

## **Stride: Journal Entries**

### **The Body in the Street**

We've identified the body. It's MJ Lane. Amanda tells me he's a trust fund baby, and his father is a billionaire film producer. This guy had women dripping all over him, so why was he on the street with a prostitute?

So far, no motive. He was having an affair with a young actress, and a video of their sex games wound up on the Internet. He was also in bed with the twenty-something wife of a comedian from the Rat Pack days. I'm not sure that's worth killing over in this town.

Something was going on between MJ and his father. We need to find out what it was, but that's going to stir up the political waters around here. This case is making people nervous, from my boss all the way up to the governor. No one likes murders that throw mud on the rich and powerful.

Meanwhile, I'm the new kid on the block, with a partner who sued the city over her sex life and won a multi-million dollar settlement. We aren't exactly making friends here.

### **Past Tense**

The more we dig into this case, the more I'm convinced there's a connection to the past. The lieutenant wants me to forget about it. Even Serena thinks I may be seeing ghosts that aren't there.

It doesn't make sense, right? People start dying in the present, and somehow it all ties back to the murder of a Spanish showgirl at a casino in the 1960s. Crazy. But the coincidences are mounting, and I don't believe in coincidences. I don't know how you draw the line yet between the past and the present, but somehow, the murder of a showgirl at the Sheherezade wound up triggering another string of murders forty years later.

Whoever this guy is, he's not finished yet. Someone is out for revenge.

### **Sex and the City**

I came from a place where sex was a dirty secret. Here in Vegas, they must spray pheromones in the air. Sex is everywhere. It's like all the dark desires that were in Pandora's box flew out and came to the desert. I'd like to say I'm immune, but I'm not. You can't walk down the street and not get aroused.

Las Vegas didn't invent sex. They import it from places like Duluth, Atlanta, Berlin, and Madrid. I used to think the world would be a better place if people were more open about sex, but now I'm not so sure. Not if Vegas is the answer.

There's a price to pay for all this sin. There always is.

## **Cover Up**

Nick Humphrey is the detective who originally investigated the murder at the Sheherezade back in the 1960s. Everyone tells me he was a sharp cop, so why does that investigation smell? The lieutenant says the case was solved. The murderer was an obsessed fan from L.A. who killed himself. End of story.

To me, it all sounds like a cover up. Something else was going on at the Sheherezade that night, and Nick Humphrey agreed to turn a blind eye to whatever it was. If Nick was compromised, he isn't going to talk to me now, but he may be the only one who can help us break through the wall of silence.

How do you convince a smart cop to let a murderer walk away? What does that do to you if you're the cop?

## **The Recluse**

I'm on a private jet to the Vancouver estate owned by Walker Lane. MJ's father. No one wants me to make this trip. No one wants me to ask questions about what happened at the Sheherezade casino back in the 1960s.

This guy has hardly been seen in public in the last forty years. He's like a modern-day Howard Hughes. He won't come to Vegas – I have to go to him.

Walker is all about money and power. That's what this city runs on – money and power, fueled by sex. I still think it's the old story. Follow the money. Next week, the Sheherezade is going to be imploded to make way for a two-billion-dollar resort.

Two billion dollars. That's worth killing over.

## **Glamour Days**

People yearn for the old days in this city. They think Vegas was in its heyday back in the 1960s, when Sinatra and Martin were in the showrooms, and the men wore tuxes, and the women dripped with jewels and furs. Maybe they're right. I look at the photos from back then, and I can feel the magic.

Or maybe it's just that we've all gotten old, and the glamour days were back when we were young. We can't accept that the stars who were in their prime when they ruled the city are mostly dead now.

It's easy to have a selective memory for those times. Sure, it was dazzling on the Strip then. But people forget about the ugly racism of those days. They forget about hardened killers running the casinos and siphoning the profits. If we dig up the glamour of the past, we have to dig up a lot of dirty secrets, too.

### **Keeping Secrets**

Tonight, Serena and I are going into the lion's den. We're meeting the casino boss, Boni Fisso. The feds have never been able to touch him, but there's no way his money is clean. He's an old-time mobster. Ruthless. Charming. You have to keep reminding yourself that this person wouldn't think twice about ordering a hit.

Boni owns the Sheherezade, and he's got most of his fortune tied up in the new resort that will rise from the ashes of the old casino. If the project sinks, so does Boni.

The question is, can we convince him to help us? If there's a killer on the streets with ties to the Sheherezade, then Boni wants him even more than we do. If he gets to this guy first, we'll never find the truth.

### **They Bury the Past**

The Sheherezade comes down today. That's what they do in this town, bury the past, forget about it, pretend it didn't exist. Maybe that's for the best.

One by one, all the casinos from the old days have taken a fall. The Dunes. The Sands. The Desert Inn. The Landmark. It takes years to build them and a few seconds to level them to the earth. They all take their secrets and sins with them.

Boni will be in his penthouse, watching the implosion. I wonder if he'll be thinking about Amira.

Serena and I have to make a decision. Do we tell the truth? Or do we keep the secret to ourselves? Maybe after all this time, no one needs to know what really happened at the Sheherezade.