., now standing over him, says. "What's going on, Jimmy? Ann called me and said you were drunk and acting a fool. I get here, and she is burning your clothes in the front yard. Jimmy tries to stand up and then sets back down. "That bitch is crazy! What the fuck she thinks she is doing!" Jimmy again stands up only to lose his balance, and J.D. grabs him and sets him back down in the chair. J.D then gets a strong smell coming off of Jimmy's clothes. "Just say right here for now."

J.D. walks back outside. He thinks he has a good idea of what that smell is. He takes out his cell phone and calls Shelton. "Hey, Shelton. I need you and Tisdale to come out here to the Cooper place. Bring the drug dogs. Oh, and bring the pictures we took from Cassy's funeral.

J.D walks back to where John is putting out the fire with a water hose. John turns off the water and walks over to J.D. "So what did he have to say?" John ask.

“Not a lot. He is really drunk. Just that she is crazy.” J.D. reaches down and picks up a shirt out of the burn pile, and hands it to John. “Smell that.” John puts the shirt up to his nose and smells. “Yuk. What is that?” J.D. throws the shirt back in the pile. I think it’s Crystal Meth. Shelton is coming with the dogs. The dogs will confirm that, and we will have probable cause to search the place.”

A few minutes later, Shelton and Tisdale show up and take out the dogs. Ann Cooper walks up and says. “What are you doing, Sheriff? Are you going to arrest that lazy ass or not? J.D. looks at her. “Well, it depends on what the dogs turn up.” She looks over at the dogs and back at him. “What’s the dog got to do with anything?” J.D. watches at the dog’s smell around. “Ms. Cooper, the dogs are looking for drugs.” Her eyes get big. “Drugs. You're not going to find any of that here.” She walks off toward the house. J.D. looks after her. He suspected she might have been hitting some kind of drugs herself.

The dogs started hitting on the clothes about that time. Jimmy Cooper comes running out of the house. “What are you doing, Sheriff?” J.D. says. “We are looking for drugs. Cooper’s face gets red. She shouts. “You can't search my place! You need a warrant! You need to get them dogs out of here! J.D. turns to Cooper. “I smelled the drugs when we got here. The dogs have hit on the clothes. We have probable cause.”

The dogs started moving toward the barn behind the house. They were scratching at the door that was padlocked. They all walked over to the barn. J.D. turned to Cooper. “You have a key?” He turns to J.D. “Fuck you! You're not going in there!” J.D. turns to Shelton, who had already gotten the bolt cutters out of the car. “Cut it,” J.D. said. Shelton snapped the lock, and they opened the door, walked in, and turned on the lights. They could see about ten totes stacked up. They looked just like the ones that they had found at the Cook house. The dogs when straight to them. J.D. walked over to them and opened one up. It was full of Crystal Meth. It also patched up just like what they had frowned at Cook’s house.

J.D. looks over at Shelton. “Read him his rights.” Shelton then handcuffs Cooper and reads him his rights. J.D. Walks over to Cooper. “You have anything to say?” Cooper lowers his head and says nothing. “Jimmy. There is no lab here. I know you didn't make this. I also know that you're not the one selling this. Your just the guy that they have set up to take the fall if they get caught. See how it's all on you. You're going to be the one going to jail. While they're out spending their money. Then there is your wife.” Cooper's head turns around. “What about her?” J.D. then says. “We found her here just like we did you. For all we know. This is hers. We got to arrest her too.” Cooper’s face turns red. “You can't do that! She had nothing to do with this.”

J.D. looks over at him. “Ok, Jimmy. I believe you. So help us out, and I will make sure she gets to cut loose.” Cooper hangs his head. “What do you want to know.” J.D. Pulls out his briefcase and opens it, and takes out some pictures. “Do you know these two men?” J.D. asks as he points to pictures of Jack Cook and Jeff Nolen. “Yes, I know them. I get a call. I get the totes ready, and they come and pick them up. Sometimes it's both. Sometimes it's one or the other of them.” J.D. puts the pictures away. “When's the last time you saw them?” “About a week ago.” “Ok,” J.D. says. “When do you expect them to pick up again?” “Well,” Cooper said. “Normally not for a few weeks. But I got a call that they needed more. So they are

coming this afternoon.” “What time?” J.D. said. “In about 2 hours.” J.D. smiled. “It's your lucky day Jimmy. You're going to keep that appointment.” Cooper lowers his head and says. “Ok.”

Chapter 11

J.D. Shelton and Tisdale had to work fast and get Cooper's barn ready. They had a hidden camera and recording devices set up. They got there car's hidden with a few minutes to spare.

J.D walked over to Cooper. He had sobered up the few hours. “Ok here's what we need you to do. Go about it just like any pickup. You let him in. you load it and he leaves. Soon as he moves out of the barn we will take him down. Go it.” Cooper shakes his head. “Ya, I got it.”

They all got in position and waited. Soon they saw a white van pull into Cooper's driveway and drive down to the barn where he saw Cooper standing. Cooper opened the door and the van backed inside. Jeff Nolen got out and walked up to Cooper. “You got it ready?” “Yes right over here,” Cooper said. Nolen opened up the back of the van. They both then walked over and each picked up a tote. Cooper then said. “I was not expecting you back so soon.” Nolen placed his tote in the back and said. “We had a complication.” Cooper then put his tote in the back and Nolen closed the door. “I got to go. I'm in a hurry.” “Ok,” Cooper said. “I will catch you next time.”

Nolen then gets back in the van and starts it up and moves out of the barn. As soon as he clears the barn. Two Sheriff's Department Squad cars block his path. J.D and Shelton come around the corner with their guns drawn and J.D. yells. “Get out with your hands where I can see them!” “Nolen looks and then slams his palm into the steering wheel. A deputy opens the door, and Nolen gets out with his hand up high. A deputy moves in and puts handcuffs on him.

J.D. puts his gun away and walks up to him. “Your days of selling this crap to kids is over!” Nolen just gives him a cold stare and says nothing. “Read him his rights and put him in the car,” J.D. says. Deputy Tisdale leads him away.

Shelton walks up. “Well, I guess we put an end to this operation.” J.D. just stares off into space for a moment. “J.D., you ok?” Ask Shelton. “Yes,” J.D. said. “I was just thinking. We got the guys selling and the guys storing. But we didn't get the guy who is making this shit. He will rebuild and start over. We need to get him too.” Shelton looks over at him and says. “Ya, you are right.”

J.D. turns to Shelton and says. “Go back in there and keep an eye on Cooper. I got to make a phone call. Shelton then walks back into the barn, and J.D. Pulls out his cell phone walks off.

A few minutes later, J.D walks back into the barn and puts his cell phone away. He was starting to like having a phone he could carry around with him. He walked up to Cooper and Shelton. Cooper says. “You're turning my wife loose, right?” “Yes,” J.D. says. I'm a man of my word. She won't be charged. There is one more thing you can help us with. Do this, and I will talk to the judge personally and tell him how much you helped us.” J.D then picks up his briefcase and pulls out the

pictures, and shows Cooper one. "Is this the meth cook? The man you picked this stuff up from? Cooper takes a long look at the picture and then back at J.D. "I got your word. You're going to help me, right?" "Yes, you do," J.D. says. "Yes, that's the guy." "Ok," J.D. says. "Last question. Where is the lab?" Cooper looks up at Him. "It's right down the street about 3 miles. Next big barn on your right." J.D. smiles. "Thanks, Jimmy."

J.D. looks over at Shelton. Get one of the guys to take him back to holding, and the rest of us are going to raid a meth lab.

They got Cooper put in a car, and J.D. and Shelton got in the lead car and left in the direction Cooper had told them. When they saw the barn, they pulled in and parked the four squad cars, and they all got out with their guns drawn. They walked up the big sliding door that was locked. Shelton reached down and cut the lock off, and they opened the door and went inside.

