

## The Jump

**SYNOPSIS:** A waitress finds her voice when a tragic murder amplifies the injustices she faces.

Alex Madison just wanted to get back to work. She waited tables at Greenbriar Country Club, where she used to earn some healthy tips, but business was probably going to be down for a while. Alex couldn't blame them for not wanting to eat an overpriced tuna salad sandwich in the middle of a murder scene.

Detectives Finch and Torrence stood in the center of the closed dining room to address Alex, the other waitress, and the club's two cooks.

"I'm Detective Finch," the taller and slimmer one started, "and this is Detective Torrence. We hope this won't take too much time. Can we start with you...?"

"Alex," she replied. "Alex Madison."

"Sounds like a boy's name," Torrence said.

"Short for Alexandria," she said, without any humor, "like the city in Egypt."

Torrence shook his head and smirked. As the only black employee at the club, Alex knew thinly-veiled racism well, and this guy fit the profile. He hadn't taken his eyes off her since they arrived, which told Alex exactly who they were here to check out. Finch chose to speak with Alex himself and led her to two dining room chairs in the far corner.

"Miss Madison, I know this whole situation has been very overwhelming, but can you think of any information that could help us?"

"No," she continued to glance across the room at Torrence, who was having a wonderful time chatting up the younger, whiter waitress. "I only saw the Gates family when they came in for dinner."

"They ate here in the dining room?" Finch asked.

"Well, Mr. and Mrs. Gates did. Delia usually just played outside on the trampoline." She pointed to a young girl working on her backflip in the nearby courtyard.

“It’s so weird to watch kids jump on that thing now,” Alex said.

“Finch!” Torrence interrupted from across the room. “Captain is looking for us!”

“I just started here. What about the rest?” Finch asked.

“Yeah, yeah,” he replied. “They had nothing. What about her?”

“Well, we only had a couple-”

“Gates came up with some other leads,” Torrence interrupted again. “I guess some guys were playing basketball at the park around the time of the murder.”

“Gates has leads?” Finch asked.

“Yeah, that man is relentless,” Torrence said, beaming. “You gotta respect it.”

The next day, Alex was setting up the dining room for the first lunch service in a week when

Detective Finch returned to the club...alone.

“Detective,” Alex greeted him without much emotion. “I still don’t have any info for you, but I can get you a burger or something.”

Finch smiled a little, “Do you give cops free food?”

“Yeah, my boss tells me to,” she said. Finch’s smile disappeared.

“Alex, I have a couple more questions about Gates.”

“Like I said, I didn’t really know her that well.”

“Not Delia. Mark.”

Alex froze for a moment, then grabbed a menu and started to walk to a table, “Sorry, Detective. I can’t help you.”

Alex was lying. For months, she had heard Mark Gates spout off to his country club buddies about the “animals” he took down when he was on duty, like a big game hunter boasting about

the trophies on his walls. There were dozens of comments and gestures that deserved a slap in the face, but they were met with laughter and high fives. Alex Madison wanted nothing more than to stand up to Mark Gates, but he was a wealthy cop with connections, and she was just a paycheck-to-paycheck waitress living in a government-funded slum. Alex knew how those fights ended.

“You sure?” Finch asked.

“Look, Gates is an asshole, but who cares?”

“You’re right,” Finch said. “He is an asshole.”

Alex wiped a tear from her cheek and turned away from the detective.

“Will you talk with me again?” he asked.

Alex didn’t answer.

“Please?”

She sat across the table and looked down at her hands.

“I think there’s a reason why we haven’t solved this murder,” Finch said.

Alex kept staring down as her eyes glistened.

“Only a few people have access to this building after hours,” Finch continued, “and one of those people is the man who the club owners have trusted for years. After all, who wouldn’t trust a veteran cop?”

A tear ran down Alex’s face. Finch continued.

“Sure, there are others who could have been in here when Delia died, including you, but Mark Gates is the only one who could commit a crime like this, leave zero evidence, and throw us off his trail.”

“Delia told me,” Alex said.

“What?”

“She told me her dad was scary. She said he hit her. Hit her mom.” Alex was weeping. “He killed their cat for knocking over a beer, for Christ’s sake!”

“Why didn’t you tell me that yesterday?”

“What does it matter? Good luck finding a jury that will believe a black girl over a white cop.”

“Come on...”

“NO! You come on! It’s easy for you. You don’t have to question every decision you make, and wonder what all the rich white folks will think about you. If you need help, you know you can call 911 and get it.”

“Alex, not all-”

“Oh, hell no. Do not give me the ‘not all cops are bad’ routine.”

“What about me? Have I done anything wrong to you? You can’t lump us all together.”

“Does it surprise you that Gates probably abused and killed his own daughter? Would it surprise you if your partner was racist?”

“No, but-”

“Then what are you doing about it?”

Finch looked down at his hands.

“So what if I had told you all this yesterday? Nothing will happen,” Alex said.

Finch rose from his seat.

“You’re probably right. But I can try.”

“Huh?” Alex said.

“I’m going back to my office right now to tell my captain everything...”

“But-” Alex started.

“...per an anonymous, but credible, source.”

Alex nodded, and Finch left to request a warrant for Mark Gates.