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The Jensen & Browning Series

Hole 7

All names, events and buildings within this work are purely fiction from the imagination of the author and unassociated with real-life action.

Prologue

“Par!” The woman yelled enthusiastically as she lowered her putter club and walked to the hole to collect her ball. With a smile, she turned to her flight mate.

“Hey Craig!” she smiled as he attempted to chip from the edge of the green. He looked up and smirked. “What? I have to focus if I want to keep up with your score, miss pro player.”

With a grin, she stepped back and watched him chip the ball...and miss the hole by an inch. She had trouble keeping a straight face as he grimaced and walked to his ball, finishing the putt.

“Well, that’s minus three for me and four for you.” She winked at him as she wrote down the score. He raised an eyebrow at her and collected his ball, walking back to his golf bag and putting his club away.

“I’ll kick your ass on the next hole.” He smiled as they both walked with their bags to the path that would lead them to the next hole.

“Hole seven.” He commented dryly on the small board that noted the distance from tee-off to green.

“Hey, there’s a bathroom here. Mind if I take a short break?” she pointed at the cabin next to the tee. He shrugged. “Go ahead.”

With a thankful nod, she dropped her bag and removed her glove and entered the cabin. He stretched his sore limbs and cursed the woman for being such an amazing golf player and being so nonchalant about it.

Something in the corner of his eye caught his attention. He turned his head to see what was causing the commotion, and saw something disappearing into the bushes. His heart thumped loudly as he neared the bush and crouched to check if he could see anything. With a smile, he saw the rabbit hopping away from him.

Damn those rabbits. He shook his head as he got up again and frowned at the cabin. *And damn her for taking so long.*

Realising he had nothing to do, he took the ball he was about to tee with and put it in the ball cleaner, rinsing it and drying it off. The ball looked as good as new. He grabbed a plastic tee from his bag, put the tee on the right location and put his ball on top of it.

“If you don’t come out in five seconds I’m teeing off without you!” he yelled at the cabin. When he didn’t get a reply, he frowned and put his driver club down, approaching the bathroom.

“Hey, didn’t you hear me? I’m going to-...” he cut himself off when he saw the bathroom door, wide open and vacant. He looked around, his face now distorted with concern. “Where are you?” he looked around, seeing nothing but plants and grass.

A twig snapped behind him. He spun around so fast he swore he could hear his neck bones cracking. But he didn’t see anything. He walked back to his bag cautiously, grabbed an iron club and held it up like a weapon, approaching the place where he’d heard the sound.

“This isn’t funny...stop it!” he tried once more, but he didn’t get a reaction. He stepped into the rough bushes, looking around, until his feet were caught in something slippery. He looked down, expecting to see mud.

The dark red liquid stained his white golf shoes and his heart leaped in his chest. He now looked around frantically, stumbling like a drunk man, helplessly searching for her.

After ten seconds of running around, following the blood trail, his feet got caught up in something on the ground and he fell forward, hitting his head on the branches of a bush. He turned around slowly, his club lying forgotten in the dirt.

“Oh no...” his throat went dry at the sight before him. He reached into his pockets and with shaky hands dialed the familiar three-digit number.

The woman staring at him with hollow eyes was naked...and her blood was sprayed all over the ground and bushes in the vicinity.

With a shock, he looked down, right when the operator answered his call.

Her left hand was gone.

Chapter one

“LEA!” the sound of her name being called shook the detective awake roughly. She grunted and rolled over in the bed, pulling the pillow next to her over her head.

“Hey sleepyhead!” she whined loudly as she sat upright, yawning. “What?!”

“Get downstairs and hurry!” She looked at the ceiling and cursed herself for forgetting to set her alarm. She looked at her watch and frowned. 07:43

She rolled her eyes as she quickly put some clothes on and went downstairs, where her partner was waiting impatiently.

“Liz, what the hell? I thought I overslept, you woke me an hour before the alarm!”

Elizabeth Browning looked up and frowned. “Well, excuse me for being an early birdie. And I didn’t wake you up when I got downstairs.”

“Why...” Lea took a deep breath and accepted the mug of coffee Elizabeth was handing her.

“I woke up around six and I couldn’t sleep so I went downstairs to do something useful.” Elizabeth explained. “Around half past seven I got a call. We have a homicide.”

“Well if you’d woken me up then at least I could have taken a shower.” Lea grunted.

