

Resurrection of the Roses

CHAPTER ONE

“I don’t know why I come.” Roz slammed through the door and tossed a pile of papers on the desk in the living room. She and Liam arrived at the apartment on the Ile de St. Louis two days ago and today she attended her first conference seminar.

“Probably because they paid you?” Liam looked up from his laptop and grinned at her. “You know it’s an ego stroke, being asked to give a paper and be on panels.”

Roz blew out a breath. “I know, it’s a big boost and an honor. But after a day of saying hello, standing around drinking coffee, wandering through the place looking for room numbers, being stopped by students asking questions,” she shook her head. “I get exhausted. My feet hurt. It saps energy that I don’t have to spend working alone.”

Tut, her greyhound, looked up, his tail thumping on the floor. “My boy.” Roz reached down and ruffled his ear. “I’m glad we brought you, but you may get bored here in Paris. It’ll be better when we get out into the county.” Turned to Liam. “What are you working on? Are you at a point where you can stop?” She sat on the edge of a chair, slid her shoes off and rubbed her aching feet.

“Just some notes on what I want to cover when we begin the rest of the trip.”

When the invitation to give the keynote at the conference arrived, Roz’ first inclination was to turn it down. She hadn’t finished the commission for the university gallery in Wisconsin, a piece she’d researched and designed last fall during an extended stay in England.

She'd left the invitation on the kitchen counter, intending to write a polite "Thanks, but no thanks" to the organizers when Liam spotted it.

"What's this?" He'd come over to take Tut out for a run on the beach, a habit they'd established when Roz was in England. And now Tut was living his best life, usually two runs a day, one with Roz and one with Liam.

Roz looked up from the sink where she was washing lettuce for a lunchtime salad. "I'm going to say no. Last fall in England was enough travel."

"That was almost eight months ago, and besides this is another country." Liam reached down to stroke Tut. "Is this a pretty influential bunch, the conference organizers?"

"Yes, they have a hand in most of the large-scale public commissions." Roz paused. Should she go? What would it benefit? Her reputation was secure, and she got more inquiries about commissions than she accepted, but there was constant pressure to maintain her presence. A major commission could bring public acclaim as well as up to \$1 million in fees for a year's work.

"Maybe I'd go with you." Liam tapped the invitation. "I've only been to France once. Maybe we could make a longer trip out of it, do some traveling around the countryside, Burgundy, the Loire Valley. I could get a couple of travel pieces out of it."

Roz stared at him. Travel? She and Winston, her late husband, used to spend two or more months every summer in Europe. As an art historian at UCLA, Winston visited museums, galleries, cathedrals, gathering information and slides for his classes. Roz spent her time in cathedrals and churches, soaking up the stained glass windows and finding glass workshops she could visit. Would traveling with Liam drown her in bittersweet memories?

“I suppose we could.” She was hesitant, not wanting to immediately take on something so intimate. She and Liam were probably working toward some kind of relationship beyond friends, but they still weren’t lovers. Logistically, how would this work? And who would watch Tut? While she was in England, Liam took on the task of surrogate dog owner to heart and he and Tut had become second-best friends.

This invitation to address a conference on replicating medieval stained glass in Paris was too big a draw. There might be forces at work, an undercurrent of malevolence, in the world of stained glass that worried her.

After Notre-Dame burnt, and then the cathedral of Saint Peter and Paul in Nantes, and those two fires only a couple of years after a hoard of medieval stained glass from Westminster Abby was stolen, Roz felt her superstitions tingle. She didn’t believe in conspiracy theories, but there seemed to be more coincidences popping up than fit random events.

She’d give her keynote talk, “New Life for Old Glass”, tomorrow, outlining how British craftspeople were repurposing some of the stained glass hoard found at Westminster. What she would leave out was that more than 15,000 pieces of the glass had been stolen, held for ransom and recovered.

She was ready for tomorrow, but tonight was Paris.

CHAPTER TWO

Maybe I should leave a trail of breadcrumbs, Roz thought as she turned the map of the Sorbonne over and over, looking for her bearings.

The University of Paris, established in 1150, had been broken up into separate colleges in 1970, but the original buildings were still used for classes, lectures, seminars and the Stained Glass workshops took up several of the medieval and later spaces. She looked up from her map, found a lecture auditorium where she was scheduled to give her keynote presentation later that day and crossed the soaring atria at the top of the grand staircase.

