

“The River Rafterers are always finding interesting things along the river banks. Last year one of the rafting company workers found a large chunk of gold up there. Terry Taylor is his name. Sadly, though he has squandered it all away, mostly on drinking. Now he is the town bum. An ex-marine, he used to be an outstanding citizen. He just cannot seem to shake the ‘gold disease’. He has found more, but nothing as big as his first find. He refuses to go back to work, says he is going to find more gold and retire rich. Poor fellow, I feel sad for him so I feed him now and then, when he’s sober enough to come into the café without disturbing my other patrons of course.” Stephanie related to Goldie not only the gold find but also several other stories about locals finds along the river. To say the least the latest find is the most peculiar. Come to find dead body was of a murdered person, first been shot by what may have been a K-98k Mauser before his body was dumped near the river and covered by dirt and leaves.

After Stephanie’s long and almost unending tales Goldie left and drove out of town, sipping on her lemonade. Goldie pulled into the parking lot of The River Rafterers and for a few minutes just sat in her car watching the people interact with the surroundings. There were still plenty of people mulling around curious about the current crime. Police crime scene tape was wrapped around trees, rocks and other markers to corridor off the area. Finally, Goldie went to the rental office.

“I’d like to reserve a kayak for tomorrow. I noticed that all your kayaks are from Northwest Whitewater. If possible, I would prefer the Discover XL or the Pursuit LP. ”

“Wow, not a whole lot of people notice the makes or models of kayaks. We’re pretty busy this week but I’m sure I can arrange something for you.” The clerk pulled out some paper work and began filling in the information provided by Goldie. Goldie gave the clerk a \$100.00 and told him to keep the change. The clerk smiled and asked Goldie if she needed a guide. He was off the next day and would not mind donating his time to show her around. Goldie gave the clerk one of her sweet ‘kiss me Kate’ smiles and declined the offer.

“That’s sweet, but I have to pass. Thanks anyways. What is all the who-haw about across the way?”

“Murder. Actually, I was the one who found him. The police sure drilled me on that, wanted to know if I had anything to do with it. I told them I had come in early and didn’t see anyone else around. Besides why would I kill someone? I called my dad first, he came out right away and my dad called the police for me. It’s kind of creepy finding a body like that. You sure you don’t want some company tomorrow?”

“No, besides you’re too young for me.”

“Hey, that’s the new thing these days, don’t you know. You can be my cougar”

“I’ll leave that to the celebrities. Don’t get me wrong, you’re definitely an attractive guy, but I’m involved with someone, and well, it just wouldn’t feel right.”

“Okay, I’ll make sure my partner has the Pursuit LP ready for you in the morning. What time should I tell him you’ll be here?”

“Oh, 10 ish. Thanks”

“No, thank you and enjoy your visit here.”

Goldie left the rental office and walked over to the tape surrounding the crime scene. A sheriff was on duty to ensure no trespassers violated the crime scene until the investigation was completed. The ever-present wind was blowing leaves and debris around in a dervish devil whirlwind. Goldie covered her eyes so no dust would get into them. As the whirlwind passed a paper fell at Goldie’s feet. The sheriff noticed Goldie reach down and picked it up. The paper was a page torn from the 2003-2004 Plumas County Visitors Guide. One side of the page was full of ads for local businesses, one of which happened to be for The Gypsy. The other side was a continuation of an article on fishing in the Feather River Canyon. Included in the article was an insert for ‘Best Bets’. One of the ‘Best Bets’ caught Goldie’s attention which read “Nature Tour – count up to 100 waterfalls, view fall colors or spring wildflowers.” The Nature Tour sounded like fun and hoped she would have time to include the tour in her week-long visit. What was of more interest to Goldie was a hand written note next to the ‘Best Bets’ insert. Someone had scribbled in three names. Mayor Dick Schultz, Governor Gray Davis, and Judge Matthew Meer. On the side with the ads someone had doodled arrows and curvy lines around the top right hand corner of the paper. Goldie also noticed a round ring on the paper which looked like a coffee stain. Goldie stood there staring at the paper for several minutes consuming everything the paper had to say, and not just the words. Obviously, the paper had not been torn from the visitors guide there at the site but elsewhere. With the coffee stain Goldie deducted the paper may have come from a diner or possibly even from a hotel room. Goldie only recognized two of the names on the paper. Of course, everyone knows the name Gray Davis, California’s infamous former and present Governor Moonbeam. Gray Davis had been ousted and replaced by Governor Elect, actor turned politician, Arnold Schwarzenegger. However, Gray Davis was back; good or bad Goldie herself had voted for Schwarzenegger, not only for his charm but also for the hope of a better California. The first name on the list, Mayor Dick Schultz, Goldie had remembered seeing him at the fair. Goldie also remembered the argument the Mayor had with the farmer. “Odd” Goldie said aloud. The sheriff had been watching the crowd while he paced back and forth inside the crime scene tape. He paced more to keep limber verses just standing and becoming stiff. The sheriff stopped in front of Goldie and interrupted her train of thought, which annoyed Goldie extremely.

