

# Rocks and Minerals

## by Jack CJ Stark

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“Oh, it’s you.” The detective’s lips tightened slightly before turning his head back to the scene. I’d met this fucker before. He was on a case I solved for them a few years back. He clearly doesn’t like me and I don’t like him. But we had work to do, and he knows he doesn’t have the authority to remove me from the scene.

“What’ve we got?” I managed to force out. There was no need for pleasantries here.

“White male. Fifty years old or so. Looks homeless. He probably lives in these woods. I’d say he’s been here a few days at least. Look, there is nothing for you to add here. The broken washing line wrapped around his neck, with the other bit still there in the tree tells us everything we need to know. Sad bastard finally gave up and took the easy way out. The line snapped after he was dead and he fell here. You can go back to helping old women connect with their dead dogs from the other side,” the detective mocked.

“Old women prefer to connect with their cats. It’s the men that miss their dogs,” I quipped. That wasn’t strictly true but I wasn’t going to let this shithead think he could rile me up.

The detective scowled at me. No doubt he wanted to sock me right there. It’s a good job he didn’t. Despite being at least twenty years older than me he was still twice my size with hands like cinder blocks. One hit from one of those and I’d be out for the count. I’d met many like him before. What they have in braun they lack in brains. Thick as pig shit, the lot of them.

“Who found him?” I asked.

“Some kid said he found him yesterday, but was too scared to report him until today. It doesn’t matter anyway,” he continued, “as I said, there’s nothing for you to do here. It’s an open and close case.”

“What about the leaves?” I asked.

“What leaves?” he returned.

“The ones on top of his body,” I pointed out. “Looks like he’s been buried under them, after he fell, of course.”

The detective scoffed. “Those? Lie down next to him for a few days and see how many leaves cover you,” he said with an irritated tone. I could see he was not going to accept any line of enquiry directly from me. He’d already made his mind up with what happened here. He wanted to get the paperwork done as quick as possible so he could go back to sitting in his patrol car and perving on the underage school girls in their short skirts.

“Sure, there would be some, but our victim here has almost been fully covered,” I replied. I chose the word victim with full intent to piss off the detective even more.

The detective looked over the body again, and then to the surrounding ground. A flash of realisation showed on his face. Now he was pissed, but the stubborn bastard was going to try and hide it as much as possible.

“Is that your magic? Am I supposed to be impressed with that? ‘Cause I ain’t,” he defended himself. “Anyone with two eyes and common sense could figure that out.”

“And yet, you didn’t,” I said whilst trying not to look too smug.

I was cruising for a bruising and it would have been smart for me to watch my tongue. But it was just a little too easy with this dipshit. He didn’t respond directly, instead the detective took in a deep breath and stared intensely at me. I could see the cogs turning in his mind, weighing up whether it was worth it or not. Luckily for me, he decided it was not.

“You gonna talk to ‘im then?” the detective asked with a nod towards the body on the ground.

“No. He’s already gone,” I replied.

“Oh good. Be seeing you another time then,” the detective said, implying my time to leave had come.

“Not just yet,” I said. “I might be able to get something still.”

The detective sighed again. He reached into his coat pocket, pulled out an e-cigarette and took a drag. With his other hand he reached into the inside pocket and took out his phone.

“You’ve got five minutes, max,” the detective barked whilst looking at his phone, turning around and heading up the bank towards the police do-not-cross tape that flapped in the breeze.

There was more to this situation but with the victim gone already I was going to have to ask around.

I crouched down next to the body. That was all it was now. It was no longer a person, a life, a human being. Just a body. Empty after serving its purpose, waiting to be recycled. The body was not going to talk to me.

I start by asking the leaves. What did they see? Nothing. They are silent today, as are the trees, the wind, the land, and the air. I could never figure out why they spoke sometimes and other times they didn't. Over the years I have learned that trying to force it was pointless. Their silence was impenetrable. They spoke only when they wanted to.