They didn't find anybody inside. But they did find a lot of stuff that was used to make Meth. They found two totes full and one tote full of loose stuff. They also found all the stuff used to make it. J.D. Looks over at Shelton, we need to dust for fingerprints, and we need to find out who owns this place. I think I know. But just to be sure.

About an hour later, Shelton walks up to J.D. "You were right about who owns this place. We have found several sets of fingerprints. "Good," J.D. says. "I guess while they finish up here. We should go pick him up." Shelton smiled. "Yes, I would like that."

They got in the car and made the drive over to the suspect's house. Getting out and walking to the door. J.D. knocked. A minute later the door opened. J.D. looked at the man and said. "Hello, Jim. We need to talk." Jim Baker smiled and said. "Sure, Sheriff, come in." J.D. and Shelton enter the house, and they walk to the living room. "Please have a seat. Can I get you anything to drink?" J.D. turns to Baker. "No, thank you, we are fine."

Baker smiles at them and says. "I heard you have arrested Jack Cook. I'm shocked to think he could have killed his own stepdaughter. Is there any way I can help you?" "Well," J.D. said. "We haven't charged him with killing Cassy yet. But we made an interesting find when we searched his place." "Oh really," Baker said. "What was that?" J.D. looks over at Shelton and then back to Baker. "We found two tote's full of Methamphetamines." Baker gave a real surprised look on his face. "You're kidding. Jack was selling drugs?" J.D. looked back at Baker. "Yes, selling them out at the School." Baker looked even more surprised. "My School?" "Yes, your school. And that got me thinking. Over the last few years, we have gone thru with the drug dogs. Oh, what about 15 times. I never found anything. That seemed strange, never to find anything. Knowing what we know now. It got me to thinking, who knew about when we were coming thru. Well, me and Shelton here and you, Jim. So I did some more thinking. I made a phone call to April Jones. Yours remember her, Jim. She was in your chemistry class back in Tyler. She was also Jack Cook's stepdaughter by a previous marriage. When you got the Principal's job. Jack Cook and Jeff Nolen moved here with you, and yall set up your operation here. We found the lab. We have everything we need. It all ends today."

Jim Baker got a sick look on his face. "You don't understand." J.D. turned Baker around and put his handcuff on him. "Oh, I understand just fine," J.D.

said. Baker turned around. "No, No. J.D. we have been friends for years." J.D. frowned. "No! You just used me. We were never friends! Baker then says. "I so so much for this school. I bought the band's new uniforms through a donation. I have set up scholarship funds!" J.D. jerks Baker around. "Is that what you tell yourself? That you helped these kids! Is that how you sleep at night? Well, let me tell you this. You took advantage of them, used them. Got them hooked on this crap of yours, and you destroyed any chance of them having a life. So I don't want to hear anything more about how you helped them. So just shut the fuck up!"

When they got back to the office and entered the bullpen, all the deputies stood and clapped at J.D. brought Baker threw to the jail.

J.D. handed Baker off to Tisdale and turned to the group of Deputies. "Everybody did a hell of a job today. We dealt the drug trade in Freestone County a big blow today. Thank you, everybody."

J.D. walks back to his office and sits down. It's late, well past his normal time to go home. He was sure Martha was wondering what had happened to him. He needed to call her and finish up here and head home.

He moved a file around on his desk, and a picture fell out. It was the school picture of Cassy Cook. He looked at it for a minute. Despite all the arrests they had made over the last few days, all directly and indirectly related to her case. They were no closer to finding her killer than they had been before. That had to change.

About that time, Shelton walks in and says. "Hey, some of us first shift guys are going over to that little bar and celebrate. I looked it up. This is the biggest drug bust ever in Freestone County. J.D. looked over at him and smiled big. Ya, I knew it was the biggest in the 20 plus years I been here.

J.D. reached and pulled out his wallet and hands Shelton a 50 dollar bill. "Buy, everybody around on me. I got to get home to Martha." J.D. starts toward the door. "Have a good time. But don't overdo it." Shelton smiles. "Thanks, Boss. We won't."

J.D. makes it out to his car and makes the drive home. He drives up in the driveway just as it is getting dark. He gets out. His dog Jett is barking at him. He looks at the dog and says. "It's me, Jett! What the matter with you. Crazy dog." Jett stops barking and sets down in front of him. J.D. stops and scratches him on the head. He walks up on the porch, and Jett follows. He walks down to the end and opens the large trash can with the dog food. He takes out a scoop full and puts it in his bowl. Jett starts eating. "I hope Mom has something for me to eat." He pets Jett on the head one more time and then heads inside the house.

Closing the door behind him, J.D. walks in and puts his hat on the hat rack and then into the living room and sets down in his chair. Moments later, he feels arms come around his neck from behind and a kiss on the top of his head. "I know I'm late. I'm sorry I didn't call. I was just super busy." Martha comes around and sets on the footstool in front of him. "You know you have a cell phone now. So there is really no excuse for not calling." She smiles at him. He looks back at her knowing that she is right. "Well." He said. "I'm still getting used to having it. I will do better." She looks over at him. "I knew you were busy. Word gets around fast. The TV News people have called here wanting to interview you. So what all happened?" J.D. with a surprised look on his face. "Really. Well, that doesn't happen very often out here. We just had a large drug bust is all." She put her

hands on his knees. "Large drug bust. I heard it was the largest in Freestone County history." J.D. smiled. "Well, I don't know about that. It's the largest since I been Sheriff."

J.D. looks over at her. "I need a vacation before I retire." She put both hands on his cheeks and leaned in, and kissed him. "You know. I might be able to make that happen," she said as she stood up. "Come on. I will warm dinner up for you.?" He grabs her hand and says. "You're like the best, Baby." She smiles at him. "I'm not like the best! I am the best!"

She turns and walks toward the kitchen. J.D. smiles. He was a very lucky man to have a woman as good to him as Martha. I was never easy being a Sheriff's wife. That was one of the main reasons he had decided to retire. So they could go and do some of the things that they never had time to do with this crazy job.

But before any of that could happen. He had to find out for sure who killed Cassy Cook!

Chapter 12

Next Saturday Morning

J.D. finished the last of the eggs and bacon and biscuits that Martha had fixed for breakfast. "Breakfast was really good." He said to her as she handed him the sports page. "Thank you." He said. He opened it up and a brochure fell out. J.D. picked it up and looked at it. Bahamas cruise vacation. He smiled and looked over at her. "Well. I wonder how that got in there." She smiled big. "I don't know. Maybe it's fate." turning the page. "Well, if fate went to this much trouble, we should at least look." He said with a laugh. She looks over at him. "I could do some checking on it. If you wanted me too." He stood up and handed it back to her. "Check it out as soon as we close this case. I will make it happen."

He bent down and kissed her and walked to the kitchen, and got another cup of coffee. He then walked to his home office and sat down. In the last few days, he had his deputies going over everything on the Cassy Cook case, talking to everybody again, trying to come up with something to go on. So far, they hadn't found out anything that they didn't already know.

It was frustrating to work so hard on this case and still come up with nothing. He opened up the file and looked at it again. He took out a magnifying glass and looked at an autopsy photo. They knew Jack Cook had made the bite mark. They knew he had raped her.

Maybe he had found out about the boyfriend and killed her in a jealous rage. There were still more questions than answers.

About that time, Martha knocks on his door. She comes in and smiles at him. "I think I'm going to run to Corsicana and look for me some. I would ask you if you want to come. But I know better." He quickly covers up the photo and looks at her, and smiles. "Ok. Have a good time. I'm going to hang out around here." She nods her head and closes the door.