The auditorium was vast, could probably hold upwards of 1,000 people, and she hoped it wouldn't be full. Speaking before groups didn't much bother her, she'd learned to focus on people on the first few rows, but here the tiers went up into darkness. She took a breath, moved to the side of the stage and climbed to the speaker's dais set up in the center

The overhead lights weren't on but a spot lit the dais and caught a flash of red near the backdrop curtain. Roz looked out at the auditorium, getting a feel for the space and how she'd shape her talk. She had slides so needed to talk to some of the audiovisual staff.

She turned around to check out the curtain behind the dais, caught the flash of red again and walked back. As she neared the curtain, the flash resolved itself into a two-foot long shard of glass, poking up from a pile of rags. No, it wasn't a pile of rags, there was a shape there—and something wet looking. Closer, she saw it was a body, a man, who was curled around the shard as though embracing it.

It wasn't an embrace though, it was a fatal wound, the shard protruding through his chest and spilling his life, the same color as the glass, out on the stage.

She stifled a scream, backed away, spun around and took the steps to the auditorium floor so fast she almost lost her balance.

What to do? Who to call?

“Hello?” she shouted and waved her arms, hoping some tech crew in the lighting booth would see her. “Hello?”

She ran up the aisle, burst through the auditorium door and straight into the chest of a stagehand.

“Ca va, Mille?” he asked, reaching out a hand to steady her.

“Um, a man, un homme...” Roz’ tenuous grasp of French flew out of her mind and she searched for a word.

“Un homme? Oui?”

“L’homme est mort!” Did she say she found a dead man?

“Perhaps English is better,” the tech said smiling as he watched her search for words.

“Thank you, yes, English is better. There’s a dead man on the stage.” Roz did her best not to sound too panicky

“A dead man? Someone you know?”

“No, no—well, I don’t know. I didn’t look.”

“And where is this man?”

“At the back of the stage, against the curtain.”

“And you think he’s dead because...?”

“Because there’s a big piece of glass stabbing through his chest and blood all over.”

The exchange with the stage tech allowed Roz to take a breath, get a handle on her incipient panic. She needed to tell this in a coherent way and get some help.

“I’m scheduled to give a talk later this afternoon on the manufacture of stained glass during the early medieval period. I came here early so I’d know the layout of the auditorium and to talk

to a technician about audiovisual needs. The spotlight above the dais caught a glimpse of red and I turned to see a tall shard of glass sticking up from a pile of rags,” She closed her eyes, shuddering at the visual memory.

“Did you go to him?” The tech was holding the auditorium doors open for them to go back down the aisle to the stage.

“No, not really. I got close enough to see that he was impaled on the shard, it must be almost two feet long and a narrow triangle. He’s lying in a pool of blood.”

By now, she and the tech had reached the steps to the stage. He said, “Wait here,” and walked back to the curtain and the body. She heard him on his walkie-talkie giving orders in rapid French and suddenly the overheard stage lights came on. In the garish light, the body and the blood stood out like a life-sized diorama. She turned her head away, ruing yet another blood-covered body. Was she destined to find them littering her path through life?

“Wait. I’m calling for help,” the tech said and within minutes the stage was swarming with people speaking incomprehensible French. Roz was starting to shake, feeling out of control in this familiar yet unfamiliar setting, a dead man, a pool of blood, authorities gathering.

She sucked in a breath and the realization hit her...Liam. Liam was here, just a phone call away. She hit his number and crossed her fingers he was someplace close, maybe walking Tut.

“What’s up?” His breezy American voice settled her.

“I found a body.”

“You found a what??

“A body. A dead man.”

“How do you do that? This is the third one. I’m wondering if you’re a dowsing rod for death. Where is this, on the riverbank?”

“No, it’s here, at the Sorbonne. In the lecture auditorium I’m scheduled to use for my keynote this afternoon.” She paused, took a breath. “Could you come over? I’m a little shaky.”

“Of course. Let me get Tut settled, I’ll be there in probably 20 minutes. Where is this auditorium?”

“It’s in one of the renaissance wings, off a grand staircase. Took me a while to find it but there’s a crowd now, just follow the cops and evidence techs. You can’t miss it.”

She clicked off and turned to the tech she’s spoken to initially. He was speaking quietly to a woman and when he saw she was off the phone, said, “Mille., let me introduce you to Inspector Celie Lejeune. The inspector is with the Surete.”

