

TRUDY'S DIARY

LIBRARIES OF THE WORLD MYSTERIES

Book 1

PROLOGUE

Daisy Carruthers left New York City because of a murder investigation.

When her boyfriend, Dean Snyder, fell from their ninth-floor balcony to the deserted Brooklyn sidewalk below late one evening the previous year, it was Daisy who had been named the prime suspect in his death. It was Daisy who spent the better part of a year trying to clear her name, trying to get people to stop thinking of her as a ruthless criminal, trying to get everyone to understand that Dean's tragic fall had been accidental.

Trying, most of all, to grieve the loss of someone she had loved so completely.

As long as she was a suspect, she couldn't move away from the city, couldn't start fresh. She couldn't bear the thought that she might be remembered as a black widow of sorts, killing her mate so she could continue life unencumbered by a weighty relationship.

But the day came when a witness stepped forward to confirm what Daisy had been saying all along: that Dean had been alone on the balcony that night and that he had fallen over the railing trying to catch a cocktail napkin which had blown out of his hand. The witness had not realized for many months that there was an investigation surrounding Dean's death because it had so obviously been an accident.

The witness's story confirmed what Daisy had been saying all along.

Dean's death was finally ruled an accident, and Daisy was no longer a suspect.

By then, she was ready to leave the city that had been so cruel to her. She wanted to start fresh in a city she had never visited with Dean.

So she packed her bags and moved to Washington, DC.

CHAPTER 1

One year later

Daisy poured herself a much-needed cup of coffee in the galley kitchen of the Global Human Rights Journal offices. Rain from her jacket dripped onto the linoleum floor.

Jude Laughton, a senior staff writer, looked up from the table where she was reading the headlines on a discarded newspaper and frowned. “You’re getting water all over the floor. Are you going to wipe it up?”

Though Daisy had worked for the journal in Washington, DC, for almost a year, Jude was still as cold as she had been the day Daisy interviewed with her.

“Of course I am. Just give me a minute.”

“Why don’t you carry an umbrella?” Jude asked.

“Because I keep forgetting to put one in my tote bag,” Daisy answered, a hint of annoyance creeping into her tone.

“It’s not that hard to remember. I keep one in my briefcase all the time.”

Daisy rolled her eyes and walked to the paper towel dispenser on the wall. She pressed the lever several times, tearing off a long sheet of the barely absorbent paper toweling, then wadded it up and placed it on the water that had fallen from her coat. Jude’s lips curled in a tight grimace as she looked on.

Daisy threw away the paper and left the kitchen without another glance at Jude. She walked into the small conference room between her office and Jude’s office and

withdrew a stack of manila folders from her tote bag, spreading them on the table in a large circle. Jude walked by, steam curling from the mug of coffee she carried. “What are you doing?” she asked. Nothing escaped Jude’s curiosity about Daisy and her assignments.

“Organizing my work. My desk isn’t big enough,” Daisy answered with a sly peek at Jude. She started moving folders around, standing back with her arms crossed. She knew it irritated Jude that the Editor-in-Chief, Mark John Friole, had given her so many assignments, and laying everything out for Jude to see gave her a jolt of devilish glee. Jude, though higher in the pecking order at the Global Human Rights Journal, wasn’t as good a researcher as Daisy and she didn’t hide her jealousy well. Jude was no slouch, of course—she held a bachelor’s degree in English literature and wrote well. But it was Daisy who had the master’s degree in anthropology, so it was only natural that she should be the better researcher.

Daisy pulled out her laptop and sat down to wait for it to boot up.

“I have a meeting in this room today, so you won’t be able to keep your stuff in here,” Jude said.

“I’m not planning to. As soon as I get these folders organized, I’ll work in my office.” Daisy was pretty sure Jude didn’t have a meeting later.

Jude was just turning away to go back to her office when Mark John came into the conference room.

“Update me, please. What are you working on?”

Jude stood up a little straighter and gave him a big smile. “I’ve made significant progress on the clean water story,” she said brightly, batting her eyelashes.

“Good,” Mark John said, nodding. “Daisy?”

“I’ll be ready to submit my current story today, and my story about childbirth centers should be done by next week.”

“I have an idea I’d like to run by you, Daisy.”

“Sure.” Daisy suppressed a slight grin at Jude’s scowl. “Now?”

“Yes. In my office. Please hand over the childbirth center story to Jude. She can finish it up if you’re almost done.” Mark John left.

Jude fixed Daisy with a glare. “Don’t be long in Mark John’s office. I need to talk to him about something.”

Daisy gathered up her notebook and sharpened pencils and left the room without another glance at Jude.