“Stop complaining and get your ass ready. We can have breakfast afterwards.”

“I hate work in the morning.” She grunted again as she finished her cup of coffee in a couple of sips and raced upstairs to brush her teeth and fix her hair. Within five minutes, she was downstairs and ready. Elizabeth looked at her, dressed up nicely as always.

“Badge? Gun?” She asked Lea, who nodded quickly. “I’ll drive.”

The two women left the house and walked to the car. Lea got in the drivers seat. She started the car and their car raced off.

“What do we know?” Lea asked after a while of comfortable silence.

“Female victim, found at the golf course.” Elizabeth said, staring ahead.

“Golf course?!” she repeated, frowning deeply. Her partner nodded slightly. “We’ll have to find out the rest.”

“So much for a relaxing day of paperwork.”

Lea parked the car smoothly in a small parking spot in the lot of the golf club and got out. Elizabeth was right behind her, smiling. “Cheer up, at least we’ll have something to talk about in the evening.”

“Yeah. Awesome.” The other detective grunted as she locked the car and the pair walked towards the building.

“Maybe they’ll let us drive a golf cart!” Elizabeth said suddenly, sounding excited. Lea frowned at her partner’s enthusiasm but laughed it off. The receptionist looked up as they reached him.

“Hi, we’re LAPD homicide detectives.” Elizabeth smiled as she showed the man her badge. He nodded. “It’s terrible, what happened. They’re at hole seven. It’s not that far from here, I’d suggest you walk.”

“Are you kidding...?” Lea asked the man. He frowned and shook his head. “I’d give you a golf cart but they’re all taken for investigation.”

“Of course they are. There are moments where we do our work too damn good.” Lea growled as she turned around and started walking towards the course. Elizabeth thanked the man quickly and then ran behind her.

“Paradise.” Elizabeth smiled at Lea as they walked on the golf course, towards the crime scene. Lea looked at her partner and laughed. “Yeah, paradise, if you don’t mind the mud on your clothes and shoes.”

“You know, I actually golfed for a while.” The blonde smiled. Lea frowned. “Really? You?”

“Handicap 30. Had to quit.” Elizabeth nodded as she looked around her. “But I know a cool golf course when I see one. I’d love to hit a ball or two here.”

“Why did you quit?” Lea asked as they crossed the path from hole six to seven. The detective laughed and shook her head. “Keith.”

“What did your scumbag ex-boyfriend do?” Lea growled at the thought of the guy, who had caused her friend this much pain.

“He gave me the clubs as a birthday present. When he got arrested it turned out they were stolen, so I returned them. I didn’t feel like buying new ones.” Elizabeth shrugged.

Lea’s nostrils flared with the deep sigh escaping. “I’m so glad you got rid of that bastard.”

“So am I.”

They reached the hole and saw the crime scene tape hanging in the corner, next to a small cabin. The police officer on guard looked at them expectantly.

“I’m detective Lea Jensen and this is my partner Elizabeth Browning.” They both flashed their badges as routine, the officer nodded and they slipped underneath the tape.

“What do we have here?” Lea said to herself as they stepped in the bushes, walking up to the body. The medical examiner was already investigating.

“Good morning, Isabelle.” Elizabeth nodded at the ME. The woman looked up and smiled at the detectives. “I’m glad I get to see you guys again, however...” she sighed at the body. “I wish it were under different circumstances.”

“What’s the problem?” Lea said as both her and her partner crouched next to the body.

“Victim’s name is Sasha Ferguson, 25 , fatal stab wounds. Severed left hand, the limb itself wasn’t found.”

“Any idea on how long she’s been here?” Elizabeth wrapped her arms around herself. She hadn’t anticipated the cold wind when she’d dressed herself.

"The witness claimed that he found her about an hour ago."

"Witness?" Lea asked. "Did someone see it happening?"

"I have no idea. You should ask the guy, he's over there." Isabelle pointed at a man sitting on a bench nearby, in conversation with an officer. The two women got up and walked towards him.

"We'll take it from here, thanks." The officer nodded and left.

"What's your name, sir?" Lea asked him. The man looked up, his eyes were red. "C-Craig Danning. She's really dead...isn't she?"

The rhetorical question brought two identical sympathetic looks on the faces of the detectives. Elizabeth nodded slowly and took a seat next to him on the bench.

"I'm afraid so...Mister Danning, what was your relation to Sasha?"