He spent the next hour looking over and over the file, reading every interview. He put it down and sat back in his chair. He reached into his desk drawer and pulled out his journal. He had started keeping a journal when he became Sheriff. Trying to keep some kind of a record of his time in office. He took out his pen and dated it, and started writing. "My gut is telling me that something about this case is not right. I got a bad feeling that something is missing. I'm headed back out to the crime scene. There has to be something we missed."

He put his pen down and laid the journal down on top of the desk. He really should leave a note for Martha, but he would probably be back before her.

He grabbed his under the shoulder gun holster and put it on. He opened the gun safe, took out his gun, checked the load, and put it in the holster. He then covered it up with his sports coat, grabbed his cowboy hat, and put it on. When he got outside, he realized that he had not brought home his squad car. They had two down in the shop, and he thought they might need his this weekend. So he had left his at the office. So he got into his personal truck and headed down the road.

The weather looked like it could get worse. It was not raining, but it was very overcast and a lot of lightning and thunder. He needed to hurry and get done before it started to rain.

He was making his way out to Lake Fairfield and to the place where Cassy had been found. He parked his truck and got out. He stood and just looked. He reached in his pocket and pulled out a bar of tobacco, and bite off a piece. Martha had been hounding him to quit for years. He had cut back, but he still enjoyed a good chew. It relaxed him. It helped him think. Or that's the lie he told to himself.

He looked to the left. He could see the crime scene tape was laying on the ground. He looked back to the right. He then walked over to where the body had been found. He looked down. He could still see her lying there in his mind. He knelt down on one knee and just stared for a moment. What happened to you, Cassy?

At that moment, the clouds broke, and a ray of sunlight shined through. He stood up. He saw something out of the corner of his eye. Something was shining he looked up and saw something reflecting light in a nearby cedar tree. He walked over to it and looked up. It looked like a chain necklace of some kind.

He got his truck and backed it up under the tree, and got in the back so he could reach it. He put on some latex gloves. He needed a camera to take pictures of it like it was before he touched it. His camera was in his squad car that he was not in. He thought for a moment and then remembered that his phone had a camera on it. He pulled it out and took some pictures of it hanging in the tree. He then reached up and pulled it free. It was a gold chain that had been broken, and on it was some kind of a medallion. He looked at it and thought. And then he knew. He knew who killed Cassy.

He got down out of the truck and put the necklace in an evidence bag. He had what he needed to make an arrest. He should take backup. He took out his phone and tried to call Shelton. He got nothing. He looked at the corner of his phone, and it said no service. Just when he was starting to like having a cell phone. He was unsure how these cell phone's worked, but he would assume it came from a signal from some kind of tower. Looking at the overcast sky and the thunder and lightning, he kept seeing. That was probably why he had no. Signal. If he was in

his squad car, he could use his radio. But that might not work for the same reason.

He had to decide what to do. Drive back into town and get somebody to go with him to make the arrest or just go do it. He looked down at the ground and spit a stream of tobacco juice. Damn it. I'm just going and do it!

He got in his truck, pulled out the file he had brought with him, and looked up the address. He closed the file and started the truck, and headed that way.

About 10 minutes later, he drove up at the address he had. He got out and looked at the house. He took the wad of tobacco out of his mouth and threw it on the ground, and spit. He walked up to the house and knocked on the door. The door opened, and Cody Hill looks back at him with a surprised look on his face. "Hello, Cody," J.D. said. "Hey, Sheriff Carter." J.D. looks at Cody. "Can I come in." Cody moves back and lets J.D. enter the house. "Cody, are your parents home?" "No, sir," Cody says. J.D. then turns to face Cody. "How old are you, Cody?" "I'm 18," Cody says. "Ok, good. I have some questions for you. You're of legal age. So we don't need your parents here." Cody looks back with a surprised look on his face. "What kind of questions?" J.D. looks at Cody. "Sit down, Cody." Cody pulls a chair out from the dining table and sits down. J.D. pulls another chair out and sits across from him.

"When was the last time you saw Cassy?" The night of Graduation. I talked to her afterward. John saw me talking to her." J.D. nodded his head. "Yes, that's right. John did see you talking to her after Graduation. But my question was, when was the last time you saw her?" Cody frowns. "That was the last I saw her." J.D. looks down, then back at Cody. "That's bullshit, Cody. I know you saw her after that." Cody shakes his head back and forth. "No, No. That's the last time I saw her, I swear."

J.D. is silent for a long moment. He stares Cody in the eye. Cody looks down, refusing to make eye contact. J.D. then says. "I found the necklace. The one you wore with the track medallion on it. The 1st place in the 100-meter dash at the district track meet. That I happened to be at and saw you win, it's going to have her DNA on it. From when she broke it off your neck and cut her hand." J.D. stands up. Cody starts to stand up, and J.D. pushes him back down in the chair. "Set your ass down, he says." J.D. puts his hand on the top of Cody's head and looks at the back of his neck. "Well, look here. You got a cut on the back of your neck. It's also going to have your DNA on it. Your DNA is also going to match the semen sample we recovered from Cassy's body."

J.D. then grabs Cody's arm and pulls him up and pulls his hands behind his back, and puts his handcuffs on him. J.D. then says. "Cody. You have the right to remain silent. If you give up the right to remain silent, anything you say can be and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford one. You can have one appointed at no cost. Do you understand what I have just told you?" Cody looks around at him and says. "Yes, sir."

They start walking out to the truck. J.D. stops for a moment thinking, how will he secure him in the truck. J.D. then opens the passenger side door, opens the glove box, and takes out a tie strap. He places Cody between the open door and the truck. He takes out his handcuff keys and says. "Don't get any dumb ideas! He takes the handcuffs off and says. "Turn around." Cody turns, and J.D. Cuffs his

hands in the front. He then places Cody in the truck, takes out the tie strap, and runs it through the handle above the door you use to pull yourself in. He then grabs Cody's handcuffs and pulls the tie strap through them, and pulls it tight. He looks at Cody and says, I know this is not comfortable, but we don't have far to go.

J.D. goes around the truck to the driver's side. He hears a loud clap of thunder and looks up sees lightning everywhere. It looks like it could pour down rain any minute.

They start the drive. Cody is setting looking forward, not saying a word as they drive down the road. J.D. says. "I just got one question. You don't have to answer. But Why Cody? Why did you kill her?" Cody turns his head toward him. His face is red with anger. His eyes are big and menacing. He didn't look anything like the scared kid he had just arrested. Cody then said in a loud voice. "Because she was cheating on me! She had a hickey on her breast. When I confronted the bitch about it. She lied and said she hadn't been cheating. I slapped her, and she still said she had not been cheating. Not only was she a slut but a lying bitch!"

J.D. was shocked to hear that. He looked over at Cody and then back to the road. He had always thought that Cassy was killed in a jealous rage. He just thought it was her child molesting Stepfather. Not an 18-year-old kid with serious anger problems.

As they drove toward town, the weather still looked bad, overcast, and thunder and lighting. As they came up to the Big Ben Creek bridge, he heard a loud clap of thunder, and a bolt of lightning struck just in front of the car driving in front of them. The driver swerved off the road and down the embankment right before coming to the bridge.

J.D. pulled his truck over. He looked over at Cody. I didn't like leaving Cody alone in the truck. But he was cuffed to the overhead door handle. He didn't say anything to Cody. He just got out and hurried over to where they had gone off the road and out of sight. He looked down and could see the car. It had turned over and had come to a stop just short of the creek. He hurried down the steep embankment and stumbled and fell and rolled part of the way down. He got up and made the rest of the way down. He could smell gasoline. He saw the driver, a young woman in the driver's seat upside-down hanging by her seat belt. The driver's window had broken out, so he reached through the window and unfastened her seatbelt, and she fell toward him. He could hear the battery popping sparks as he pulled her through the window. He dragged her a safe distance away from the car and checked for a pulse. She had one, which was good. He looked back at the car. A fire was starting. He had thought he had seen a child's car seat out of the corner of his eye while he pulled her out. He got up and returned to the car, and looked through the back window. He saw a small child in the car seat. He then crawled back through the driver's side window. He could now see fire coming out from around the hood of the car. He had to hurry.

