

Death Notice

Excerpt:

I went to work early on Monday morning, before anyone else arrived. I wanted to look up some information from when Katie was murdered. Our computers held software that couldn't be accessed from my home terminal.

I left off all the lights, other than the one directly above my cubicle. Sipping from the mug of hot, strong coffee I'd just brewed, I scrolled through the limited data available about the murder.

The only viable suspect they'd had was Cameron Cooper. He'd been twenty-one at the time. He'd served three years for a rape that occurred when he was a juvenile.

I did a search on his name. He'd be forty-six now. I wondered if he were still alive, if he were still in the area. Had the police looked at him for Maya's killing two years ago? I hadn't found anything to indicate they had in my two years of research. Hadn't found anything to indicate whether or not Cooper was still around. Was he in jail now for some other crime? Maybe another rape? Once a rapist, always a rapist. The question wasn't had he done it again. The question was, had he been caught and convicted.

Nothing came up on the search.

A noise sounded behind me and I turned. A figure lurched toward me from the darkness. I let out a scream.

"Monroe? Is that you?" a male voice said.

My heart pounded furiously, but I recognized him now. Adam.

"Yes, it's me."

"What are you doing here so early?"

He came closer and in the circle from the light above me, I got a better look at him.

His clothing was wrinkled, as if he'd slept in it. His face, however, looked like

he hadn't slept at all. Deep lines etched the sides of his mouth and dark circles surrounded his eyes, their vivid green now dulled. His hair was uncombed. He smelled of stale cologne and sweat. He squinted at me, blinking like he was coming out of a daze.

"I came in to do some research," I told him. "What's wrong? Are you okay?"

He peered at the computer screen. "What kind of research?"

Adam knew about Katie, but not everything. In the two years we'd dated, I hadn't told him half of what I'd told Lane.

"It's not important," I said, minimizing the web site I had pulled up. I repeated my question. "Are you okay?"

He shook his head, shoving a hand through his hair. Shaking his head again, he stared at me. For just a moment, I saw a longing in his face. The old feelings I'd buried surfaced briefly, my body responding to the look in his eyes. I shoved them aside.

"Adam, has something happened?"

"Did you read yesterday's paper?"

"No."

"Tabitha's best friend." He sighed and dropped into the chair next to my desk. I waited for him to continue. After a long silence, he did. "Tabitha's best friend was...murdered."

"Oh, Adam. I'm so sorry."

He nodded slowly, staring at his hands where they rested on his knees. "Murdered. Tabitha's a wreck. We were up all night."

"How did it happen? Do they know who did it?"

"Not yet. She was stabbed." He drew in a shuddering breath. "Murdered," he said again.

Not knowing what to say, I sat silently. Reaching out, I placed a hand on his

shoulder. I could feel him tremble beneath my fingertips.

“I need a drink,” he said.

“It’s six-thirty in the morning.”

He gave a weak grin. “It’s five o’clock somewhere.” Leaning back in the chair, he closed his eyes. “I can’t believe it. Can’t believe Laurel’s dead.”

A chill weaved its way through me and I shuddered. “Laurel?”

He nodded. “Laurel Lohman.”

My blood froze. I couldn’t speak.

Laurel Lohman was the girl’s name. The one in the obituary with the wrong date.