I turned my attention back to the body. It was lying on its back. Its face was swollen and its lips were blue. The grey patchy hair on the top of its head looked like it hadn't been cleaned in a while, as did the grey skin and grey beard. The leaves had been brushed off the face and upper part of the body. Probably by the kid that found it. I could see the body was wearing several layers of clothing, with an old overcoat on top. The coat had seen better days. The bright blue colour had drained from it over the years. Sweat stains marked the armpit areas. Worn out jeans, looking almost as old as the body itself. Grey trainers that had seen better days. There was little there to tell a story.

It was futile to stay there. Nothing was speaking, making this another wasted journey. It happened sometimes. I used to get frustrated at those times, demanding expense payments and the such, but I have come to learn that it gets me nowhere. People don't pay if they don't get anything in return. It's better to cut my losses and move on, charging enough in those successful cases to cover the cost of the times when nothing speaks.

I took one last glance around as I got to my feet. My knees creaked and my hips ached. I saw nothing of worth. I had no doubt the thick as pig shit pig would take great pleasure in my failure to find anything.

“There was another.”

It was quiet. Quiet enough that at first I couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from or what had said it.

“Say that again,” I said, this time paying closer attention to where it was coming from.

“There was another. They were here, and they made it happen.”

The voice was coming from somewhere near the body. It was still too quiet for me to know exactly what was speaking though.

“Who are you? I can’t see you,” I said.

Nothing replied. This was the case sometimes. They say what they want to say when they want to say it. It’s less of a conversation, and more of a begging for statements. Sometimes I know what they mean, sometimes they speak in riddles. Sometimes they just speak nonsense and add to the confusion of the situation.

I crouched back down to get a closer look at the body, paying attention to the smaller items. It could’ve been anything nearby, a leaf, a twig, a small pebble. It could’ve been an individual strand of cotton woven on the clothing, or a button. A button. That’s what I focused on. That’s what grabbed my attention. It was hanging on by just a couple of loose threads.

“She made it happen with her moving of the rocks and minerals.”

“Rocks and minerals?” I begged for clarification. “I don’t know what you mean by that. Can you rephrase it?”

“Charcoal and clay,” replied the button.

Well, that fucking helped.

“She put the charcoal and clay down. She pushed it around. She made it happen,” the button said.

I’d like to say that it all made sense at the time, but it didn’t. Of course, it was just my luck to get a button that was dumber than the detective waiting up the hill.

“So, this wasn’t suicide?” I asked. “A woman did this to him?”

“He did it to him. She made it happen, with the rocks and minerals.”

“Anything else you can tell me? The rocks and minerals, charcoal and clay, it doesn’t mean anything to me.” I was begging for anything else at this point. It took a lot for me to hold my tongue. They give me nothing if I get too bitchy with them. I was close to getting something this time, I could feel it. I just needed a little more.

“Rocks and minerals,” the button repeated. Then again, “Rocks and minerals.”

Then nothing more. The button was silent. Clearly it thought it had given me everything I need to know, but it gave me almost nothing at all.

“Come on! Time’s up. Clear out!” the twathead pig shouted down to me.

I fumbled my way to the top of the bank, joining the detective who was still looking at his phone. I was weak on my feet. It happened sometimes. The focus it takes to listen to them can leave me mentally and physically exhausted.

“Did it work? Did you speak to him?” asked the detective.

“Not him,” I replied, reluctantly. “But I got something.”

“Oh yeah?” the detective asked with a cynical tone.

I was not about to share the details with him. He was not leading the investigation, and not the one that asked me to come here. He was not the one paying for my time and information. But that wasn’t going to stop me from pissing him off just a little. I ducked under the police tape, turning just enough to glimpse a look at his face.

“It said yo mama’s so fat that God created light by asking her to move out of the way.”

“You fucking what?!” he snapped.

I walked away quickly enough. “Rocks and minerals,” I shouted back. “Rocks and minerals.”

I walked back to my car, knowing that moron wouldn’t have a clue what that meant. He didn’t need to know that I didn’t know either.

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