“Hello Ms. Duke,” the woman said. “It is Ms. Duke, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Roz said, shaking the inspector’s hand. “How did you know?”

“Well, the technician said you were to give a talk here this afternoon so I just looked up the schedule. Not a giant leap of detective work. And you found the body?”

“Yes.” Roz looked away for a second, calming herself, then went through the story again. Inspector Lejeune took some notes on a tablet, nodded. “And do you know who this is?” she asked.

“I have no idea, I didn’t look at him long enough to see his face, just saw the glass, his chest and the blood.”

“Maybe this will help,” The inspector turned her tablet toward Roz and a shot of the dead man’s face filled the small screen.

Roz gasped. “So you do know him?” the inspector asked.

“No, not really, I know who he is, but I’d never met him. I recognize him from the seminar program. He’s Etienne Milliard and he’s working on ways to reproduce medieval stained glass. Some of his ideas aren’t well thought of in the field.”

“Does he have enemies?” Celie Lejeune narrowed her eyes at Roz and Roz realized that the inspector was an attractive woman, very French, in her mid-30s.

CHAPTER THREE

“There you are.” Liam’s calm voice began to soothe Roz’ frazzled nerves. “Are you OK?”

He reached over and pulled her into the circle of his arms, a gesture of comfort. “What happened?”

She took a shaky breath and went through the story again, this time letting some of her angst show. Liam, after all, was with her for the first body, that of the defrocked priest murdered in their neighborhood in their small Oregon town.

He wasn’t with her for the second body, found in an abandoned church in Kent, on the coast of England, but she called him as soon as she was able.

And now with her to give solace and support, for number three.

“Number three?” The Inspector’s voice caused Liam and Roz to clam up. Were they about to get off on the wrong foot with the Surete?

“It’s sort of a private joke,” Liam said turning to the Inspector. “And you are...?”

“This is Inspector Celie Lejeune of the Surete,” Roz said, waving her hand to include the Frenchwoman. Then to Lejeune, “This is my friend Liam Karshner.”

“Friend? What did he mean about number three?”

Well..." Roz hesitated. How much to tell? Would it raise suspicions or offer explanations?

"We're neighbors in a small town in Oregon." Liam began a calm recitation. "One morning, a man's body was discovered stabbed to death in his home, about a block from our houses."

"That seems straight-forward enough. Why did you," she gestured to include both Roz and Liam, "become involved?"

"Ummm..., Roz stumbled around the truth. "It seems that one of my coming knives was the murder weapon."

"Coming knives?" Lejeune wrinkled her beautifully shaped eyebrows.

Here we go, Roz thought. Out loud, she went through a fast explanation of putting together a stained glass piece.

Lejeune nodded, impatient. "I'm aware of how stained glass works, I'd just never heard of a coming knife. What do they look like?"

Roz reached into her shoulder bag and picked out a print of the slides she was planning to use. "These are coming knives," she said, showing the Inspector a page of a variety of knives.

"And your *neighbor*," she stressed the word, "was stabbed by one of your knives?"

"Yes." Liam interrupted to tell the rest of the story. "One of Roz' knives was stolen by the murderer but it was enough to cause the police to view her as a person of interest."

"And the others?" Lejeune was acting as though she was on the scent of something.

"The second one was in Kent and was only interesting because I was the one who found the body." Roz sighed. "I ended up working with Scotland Yard and Interpol to take

down an international sex trafficking operation and recovering 30,000 pieces of stolen medieval glass.”

“And now we’re here,” the Inspector said. “How long was it after you found the body that you called for help?”

“Immediately.” Roz’ hackles rose. Was the Inspector insinuating something?

“And who did you tell?”

“I ran out of the auditorium yelling for help and ran into one of the tech crew.” Roz looked around at the crowd of people filling the stage. “There, that man,” she said pointing out the techie.

One of the other officers was talking to the tech and Roz hoped that his story jibed with hers, although it was not involved or complicated.

“And then there’s Winston,” Liam said, bringing the conversation to a screeching halt.

“Who is Winston,” Lejeune asked, alert like a bloodhound on a trail.

Roz threw Liam a filthy look. Boy would she light into him when they got back to their apartment. She sighed and said, “Winston was my husband. He was killed in a drive-by shooting outside a mall in Los Angeles. The LAPD thought of me as a person of interest because they had no other leads. Where Winston was, outside a mall that neither of us ever shopped at and one which had commissioned one of my pieces for their atrium, made the police suspicious.”

