

25. A Visit from Patti Love

In Chapter 25, set in 1969, a critical visit transpires at the sheriff's office involving Patti Love Andrews, the mother of the deceased Chase. Dressed somberly, Patti Love seeks updates on her son's case, convinced that his death wasn't accidental, given his athletic prowess and intelligence. The conversation shifts toward a significant detail—Chase's missing shell necklace, a treasured item he was last seen wearing the night he died but was absent from his personal effects at the coroner's office. Patti Love discloses that the necklace, a gift from the Marsh Girl with whom Chase had been involved, was not among the belongings returned by the coroner, proposing it as evidence of foul play.

Patti Love reluctantly shares her suspicion with Sheriff Ed and Deputy Joe, touching on the village rumors of Chase's affair with the Marsh Girl, even after marrying Pearl. Her theory suggests the woman, known for selling mussels and navigating the marsh in a decrepit boat, might have murdered Chase out of jealousy and taken the necklace as a token or evidence of her act.

The absence of the uniquely crafted shell necklace, which should have been secure around Chase's neck, pivots the investigation towards the Marsh Girl, now a potential suspect. Ed and Joe speculate on the circumstances leading to Chase's fatal fall, considering the involvement of someone familiar with the marshland's covert ways, possibly luring Chase to his death.

The chapter concludes with the decision to pursue this new lead by questioning the Marsh Girl about her whereabouts on the night of Chase's demise and her connection to the missing necklace. The dialogue between Ed and Joe outlines the complexities of the investigation, marred by scarce evidence but reignited by this tangible clue, set against the backdrop of a community's suspicions and the murky interactions between its inhabitants.