When he got to the back of the car, he found a small girl, probably about three years old. She was screaming and crying. When she saw him, she stopped briefly. He reached to unfasten her from her car seat. He couldn't get it loose. He pulled out his knife and cut the girl free. He looked back toward the front and saw the fire had gotten to the front seat. They couldn't go back out the way he had come. He took his sports coat off, wrapped the little girl in it, and then kicked several

times at the back seat door window. It finally broke out, and he pushed the little girl through the window wrapped in his sportcoat. He could feel the fire burning his hands and arms as he went through the window. Outside he picked up the little girl and started running away from the car.

J.D. felt a sharp pain in his head and sudden weakness. He lowered the child to the ground just before he fell. She ran toward her mother, still lying on the ground where he left her. He fell on his right side. His eyesight was blurry out of his right eye, and his right arm was going numb.

He felt somebody touch him, and he looked back to see Cody Hill pulling the handcuff key off of his belt. He looked at Cody and tried to say stop. But all that would come out of his mouth was gibberish. He tried to reach for his gun. But his right arm was useless. He tried to get to his gun with his left hand, but he couldn't get it loose from under his left arm with his left hand

He watched helplessly as Cody struggled to get his handcuffs loose. He had to do something. He reached for his phone he pulled it off his belt. When Cody was looking down, trying to get his cuffs off. J.D. opened the phone up around his belt and pointed it toward Cody and snapped a picture, and then put it back in its holster on his belt.

Cody got the cuff off and looked back at J.D. before turning to leave. J.D. Could just watch as he ran off. A murder was getting free. There was nothing he could do to stop it. John would find the picture. He would get it to Shelton, and he would find him.

He lowered his head to the ground. The pain in his head was so bad. Oh, please, God. It can't end like this. Martha, I'm sorry. Please, what's going to happen to her. There was so much we wanted to do. No, not yet, please!

Then a peacefulness came over him. Oh my, it beautiful. Were his final thoughts as everything faded to black.

48 minutes later

John and his younger brother Brian were sitting in the living room watching the college football game. When the phone rang. John got up and answered it. "hello." he said. "John. This is Deputy Shelton. Your Grandfather was involved in some kind of car accident. I don't have any details. But he was hurt. They are taking him to the hospital in Fairfield." A feeling of panic came over John as he said. "How bad is it?" There was a long pause. "It's Bad John. Real bad." A hundred things went through John's head. "Have you called my Grandma?" "I have tried, but no answer. I have sent a car over to the house. When she gets home, he will bring her straight to the hospital." John paused for a moment and then said. "I'm on my way there now." "Ok, John. I will see you there." Shelton said.

John hung up the phone and turned to his 14-year-old brother. Who had overheard John's side of the conversation? "What's happening?" Brian said. John looks over at him. "There has been an accident, and Papaw has been hurt." I have to get over to the hospital." Brian's eyes got big. "Ok, I'm coming with you!" John turned back to Brian and said. "No, you have to stay here and wait for Mom to get back. Tell her what happened, and then yall come." "But John," Brian said. John

then grabbed the keys to his Dad's truck and said. "It's important we get ahold of Mom. I will call you when I know more. Stay by the phone."

John turned and quickly ran out the front door and into the truck, and left. The hospital was not that far away, and it didn't take him that long.

When he entered the E.R., he saw several people standing around. He saw Deputy Shelton standing at the nurse's station. A Doctor had just walked away. He turned and saw John and started walking toward him. When he got to John, he stopped. John said. "What did they say? Is he going to be ok?" Shelton looked down and then back at John. "I'm sorry, John. He didn't make it. The doctor said it looked like he had a massive stroke." John puts his hands on his head then lowers them. Fighting back tears, he says. "What happened?" Shelton looks back at John. "Lightning struck in front of a car, and they went off the road. The driver says she was knocked out and doesn't know what happened. When she came to, her and her child were out of the car, and your Papaw was lying on the ground unresponsive. What we have figured out was that. He saw them go off the road and stopped to help them. The car was on fire. The doctor said he had burns on his hands. So we think he pulled them out of the car and then had a stroke."

John nodded his head and said. "Thank you. Where is he?" Shelton pointed down to the last workstation with the curtain pulled. "He is down on the end." "Thank you." He said as he turned to walk toward the curtain. When he got to it, he paused for a moment. Somehow thinking that if he didn't see, it would not be real. He reached up and pulled the curtain back and walked in, and pulled closed behind him.

He could see his Papaw lying on the table in front of him. He had a sheet covering him from the waist down. He could smell the smoky smell and see the burn marks on his hands and arms. His eyes were open, and he stared off into space. John put his hands over his face and gently closed his eyes. His hair was messed up. So he took his fingers and combed it through this hair. As he bent down a tear, fell on his forehead. John wiped it away and then kissed his forehead. "I love you, Papaw." He said as he stood back up.

He walked back out into the E.R. and over to where Shelton was. "You ok, John?" Shelton ask. "Yes," John said. "I really don't want my Grandma to see him like this." Shelton looks over at him. "Well, there is no reason she has to come down here. She can just let them know where she wants them to take him." "Ok," John said. "I'm going back to the house and wait for her. She can decide if she wants to come back here."

Shelton then hands John a heavy bag. "This is his personal stuff. His clothes, gun and wallet, phone, badge." John takes the bag. "Thank you," John says. Shelton then turns and says. "Deputies recovered this also." Shelton then hands John. J.D.'s straw cowboy hat. John nods and says. "Thank you."

John walks back out to the truck and drives out to his grandparent's house. When he gets there, he sees the deputy waiting in the driveway. He gets out and walks over to him, and says. "You can go. I will wait for her here." The deputy looks over at him and says. "Ok. I'm sorry, John." John looks back and says. "Thank you."

He turns and walks up the porch and gets the key from under the plant, and opens the door. He walks down the hall to his Papaw's office and opens the door,

and goes in. He turns and hangs the cowboy hat on the hat rack. He walks over behind the desk and sets the bag down in the corner behind the chair. He then sat down in his Papaw's chair. He looks up to see the picture of him and his Papaw at his track meet setting on the corner of the desk. He looks at it for a long time and says. "How are we going to make it without you, Papaw."

Chapter 13

20 years later. Present-day

John stood up from behind his Papaw's desk. He had gotten his Dad to take Tom home and now he was just combing through the files.

It had to be the Cassy Cook case. That was the last case that he had worked on. He remembered it. He had worked as an intern At the Sheriff's Department and remembered a lot about the case. Cassy had been a friend of his. They had gone to school together.

Cassy's stepfather has always been a prime suspect. They found out that he had been abusing her. They had even found his semen on her body. But they also had found unknown semen. He was later tried and convicted of sexual assault on a minor. Along with a drug charge. He needed to find out if he was still in prison or if he was out.

It was getting late. He needed to get home. He had church in the morning. His younger brother Brian was the Pastor of his church and hated it when he was late.

As he started around the desk his foot hit the bag setting at the end of the desk. He reached down and put it back to where it was. There was a lot more he wanted to do. He needed to find out why Papaw had a bad feeling about this case. But that was for another day. Now he had to get home.

Next day, Church

John and his family, Wife Carolyn, His 13-year-old twins, Tom and Becky. Set in their regular spot on the 2nd pew at church. John's brother Brian had given a good sermon. But John had missed some of it. His mind kept going back. To the case files he had been looking at last night. Papaw was right. Something was not right about it.

