

RAIDERS OF THE CAMPSITE

A Southwest Exposure Mystery

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EXCERPT

Minutes later, Andie was sitting on the curb outside the Dumpster, watching and listening to Chad hurl every item he'd eaten in the last week onto the street. Vince was also losing his shit, his hands flapping faster than a bird in the air above his head as he barked orders at his receptionist to get the hose. Problem was, the hose was a twelve-footer and wouldn't reach from the side of the building to the street.

She watched Zac try to question Chad to no avail. If you looked up *weak stomach* in the dictionary, it'd be a picture of Chad. During his botched interrogation, Zac had shot Andie his cop face glance, and she'd shivered knowing he'd expect her to explain herself after he'd cleaned up the mess she'd caused. Sure, she should've probably informed him about her whereabouts, especially since they were connected to the crime case. Possibly. And yeah, they'd made a pact to be on the up-and-up with each other—her more than him. He said it had something to do with the badge. But frankly, a sheriff badge made likely suspects run. She pondered that final thought a second. Okay. Not a good arguing point.

What does the owl pin mean? And how deep is Walter involved? Is Vivian a clueless spouse? Hopefully, because Andie didn't like having nagging suspicions about her best friend.

She needed these things answered, yet at this exact moment, she was watching Chad vomit. Vince yelled behind her. *Geez, men. Get it together. Not like I have time on my hands.*

Andie stood, rubbing her hands along the seat of her jeans for good measure. Couldn't be too sure if she had some condiment smeared on her palms, and she didn't want to give Chad another reason to start the vomit train again. Time to get her answers, then head home for a hot shower. Lord knew she stunk worse than the stinky cheeseburger sweat Kyle used to acquire during middle school because he refused to shower after PE class.

A shiver rippled through her on that thought. She shook it off, started to approach Zac and Chad, reminding herself to burn all items of clothing she was wearing when she got home. Zac glanced at her, and Chad tried between gags. She cleared her throat. *Here goes nothing.* "Can I ask Chad

something?” She directed her question to Zac. He was the sheriff, after all, and personally she didn’t want to rub him any more wrong than she had. He had that look, the one where it was taking all his patience not to take her aside and ask his usual, *Damn it, Andie, why didn’t you call?*

Zac grunted. “Why not. You’ve already wrestled the guy in a Dumpster and he lost. Not like things can get any worse. Right, Chad?”

Chad wasn’t amused. “She attacked me and you’re taking her side, Sheriff.”

“Not taking anyone’s side,” Zac said, crossing his arms at his chest. “But she’s not the one wearing an owl pin similar to the one found at a murder scene yesterday.”

A little zing of something extra flashed inside her. She couldn’t actually describe it, but she couldn’t quite stop smiling whenever Zac awarded her points to talk to a supposed suspect, and this time he’d stepped aside even after she’d almost botched it. Was he trying to score brownie points? Yeah, he was. And she’d allow it.

Chad gulped, then looked at Andie, saying, “Ask away.”

Andie matched Chad’s stare. “Why did you run from me?”

“You looked like you wanted to attack me.”

“Liar.”

“Fine. You knew my name.”

“We could’ve met on a really bad blind date.”

“I would’ve remembered you,” Chad said, giving Zac a look. “Right, Sheriff? She has the crazy bullseye stamped on her forehead.”

Zac stepped back, hands in the air. “Don’t do me dirty, man, I know her.”

“Sucks for you.” Chad shrugged. “She ever push you in a Dumpster?”

“I did not push you,” Andie exclaimed.

Chad nodded at Zac. “She pushed me.”

“He’s pissed a girl bested him.”

“No. I’m mad you and your hiking boots ruined my afternoon.”