

## Chapter 2

The Key West Police and Fire stations are a block south of the car wash on North Roosevelt Boulevard, so it didn't take Richard long to lead a parade of cop cars, vans and two fire engines to where I waited, with sirens screeching and lights flashing. The ambulance garage is located two blocks in the other direction and an ambulance arrived as the vehicles filled the parking lot of the self-service gas station that housed the car wash.

The fire department is often the first responder to events in Key West and many of the fire fighters are paramedics, but they were not necessary at the car wash.

Tita's SUV was a crime scene, so I would have to find another way to pick her up at the airport the next afternoon.

Sherlock Corcoran, the crime scene investigator, led a small army of cops as they searched the car wash's wet pavement on their hands and knees for spent shells, while others tried to locate bullet fragments inside the vehicles. The recycled-water system may have sucked up shell casings and other evidence, so it was going to have to be dismantled and that didn't make the proprietor happy. He would also have to turn over video surveillance tapes from the gas pumps. Sherlock bitched because the recycled-water system had also cleaned away blood evidence.

Detective Luis Morales, Key West's macho Cuban with movie-star good looks, headed up the investigative team. Chief Richard Dowley sat on the low back wall with me, as I retold Luis what happened. Sherlock had already bagged my Glock.

"You don't know the shooter or the vic?" Luis asked, probably for the tenth time.

"Didn't know them when you got here, Luis, and I still don't know them."

Luis rafted from Cuba with his family when he was a child and has never returned to visit, though he has family there. His cousin, Jorge Torres, is a Havana police detective that I met on a trip there two years ago. We talked about it when I returned and I gave Luis a note from his cousin. He read the note and made it clear we would never discuss the topic again. He takes a lot of pleasure in helping Immigration and Customs Enforcement hassle boaters returning from Cuba. I am one of those sailors and we don't get along too well.

“And you had your Glock with you because . . .” His dark brown eyes stared as if they wanted to burn a hole in me, while he waited for my reply with his bogus movie-star smile. He scratched above his ear, brushing at the gray hair beginning to appear at his temples.

“I have a concealed weapons permit,” I said, knowing it wasn't what he wanted to hear.

“Half the people in the state have that permit, but I've never known you to carry.” He continued to smile with a cold stare. “Why today?”

I turned to Richard, who shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing. Richard is a big man, six-four, close to two-hundred pounds, with a military haircut, hard gray-green eyes and in his mid 50s.

“Bob Lynds and I just came back from Miami.” I knew it wouldn't satisfy him. “I picked up a sail for my boat and I don't go to the mainland without protection.”

“You should buy a lotto ticket, Mick, it's your lucky day.” His sarcasm was wasted on me. “There was no escaping this if you couldn't have defended yourself.” He pointed toward the interior of the car wash and I knew he meant that it might have been

me lying all wet and dead on the floor. “He has no identification, nothing in his pockets, but the vic did. We’re checking him out.”

“My guess is the shooter’s Mexican or maybe Guatemalan.”

That comment got his attention.

“Why do you say that?” He turned pages in his notebook, searching for something he’d written earlier.

“The Central American Indians are tough, hard workers and loyal,” I said. “And most of them are honest, but a few work for Mexican gangsters.”

Luis turned his attention to Richard, looking for some response, before he came back to me. “And you know this how?”

Richard smiled, but said nothing.

“Fifteen, twenty years ago, I spent a lot of time in Central America.” We had never discussed my past, but I knew Luis had checked into my background after our first encounter and that was before ICE was ICE. “I ran into some of these men working with the cartels as mercenaries. They were lethal.”

“And you think the shooter is a descendant of the Mayans, this far from Mexico, or are you profiling?” More of his wasted sarcasm.

I had called them Indians, so his choice of words told me he knew more about the dead shooter than I probably did, and he enjoyed wasting my time.

“Do you need me to come to the station?” I asked Richard, as I checked my wristwatch, it was six, and the late afternoon sun reflected off the water at Garrison Bight across the boulevard.

A soft breeze blew the pungent scent of low-tide saltwater, seaweed, and fish across from Chatter Boat Row, where the crews were cleaning the days catch for their paying customers. Traffic hummed along the boulevard, carrying tourists and locals in and out of Old Town, while the police and ambulance crew waited for the medical examiner.

“Are you done, for now?” Richard stood and pushed his sunglasses higher on his broad nose.

Luis nodded and put his notebook away. “I’ll need you to come in and sign a statement tomorrow. I should have some footage from the security cameras for you to look at too.” He walked away without waiting for an answer.

The police had to wait for the medical examiner to come from Grassy Key, and that could take an hour, before the bodies would be examined and removed.

“Don’t say it,” Richard raised his hands, palm out, to stop me from complaining. “He’s a good cop.”

“Who’d pin this on me, if he could see a way to do it.”

“I don’t believe that,” he smiled. “Meet me at Harpoon Harry’s for breakfast tomorrow and maybe I can save you a trip to the station.”

“Eight?”

“Yeah. You going to the marina or do you need a ride somewhere?”

The *Fenian Bastard* was slipped across the street at the city marina.

“I’ll walk. Any idea when I can get Tita’s SUV or my Glock?”

“You think you need the Glock?” His tone carried suspicion in it.

Richard knew me well and had to be considering that I might know more than I'd admitted to Luis. Any other time he'd probably been right.

"No," I smiled. "This was my being at the wrong place at the wrong time."

"Miami," he moaned. "The shooter is probably halfway back there."

"Better than him sticking around here. See you in the morning." I walked out the back of the car wash and crossed the boulevard toward the marina having no idea about the violence that had been set in motion