About that time, Carolyn had nudged him to move. He looked around and saw that Brian had dismissed them and people were moving out in the aisle. He moved so people could get out. He normally waited around for most people to leave and then visit with his brother.

Brian walked up to him and shook hands. Brian smiled and said. "Ok. So what's up with you?" "What do you mean?" John ask. "Well," Brian said. "You may have been here, but your mind was someplace else. So what's up?" John smiled. "Dad had asked me to go over to Grandma's place and start going thru some of Papaw's stuff. I kind of stumbled across some stuff that Papaw was working on the

day he died. So I'm going to look into it." Brian shook his head. "I knew it had to be something. I know that look. Anything I can help you with?" "No," John said. "I'm going back over there this afternoon. Follow up some. 20-year-old cold case. Probably just a dead end." "Well," Brian said. "If there is anything to find, you will. You're just like Papaw. You get onto something you don't let go. Just like a pit bull." John smiled. "I guess you're right." Brian turned to walk away. "Let me know how it turns out."

John drove his family home and had lunch. John then went into his office and put his gun on. Carolyn walked in and said. "You going someplace." He turns to her and says. "Ya, I'm going back over to Grandma's house. I want to go over some more of that stuff I found in Papaw's office." She smiled at him. "You're not going to watch the game?" John smiled. "Well, I think he has a small tv in his office." She turned to walk out. "Are you going to be late?" "No." He said. "I will call you if I'm going to be."

John then goes and gets in the truck and leaves. On the drive over, he takes out his cell phone, looks through the contacts, and finds Rick Shelton's name. Shelton was his Papaw's Chief Deputy when he died. He finished out the last few months of his term and was elected to 2 terms of Sheriff of his own before he was shot in the line of duty. He now was a teacher at Navarro College in Mexia. He taught a peace officer's class. Several of John's Deputies had taken his class.

John hit the call button. The phone rang. "Hello." The man said. "Sheriff Shelton. This is John Carter. How are you?" "I'm good, John. How are you?" "I'm good. Hey, I have been going through some of my Papaw's stuff came across some old case files I would like to ask you about. Can you come by his place this afternoon?" "Sure," Shelton said. "What files are you talking about?" John paused for a moment. "It's the old Cassy Cook case." Now there was a pause on Shelton's end. "Oh yes. That case has bothered me for years." "Ok then. Maybe we can put our heads together." John said. "I will see you then."

John finished the drive and spent the next hour looking over the files again. Everything just seemed to lead to a dead end. He heard a car outside, looked out the window, and saw Rick Shelton get out of his car. He walked with a very bad limp now. He had gotten shot in the kneecap and used a cane to get around. John walked to the door and opened it. "Sheriff Shelton, glad you could make it." John offered his hand to shake. Shelton took John's hand and said. "Nobody had called me Sheriff for a long time." John smiled. "Come in." Shelton walked past John, and they walked together down the hall to his Papaw's office.

Inside, Shelton looked around. "Wow, it's just like I remembered it." "Well," John said. "My Grandma kept it closed off."

John picked up the Journal and handed it to Shelton. "This is what got me thinking. Turn to the last entry. Shelton turned to the back and read the last entry in the journal. He then looked back over at John. "I'm assuming he is talking about the Cassy Cook case. That was the only big one we were working on at the time. He went back out to the crime scene?" John looks at him. "I'm guessing he did. I was hoping you knew if he did." Shelton shakes his head. "He didn't call me and tell me he was. I was working that day. I could have met him out there."

There was a map of Freestone County on the wall. John walked over to it. "Let's assume for a moment he went out to the crime scene out at Fairfield Lake." John

points to the lake on the map and the area where the body was found. Shelton joins him at the map. John then says. "Where was the accident at? Were he pulled the woman and little girl from the car?" Shelton then pointed to a spot on the map. "It was at the Big Ben Creek bridge." They then looked at each other. Both thinking the same thing. John spoke first. "If he was going to the crime scene. Why did he wind up here? That's not the way he would have gone to get to the crime scene. And not the way he would have come home." Shelton then stares at the map. "That doesn't make sense."

John turns and walks back to the desk and sets down. Shelton sat across from him. John says. "If he found something at the crime scene, he would have called you, right?" Shelton looks up and says. "Not that night. There was a bad electrical storm, and it knocked out the cell tower. Back then, service was not what it is today. When a tower went down, all the service went down." "Yes, I forgot about that," John said. "But if he found something. He would have brought it back to the Sheriff's Department. That still doesn't explain how he got up there." John said. Shelton frowned. "When we got to the accident, we didn't know he had been out to the crime scene. So we didn't look for anything. John thought for a moment. "Maybe he found something, and it was left in the truck." Shelton then said. "Do we know what happened to the truck? Not much of a chance anything still being there 20 years later." John stood up. "It's out in the barn. My grandma used it to drive around in the pasture some. But mostly, it had just sat there. Let's go take a look."

They walked out behind the house to the barn. John opened the big swinging doors, and they went inside. The truck was parked off to the left. They walked over to it. Shelton opened the driver's side door and John the passenger side door. There was a musty smell to the inside. It didn't look like the truck had been moved in some time. John opened the glove box and looked inside. There was not much in it. Registration papers, sunglasses, flat head screwdriver. Tire gauge. John closed it up. Shelton had looked under the seat and found nothing.

John then got in and sat in the passenger seat. He looked over at the door. He saw the handle that was above the door. That you could use to pull yourself in was broken. "Hey, look at this," John said. Pointing up at the handle. "I don't remember this being like that." John then looked at Shelton and then back at the broken handle. He reached his hands up to the handle and held them up there together. "If you wanted to secure a prisoner. This would be a way of doing it." Shelton then nods his head. "Ya, you're right." John then turns to Shelton. "If he found something incriminating. He would have called for backup before going after them. But there was no cell service. Would he have gone on alone? Or would he drive back to town and get somebody to help?" "Well," Shelton said. "He should have come got somebody. That's what he would have told us to do. But knowing J.D. If he had put it all together. He would want to act on it. That's just the way he was." "Yes, I think you're right," John said.

They looked over the truck one more time and still found nothing. They then went back to the house. Walking back into the office, Shelton said. "Ok, if he found something and it was not in the truck, where would it be?"

They looked around the office, and John saw the bag beside the desk. He bent down and picked it up. He then walked behind the desk and sat down. "This is the

bag of personal stuff that the hospital sent home after the accident,” John said. He then opened the bag and pulled out His gun in its holster. John paused for a moment looking at the J.D.C. that was on the handle. He took the gun out of the holster, opened it, took the shells out, and placed them on the desk. He closed the gun up. This had been his Papaw’s prized possession. The County had given it to him after ten years of service. He placed it back in the holster and laid it on the desk.

He then pulled out his wallet with his badge on it. It was made to carry in your back pocket, or you could flip it around and place it on the pocket of your shirt. He had one like it.

Next, he found a shirt and pants that had been cut off. There was something in the pocket of the pants. He reached in and took it out. It was in an evidence bag. He held it for Shelton to see. “What is it?” Shelton said. John looks some gloves out of the desk and puts them on. He then opened the bag and took out what looked like a necklace. On closer inspection, I was a backless chain with some kind of medallion on it. Looking at it, he turned it over. Shock set in as he realized what he was looking at. “What is it?” Shelton ask. “John looked up at him. “It’s the first place medal for the district track meet 20 years ago.” Shelton then said. “Do you know who’s it is?” “Yes,” John said. “I was there when he won it, and so was Papaw.” John paused for a moment. “Cody Hill killed Cassy!”

Chapter 14

John handed the medal to Shelton who took it and looked at it. “J.D. would have known for sure that this was Cody’s?” John reaches down in the bag and pulls out J.D.’s cell phone. “Yes,” John said. “He was at the track meet. I was running in. Cody won the 100 meters, 200 meters, and 400 meters, and we were going for the 400-meter relay. Nobody had ever won all 4 first-place medals. Cody was a last-minute replacement, and we botched the last exchange and dropped the baton. Cody was furious with me. He would have remembered that.

