

Chapter Five | Never Judge a Book by its Cover

---POV Julie---

The ocer turned to look at the woman, as did the rest of the crowd. Something didn't seem right here. She looked to be in her forties or fties and her eyes darted around the growing crowd as her body language seemed frantic and ustered. "You little brat! What utter nonsense are you talking about?!" Her eyes ashed and I could tell immediately she wasn't human. I've lived with enough wolves in my life to know when their spirit is trying to come out. However, she turned to the ocer and tried her best to look sweet. "O-Ocer, please. This boy is barely old enough to know his right foot from his left and you would allow him to solve a murder mystery for you in a matter of minutes?! I for one, would like to go home, not play some silly game with a child." She growled.

Oh no.... Ricky pulled away from me and stomped into the middle of the crowd, placing his arm over his brother's shoulder. "My brother didn't lie!" He bellowed. The only way you could tell them apart now was Ricky's outt. He was wearing an all-black short sleeve button up and light tan khaki shorts with black converse. His eyes were darkened and serious. Of the two, Ricky is not the one to mess with. You mess with his little brother, you mess with him. They may be twins but he is twenty minutes older, and he's always been like this. I admire his spunk, but this was so not the time.

"It would be hard to see you two weren't twins, but I'd love to hear why you both think this is the truth. Be honest with me. It is not right to lie to others." The ocer said, remaining neutral in this whole situation. I bit my lip, seeing that he was handling this quite well. At this point, I don't think there was much for me to step in for.

Ricky raised out his hand for the ocer to shake, pulling a couple 'awwhs' from the crowd. The ocer smirked and shook it. "Hello, my name is Dedrick Bruen, and this is my younger twin, Duncan Bruen."

"Well, it is very nice to meet you Dedrick. My name is Steve." He let go of Ricky's hand and tilted his head towards Duncan. "It's nice to meet you as well Duncan."

"Now that pleasantries are out of the way. Let us be clear, my brother is right. That woman is the murderer!" Ricky concluded.

"Why you --" Steve raised his hand towards the woman and continued to keep his focus on the boys. I know that look. I've seen it more times than I can count. The questioning side glare towards the validity of their statements. If only he knew. They really are that smart.

"Can you tell me why you think that woman is the murderer?" He asked gently.

Ricky pulled his arm off of Duncan's shoulders and nodded for him to continue. With his brother by his side, I could tell his condence increased. Like I said, the kid's eyes are sharper than a tack. So, if he says he saw something, Ricky and I will always believe him. We've already walked down the point of no return. There was no way we were coming back from Duncan's declaration now. "From what I can see, it's already well into the evening and she is wearing a baseball cap. Her dress is very exquisite which indicates that she is someone who likes to dress up or she just came from an event. Either way, she wouldn't be wearing that type of hat with such a nice outt. Therefore, it seems to me that the hat was something to put on in a hurry." Duncan concluded.

"How would you know?! You're just a kid. Maybe I came back from a baseball game with my children." The woman spat back.

Ricky walked over to the other side of the body and now all the ocers had eyes on the kids and that woman. "Fair point, however, as kids who play our fair share of sports, we know that no mother would go to the eld wearing all white heels and an all-white dress because of all the red dirt that gets kicked up throughout the game. Also, if you had kids, they would be with you. Just like our mother is with us." Ricky raised his hand over to me and I blushed, immediately worried about all the eyes looking at me. I still hate being the center of attention when I don't have to be. Put me in a court room and trust me, that's a whole different story. I'll argue the prosecutor under the table. But being the center of attention for no reason...that's not really my cup of tea.

"Anything else kids?" Steve asked.

"Yes, actually." Ricky squatted down next to the shoes, uncovered past the edge of the white tarp. "The heel on the right foot of the body is much cleaner than the heel on the left. This indicates that it has been deliberately wiped clean recently. I suspect that the deceased had a dispute with that lady with the hat. In this altercation, the deceased used her shoe for defense and got in a good enough hit to tousle your hair and require a cap to cover the damage. By the way you butted your way into this conversation, I can tell that you are not one to take anything lying down, so you decided to take matters into your own hands, or should we say, claws, dened by the blood pooling in such a specic direction through the tarp. I'm sure if you remove the cap, my brother and I are right, and the chain of events adds up to Hat Lady killing Clean Foot." Ricky concluded, standing to his feet and walking over to his brother.

"Hiding in plain sight was a good tactic, but you just don't seem like the woman to come out of your house properly dressed with tousled hair and a baseball hat at nine in the evening. Aside from everyone else, nothing about you adds up. You made yourself the target." Duncan concluded.

