

THE RULE OF 3

An Arlan Condon Mystery

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CHAPTER ONE

Dispatch

No sound escaped the carpeted hallway as Cath's tennies stomped their way to the door of Dispatch. She punched the keypad, trying three times before the door clicked. Pushing herself in, she threw her oversized bag on the table and wrestled herself out of her coat which she tossed at the chair, but which landed on the floor. Without picking it up, she stood with hands on her hips, and glared at Sy, her colleague rising from her computer workstation.

"Your late, Cath. What's up?"

"Another big one with Larry is all."

Cath picked up her coat, threw it on the table, kicked the trash can, and let out a growl. "Don't rag on me Si, not now."

"Hey girl, no raggin' here, this is your sanctuary, right? You guys been fightin' much more than jumpin' rope, I can see that. You are stressin' up high wire."

"So, how's your love life, all peaches and cream?"

"Second date tonight with a new one, so I'm outa here."

"At midnight?"

"Yeah, at that Taco Bell round the corner, open 'til 2. Then where, who knows. Hey, just one uncompleted dispatch. The call came in about 20 minutes ago and I dispatched a car and medics. The caller said there was a body in the alley. Have not heard back the resolution yet, so that'll be on you, hon. See you Monday."

“Good luck with that new guy tonight.” Cath plopped herself in front of her three screens.

As Si, left she said, “who said it was a guy?”

Before Cath could wrap her head around this picture of her colleague, her computer pinged and called her eyes to focus on the screen’s new message: *12:15:36 AM MedTech One ... On way back to base. No body. O&O.*

As Cath logged the report from MedTech, another report was received: *12:15: 12 AM ... sight where body reported thoroughly searched. No body. Will interview person reporting body. Will report when done.*

Odd, she thought. First time in all her years there was no body found after a 911 call in. Probably just a drunk who walked away. She took up her novel and started reading.

No Body

At the sight of the reported body, officers Black and Derrick had found no body, sent MedTech back home, and called it in to dispatch. They walked from the alley to the corner bar inspecting the sidewalk as they went. Nothing unusual.

They flagged the barman and said they wanted to speak to whoever reported the body in the alley.

“Hey Bill. The officers are here.”

“Could you tell what happened to that guy?” Bill shouted his question as he approached the police.

Officer Black spoke first. “First things first, sir. You reported the body in the ally?”

“Yes, sir. I ran up herein as soon as I could and called it in. He was dead, wasn’t he? Sure looked like it.”

Black again. “What is your name?”

“Bill Entrada.”

“You call from here, Mr. Entrada?”

“Yeah, Doug dialed the number, and I reported it. I don’t have a phone.”

“Mr. Entrada. We searched the alley. There is no body. Can you give us a picture of exactly what you saw.”

“No body? I don’t understand. The way that guy was laid out he wasn’t goin’ nowhere.”

Officer Derrick repeated the question. “What did you see sir?”

“I was on my way here and when I crossed the alley I looked over to where the dumpster is. I saw this guy, on his back, in a kind of odd posture, hard to describe. He wasn’t moving. I didn’t go any closer but just ran up here.”

“What was he wearing, Mr. Entrada?”

“Well, I think it was dark jogging clothes, you know, and white runners. Not sure as I didn’t really stop to look carefully.”

“Was he white or black?”

Officer Derrick added, “Or, brown?”

“White. Yes, I’m sure of that.”

“Mr. Entrada, there is no body in the alley.” Office Black took a step toward Entrada and the young man backed up.”

“What? Couldn’t be more than 10 minutes from the time I called till the ambulance and you guys showed up. I don’t see how that guy went anywhere.”

“Still, he’s not there. Could be he woke up and took off.” Officer Derrick took a step forward and joined his partner.

“Let’s see your driver’s license, sir. We are going to need more information from you.”

While officer Derrick was getting more details from Entrada, officer Black talked to Joe, the barkeep.

“Your name is?”

“Joe Martinez.”

“You know Mr. Entrada?”

“Yes, a regular. He came in out of breath and asked me to call 911. I dialed and handed him my cell. He reported the body as he said. He’s a good guy officer.”

“Did anyone leave the bar after he called 911?”

“No, everyone was interested in what Bill was sayin’. No one left and everyone is still here since you guys arrived.”

“Thank you. My partner will get your particulars and we will be on our way.”

“Pretty peculiar don’t you think?”

“Maybe, maybe not.”

Officer Black typed into his tablet: *12:35:12 AM ... interview with 911 caller, seemed sincere about seeing body, no hint of false report, upstanding guy according to bar tender. We will check possible missing persons for white guy, dark jogging suit, white tennis shoes.*