John opened up the phone and looked at it. “There might be something interesting on this.” John held up the phone. “It’s dead, of course. Surely there is a charger around here.” John looks through the desk, looking for a charger.

Shelton looks through the files on the desk. “We had at least two interviews with him.” He looks and finds them. “He really doesn't say anything. All he says is that he talked to her right after graduation, and that was it.” Shelton pauses for a moment and then walks over to the Freestone County map on the wall. “The address we have for Cody is in this area. If J.D. found the Metal at the crime scene and then drove to Cody’s house. The trip from Cody’s home to the Sheriff’s Office would have taken them right over the Big Ben Creek Bridge. The place of the accident.

“Oh wow,” John said. “That with the broken handle in the truck. It's looking more and more like he arrested Cody and had him with him and no phone service to call for help.”

John then pulls a charger out of the desk and plugs the phone in. "Let's keep our fingers crossed that this old phone will still hold a charge. It might at least tell us who he tried to call.

John and Shelton spent the next 45 minutes reading the two interviews with Codys. John looks up. "I remember him coming up to us after Cassy's funeral asking if we had any leads." Shelton looks up from his file. "He was probably fishing for information and trying to find out if we knew anything.

John's face turns red. "That son of a bitch even came to Papaw's funeral! Told me how sorry he was!" Shelton looks up and says. "He is a sociopath. He doesn't feel any remorse.

John reaches over and checks the phone. It was at 45%. "This should be enough for us to check it." he flips it open and turns it on. It powers up. John then checks recent calls. "Looks like he tried to call the Sheriff's Department 3 times, and he tried to call you twice. He tried to call home, and he tried to call." John paused for a long moment. "He tried to call my house. He was trying to call me."

John hung his head as he thought one of the last things his Papaw had done was try to call him. Was he trying to call for help? Guess he would never know for sure.

John then looked and saw that the phone had a few photos on it. He wondered what they could be. Papaw had not had the phone long and didn't really know how to work it well. He hit the photo button, and the photo's popped up. He was shocked at what he saw. Looking down at the phone, he could see a picture. The last one was taken. It was taken from an odd angle. It was a photo of Cody on his knees, looking down at his hands and trying to take off handcuffs. John's face turned red with anger. He held the phone up for Shelton. "Take a look at this!" Shelton took the phone and looked at it for a moment. "That's Cody taking handcuffs off. I'll be damned." Cody looks up at Shelton. "He was dying. He couldn't stop him. So he did the only thing he could do. He took a picture of him. He was hoping that I would find it. It only took me 20 fucking years to do it! Damn, I'm so stupid. I brought that bag home from the hospital. I didn't even look in it." Shelton looks over at John. "Hey, you didn't know that he went out to the crime scene. You had no reason to look. Neither did I. We both just thought he was alone when he stopped to help at that accident.

John set up in his chair. He was to upset to think. "Ok. So what do we do now?" Shelton looked at the other pictures on the phone. "Look at this. It's pictures of the necklace hanging on what looks like a cedar tree limb. No wonder we didn't find it. This is good. It will show where it was found." John takes a look at the pictures. Shelton says. "We need to take everything we got to Freestone County District Attorney Sam Beck." John looks up. "Yes, but first, we need to check Cody out again. If he has anger issues, as we think. He may have gotten in more trouble in the last 20 years. His DNA may be on file. If so, we can match it against the DNA we found on Cassy. The problem is how can we run it? I can't very well ask my staff to do it. It's not our case. Not even in our County." Shelton then turns around and smiles. "I can get my students to do it. It's part of my class on how to run DNA." John smiles. "Great."

Shelton then picks up the files he will need. "Ok, I will run it as soon as class starts at 9:00 am. Then I will meet you back at your office in Groesbeck." John stands up and shakes Shelton's hand. "Thanks, Sheriff Shelton."

Shelton has the file in one hand and his cane in the other, and he limps to the door. John thinks to himself. Maybe by this time tomorrow, we will have the last piece of this 20-year puzzle.

Monday morning

The next morning John was the first one up. He showered and got dressed. When he came out of the bathroom, he saw that Carolyn was just getting up. She said to him. "Can you make sure the kids are up while I take a shower." John smiled. "Sure."

He walked down the hall to the 13-year-old twin's rooms. Tom on the left and Becky on the right. He entered Tom's room first. He looked around the room and was shocked at how messy it was. He walked over to the bed, where Tom was completely covered up. "Let's go, Tom. It time to get up." All he heard was a moaning sound coming from under the covers. He reached and pulled them back. Tom squinted his eyes and covered them with his hand. "Aw, Dad. That's not cool." Tom said. John then looked and was shocked to see that Tom was fully dressed under the covers. Tom sat up and put his shoes on and stood up and said. "Ok, I'm like up, Dad." John looks at Tom. "You slept in your clothes?" Tom looks back at him and says. "Well, ya."

John looks at him with a stern look on his face. "Well, get in there and take a shower and get some clean clothes on and hurry up about it." Tom raises his hand up and back down. "These are clean clothes. I took a shower and put them on before I went to bed. I don't think I got dirty sleeping." John rolled his eyes. "You gotta be kidding me?" Tom smiled and said. "No. It cuts down on my getting ready time in the morning. More sleep." John takes a step closer to Tom. "Well, those clothes look like you slept in them, and you know why they do?" Tom looks down, not knowing what to say. He then looks up and says. "Dad, is this a trick question?" John tries hard not to smile. "No. It's not a trick question. They look like you slept in them because you did sleep in them! Now get changed." "Ok, Dad, Tom says as John walks out of his room and across the hall to Becky's room.

Inside Becky's room, he finds it much neater than Tom's room. "Becky, time to get up." She moves around some but says nothing. He pulls the covers back to see her head. He then looks around the room and is shocked again by what he sees. There is a chair at the end of the bed and laying across it is a pink bra. He picks it up. His eyes get big as he looks at it. When did this happen? He thought. About that time, Becky jumps up and grabs it from him. "Dad, please, I'm up!" Not knowing what to say. John just turns and walks out.

He goes back down the hall back to his bedroom and back to the restroom, where Carolyn is in the shower. He stands on the other side of the shower curtain and says. "Did you know that Becky is wearing a bra?" She pulls the curtain back and sticks her head out. "I bought it for her. So yes, I knew about it." She then pulls the curtain back. "Nobody told me," John says. She pulls the curtain back

again and rolls her eyes. "Did you not get my email?" She pulls the curtain back. He starts the leave then says. "Did you know Tom sleeps in his clothes?" From the other side of the curtain, she says. "Yes, it cuts down on his getting ready time. So he gets more sleep. Now can you let me finish my shower?" John walks out. Guess he should wake the kids up more often. Maybe he would know what's going on around here.

4 hours later

John had made his way to the Sheriff's Department. He had spent most of the morning going over with his Chief Deputy Greg Roberts what all had gone on all weekend. He also got updates on all the cases they had going.

John kept looking over at the clock on the wall. Roberts looked up from his reports. "You have to catch a train or something? You keep looking at the clock." John smiles. "No, I was just expecting a phone call. My weekend just got kinda crazy." Roberts nodded his head. "Everything ok with Carolyn and the kids?" he said.

