

Excerpt ~ Keeper's Watch – The Wind

Robert Tyler left his daughter an estate worth nearly a quarter of a billion dollars from his many sizable holdings. The fact that the man knew how to reinvest his "old money" was obvious and Jeremy admired him for that. Being an heir to an empire three generations deep, helped tremendously too.

As one of the world's leading archeologists, his entire life was one of discovery and the artifacts he unearthed throughout the world made him a very sought after commodity by not only the most prestigious of museums, but also, some of the wealthiest privateers the world over.

It was his last discovery that brought Jeremy to her home that very night, a discovery he was not sure she was aware existed. He had to approach this delicately, to gain her confidence. He needed her cooperation, and perhaps more than ever, he might need her help. He had to be careful how he played this all out. They could end up partners, unraveling this mystery together, which could prove an adventure in itself. Beth Tyler was not a stupid broad by any means. Winning her over was not going to be easy.

"Did you know anything about your father's last excursion, Lieutenant?" he sniped.

"Watch your tone, Steele. It's very ugly and we both know how pretty you think you are."

The grandfather clock on the farther wall to their right began to chime and they both looked in its direction.

"Time's a wasting, princess."

She glowered at him.

"My father and I were extremely close. I majored in his field and accompanied him on many of his digs. But then, you probably know all that, if you're as top in your investigations as you are at breaking into people's homes."

His right eye twitched from her taunting, but he kept what he was thinking to himself.

"I knew he focused his latest attention on the jungles of Mexico. Dad was never one to divulge his findings until he could back it up with fact. My father was like a Pit Bull during the discovery stages. He didn't give up when he knew there was something conclusive to pursue."

Jeremy rubbed his chin slowly.

"So ... you had no idea what he unearthed three months ago?"

"No, he was, we were —"

She rubbed at her eyes slowly. It was obvious that she was exhausted and tired of skirting around the issue. She did not know how much she wanted him to know. Even still, she hated not knowing what, exactly, he knew. Being caught fabricating the issue would only make things worse. Despite his utter good looks, she knew his climb to Investigator was won by brains as much brawn and she had to play this one close to the edge without giving away all of the facts.

“My father and I became estranged when I changed my major. He wanted me to ... to join him. It was a great disappointment to him when I chose criminal justice instead.” Her voice shook slightly with emotion and she cleared her throat to hide the upset. “I hadn’t talked to him for quite some time.”

Jeremy knew he had to tell her, had to confess that there had been a leak, that her father had discovered a crash site. There were certain things uncovered he refused to disclose to his people.

“How well do you know Chief Colson?” he asked.

“Like a father,” she shrugged, “the Chief and my dad were high school buddies and maintained a close friendship until he died. Why do you ask?”

Jeremy rose and closed the distance between them. He sat down beside her and turned to gaze into her eyes.

His closeness was unsettling and Beth placed some distance between them.

“Let’s just drop the title crap.” He took a deep breath. “Look, I don’t know how to tell you this —”

“Just say it.”

He scratched the stubbly growth on his chin, as if it was a bothersome rash before he continued. This was a delicate issue and he had to handle it carefully or it could blow up in his face.

He believed she had no awareness of her father’s last discovery. With her knowledge, however, she could prove a valuable adversary. It was possible what he was looking for was not in her house. In two days, her father’s funeral would be over and until then, Jeremy knew he had to stick to her like glue.

Beth bolted to her feet.

“Will you tell me God damn it!”

“Okay ... okay,” he rose and grasped hold of her shoulders, “just don’t go off the deep end okay? I need you to be open minded here.”

She gazed into his eyes and it was as if she got lost there for a moment. He wondered what she was thinking. Did she trust him? Would she believe him? Would she join him or go off rogue on her own? Slowly she nodded her head and allowed him to lead her back to the couch.

“We believe your father discovered a crash site, along with a scribe of some sort and a crystal ... a very BIG crystal. The writings on that scribe are believed to match other writings found around the world.” When she did not interrupt, he continued. “I broke into your home because we believed they, possibly, could be here.”