"We were...golfing mates. I met her about a year ago on the course here...she's really good. On her way to becoming a pro...I went with her to practice. We had the earliest flight possible today because she had to go somewhere." He dried his cheeks with the back of his hand. "She wanted to go to the bathroom...I checked on her, she wasn't there. I found her in the bushes, I called 911."

"You did well." Lea said to the man. He nodded slowly. "Who'd want her dead? She was the sweetest girl..."

"Did she have any enemies? People she had disagreements with?"

"No...she rarely talked about her private life. And...there's only one person I can think of that disliked her..."

"And that person is...?" Lea asked him as Elizabeth grabbed a small notepad from her jacket pocket.

“Dawn Jacobs. She was her rival...they were very competitive against each other during events. They got into a fight sometimes.”

“Okay, we’ll look into that. Would you like to come with us to the police station to get an official statement?”

“Yeah, okay.” He rubbed his eyes tiredly. “Uhm...My club. I threw it in the bushes, an iron seven. Is it okay if..”

“We’ll examine it and when it’s cleared you’ll get it back immediately.” Elizabeth said. He nodded. “Okay.”

“Did she have any family or relatives we can contact about her death?”

“Her mom passed away and her dad went AWOL in Afghanistan.” He said, shaking his head. “But you can try her brother, he lives not too far from here.”

“What’s his name?” Lea asked. Craig thought for a second. “Simon. Simon Ferguson.”

“Okay, I’ll give Ben a call.” Elizabeth took her cellphone from her pocket and distanced herself from the scene. Lea turned back to Craig and sighed.

“Ben? It’s Liz.” She announced as soon as the phone clicked.

“Hey Liz...I’m on my way to the station, in the car. What’s going on?”

“We have a homicide at a golf course. I need the address for Simon Ferguson, he lives in West Los Angeles.”

“You got it. I’ll text you the address asap.”

“Okay, thanks.” She disconnected and walked back to her partner, who was comforting a now crying Craig Danning. Lea looked up at her

and shrugged sadly. Elizabeth took a deep breath and walked back to the body.

“Do we have any idea what the murder weapon is, Isabelle?” she asked the ME who was now working on getting the body in a body bag. The woman looked up, ran a hand through her hair and shook her head. “I don’t believe we’re dealing with a double weapon. It must’ve been one weapon to both sever her hand and to stab her. We’re getting the body transported so I can perform an autopsy.”

“Okay.” Realizing that her work at the scene was practically done by the numerous police officers walking around collecting evidence, she turned around to walk back to her partner. Then, she frowned as she saw something lying at her feet. She crouched and stared at it. It was white and it contrasted brightly with the muddy ground.

“Hey, can I borrow a pair of gloves?” she asked the ME, who nodded and got a pair out of her kit, throwing it towards her. Thanking her quickly, Lea put them on and picked up the object. It turned out to be a small piece of paper.

“Bag this, we need to find out what it is. It looks like there were letters on it but the mud made it unreadable.” The officer she was talking to nodded and put the piece of paper in an evidence bag.

Lea got up and walked back to her partner, who looked at her, holding her phone.

“Ben just texted the adress for the victim’s brother. Think we should go check it out?”

“We at least have to go tell him about his sister.” Lea shrugged.

Elizabeth groaned. “I hate bringing bad news.”

They walked back to the parking lot. “What do you think of the witness?” Lea asked.

The blonde detective thought for a second, then sighed. “Pretty sure he’s clean. If his story is true, then it’s that Dawn Jacobs individual we have to watch out for. We should put her on our bucket list.”

“Definitely.” Lea agreed with her. They reached their car in no time.

“I’ll drive this time. I owe you one for pulling you out of bed anyways.” Elizabeth said as Lea unlocked the doors and handed her the key.

As they pulled out of their parking spot, Lea got the creeping feeling that this wouldn’t be the last time they visited the club.

Chapter two

“Let’s hope this guy doesn’t cry. I don’t want to start crying too.”

Elizabeth frowned as they walked up to the front door. Lea had one hand on her badge and one on her gun, a reflex she’d grown accustomed to over the months of working with Elizabeth.

She knocked three times, then stepped back. After about ten seconds of silence, she frowned and knocked again. “Los Angeles police, open the door!”

After some time, the lock was turned and the door opened slowly. A boy stood in the doorway, he looked about sixteen. “Yeah?”

