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The first cop on the scene was a short, balding guy in a plaid sports coat named Teddy Wasynczuk, a detective from Homicide who'd seen so many murders in his tour of duty that he actually found he was whistling as he parked his car near the corpse. At least this one didn't get him out of bed. It was high noon, and although high noon in Miami meant heat rippling off the tar like upside-down lava, he'd still be home for supper. That is, if some other poor dolt didn't get caught in the cocaine crossfire before the day was through.

The second person on the scene was Sherry Estabrook, a fact that made Wasynczuk whistle even more brightly. He loved reporters, especially if they managed to spell his name right, which Estabrook always did. She was one of the best in town. And a real treat to talk to. A flirt. A beautiful, funny, sassy-mouthed flirt.

Wasynczuk stepped out of his dented police-issue sedan and called her name. But Sherry was already too far away to hear him, crouching above the dead body and examining its wounds dispassionately. In one hand, she held a reporter's notebook, in the other a fountain pen. A moment later, she stood up, straightened her short red skirt, checked the bottom of her high heels for muck, and jotted down a few words.

"Sherry, Sherry—you mistress of Miami murders—how ya doin'?" Wasynczuk was by her side now, chatting familiarly. "When they gonna graduate you off the streets and into the air-conditioned comfort of the editor's desk?"

"Never!" Sherry cracked back. "I'm never going to let them." She smirked, and Wasynczuk couldn't help but notice that even her smirk was charming. As usual, she was made up with the perfection of a high-fashion model—no lipstick on her teeth, turquoise eyes carefully outlined in black, her long hair sprayed into a sexy mane. The word around the station was that Estabrook was the daughter of some muckety-muck Boston judge and that