Beth looked at him as if he had sprouted two heads and a tail.

He could see her mulling over in her mind what he had just told her. He knew a storm was about to erupt and read the suspicion mirrored in her eyes. He sat back and waited for her to blow.

She shook her head in disbelief.

“Let me get this straight. You break into my home because you think I’m hiding them here?” She paced back and forth. “Now,” she pointed, “you know that I’m a detective ... bound by the same laws you are, and yet, you don’t show me any professional courtesy at all? And I should cooperate because —”

Jeremy opened his mouth to speak but Beth waved her pointed finger back and forth in front of his face.

“Oh no, no, no. You lost your right to speak here, pal.”

Jeremy jumped to his feet.

“Ah, Beth, come on!”

Beth’s reaction was immediate as she swung out a tightly closed fist and slammed his jaw with a force that threw his head back.

“It’s Lieutenant to you. And we’re done here!”

Jeremy rubbed his jaw absently as the shock of her powerful blow slowly dissipated.

“I’m not going anywhere until you hear me out. You know damn well you’re a likely source. You went on plenty of expeditions with him. Clearly, you know the ropes,” he hesitated briefly before continuing, “look, damn it, I’m sorry about your father and how I handled this, but we have to find the items he took from the crash site. It’s a matter of national security.”

“National security? Are you stating the site was alien?”

His look told her she guessed right.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” she continued. “The only reason the FBI wants to get their hands on what my dad found is to conceal the truth. Even if I knew where this so-called tablet and crystal were, I sure as hell wouldn’t tell you. It’s about time the government discloses what we know has been fact for decades.”

Jeremy looked at her with a knowing smile on his face.

“No, you wouldn’t. You’re too straitlaced a detective for that kind of subterfuge, and you know it. The very thought of breaking the law sends chills down your gorgeous little spine. You’d confess. It’s in your blood.

I can tell just by looking in your eyes that the idea of keeping it a secret fills you with dread. That’s where you and your father differed. That’s what kept the two of you apart. You didn’t like keeping secrets and he glorified in them.”

A look of amazement registered on her face. He hit the nail on the head. In the short time she was in his presence, he had her figured out to some degree. He watched as she quickly looked at the grandfather clock and then out the window. The sky was beginning to lighten with the coming of dawn. In less than a week, her life had changed drastically. He was now in her life whether she liked it or not and he wondered where it would all lead from there. Could she bring herself to trust him after he blatantly flaunted the law that governed both of them by breaking into her home? He definitely would not trust himself, if he were in her place. Something was up. He could feel it. He was at the airport when she landed and had followed her to the office of her father’s estate attorney.

When she exited his office building with a silver box in her hand, his instincts told him he was on to something. It was the expression on her face when she pulled a small, white piece of paper from the box, stopped and read it multiple times. His gut told him, that note was the clue and she would lead him to what he was looking for one way or the other.

Beth could not help but wonder just how much he was keeping from her. Did he break in already knowing she came home early? Was it possible he had been following her for quite some time? Was his supposed surprise of her cutting vacation short all just a ploy? Did he already know about the silver box?

She was not surprised to have learned earlier in the day that she had inherited her father’s entire estate. The shock, however, was a note contained inside a little silver box her father’s attorney had given her tightly wrapped and sealed in brown paper. At that very moment, she was certain her father had known that he was very ill and dying. He must have known it for a while and had meticulously planned everything out that he so desperately wanted to keep secret.

Inside the box was a riddle penned in her father’s own hand. She had memorized the six short stanzas and even now could not get them out of her head.

There stood a lone marker, old, but true
Its etchings fading for Pierson LeBleu
One bold cypress shading its name
A woodsman was his call to fame
LaSalle at Catahoula is the find, encased in pewter 5x9

She had found her father's play on words amusing. He was always quite the jokester while she was growing up. For as long as she could remember, he would leave riddles for her to find because it forced her to use her mind. She knew whatever he was keeping secret was going to be found in Catahoula, Louisiana