“And was there a resolution?” Lejeune’s tone was waspish, a reaction Roz expected any time Winston’s death came up.

“Yes. Forensics traced the bullet to a gun stolen in an earlier robbery. The gang member who’d stolen the gun used it in a couple of other drive-bys, including the one the

Winston was involved in. They weren't after Winston, they were shooting at a rival gang member. Winston was just collateral damage.”

“That should give you peace.” Lejeune turned to Liam. “Why did you bring it up, it seems cut and dried.”

“The who and how Winston died is known,” Roz said. This wasn't Liam's to tell. “What I've been wrestling with is why. Not why he was shot and killed, that I know, but why he was at that place, at that mall. I don't think I'll ever rest until I know that.”

“Does it matter?” The French detective gave Roz a curious look. What possible difference could it make now, she seemed to ask.

Roz shot Lima a sharper look than her coming knives. What was he playing at, bringing Winston up? He read her look and said, “If the Surete begins to ask questions about your past, I wanted to make sure that your ‘person of interest’ role wasn't misinterpreted. The LAPD has a file on you and Winston that could seem intimidating.”

Liam was helping her, keeping her safe, she realized, not pointing out her seeming penchant for stumbling over dead bodies. How could she explain Winston to the sleek French woman? Even if Winston was having an affair, it might not surprise the inspector, the French were more blasé about extra-martial sex than most Americans.

Not that he was sleeping with one of his students—at least there was no indication of that—the fact he was somewhere they'd never been made her doubt her trust in him. She and Winston had been married for almost ten years. Their careers were similar—hers in stained glass, a medieval medium, and his as an art history professor at UCLA. Their summers were spent traveling through Europe, for the art, the food, the culture, the history. These were the times she cherished and took the memories out every few months to polish

and relive their experiences. Since the place where he was murdered was beyond their mutual life, had she placed her trust in him in a frail vessel?

Did Winston have a secret life?

None of Lejeune's business.

"Why is the Surete involved? I would have thought the Paris police would handle a murder at the Sorbonne?" Roz asked. Not a bad tangent to pull Lejeune's questioning away from Winston and Roz' link to murdered men.

"Under normal circumstances, probably," the inspector said. "But this was at the start of an international conference dealing with an issue around our culture and heritage with speakers and guests from around the world. It puts us in a larger arena." Lejeune closed her tablet. "Particularly since you know who the victim is and that he may have ties to international art forgery."

CHAPTER FOUR

"International art forgery?" Liam sucked in a breath then said "Ow," as Roz elbowed him.

"Oops, sorry," she said, turned to the inspector. "Is that why the Surete is in at the beginning?"

Liam was a good friend and a great investigator, having spent most of his career as a newspaper journalist, but Roz didn't need him in the middle of another dead body find. It was hard enough dealing with the police forces, whether in the U.S., England or now France. She wasn't going to lie about her previous experiences. Why give the Surete information that had no bearing on this case?

“Yes, of course,” Lejeune said. “We’ve heard rumors that there’s a burgeoning market for medieval stained glass, it’s become a darling of architects and designers. You must know Ms. Duke, I would guess your business is blossoming.”

In truth, Roz’ business was doing well, although her bread and butter income was from prepackaged DIY kits for the amateur. She sold these online through her website and at a couple of local craft stores in Oregon. They were designed to be installed in an existing window or door and were various flowers, beach scenes, shore birds. One of her best-selling kits was of Van Gogh’s Irises and she was always on the lookout for art that could be easily transferred to stained glass for a novice who wanted some color in their window.

What she excelled at and loved, though, were the large commission pieces done for individuals, commercial buildings and churches. These works, taking months to design, build and install, went for upwards of a million dollars. The piece she’d done for the mall where Winston was murdered, an impressionistic depiction of San Fernando Valley orange groves, brought her \$600,000 a few years ago.

These designs were the ones that pushed her interest and expertise in medieval glass. She wanted to capture the beauty and awe of art and architecture in the Middle Ages, now being understood in the brilliant original colors.

From the Greeks to the Gothic, buildings weren’t just the gray stone edifices the modern world knew, they’d been painted in breathtaking colors. A Persian archer on the frieze of the Parthenon, now a beautifully carved grey-white marble, was originally dressed in a multi-patterned jerkin and hose in vivid blues, yellows and reds. To the modern eye, these might seem gaudy but to an illiterate population, they told arresting and illuminating stories of war, conquest, heroes, redemption.