"Oh yes," John said. "I just went over to my Papaw's place and went through some of his stuff. There was this stuff from the last case he worked. I found some things we didn't know he had. I called former Freestone County Sheriff Rick Shelton. He was my Papaw's Chief Deputy at the time. We looked over all the stuff. We think we might have got a break in the case. He was going to run some DNA for me this morning. I was just expecting to hear from him." Roberts gave him a surprised look. "Really, wow. How old a case was it?" John looked over at him. "20 years," John said. "Wow, that is a cold case," Roberts said. "Why didn't you bring it in with you? We could have run the DNA." "Well," John said. "It's really a Freestone County case. I really can't ask my people to put in time on another County's case." Roberts stood up. "I see. Well, if I can help you out on it. Let me know. We can figure a way to do it off the clock." John smiled. "Thanks, Greg. I will let you know how it turns out."

Roberts leaves the room, and John goes back to doing his paperwork. About 45 minutes later, he hears a knock on his door. "Come in," John says. The door opens, and Rick Shelton walks in, carrying a large bag in one hand and his cane in the other. "Afternoon, John," Shelton says, setting down. John smiles and says. "Hey, I was waiting for you to call. I was just fixing to call you." Shelton looks over at him and says. "Well, I figured I better do this in person."

John set up in his chair. "So, what did you find out?" Shelton reaches in the bag, pulls out a file, opens it up, takes some paper out, and hands them to John. "I found where Cody was arrested five years ago for raping a woman he knew in Ellis County. The papers I could get ahold of just referred to her as a Jane Doe. She later recanted her story. But not before they took his DNA. So I had my students run his DNA against the DNA we got from the semen found on Cassy's body." He looked at John and paused. "It was a match. The 2nd semen sample was Cody's" John smiled. "So we got him!" Shelton hands John some more papers out of the file. "I talked to Freestone County D.A. Sam Beck. We have been friends for years. He also worked with J.D. He remembered the case. He asks that I fax

what I had over to him. He wants to see us this afternoon with all the evidence.” John stands up. “What time?” Shelton looks up. “Around 4.” John looks at the clock on the wall. “I guess we better get things wrapped up here and get a move on.”

John hands the papers back to Shelton and picks up the phone and hits the intercom button. “Can you come in here,” John says. A moment later, Deputy Greg Roberts walks in. John looks over at him. “I got to run over to Fairfield. Can you handle things here for a while?” “Sure,” Roberts says. He then glanced over at Shelton. John then says. “Greg, this is Sheriff Rick Shelton. He worked with My Papaw over in Freestone County. Sheriff, this is Chief Deputy Greg Roberts. Shelton then extends his hand to shake. Roberts takes it and says. “Nice to meet you, Sheriff.” Shelton smiles. “It's been a long time since anybody has called me Sheriff.” Shelton then puts all the files back in the bag, and they head toward the door.

Outside they get in John's car and make the 45 minutes drive over to the Fairfield. They pull up in front of the Freestone County Courthouse. Where District Attorney Sam Beck's office was. They got out and entered the Courthouse, and found their way to his office.

Walking in they walked over to his secretary's desk, and she looked up at them and said. “Can I help you?” John looks down at her and says. “ I'm Sheriff Carter and this is Sheriff Shelton. We are here to see Mr. Beck.” She smiled. “He is expecting you. Go right in.”

They turn and walk toward the door that she pointed to, and they open the door and enter. Inside they see Sam Beck sitting at his desk. He looks up and smiles and gets up and walks around the desk and says while extending his hand to Shelton. “Hey, Rick, how have you been?” “Well,” Shelton said. Lifting up his cane. “For a one-legged old man, I'm doing ok.” They both laughed. Shelton then turns to John. “Do you know Sheriff Carter?” Beck smiles and shakes hands with John. “Yes, of course, I remember John from way back when he worked for J.D. I'm sure he would be very proud of you, John.” “Thank you,” John said. “Have a seat. Can I get you anything?” “I'm good,” Shelton said. John shakes his head no.

Shelton then hands back the bag of evidence. Beck takes it and pulls out the files, and looks them over again. He then says. “Taking everything at face value, It looks like you have a strong case against Cody Hill.” He then takes the bag with the necklace with the metal on it out of the bag and looks at it through the plastic evidence bag. “This places him at the scene. But now, here comes the problem. J.D. didn't make it back to the Sheriff's Office and record it as evidence. It was 20 years before it was found unsecured in an old office. I think there is a very good chance that any judge will throw it out and all the pictures that are on the phone. Your case goes from very strong to very weak. With the semen from the stepfather, any lawyer will throw it back on him. In fact, we would have a stronger case on the stepfather. Even though we know now that he didn't do it.

Shelton shakes his head. “Everything was taken off J.D.'s body and handed to me. I then turned it over to John.” John then looks up and says. “I took them and placed them in my Papaw's home office, where they stayed for 20 years till I found them last week.” Beck then puts the necklace back in the bag. “Oh, I believe you,

John. It's just we have no way of knowing if anybody else came into contact with that bag. No proper chain of evidence.

John and Shelton sat back in their chairs in silence for a moment, and Beck said. "After 20 years, this is probably the best you're going to going to get. I'm willing to sign an arrest warrant. Based on the DNA found on the body. You can bring him in and try to squeeze him but as soon as he lawyers up. We have a slim chance of a conviction."

They get up and shake hands, and John and Shelton leave. They walk down to the car and get in. Shelton looks over at John and says. "So, what do we do now?" "Well," John says. "He said a Judge most likely throw the necklace out. But he hasn't yet, and Cody doesn't know that. Cody is a shit talker. We squeeze him and give him enough rope to hang himself."

Chapter 15

Wednesday 4:00 pm

John and his team had spent the last two days getting ready to make their move on Cody. They had checked everything again. They had obtained the arrest warrant from Freestone County D.A. Sam Beck this morning. They were making sure they had all their ducks in a row.

They did have one problem. He got a call this morning from Freestone County Sheriff Don Goodwin. It seems that D.A. Beck had sent the same arrest warrant to him. Goodwin didn't know anything about it, so he called Beck. Who told him that I was looking into an old case that should be his. So Goodwin then calls me. Very upset that I was investigating a case that was his without telling him. I tried to explain that I just found the stuff going through my Papaw's things. But he was not going for that. He was right. I should have called him before I went to Beck. I apologized but not sure it did any good. So he should not expect much help from the Freestone County Sheriff's Department.

The good news was that Cody worked at a Motel in Mexia that was in Limestone County. They could arrest him and turn him over to Freestone County later. With an outstanding warrant signed by Beck, they would have no choice but to take him. Goodwin would calm down when he realized that his Department could take most of the credit.

Deputy Greg Roberts walked into his office carrying a small bag. John looked over at him. "Everything about ready to go?" Roberts shook his head. "Yes, we are ready to go. I got Deputy Hayes set up in a surveillance van outside the Motel." "Good," John said. "Do you have the recorder?" "Yes," Roberts said. He takes it out of the bag and hands it to John. "Put the microphone around your neck and run the wire inside your shirt put the microtape in your pocket. Just put your hand in your pocket and turn it on." "Good," John said.

As Roberts leaves John to get the recorder set up. He hears a knock on the door. Rick Shelton walks in. John looks up. "Looks like you're about ready to go," Shelton says. "Yes, we are." John then tucks his shirt tail back in and puts his

bulletproof vest on over it and then a Limestone County Sheriff Department windbreaker over that. "That's great," Shelton said. "Let me know how it goes. Is there anything else I can help you with?" John looks over at him and smiles, and walks over to his takes something out. "Yes, there is." John walks over to him and hands him a badge that says. Limestone County Deputy Sheriff. "I figured you were in this case when it started. You should be in on it when we finish it."

Shelton looks at him with a surprised look on his face. "Are you serious? Bad leg and all?" John looks back. "Yes, very. It's a Reserve Deputy spot, so it doesn't pay anything. We will reimburse you for any bullets you use." Shelton smiles and takes the badge. "Do I need to get sworn in or anything?" John walks over to Shelton and takes his left hand, and slaps Shelton on his left shoulder, then his right and the top of his head. "That should be good enough." John then bends down and picks up a bulletproof vest and windbreaker and hands them to him. "We don't want you to get shot either."