Mark John wasn’t in his office when Daisy knocked on his door, which was partially ajar. “Mark John?” she asked, poking her head into the room. There was no answer. She went inside and sat down in one of the chairs in front of his desk. She flipped idly through her notebook, then cracked her neck and checked her watch. When five minutes had passed and Mark John still hadn’t appeared, Daisy stood up and wandered around his office, picking up and setting down various mementos from his travels. She went to the window behind his desk and looked down onto the ground far below, at the people scurrying about with their umbrellas up, hiding their faces. She felt

another surge of annoyance that she had forgotten her own umbrella that morning. As she turned away from the window, a photo of Mark John and his wife, Fiona, caught her eye. She picked up the photo and gazed at it for several moments, focusing on Fiona's wide smile and long red tresses. In her time at Global Human Rights, Daisy had only heard Mark John mention his wife's name a few times. Daisy wondered what she was like. She set the photo back in its spot and sat down to wait.

Mark John came into the office a minute later.

"Damn secretary can't do anything without asking me twenty questions about it," he said, settling into his chair.

Daisy didn't reply.

"This won't take long," he said. "I've been thinking—we should do a feature about women's issues in this country. You know, how they've changed and evolved since the time when the United States was an agrarian society."

"Sounds interesting, but that's going to take up much more space than just one article."

"I know. I'm thinking we'll do it in twelve parts. One article every month for a year. Then in January a year and a half from now, we trumpet it as a yearlong deep dive into the history of issues that have shaped women's roles in society. That gives you plenty of time to come up with an outline, submit it for approval, and get writing."

"Sounds great. Thanks for trusting me with this." Inside, Daisy was squealing with delight. What a plum assignment!

Mark John sighed. "I'm sure Jude will want to know all about this project, but try to take your time telling her. The last thing I need right now is to listen to her complain about why I gave you the assignment instead of her."

Daisy grinned. "I'll keep it quiet as long as I can." She looked at her watch and chuckled. "I give it about two minutes. Maybe three."

Mark John ran his hand over his forehead and squeezed his eyes closed for a long moment. "Well, I don't feel like dealing with it today. I have a headache."

"If you prefer, we can talk about particulars later," Daisy said. "In the meantime I'll get started on some preliminary research and start working up an outline."

"Sounds good." Mark John looked around his office, puffed out his cheeks, and let out a sigh.

"You okay?" Daisy asked.

"Yeah." He rubbed his face with both hands. "There was a burglary in my neighborhood last night. A house just across the street and a couple doors down from us. A bit unnerving, you know?"

"It sure is," Daisy replied. "That's scary. Was anyone hurt?"

"Not that I know of."

"Do you have an alarm system?"

"Yes, but so did the people whose house got hit. They had left a window open downstairs."

"Kind of defeats the purpose of having an alarm," Daisy said.

“Yeah,” Mark John said curtly. Daisy knew the conversation was over and she left the office. She walked by Jude’s office on the way to her own.

Jude smirked and pushed her chair back. “I’ll go see him now. You were longer than I expected.”

“He wasn’t in his office so I had to wait for him,” Daisy said. “He has a bad headache,” she warned.

“I just want to ask him a couple quick questions. I won’t bother him,” Jude said.

Daisy returned to the conference room and sat down.

It wasn’t long before Jude came out of Mark John’s office. She walked into the kitchen, where Daisy was pouring a second cup of coffee. Jude looked flushed—her cheeks were red and her lips were a bit puffy. Several strands of hair had come loose from her chignon.

“Is everything okay, Jude?” Daisy asked.

“What?” Jude looked distracted. “Oh. Yes. I’m fine. Mark John told me about your new assignment.”

So much for not wanting her to know about it right away.

Daisy watched as Jude took a bottle of mineral water from the refrigerator, unscrewed the cap, and took a long drink of it. She turned to wash her hands in the sink.

Jude, tall, slim, and well-proportioned, typically wore a uniform of a dark pencil skirt, expensive white blouse, an elegant yet understated necklace, pumps with two-and-a-half inch heels, and tortoiseshell glasses. She wore her glossy chestnut hair either

down in a long bob or up in a chignon. She was gorgeous. Daisy, on the other hand, was tall in a lanky way, wore her hair in a loose ponytail, preferred loafers to pumps so she wouldn't tower over everyone, and liked to wear wide-leg linen pants and peasant blouses. And whereas Jude's glasses gave her a sexy, alluring look, Daisy knew that if *she* wore them, she would end up looking geeky. Thank goodness for contacts.

Daisy cocked her head and gave Jude's profile one last glance. Jude wasn't paying any attention to her. Daisy, who normally saw a cold, aloof woman whenever she looked at the senior staff writer, tried to look at her as others might see her. And what she saw surprised her—this time she saw an elegant woman who exuded professionalism as well as, perhaps, a hint of vulnerability in the set of her mouth.

She wondered which Jude Mark John saw when he looked at her.