Roz planned installation pieces both for their context and color, partially why she was in France. To lecture on medieval glass and to continue to do research into its manufacture. Long before modern aniline dyes, craftspeople used natural materials for coloring: Copper for a green, as well as red and blue; types of iron oxide; manganese for a red. And the act of heating and molding the glass itself made the material change color from a pale yellow to an almost purple shade as it was heated and rolled.

Egyptian blue, a color used by the Greeks and Romans although not exclusively for glass, was a mixture of silicate of copper and calcium and artists used the ground precious stone lapis lazuli for a rich, deep blue. Some of the colorants were lost to history however. The glass itself morphed from soda glass, used until roughly 1000 CBE to so-called “forest glass” made from 1000 to about 1700. The forest glass was cheaper to manufacture. Many of the glassworks were on the edges of forests for ease of acquiring charcoal for the ovens and this glass was used extensively in stained glass as well as everyday utensils.

She’d cover this development in her lecture.

In the UK, a considerable quantity of blue soda glass was identified in stained glass from York Minster, and in excavations at Old Sarum and Winchester. In France, in Chartres Cathedral and St Denis in Paris, soda glass has also been found.

Occasionally, Roz thought maybe she should have majored in chemistry or even art history like Winston. From him she learned that some early glassmakers ground up Roman tesserae for their colorants, a case of Peter robbing Paul?

As interesting as this was, it wasn’t getting her any closer to the body of Etienne and why he’d been killed.

“Do you need us any further?” Roz’ tone was cool. It wouldn’t do to piss off Inspector Lejeune but she also wasn’t going to cave in like a sniveling coward. Liam may be blathering on about all Roz’ dead bodies, but she didn’t want Lejeune to conjure up suspicions.

As the Frenchwoman shook her head, Roz took Liam’s arm. “Let’s go home,” she said, “I think the lecture for today is cancelled, we can take Tut for a walk.”

“Tut?” Lejeune made a small moue, inviting Roz to explain.

“My dog, a greyhound. Because we’ll be gone for a few months, we decided to bring him along. After we leave Paris we’re going to travel through Burgundy, the Loire Valley. Plenty of rural areas for him to explore.”

“And you’re going to look at stained glass?” Now the inspector sounded skeptical.

“Yes,” Liam nodded. “She’ll look at stained glass, I’ll drink wine.” He laughed. “In fact, I’m a travel writer and am planning to do a series of articles on French wines and winemaking. With the climate change that’s coming faster than we know, I keep reading that the best wine grape growing areas are edging north. It’s getting too warm for French and Italian wines. In the U.S. the states of Oregon and Washington are giving California wines a run for their money.”

“I have heard that,” Lejeune said. “But don’t count us out.” Turned to Roz. “You are staying in Paris for now? May I have your contact information and your hotel?”

“We don’t have a hotel, we’re in a B and B on the Ile St. Louis.” She pulled a page from her notebook, jotted down her cell number, the address of the apartment, Liam’s cell number.

“Thank you, I’ll be in touch,” Lejeune said as she responded to young officer patiently standing at her shoulder.

“This is our exit line,” Roz whispered to Liam. “Let’s get out of here.”

They made their way through the crowd of police, technicians, Sorbonne officials who were swarming the lecture hall, speaking rapid French and all of whom, it seemed had an opinion about the dead body.

“Whew,” Liam said, once outside. “I don’t know how you attract bodies.”

Roz narrowed her eyes at him. “I don’t either and it doesn’t help matters when you stand there and vomit non sequiturs about ‘all my other’ dead men. Why did you go on about Winston and the archbishop?”

“I told you, if the French authorities, particularly the Surete, begin looking at us, at our backgrounds, they’re bound to find a file on you at the LAPD. Probably even Interpol after the business in Kent. I thought heading her off before she starts down a wrong freeway ramp would be good.”

Mollified, Roz signed and tucked her hand in his. “You may be right; I don’t have any idea why I get the brass ring in the murder-go-round. Let’s go take Tut for a quick run then find a quiet restaurant in some little square, have a drink, a good dinner and an evening in Paris. A walk along the river. Watching the lights come up?”

“I’m in,” Liam said. “What do you suppose she meant about staying around in Paris?”