Shelton then puts it on, and John says. "Well, I guess we are ready. I will fill you in on the details on the way over." The two men turn and walk out.

About 30 minutes later, the two squad cars pull up at the Mexia Best Western Motel. They park on the side to not be seen. They walk across the street to the surveillance van. They open it up and get inside. Deputy Billy Hayes is inside, watching the door.

"He inside?" John ask. "Yes," Hayes said. "He got to work about an hour ago." "Ok," John said. "Normally, we would just go in there and grab him and come out. But we need to get him to talking and maybe give something up. Yall will be able to hear everything that is said. When I say let take him. That will be your cue to come in.

They open the door and get out and stand at the back of the van. John looks at Roberts. "Ok, Roberts, you take the back. Roberts then takes off toward the back. John and Shelton walk across the street toward the front door.

"What you going to say to him?" Shelton says. "I don't know yet," John says. "Ok," Shelton says. "I will watch the front door. But remember, I'm not much on foot chases anymore."

John nods at Shelton as he walks through the sliding front door. He walks up to the front desk. The clerk looks up at him and says. "Can I help you?" John looks at him and says. "I'm looking for a man named Cody Hill. Where can I find him?" The clerk seems startled, says. "He should be in the kitchen." John then says. "And where would that be?" the clerk then says. "Threw that door into the restaurant and to the back." "Thank you," John says.

He turns and walks into the restaurant and to the back, and into the kitchen. A man wearing a suit and tie says to him. "You can't come back here." John just holds up his badge hanging around his neck. The man sees it and backs away.

John walks around the corner and sees Cody working at a table, chopping up vegetables with a knife. John stops on the other side of the table from him. John then turns on the recorder. Cody looks up at him and has a surprised look on his face. "Hey, Cody. Long-time." John says. Cody pauses for a long moment. "Well, look who's is here. Mr. Big time Sheriff. Who would have thought? Want me to cook something up for you, John?" "No, thank you. I just came here to talk to you." John said. Cody then stops cutting and points the knife at John. "What after

all these years could you have to talk to me about? Oh, maybe it was about you dropping the baton at that track meet and costing me a 4th medal that day.” John smiles and says back to Cody. “No, I’m not here to talk about us dropping the baton. I’m here to talk about Cassy Cook.” Cody’s face turns white like all the blood drained out of it at the mention of her name.

“What about her?” Cody says, taking a hard look at John. “Were you sexually involved with Cassy?” Cody looks away and then back to John. “What kinda question is that? I hardly remember her!” John then says. “Oh, I think you remember her alright, and I already know the answer to the question. You see your DNA that they took when you raped that other girl a few years ago. It was a match for the semen that we recovered from Cassy’s body. So I know you were having sex with her.” The blood returns to Cody’s face as it turns red. “So I was fucking her. So what! Half our class was fucking her. Bet you were even trying to get a piece of that. Oh well, maybe not. You were too big of a loser, even for that.”

John looked Cody in the eye and said. “We found your 100-yard dash track medal that you wore around your neck at the crime scene. It has her DNA on it from where she ripped it off your neck. That puts you at the scene.” Cody lowered his head and shook it.

John then said. “We also know that my Grandfather, Sheriff J.D. Carter arrested you and was bringing you in. When he stopped to help at an accident. You freed yourself and got away. Oh, and we have a very nice picture of you taking your handcuff off.” John reaches and takes his phone out and pulls up the picture, and shows it to Cody. Cody looks at it and gets very angry.

“John looks at Cody. “I have you, Cody. I know everything that happened. The only thing I don't know is why? Why did you kill her? There was a long pause. “Because she was cheating on me! She was a slut! She had a huge bite mark on her tit! She was fucking around on me!”

John shook his head. “No, she wasn't Cody. Her Stepfather was molesting her. The bite mark matched his teeth.”

Cody is getting upset. Shouted. “No, No, She would have told me!” John then said. No Cody. She didn't tell anybody. She was probably going to tell you. She probably wanted you to help her. But you killed her.

Cody gripped the knife in his hand tight, pushed the rolling table between them at John, and started running toward the door. He turned over a tray of dishes that crashed, breaking on the floor. Slowing John down enough for him to get out the door and run through the lobby.

“He is coming out the front,” John shouted as Cody hit the front door. He ran out in the street and stopped traffic. He opened a car door, still holding the knife, and pushed the young woman driving over to the passenger side. He got behind the wheel and hit the gas.

“Damn it!” John shouted as he watched the car drive away. About that time, he looked and saw one of his squad cars coming through the stopped traffic. John ran toward it. The driver's side door opened, and he saw Shelton sliding over and say. “Get in!”

John jumped behind the wheel and hit the gas. John looked over at Shelton. “Thanks. He almost got away.” Shelton was looking straight ahead as John weaves

through traffic. "He is going to do more than almost get away if you don't step on it!"

John sees Cody up ahead going out of town. John pushed it fast, hitting 100 mph and catching up to him. His lights were flashing and the siren was loud. They were coming up on a sharp turn. John says. "On the next turn. He is going to have to slow down. I'm going to spin him out." Shelton looks over at him. "You mean like how your Papaw us to show us how to do?" "Ya just like that," John said. Shelton looked at John with a concerned look on his face. "You know J.D. never did that other than on the track under controlled conditions, don't you." John glances over at Shelton. "No, I didn't. This might not have been the best time to share that."

When they came to the corner, Cody slowed down, and John hit the gas, hitting Cody's car with the passenger side of his bumper on the driver's side of Cody's bumper. The car spun out just like John wanted it to and came to rest.

John got out of the car to see Cody getting out, and he had the young woman in front of him with the knife to her neck. John got out on his side and Shelton on his.

John drew his gun and pointed it at Cody. "Let her go, Cody," John said as he took two steps to his left, putting the sun in Cody's eyes. Cody squinted his eyes as he looked toward John. "No, I'm not going to jail, John! You get back, or I will kill her!" He looks at John with a crazy look in his eye and says. "You know I will do it!" He puts the knife tight to her neck. "So you and your one-legged friend here need to leave."

John points his gun straight at him. "Not going to happen, Cody. Let her go. Don't make me shoot you!"

Cody's face turned red with anger. He pointed the knife at John and shouted. "You're not going to shoot me! You don't have the guts, John!"

John saw his chance and took it. Firing one shot. Hitting Cody in the head. He fell back to the ground. The girl ran toward Shelton, and he grabbed her.

John slowly walked up to Cody with his gun still trained on him. He kicked the knife out of his hand. He looked down at him to see one bullet hole just above the bridge of his nose. Blood is running down both sides. "Guess you were wrong about that, Cody," he says. He turns and lowers his gun. As he was putting it away, he sees the J.D.C. on the butt. After 20 years, it was finally over.

Next morning

John was at the office finishing up paperwork when he heard a knock on the door. He looked up to see Rick Shelton walk in. He smiled. "Hey, Rick." Shelton smiled back. "Morning, John. I was just finishing up my report. I wanted to give this back to you." He takes the badge out of his pocket and hands it to John. John looks back at him. "Why don't you keep it. We can use you from time to time. We are always short-handed around here.

Shelton looks over at John. "I think I better stick to teaching. You know John. I never liked how my career ended." He looks down at his cane. Thank you for letting me end it on a high note." The two men shake hands, and Shelton turns to

leave. He stops and turns back around. "You know J.D. would be very proud of you." "Thank you," John says.

As the door closes behind Shelton, John sets back down at his desk. He reaches and pulls open the lower drawer and pulls it open. John then takes out the picture of him, and his Papaw at the track meet 20 years ago. He looks at it for a long moment. He then puts it on the corner of his desk and smiles.