“Simon Ferguson?” Elizabeth asked. The boy’s eyes shot from her to Lea and back. “Yeah, that’s me.”

“My name’s Elizabeth Browning, I’m with LAPD...can we come in?”

“Uhm, my sister’s not home...” he hesitated. Lea sighed sadly. “We want to talk to you.”

The boy stepped aside and let the two detectives in. The hallway was full of pictures with Simon and Sasha, and two people that could only be their parents.

“Sit down, please.” Lea pointed at the couch. The boy took a seat, frowning deeply. “I was kind of in the middle of a gaming battle.”

“I’m sorry but it’s urgent.” Elizabeth took a seat next to him, looking him in the eyes. “It’s about your sister.”

"What's wrong with her?" he asked slowly, tensing. Lea crossed her arms and stared at the ground, hating this moment in her work.

"We...we found the body of your sister on the golf course." Elizabeth said cautiously. Simon's face remained neutral at first, then went to shock, and then turned to anger. "Who did it?" he asked slowly, clearly trying to keep himself under control.

"Well...that's what we want to find out." The boy breathed heavily at the answer. "Tell me you're lying...please..."

"Were you living alone with your sister?" Lea asked him, stepping forward. He looked up and nodded quickly. "She...she was all I had left." His fists clenched and unclenched.

"I think it's best if you come with us to the police station, we'll work things out and you can tell us the story, you can help us find who did it."

"I'm not leaving this house." He shook his head with a near maniacal expression. "I was gaming...I need to finish my battle."

"There will be time for that later, Simon." Elizabeth got up slowly and tried to pull him up, but he growled and shoved her away roughly before stomping out of the room and up the stairs.

Lea tried to go after him, but Elizabeth stopped her with a hand to her chest. Lea frowned. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. We'll just call some people to get him to the station, we're wasting time anyways. This guy isn't a suspect."

"So what do you propose we do?" Lea asked her partner.

"I guess we could head to the station and try to get some evidence."

“Sounds good. Come on.” Lea walked towards the front door, but Elizabeth stopped. The brunette officer turned around and frowned.

“What?”

“Simon..” she pointed at the ceiling, “...has headphones on and is in the middle of a vicious game battle.”

“Well spotted, Sherlock.” Lea frowned. Elizabeth shook her head.

“Now is the time to look around a little. A warrant will take forever to get.”

“Liz, this isn’t a good idea.”

“I know.” Elizabeth nodded as she walked through the living room, looking around. Lea’s phone buzzed in her pocket and she reached for it, checking the message.

“Head to the station asap. It’s from Ben.” Lea looked up at her partner who was still looking around intensely. “Come on, we’ll get a warrant later and search the place.”

Elizabeth didn’t respond immediately but followed Lea out of the house and into the car.

“I’m going to yoga class tonight, want to come?” Elizabeth asked Lea as she got behind the wheel and put her seatbelt on. The other detective shrugged. “I was thinking about going for a drink, it’s been ages since I’ve had contact with humans that aren’t dead.”

“Second that. I’ll drop by after class.”

“I’ll get you a cold beer ready.” Lea winked at her partner as they ripped through the streets again.

“So sad...a golf player with that kind of potential...lost talent.” Elizabeth sighed sadly. Lea shrugged.

“People are getting murdered everywhere, Liz. Talented people.”

“Still...25. She must’ve just finished college or something...I wonder what she studied. Come to think of it, neither her brother nor the witness told us anything about a boyfriend or husband. Maybe we should look into that.”

“Another thing to do, yaay.” Lea rolled her eyes, but Elizabeth knew that she was being playful.

“I wonder what that Dawn Jacobs individual is like.” Lea sighed after a while of silent driving.

“Knowing the pretentious people that walk around on golf courses, especially here in LA, I have a feeling she’ll be exactly like I picture her.”

“Now, now. You don’t stereotype, Liz.” Lea grinned. Elizabeth raised an eyebrow. “I’ve had enough flights with strangers to know when people are pretentious. And sadly enough, this town has a lot of people like that.”

“What is a ‘flight’ anyways? I feel like an idiot when you use that golf mumbo jumbo.” Lea looked at her partner expectingly.

“A flight is the departure from the main building to the holes. There is a flight every, say, eight minutes. People within one flight stick together during the holes. It’s nothing spectacular, it’s just people getting onto hole one to tee off.”

“Teeing off is hitting the ball?”

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