

28. The Shrimper

In 1969, within the rustic ambiance of the Dog-Gone beer hall, where the glow of beer signs cast a warm light over the patrons, Sheriff Ed and his companion Joe mingled among locals. Amid the clatter of billiard balls and the sizzle of frying seafood, they stood at the bar carved from a lengthy pine, engaging in the communal pastime of exchanging gossip and speculations. On this particular evening, the buzz was all about a puzzling incident devoid of fingerprints, with locals tossing around theories and pondering the involvement of eccentric individuals like old man Hanson.

As questions and theories swirled around them, Ed and Joe, accustomed to such interrogations, navigated the conversation with ease until a distinct voice cut through the din. Hal Miller, a shrimper employed by Tim O'Neal, approached with a request for a private word with the sheriff. Moving to a quieter spot, Hal confessed his unease about something he'd witnessed, a weighty secret that he couldn't carry any longer.

With a mixture of reluctance and urgency, Hal relayed his account of the night Chase Andrews died. While returning to the bay with his crewmate Allen Hunt, way past midnight, they had spotted the infamous Marsh Girl near the bay's entrance. Hal's revelations hinted at a potentially crucial piece of the puzzle surrounding Chase Andrews's mysterious death, stirring a blend of intrigue and concern in the sheriff. This conversation in the dimly lit corner of the Dog-Gone wasn't just an exchange of words; it was the unveiling of a significant clue, embedded in the tight-knit fabric of the community's daily life.