"How dare you?!" At this point the entire crowd was as silent as a mouse. Slowly the eyes turned on the woman with malice and conviction. "This is utter nonsense. You gured all of that out from a hat and a shoe? Ridiculous!"

Without waiting for an order, two ocers slapped silver cuffs on her wrist. One pulled off her hat to reveal a trickle of blood on the inner rim and the side of her blonde hair now out of place from the barrette it was originally placed in. "I can't believe it; the kids were right! She really is the killer!" One person shouted while the woman screamed and huffed, desperate to get out of the ocer's grasp.

"This has to be a show. There is no way those kids are that smart." Another person called.

"Let's not forget how hot their mom is!" Another voice called.

"No way she has twins and looks that good. Let's not forget she smells human." Another chuckled. I raced up to grab the children's hands and haul the three of us out of there, but I was stopped by ocer Steve.

"Don't listen to them. Your kids did great. If they ever want to do a summer school program. There are a few spots left on the junior deputy department. I don't know if they'll see as much action as they did tonight, but there is some great promise with those two."

He reached out his hand with his card between his ngers. I stared at it for a while before grabbing it and stung it in my pocket. "Thank you." I said, clearing my throat.

"Of course. Give me a call any time." He added and I nodded before jogging back to the car. Duncan and Ricky climbed in after taking off their backpacks and I sat in the front seat staring out of the window for a second.

"Mom, did we do well?" Duncan asked. "Sorry for butting in. I...I couldn't let that woman go free." He confessed.

They both really have an unyielding sense of justice. That might be my fault. I shook my head and turned to my brilliant boys looking over at me worriedly from the back seat. "You did nothing wrong you two. You both were amazing." Their eyes lit up and their smiles could outshine the sun.

"Thank you, momma!" They both called.

I pulled out of the parking spot and got in line to exit the parking garage on the other side. Once we got to the front of the line, the ocer checked our car before nodding and allowing us to pass. "I'm sure our dad would have been proud too." I heard Duncan mumble and it pulled on my heart strings. Was my need to hide from that man a detriment to them? Can I continue to stay so selsh? I...I don't know.

---POV Jack---

I stared at the footage from Red Moon's mall as my mouth dropped in awe. The one day I decided to come home and watch the news.... I feel like I'm staring at a mirror image of my son through those children. Who are those kids?! Now I know why such a small pack made the news. And this went viral yesterday? What luck!

I stood from the couch and raced into the oce, immediately going for the photo albums stored behind my desk. "There is no way, but I cannot ignore the resemblance. It's uncanny." I hurriedly rushed through the pictures before I found the one, I was looking for and yanked it out of the plastic covering. Staring at my son in his third-grade uniform, there was no doubt about it.

They were identical.

"Jason!" I called through our mind link. "Jason!" I shouted again.

"Yes, sir?" My butler called and I sighed in relief.

"I need you to come to my oce immediately. Unless I've completely lost it, I think I've found my grandsons." I called. I stared at the photo of my son, trying to think of who the lucky woman could be. Trying to understand why he hid this from me.

"Sir, are you positive?" I heard as Jason appeared in the doorway.

"I've never been more positive in my life." I pulled out my phone and grumbled irritably as the screen took quite some time to load what I was looking for. The video of the boys solving a murder investigation in record time. I pointed to the two children commanding the center of attention. "They are identical." I tossed the photo of my son on the desk and Jason looked between the paused video and the polaroid shot of my son. This went on for what felt like more than a minute before he turned to me.

"Your highness." He said.

"That is an understatement. We need to get my grandsons now! Who knows what kind of state they are in!" I shouted grabbing my coat from the hanger in the corner of the room along with the picture and my phone.

"Wait, sir. As a suggestion. Maybe we should present the evidence to your son rst, then decide the right course of action. Who knows, reuniting with each other may very well be the worst thing for the both of them."

"But...." I huffed before walking back to my desk and plopping my phone and the picture back into the center of the stained desktop. I took a deep breath, knowing Jason could be right. These boys may be my grandsons, but I know my son. The possibilities are endless with him. He doesn't have a girlfriend. He's never had a girlfriend, but his... conquests, as he calls, them are insurmountable. If those really are his kids, I need to make sure the mother even wants to know that fact. If she wants him to know that fact and if he wants to know himself. "Get the proper documentation in order. Find out about those boys and their mother. We leave in the afternoon. Get my chopper ready."

"We are going to him, sir?"

"Yes, we are going to him."