“Ma’am, what is odd?”

Goldie did not answer right away so the sheriff asked again.

“Ma’am, is there something wrong?”

“No, I’m fine, thank you officer.” Goldie, afraid the sheriff would notice the writing on the paper, immediately returned to her car and drove away. A few miles down the road Goldie pulled to the side of the road to finish thinking about what to do next. The third name in the list didn’t ring a bell. “Hum, what does this judge have to do with the other two?” Goldie often talked to herself claiming it helps her to think better. It had taken her boss, Beth Weiss, some time to get used to this, often thinking Goldie was asking her a question. Goldie remembered she had been told that judges had often stayed at the Bed & Breakfast she was registered at. Had this judge stayed there also? Goldie turned the car around and headed back for town. Just as she passed the rafting docks she noticed a few ‘high-end’ cars pulled over at the side of the road. Goldie looked in her rear view mirror to make sure there was no one directly behind her, then she slowed her car down to observe as much as she could. Goldie jotted down the car makes & models with their license plate numbers. It may be nothing, but through years of having to pay attention to detail; Goldie had learned to trust her instincts. Right now, her instincts were screaming at her that these five men had something to do with the recent murder. Just before she got out of sight, she noticed a sheriff’s car pull up and park next to the others. At first, Goldie was relieved to think that the men were busted, but right behind that thought was the realization that there was a possibility that the sheriff was one of the group. Goldie kept driving, on the outskirts of town was the feed store – Meer’s Feed Store. “Wait, that name”. It dawned on Goldie that the feed store may belong to the judge’s family. At the last minute Goldie pulled into the parking lot. It was only 3:20 in the afternoon and the hours on the door showed the store should still be opened but the doors were locked. “I guess being a small town business doesn’t mean you have to keep regular hours” Goldie said to herself. A few blocks away a man on a motorcycle watched Goldie as she walked to the side of the building. A few cars were parked towards the back where someone was just getting ready to leave. The car pulled up by her and the man inside asked if he could help her. Goldie asked if the store was open. The man replied that there was a family emergency but they should open up again tomorrow morning. Goldie thanked the man then continued on her way back to town. Goldie next stopped by The Gypsy Café to have a late lunch as requested by Stephanie. “Now that really is odd”. A note on the front door said the café had to close early do to the owner being ill. “What in the hell is going on around here?” Goldie was startled out of her own little world by the sound of approaching footsteps. The footsteps were familiar somehow. Goldie looked up and saw the Arabic man. Aziz smiled and nodded in Goldie’s direction as he began to open the door to the café.

“They are closed” Goldie said.

“Oh, too bad. The pie is very good here. Would you like to join me for hot tea or coffee? There is another café around the corner.” Of course, who could turn down an offer to spend an afternoon with such an incredibly handsome man. At the same time, bells were ringing so Goldie was cautious so instead of going with him she said “Sure, I’ll follow you there.”

Aziz got on his motorcycle and led Goldie to the Moon’s Café. There they sat and talked for two hours. They talked about several things - their families and their cultures, the surrounding area, and the recent murder. Goldie looked at her watch and realized how late it was getting, so she thanked Aziz for his company and left. A block away from the Bed & Breakfast was another blockade. There was crime scene tape stretched across the street blocking all access to the B & B.